

Doing Liberation Theology in the Context of the Post-Apartheid South Africa

by

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## **Abstract**

The author strongly holds – in the thesis – that the Theology of Liberation can inspire the poor of South Africa to uproot the post-1994 socio-economic and political evil structures which continue unabated to impoverish them.

The introductory chapter studies the reasons which motivated the author to write the thesis. It further discusses the method, the format and the limitations of the thesis.

Chapter one focuses on the author's understanding of the Theology of Liberation, and its historical background.

Chapter two discusses the relationship between the Theology of Liberation and black theology, while chapter three contemplates on the possibility of the creation of what the author calls, *An African Theology of Liberation*.

Chapter four studies the relationship between the Theology of Liberation and the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church as taught by the pope and his council. The study of this relationship is extremely difficult because of the on-going, and seemingly insurmountable ideological differences between the two parties. The author suggests, as a solution, that each party seriously considers and recognizes the contextual limitations of its theology.

Chapter five focuses on the implementation of the Theology of Liberation into the South African situation. The author highly recommends the inclusion of the veneration of the ancestors of Africa, as a perfect instrument by means of which the Theology of Liberation can succeed in achieving one of its major aims, which is to convert the poor to be leaders of their own liberation.

The concluding chapter suggests concrete ways through which the Theology of Liberation can be kept alive and relevant within the South African situation.

## **The Ten Key Terms Required**

1. Liberation Theology
2. Latin American Theology
3. Option for the Poor
4. Basic/Small Christian Communities
5. Inductive method
6. Oppression
7. Contextual Theology
8. Neo-colonialism
9. Injustice
10. Indigenization

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# **DOING LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

## **1. The Formulation of the Problem**

In the year 1994 the Black People of South Africa were eventually freed from the yoke of political oppression. This means that the Apartheid legislation which served to deprive them of various fundamental rights was finally scrapped. As a result, Black People, like their counterparts, are legally entitled to ideological affiliation, to the freedom of movement, speech, and press; they are also entitled to the absolute right to vote, and to many other freedoms and rights that are enjoyed in the context of a democratic dispensation.

However, in spite of the political rights and freedoms mentioned above, a very large majority of Black People are still jobless, homeless and landless, because the economy of the country is still largely in the hands of Whites. This means that the means of production, viz. the mines, the farms, the factories and the means of transportation, the banks and the insurance companies are still owned and controlled by Whites. What makes matters worse is the endless corruption of government officials which often manifests itself in the form of the abuse of funds which are supposed to improve the economic life of the poorest of the poor in South Africa. Furthermore, the tenders provided by the government for the increase and the betterment of housing are also met with corruption from the part of the contractors who use this money for their own private purposes. The government has managed to have some of the corrupt leaders apprehended, while others were forced by the same government to step down from their leadership positions. The question of corruption still continues in spite of the harsh measures imposed by the government. What is the best solution?

Attempts have been made to address the levels of poverty and corruption in South Africa. So far these attempts have been made from the socio-economic and political point of view. I am not aware of any theologian who has tried to analyze and condemn these evils from the theological point of view. It is true that various contemporary theologies, especially Black Theology and Liberation Theology have, prior to the year 1994, fiercely attacked occasions of political and economic injustice brought about by the Apartheid Regime in South Africa; but after 1994 very little has been done by theologians in South Africa to denounce theologically the economic and political injustices emanating from the present dispensation. The thesis therefore attempts to address the current political and economic problems of South Africa from the theological point of view. To be more specific the thesis will make an effort to solve the social problems in question from the point of view of the Theology of Liberation.

## **2. The Importance of this Study**

The study is important in the sense that it will benefit all people who wish to understand the role Liberation Theology can play in the process of denouncing political and economic injustice on the one hand, and in the programme of promoting the respect and the recognition of the fundamental rights of every citizen, most especially the downtrodden in South Africa, on the other. Indeed the thesis will highlight the point that the task of Liberation Theology in South Africa remains incomplete up until the poorest people in the same country are in a position to benefit economically from the present dispensation.

The study is important in the sense that it will benefit all those people who (within the context of South Africa) wish to know if it is true that Liberation Theology does not only condemn white oppressors, but it condemns also black oppressors. As I mentioned above, Liberation Theology played a very crucial role in dismissing apartheid as diabolically unjust and inhuman. Ten years after 1994 the majority of the people are still landless, jobless, and homeless, and subjected to the worst sewage system called the 'bucket system'. Consequently, some even regret voting the present regime into power. As a further consequence, some other poor people even tried at such places as Harrismith, Schweizer Reneke, Lichtenberg, Imbalenhle, Winterveldt, Khutsong and Hennenmann to stage a rebellion against their respective local governments. The intention to stage a rebellion is a clear indication that the economic situation of the majority of people will never be improved in spite of the fact that the majority of parliamentarians are black. In the midst of such havoc, Liberation Theology will always support and encourage radical protest against any kind of injustice regardless of the skin color of the perpetrators. Put in the vocabulary of Jon Sobrino, Liberation Theology is 'scandalously' partisan in the sense that it will always take the side of the poor. In so doing, he claims, Liberation Theology is trying to imitate Christ who was never neutral, but who was always on the side of the poor. The majority of priests and theologians in Latin America concur with Sobrino. A clear example is that of the theologians and priests of Nicaragua who actively helped the poor of that country to overthrow the dictatorship of Somoza in order to replace it with the democratic rule of the Sandinista Party.

In the context of South Africa this, among other things, means that Liberation Theologians should urge the poor to do like those in towns and cities that are cited above. If their revolution is countrywide, surely Thabo Mbeki and his fellow-parliamentarians will listen to their grievances.

In their book, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, the Boff brothers, namely Clodovis and Leonardo discuss the relationship between Liberation Theology and the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church. Leonardo and Clodovis jointly argue that Liberation Theology serves as a means to contextualize for the Latin American situation the universal principles contained in the Social Teachings of the whole Catholic Church.

Following the argument of the two brothers I strongly hold that my thesis will be highly valued by those Catholics who wish to know the relationship between Liberation Theology and the Social Teaching of the Church. This relationship will be discussed within the context of South Africa.

### **3. The Method**

The Method will be historical, critical and constructive. It will be historical in the sense that it focuses on the period 1994-2004 of the history of South Africa. A comparative study of this period and the periods of Apartheid will be included with the specific aim of investigating whether the economic situation of the poor improved or worsened after 1994.

The method will be critical in the sense that it will give an analysis of the root causes of poverty among the black people of South Africa who hoped that after 1994 their economic conditions would improve quite substantially.

The method will also be constructive in the sense that it will consist of suggestions as to what steps can be taken by both the Government and the poor in order to alleviate the latter's pain of economic exploitation. In other words the

poor with the help of expertise will have to be involved in the major economic decisions of the government so that their economic rights will eventually be recognized and respected.

#### **4. The Format**

The thesis consists of five chapters. First, the introductory chapter which will briefly describe the contents of each chapter, so as to indicate to the reader how each chapter flows from the other.

The first chapter will deal my understanding of the Theology of Liberation which will include its definition, its relationship to the scriptures and its history.

The second chapter of the thesis will deal with the relationship between the Theology of Liberation and the Black Theology of Liberation of the United States of America. A comparative study of the two theologies will be followed by their relevance to the situation in South Africa.

The third chapter focuses on the comparative study of the Theology of Liberation and African Theology. A proposal is made in this chapter to merge the two theologies into one called the African Theology of Liberation which will deal with the question of the liberation of the continent of Africa not only from socio-political injustice, but also from elements of cultural oppression emerging from within and from without the continent.

The fourth chapter discusses the relationship between the Theology of Liberation and the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church. The chapter does not have a happy ending because of the unfortunate ideological differences between the

Vatican and the Latin American exponents of the Theology of Liberation. It is not a healthy atmosphere for theologizing and hope is expressed that the unnecessary tension between the two parties will soon subside.

Chapter Five is the main chapter of the thesis and it deals specifically with means through which the Theology of Liberation can be applicable to the South African situation.

Finally, the conclusion will deal with concrete steps through which the Theology of Liberation can be kept alive in the South African context.

## **5. The Limits of the Study**

The study will be limited in the sense that it will rely heavily on literature as its source of information. In other words interviews which are supposed to be conducted among the poor, the government officials, and the business world will be excluded because of time constraints.

The thesis will be limited in the sense that it will be available only in English for the time being. The writer thinks of translating it into various African languages of South Africa so that the bible-study groups in the different denominations can use it for their weekly reflections.

## Chapter One

# MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the definition of the Theology of Liberation, and its relationship with the scriptures. The details of its relationship with the scriptures are jointly discussed by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff under the subtopic, *Hermeneutical Mediation*. The same detailed relationship – with the scriptures – is also studied by Gustavo Gutierrez under the subheading, *Scriptural Influence on Gutierrez's Understanding of Liberation Theology*

The second part of this chapter deals with the history of the Theology of Liberation.

### 2.1. Definition

Several authors – Latin American and non-Latin American alike – define the Theology of Liberation as a new methodology. I agree with them and I intend developing this popular definition below. There are other (unpopular?) definitions which although they are similar to the first one, they do at the same time retain their richness and uniqueness of explaining what the Theology of Liberation is all about. For lack of time and space, let me give two examples. The one example is provided by Gustavo Gutierrez, who claims that,

*Theology, then, will be reflection on faith as liberation praxis, reflection inspired by this very faith. ... We seek to understand the faith on the basis of our real and effective solidarity with the exploited classes of Latin America. We do so from within their world. Our reflection, then, is rooted in the commitment to create a just and communal society; and in turn should help to make this commitment radical and complete. Thus our theological discourse will be turned into truth, will be veri-fied, in and through its real-life insertion into the process of liberation.<sup>1</sup>*

I understand Gutierrez to be saying that theology is a reflection on faith. And the kind of faith on which theology focuses, is the one which tries to liberate the oppressed from every facet of injustice. It is a theology which does not only think or reflect on the importance of faith within a liberation process; it even inspires its subscribers to commit themselves actively in the process of liberation. It is this active commitment to the process of liberation which will



prove the truth or the relevance of this theology for the liberation of the oppressed. A closer look at the definition offered by Gutierrez above will help us see that an active commitment is the number one priority of the Theology of Liberation.

The second priority is the constant reflection of this theology on the relevance of the Christian faith within the situation of the oppression of the poor. The yardstick or criterion determining the truth or the relevance of our theology to the cause of the oppressed is this commitment to their total liberation, inspired by our faith. In other words, we commit ourselves –from the faith point of view – to join the poor in their struggle for justice. Reflecting on this act of faith is our Theology of Liberation which keeps on reminding us of the commitment which we consciously made – from the faith or gospel point of view – to help the poor attain a just society. Underlying our faith is Christ’s love, about which Gutierrez holds,

*That love goes to the very root of all exploitation and injustice: the breakup of friendship with God and other people. That love enables human beings to see themselves as children of their Father and brothers and sisters to each other.*<sup>2</sup>

Gutierrez further suggests that we exegetically study the foundation of Christ’s love in the Old and in the New Testaments so as to understand, in our days, how this love totally denounces exploitation and injustice, in its effort to intensify the true unity of the family of God.

Raul Vidales is also a Latin American proponent of the Theology of Liberation. Without explicitly saying what the Theology of Liberation is, he mentions the historical circumstances within which this theology is done, as very crucial. Indeed he holds that,

*Liberation theology begins with concrete experience of the faith as a liberation praxis. It is from that source that the path of reflection starts out in its attempt to understand the faith as lived reality.*<sup>3</sup>

Vidales speaks the same language of Gutierrez by taking, as the point of departure for the Theology of Liberation, the concrete experience of faith lived out as liberation praxis. Faith in this context – in order to prove itself relevant for the populace – has to commit itself totally to the struggle of the poor for liberation. Without this commitment, faith is empty and irrelevant, and so is the reflection conducted by the Theology of Liberation. Vidales further gives examples of the questions that are asked by those who live their faith within the situation of oppression. He says,

*How are we to live as believers in a continent ravaged by violence, domination, exploitation and dependence? How are we to live the faith in this conflict-ridden milieu so that our*

*faith-based response will serve to animate and mobilize the people's energies for the construction of a more just and fraternal society?*<sup>4</sup>

From the questions asked above Vidales obtains a response in the form of a concerted commitment from the Christians to liberate the poor from every manifestation of injustice. In this context the Christians are trying – in their own context – to love the poor concretely as did Jesus in his own time. Indeed Vidales writes,

*Christian commitment is now clearly occupied with the concern to recover the historical meaning of Jesus and his salvation, particularly in so far as salvation is destined for the most disadvantaged. With this concrete commitment Christians plunge into the complex and conflict-ridden world of the poor, regarding their choice as a fundamental option stemming from their faith in the Lord.*<sup>5</sup>

Out of this concrete commitment of Christians to the cause of the poor, a new way of theologizing is born, which Vidales expresses as follows,

*As we noted above it was the discovery of the world of the "other" that led committed Christians to a new way of living the faith in and through the revolutionary involvement. This in turn inaugurates a whole new way of engaging in theological discourse. Framed in a new and distinctive context, theological discourse and its understanding of the faith become distinctively different. Theory and practice are now to be indissolubly united as embodiments of one and the same reality. Our understanding of faith must operate through the mediating realities and circumstances in which Christian living is immersed: i.e., history, politics, and socio-economic conditions.*<sup>6</sup>

A commitment to a revolutionary or radical transformation of the lives of the poor has given rise to a new way of theologizing. And that new way of theologizing refers to the Theology of Liberation which enables Christians to see God at work in our contemporary history, denouncing oppression in all its manifestations and – through human minds and hearts – promoting a better socio-political and economic life for the poor.

Like Gutierrez, Vidales thinks that this new theology will have a very bright future if it continues to be exegetically or hermeneutically rooted in the scriptures. Indeed he strongly maintains,

*We need a hermeneutics that will pay heed to the voice of the sciences, not only the sciences that will help us better to understand the world of the Bible but also the sciences that help us better to understand the present-day world. Insofar as we Latin Americans are concerned specifically, we need a*

*hermeneutics that is open and sensitive to the history of our peoples, the geography of hunger, the culture of violence, the language of the voiceless masses, the world of oppression, and the structures of an unjust social order that is badly in need of God's message of freedom.*<sup>7</sup>

There is no doubt that Vidales is clearly looking for a relevant hermeneutics. He is looking for a kind of hermeneutics that will work hand in glove with – past and present – sciences in order to strengthen the Theology of Liberation in its attempt to seriously address the socio-political and economic grievances of the poor masses of Latin America. This is a very massive job, at least from the academic point of view, and that explains why it needs to be regularly reviewed or revisited, or in the language of both Gutierrez and Vidales it needs to be regularly verified.

What fascinated me about the authors just discussed is their unique way of explaining that the Theology of Liberation is a methodology without explicitly saying that the method consists of the first step and the second step as many will say so below.

## **2.2. The Boffs' Definition of the Theology of Liberation.**

Before they give us their joint definition of the Theology of Liberation, the Boff brothers, namely Leonardo and Clodovis, want to familiarize us with the kind of world poverty this theology is dealing with on a daily basis. The statistical picture of that world, they claim, is as follows:

- *Five-hundred million persons starving;*
- *One billion, six hundred million persons whose life expectancy is less than sixty years...*
- *One billion persons living in absolute poverty;*
- *One billion, five hundred million persons with no access to the most basic medical care;*
- *Five hundred million with no work or only occasional work and a per capita income of less than \$150 a year;*
- *Eight-hundred-fourteen million who are illiterate;*
- *Two billion with no regular, dependable water supply.*<sup>8</sup>

Concurring with the Boff brothers is Robert McAfee Brown whose statistical information, however, is confined to some of the countries of Latin America. He claims that,

- *In Brazil the top 2% of the land owners control 60% of the arable land, while 70% of the rural householders are landless or nearly so. In Colombia the top 4% of landowners control 60% of the arable land, while 66% of the rural households are landless or nearly so. In El Salvador the top 1% of landowners controls 41% of the arable land, while 60% of rural householders are landless or nearly so. In Guatemala the top 1% of landowners controls 34% of the arable land, while 85% of the rural households are landless or so.<sup>9</sup>*

Reflected in the foregoing statement is a very small percentage of capitalist farmers who own vast acres of land for the sake of profit. According to the capitalist mode of production, the more land one buys, the more one stands a chance to make lots of profits. This system is much to the economic disadvantage of the majority of poor people who cannot compete with the capitalist farmers in question because of the lack of skills and monetary means to do so. While Brown reveals the cruelty of capitalism on the large majority of rural householders, he does not, however, indicate the period of the history of Latin America on which he is basing statistical information. As a result, it is extremely difficult to critique his statistical research. The same applies to the Boff brothers' statistical information above. No doubt, they have – by means of statistics – made their point clear that the poor in the Third World are deprived of their political and economic rights; but, to which historical period are they referring, it is certainly not clear.

### **The Importance of the Elites' Active Commitment to the Poor's struggle for Justice as the First Step of the Methodology of Liberation Theology**

Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff further argue that the statistical information they provide above, is not meant to satisfy the curiosity of the reader, but to stimulate the spirit of sincere compassion and a very serious commitment of the Theologians of Liberation to join forces with the poor in the process of liberating themselves from oppressive structures which exploit them ceaselessly. To this effect they strongly maintain that,

*Without a minimum of “suffering with” this suffering that affects the great majority of the human race, liberation theology can neither exist nor be understood. Underlying liberation theology is a prophetic and comradely commitment to the life, cause, and struggle of these millions debased and marginalized human beings, a commitment to end this historical-social iniquity.<sup>10</sup>*

Following the joint argument of Leonardo and Clodovis, the Theology of Liberation is not an armchair exercise: in addition to its theoretical expression, it requires a concrete commitment to the poor's cause of justice on the part of those who are its exponents. The participation in the poor's struggle for justice and liberation is actually one of the highest priorities of the theologian of liberation, which priority the Boffs strongly assert as follows:

*Before we can do theology we have to "do" liberation. The first step for liberation theology is pre-theological. It is a matter of living the commitment of faith: in our case, to participate in some way in the process of liberation, to be committed to the oppressed.*

*Without this specific condition, liberation theology would be simply a matter of words. So it is not enough here only to reflect on what is being practiced. Rather we have to establish a living link with living practice. If we fail to do this, then "poverty," "oppression," "revolution," "new society," are simply words that can be found in the dictionary...Theology is a second step; the first is the "faith that makes its power felt through love" (Gal. 5:6). Theology (not the theologian) comes afterward; liberating practice comes first.<sup>11</sup>*

I understand the Boffs to be saying that without the theologian's active commitment in the poor's struggle for liberation, there is no proper Theology of Liberation. In other words a theologian cannot claim to be doing an authentic Theology of Liberation if his/her faith does not motivate him/her to be actively involved with the poor in their daily struggle against all forms of injustice imposed on them. This active participation in matters of the poor's liberation – from the part of the theologian – is the first step of doing a genuine Theology of Liberation. The second step consists in the formal or systematic presentation of the Theology of Liberation.

Leonardo and Clodovis further suggest levels or ways through which a professional theologian can be truly committed to the poor's total emancipation from all kinds of oppressive structures. They say,

- *The first level might be called more or less restricted, either sporadic, in the form of visits to base communities, meetings and the like, or more regular through pastoral work on weekends, acting as advisor to communities or popular movements, and so forth.*
- *The second would be alternating periods of scholarly work—research, teaching, writing—*

*with periods of practical work—pastoral or theological work in a particular church.*

- *The third level is that of those who live permanently with the people, making their home among the people, living and working alongside the people.<sup>12</sup>*

Underlying the three levels is the noble intention of exposing the professional theologian to the horrendous conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression the poor wish to be liberated from, before writing about this liberation from the point of view of faith.

In short the methodology of the Theology of Liberation is divided into two steps. The first step is the analysis of the situation of the world of the poor. This step is incomplete if it does not motivate the elites or passers-by, more especially the theologians to commit themselves actively to the cause of the poor. The second step, continue Leonardo and Clodovis, is called the theological step as it consists mainly of the formal or theological presentation of the methodology, with all its aspects for outsiders to read and have an idea of what the Theology of Liberation is all about. The Boffs deepen the knowledge of the methodology – as discussed above – by subdividing it into what they call mediations. They say the Theology of Liberation –as a methodology – consists of three mediations which they discuss as follows

- *Socio-analytical (or historico-analytical) mediation operates in the sphere of the world of the oppressed. It tries to find out why the oppressed are oppressed.*
- *Hermeneutical mediation operates in the sphere of God's world. It tries to discern what God's plan is for the poor.*
- *Practical mediation operates in the sphere of action. It tries to discover the courses of action that need to be followed so as to overcome oppression in accordance with God's plan.<sup>13</sup>*

I am now going to discuss the details of each mediation.

### **2.3. The Socio-Analytical Mediation**

The starting point of the Theology of Liberation is the thorough analysis of the socio-political and economic situation within which this theology is to be formulated.<sup>14</sup> The content of the Boffs' socio-analytical (or historico-analytical) mediation is this analysis of the socio-political and economic context within which Liberation Theology is being written.

The Boff brothers start off their discussion by trying to answer the question, “why are the poor, poor? According to their research, the empiricists claim that poverty is a vice. In other words, empiricism is a philosophy which,

*...attributes the causes of poverty to laziness, ignorance, or simply human wickedness. It does not look at the collective or structural dimension of the problem: that the poor make up whole masses of a people and their numbers are growing all the time. It is the common conception of social destitution, the explanation generally upheld in society.*<sup>15</sup>

Resulting from this view, the Boff brothers explain, is an act of pity and charity expressed in the form of almsgiving by the economically stronger individuals and communities. This position is narrow in the sense that it refuses to study the question of poverty from the structural point of view, that is, it refuses – according to the Boff brothers – to see poverty as an evil burden imposed on the one group by the other.<sup>16</sup>

A bit similar to empiricism is Functionalism – another philosophical position – according to which poverty is caused by economic and social backwardness. The solution offered by functionalism, the Boffs observe, is the implementation of the western programme of development which specifically gives financial help together with technological advancement to the Third World as the solution for the problem of hunger and poverty. Functionalism – unlike empiricism – does recognize the collective dimension of poverty, that is, it does accept the poor as a group of people existing along the other group, namely the rich; but it still fails, the Boffs argue,

*... to see what Puebla saw, that poverty “is not a passing phase...It is a product of economic, social, and political situations and structures... where the rich get richer at the expense of the poor, who get even poorer.*<sup>17</sup>

The position of Puebla,<sup>18</sup> as cited by the Boff brothers, is an indirect critique of capitalism – an economic system which aims at profit-making by all means wherever it exists. In the context of Latin America, which is a Third World country, capitalist countries of the West would send financial and technological help, not so much for the economic benefit of the former, but for the profit of the latter.

The Boffs also discuss the dialectical approach to the question of poverty. This critique – sometimes called the historico-structural approach – considers poverty as a form of oppression which results from the manipulation of the kind of society which,

*...exploits some—the workers—and excludes others from the production process—the underemployed, unemployed, and all those marginalized in one way or the other. In his encyclical, Laborem Exercens (chap. 3), Pope John Paul II defines the root of this situation as the supremacy of capital – enjoyed by the few—over labor – practiced by the many.<sup>19</sup>*

The use of the terms ‘historico-structural’ and ‘dialectical’ clearly indicate that the analysis or approach is Marxist in orientation.<sup>20</sup> The analysis itself in the foregoing quotation – in addition to the terms designating the approach – is clearly Marxist, in the sense that it refers to capitalism which, according to Karl Marx, seriously exploits the proletariat (worker).<sup>21</sup> And, according to the Boffs, since capitalism impoverishes not only the employed, but also the unemployed and the underemployed, it has to be demolished by revolutionary means and be replaced by a totally new economic system which will be of benefit to all the former victims of capitalism. And indeed they (Boffs) hold that,

*The way out of this situation is **revolution**, understood as the transformation of the bases of the economic and social system.<sup>22</sup>*

So far my observation is that the Boff brothers are fascinated by the analysis of the socio-political and economic situation of the poor as articulated by the Marxist ideology. They quickly claim, however, that their use of the Marxist tools of analysis is exercised from a very critical point of view. Trying to emphasize the importance of this critical relationship with Marxism, the Boffs say,

*Placing themselves firmly on the side of the poor, liberation theologians ask Marx: “what can you tell us about the situation of poverty and ways of overcoming it?” Here Marxists are submitted to the judgment of the poor and their cause, and not the other way around.*

*Therefore liberation theology uses Marxism purely as an **instrument**. It does not venerate it as it venerates the gospel.*

*Liberation theology, therefore, maintains a decidedly critical stance in relation to Marxism. Marx (like any other Marxist) can be a companion on the way (see Puebla, article 544), but he can never be **the** guide, because “**You have only one teacher, the Christ**” (Matt. 23:10)<sup>23</sup>*



A detailed discussion on the relationship between Marxism and Liberation Theology is in Chapter 5 of my thesis, below. At the moment suffice it to establish that one of the major characteristics of the Theology of Liberation is its relationship to Marxism. In other words one cannot claim to have written about the full content of this subject or theology if – in the process of doing so – one omits this relationship.

#### **2.4. The Hermeneutical Mediation**

This mediation is characteristically theological in the sense that it has a lot to do with God as revealed by the scriptures. At this level the question which is asked reads as follows: What does God's word say about the situation of poverty which exists in Latin America. In other words, a liberation theologian looks for the solution of the problem of poverty from the biblical point of view. Indeed the Boffs assert that,

*The liberation theologian goes to the scriptures bearing the whole weight of problems, sorrows, and hopes of the poor, seeking light and inspiration from the divine word. This is a new way of reading the Bible: the hermeneutics of liberation.<sup>24</sup>*

The Boff brothers also maintain that the liberation hermeneutics they employ is not reductionist, in the sense that,

*It places each text in its historical context in order to construct an appropriate—not literal—translation into our own historical context. For example, liberative hermeneutics will stress (but not to the exclusion of other aspects) the social context of oppression in which Jesus lived and the markedly political context of his death on the cross. Obviously, if it is approached in this way, the biblical text takes on particular relevance in the context of oppression now being experienced in the Third World.<sup>25</sup>*

What the Boffs mean here is that, while the Theology of Liberation takes particular interest in the scriptural text which is of immediate relevance to the oppressive political situation in the Third World, it (Liberation Theology) does, however highlight the original historical context out of which the text in question emerges. Failure to do so would possibly lead to the gross misinterpretation of the biblical text under study.

In the attempt to introduce or sell the idea of the new interpretation of the scriptures inherent in the Theology of Liberation, the Boff brothers beautifully write:

*An examination of the whole of scripture from the viewpoint of the oppressed: this is the hermeneutics or specific interpretation (reading) used by liberation theology.<sup>26</sup>*

The hermeneutics employed by the Theology of Liberation does not – in its original form – belong to the poor of Latin America, as the Boff brothers claim above: they belong to the Twentieth Century’s German school of analysis called *Formgeschichte* (Form Criticism) according to which,

*The Gospels are not biographies, giving us a consistent historical picture of the life of Jesus, but reflection of the faith and life of the early Church. In fact, history was of little concern to the early Christian community that they made no great distinction between the early history of Jesus and his post-resurrectional history and presence with the Church, to whom he spoke by the Spirit. Without the strictures of history and with its assurance of Jesus presence, the early Church could freely adapt and even creatively add to the tradition, if the needs for the Church for preaching, apologetics, worship, etc., so required.<sup>27</sup>*

Elsewhere Leonardo Boff – in addition to *Formgeschichte* – makes use of *Traditiongeschichte*, *Redaktiongeschichte*,<sup>28</sup> in order to strengthen the scriptural foundation of his Liberation Christology. In this context, Leonardo does acknowledge the use of these three foreign (German) tools of interpreting the scriptures. He says,

*Consequently, a Christology thought out and vitally tested in Latin America must have characteristics of its own. The attentive reader will perceive them throughout this book. The predominantly foreign literature we cite ought not delude anyone. It is with preoccupations that are ours alone, taken from our Latin American context, that we will reread not only the old text of the New Testament but also the most recent commentaries written in Europe.<sup>29</sup>*

I am baffled by the inconsistency displayed by Leonardo Boff, as an individual scholar: on the one hand, he together with his brother, Clodovis, jointly claim that the tools of analysis they utilize for the interpretation of the scriptures belong to the poor of Latin America, while when dealing with his Christology, he openly accepts that he acquired the same tools from the biblical

commentaries of Europe, on the other. I guess the way out this impasse is the description they jointly give to the Theology of Liberation: they say,

*Liberation Theology could be compared to a tree. Those who see only professional theologians at work in it see only the branches of the tree. They fail to see the trunk, which is the thinking of priests and other pastoral ministers, let alone the roots beneath the soil that hold the whole tree—trunk and branches—in place. The roots are the practical living and thinking—though submerged and anonymous—going on in tens of thousands of base communities living their faith and thinking it in a liberating key.*

*From it will be seen that attacking the so-called liberation theologians merely lops off a few branches. Liberation theology continues living in the trunk and still more so in the roots, hidden underground.<sup>30</sup>*

Following this beautiful description, it goes without saying that as part of their job description, it is highly expected that the professional theologians dealing with the Theology of Liberation will make use of all kinds of relevant tools of interpretation – including the German or European tools – in order to strengthen the biblical foundation of the study. And let the two brothers not force down the throats of the poor of Latin America these foreign tools of interpretation. On the contrary, let them – like Paulo Freire<sup>31</sup> – attempt to help the poor use these tools of interpretation at their own level of learning. The large majority of the Third World – including those of Latin America – are illiterate,<sup>32</sup> even too illiterate to claim the original ownership of Nineteenth to the Twentieth Centuries' German tools of exegesis!

The Boff brothers maintain that the Theology of Liberation – like every other theology – is forced by hermeneutical studies to be selective in the use of the scriptures. In short, this means that, some books of the bible will be more relevant than others in the program of the liberation of the poor. As a result, there are biblical books which are recognized to be of immediate relevance to the struggle of the poor for liberation in the context of Latin America. The most popular of these, the Boffs contend, is the book of Exodus:

*...because it recounts the epic of the politico-religious liberation of a mass of slaves who, through the power of the covenant with God, became the people of God.<sup>33</sup>*

I understand the Boffs to be maintaining that this book inspires the poor of Latin America with a firm hope that one day God will liberate them from oppression

as He did in the case of the Israelites of old. Alfredo Fierro is Director of the University Institute of Theology in Madrid. He agrees with the Boffs that the book of Exodus serves as a firm scriptural foundation of the present Latin American Theology of Liberation. Indeed he claims that,

*Latin American theology also stresses the fact that liberation from Egypt was a political act, noting the link between it and creation in the Hebrew Latin American Theology also stresses the fact that liberation from Egypt experience; those two events are almost completely identified in the mind of the Israelites. To be created by God is equivalent to being free. Indeed the very possibility of appreciating life and the world as creation depends on the concrete experience of liberation.*<sup>34</sup>

Gutierrez concurs with Fierro by strongly asserting that,

*The God of Exodus is the God of history and political liberation... the heart of the Old Testament is the Exodus from the servitude of Egypt and the journey to the promised land... The God who makes the cosmos from chaos is same God who leads Israel from alienation to liberation.*<sup>35</sup>

In many of the volumes which he wrote, James Cone finds the Exodus account to be a very appropriate biblical foundation. For example, in the volume, ***Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology***, Cone writes,

*It seems clear to me that whatever else we may say about Scripture, it is first and foremost a story of Israelite people who believed that Yahweh was involved in their history. In the Old Testament, the story begins with the first Exodus of Hebrew slaves from Egypt and continues through the second Exodus from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple. To be sure, there are many ways to look at the story, but the import of the biblical message is clear on this point: God's salvation is revealed in the liberation of slaves from socio-political bondage.*<sup>36</sup>

Cone further believes that the book of Exodus is very relevant for the New Testament community, and for the afflicted of every form of injustice in the world, in every generation, as they cry "Freedom!" Indeed he holds that,

*My contention that Scripture is the story of God's liberation of the poor also applies the New Testament, where the story is carried to universal dimensions. The New Testament does not*

*invalidate the old. The meaning of Jesus is found in God's will to make liberation not the property of one people but of all humankind. The cross of Jesus is nothing but God's will to be with and like the poor.*<sup>37</sup>

Allan Boesak couldn't agree more. He discovers lots of value in the Exodus as a firm foundation for the understanding of the ministry of Jesus in the New Testament. He strongly maintains that,

*When he began his ministry, Jesus did not draw a dividing line between the Old Testament and the New Testament, but rather he stood squarely within the tradition of the Exodus and the prophets of the Old Testament. The theme of liberation in the Old Testament became the same theme in the New Testament, proclaimed by Jesus Christ... His quotation from Isaiah 61 goes back to what Old Testament scholars have called the actualization of the Exodus throughout the Old Testament... the whole book of Genesis is no more than a prologue to this central event of Exodus.*<sup>38</sup>

Thus, the beauty and the centrality of the exodus event is duly recognized and well articulated by exponents of the Theology of Liberation – in its Black version and in its Latin American version – from some parts of the world. However, recent exegetical research results – explained by Klaus Nurnberger – on the exodus event seem to contradict the similar exodus reflections expressed above by different theologians.

Nurnberger explains his argument as follows,

*Many scholars believe the exodus to be the single most basic event for the faith of ancient Israel. Noth, a historical-critical scholar, spoke of the "Urbekennntnis Israels" (primeval confession of Israel). Croatto, a liberation theologian, describes the exodus, understood as a metaphor of liberation from oppression, as the "Axis" of Scripture.*

*The Canonical evidence hardly bears this out. As we have seen, it does not appear in all important bodies of Old Testament scripture, especially those emanating from the South. It was only one part of the pre-deuteronomistic Northern tradition and inextricably linked not only to the patriarchal tradition, but also to the conquest tradition. Whatever the historical nature of the settlement of the Israelite tribes in Palestine, the documents want the conquest to be understood as a deliberate subjugation, even eradication, of the Canaanites – which hardly fits the paradigm of liberation.*<sup>39</sup>

Nurnberger further argues that,

*The exodus was hardly used as a paradigm of liberation even where one would have expected it, notably in the interpretations of Babylonian, Persian, and Macedonian imperialism. Here it competed with other powerful paradigms like the messianic and the cosmic recreation motifs. It is a side issue in Apocalypse. The New Testament does not utilize it at all.*<sup>40</sup>

The question of conquest – as explained by Nurnberger above – surely betrays the whole program of the Theology of Liberation which, in short, constitutes the total liberation of the poor at the expense of no-one. Thus the Theology of Liberation cannot accept the Exodus event – as its scriptural foundation – so long as the event still has inherent linkages with the extermination of the Canaanites, as revealed by the biblical documents researched by Nurnberger above. This further means that the exodus event, no matter how important it was for both the Old and New Testament – as clarified by the contemporary theologians cited above – it nevertheless remains totally unimportant for today's Theology of Liberation, because of its conquest and annihilation tendencies discovered by Nurnberger's biblical findings. Indirectly concurring with Nurnberger is Marc H. Ellis – a Jewish liberation theologian – who wants to contribute towards the reconciliation of Arabs and Jews by partly critiquing the scriptural foundations on which the occupation of the Palestine by Israel was created. He says,

*A religiosity that makes biblical claims for the land for a people without a land and justifies the expulsion of those who lived on the land is a critique of the religious foundations of our empowerment.*<sup>41</sup>

Ellis obviously denounces the abuse of the scriptures by his fellow-Jews. His bitter complaint is that the scriptures are used for the justification of the Israelite's occupation of the Canaanites' land. The same scriptures are used by the Jews to legitimate the expulsion of the Canaanites from their land. This is how deadly the exodus paradigm is if it remains irrevocably accompanied by the conquest. It (exodus paradigm) just doesn't fit into the scope of the Theology of Liberation anymore, as this theology will always be on the side of the victims of conquest, and every other victims of injustice. In this context the victims are Canaanites who were kicked out of their patria by the ravaging Israelites. A paradigm which encourages conquest, extermination or any other injustice – like the exodus paradigm in our case – should surely be rooted out of the program of the Theology of Liberation.

Norman Gottwald is biblical scholar based at the Union Seminary in New York. He also agrees – albeit from a historiographic point of view – that it is not yet wise for the Theology of Liberation to adopt the exodus paradigm, because of

the unfortunate and almost insurmountable problem of the mixture of fact and fiction involved in the exodus story. He puts his case as follows:

*The exodus events are set forth in the bible in a mixture of literary genres that include sagalike narratives, theophanic descriptions, instructions, lists, and laws. The extent to which we can locate “historical facts” within this mélange of mythico-symbolic stories is a matter of great dispute. It can be safely said that at no stage in the development of the single units and complexes of traditions was there any intent of rendering a coherent account according to historiographic conventions.*<sup>42</sup>

Thus, Gottwald – through his research results – unintentionally makes it very difficult for anyone who wants to base the present Theology of liberation on the exodus as a biblical account on the political liberation of Israel: In short, lots of legendary material – in the story – prevents any person from achieving that wonderful goal. My further understanding of Gottwald is that the most recent exegetical studies seem to be militating against the biblical ideas of when and where exactly did the formation of the Israelite nation take place. Indeed Gottwald strongly holds,

*It must be emphasized that the entire exodus process encompass much more than a possible escape of slaves from Egypt insofar as it alludes to the incontestable reality of the birth of Israel out of “bondage in Canaan.” Whatever happened in Egypt, Israel sprang to birth in Canaan in the approximate socio-historic manner attested in the exodus tradition: by resistance to the state oppression and by a bold bid for self-determination.*<sup>43</sup>

What I understand Gottwald to be saying is that – according to some incontestable exegetical findings – Israel, as a nation was born in Canaan. This exegetical statement surely serves as a further means to demolish the exodus event as a foundation and pillars on which the Theology of Liberation rested. The theologians discussed above – including the Boff brothers – have emphasized the exodus of Israel from Egypt as foundationally important for the Theology of Liberation. But the idea of the exodus – as a scriptural cornerstone of the Theology of Liberation – is completely thwarted by the results of Gottwald’s research as quoted above. I think this discussion is not yet finished up until Gottwald identifies clearly the nation which – according to the biblical account referred to by the different theologians above – was liberated from Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and eventually entered Canaan.

Complementing the studies of Gottwald indirectly is Jorge Pixley together with Clodovis Boff who jointly attempt to answer the question, “If Israel was born in Canaan, then who escaped the wrath of Pharaoh, crossed the Red Sea, and eventually settled in Canaan, as the book of Exodus recounts? Pixley and Boff begin their discussion by jointly agreeing with Gottwald that the event of the

escape of Israel – as recounted by the book of Exodus – certainly took place long before the formal recognition of Israel as a nation among others. Indeed they write,

*In the account of the exodus from the Egyptian slavery under the inspiration of Yahweh and the leadership of Moses, Israel narrates its origin as a people and confesses that it owes these to Yahweh and is, in consequence, the people of Yahweh. Although the events narrated are earlier than the formation of Israel as a nation with its own language and identity, the account presupposes the existence of this nation. It is an “official” account; and, like the official accounts of any nation, explaining its origins, it hides some elements while revealing others.<sup>44</sup>*

Pixley and Boff claim that an official account of any nation’s origins tends to hide certain things while it reveals others. Following this explanation, it has been hidden from us that Israel originates from the outskirts of Canaan in the form of loose blood-related peasants who spoke the Canaanites’ language very fluently.<sup>45</sup> It is further hidden from us that, at some stage, part of Israel left Canaan during the period of famine and settled in Egypt. Persecution in Egypt – inflicted by King (Pharaoh) Rameses II<sup>46</sup> – resulted in the return of this portion of Israel to Canaan. Indeed Pixley and Clodovis further write,

*The children of Israel...had been enslaved in Egypt after settling there to escape famine in their own land of Canaan. A perverse king took advantage of their presence as guests, and the struggle that followed was between Egyptians and Isarelites. The Israelites conceived the plan of returning to the land of Canaan.<sup>47</sup>*

It is this portion of the Israelites which fled from the wrath of Rameses II, continue Pixley and Boff, that – on its return to Canaan – spoke of the wonderful deeds of Yahweh who compassionately liberated them from the Egyptians, thereby strengthening the faith and hope of all of Israel in Yahweh. Indeed Pixley and Boff jointly claim,

*The Hebrews who came out of Egypt understood that their success had been due to Yahweh, their God, being with them. The coincidence of this experience with that of the clans of Israel was noteworthy, and the clans gradually came to accept Yahweh as their God. The exodus of the Hebrews came to be the founding history of Israel.<sup>48</sup>*

What a conflict of exegetical ideas!!! On the one hand, Nurnberger rightly condemns the use of the exodus paradigm – in the area of Liberation Theology – because of its harmonious connection with the idea of the cruel conquest of Canaanites’ land by Israel, while, on the other hand, Gottwald, Pixley, and Boff



implicitly concur that no conquest took place as – by the time of the exodus event – the majority of Israel were already citizens of Canaan. What Pixley and Boff speculatively hold is that what really happened was just a re-entry of a small portion of Israel into Canaan. In spite of the conflict of exegetical ideas taking place above the Theology of Liberation should continue to be in constant dialogue with exegetical expertise for its growth. In other words, the Theology of Liberation – like any other theology – needs to be critically open to the critique of various experts across the globe for the sake of its further development. Failure to do so eventually reduces this theology into a defensive, stagnant and fossilized study which helps no-one else but its upholders only. Besides, parting ways with the exodus – if it is really an irrelevant paradigm – will not completely destroy the Theology of Liberation, as it still has the book of the prophets and many others, discussed by the Boffs below, which to a very large extent, serve the same purpose as the Exodus: they uphold the faith in Yahweh who, as a God of justice, protects the poor, the stranger and the widow.

The book of the prophets serves as another valuable asset for the Theology of Liberation. According to the Boffs, the relevance of all these individual prophets for the liberation struggle of the poor of Latin America lies in,

*...their uncompromising defense of the liberator God, their vigorous denunciation of injustices, their revindication of the rights of the poor, and their proclamation of the messianic world.*<sup>49</sup>

According to the Theology of Liberation, the church should adopt this prophetic attitude, most especially in its relationship with any government. This means that – in the context of the of the economic exploitation or the political oppression of one group by the other – the authorities of the church will have to condemn acts of human degradation, and promote the culture of the respect of fundamental human rights at all costs. It is not easy for many bishops to establish this prophetic relationship with their respective governments, because, most of the time this relationship largely demands an open condemnation – from the part of the bishops – of all facets of social injustice inflicted on the poor by the government. Some bishops have however – as individuals and as collectives – already made a concerted effort to live in accordance with the radical requirements of this most essential (prophetic) stance.<sup>50</sup>

The Boffs strongly maintain that the gospels play a leading role among the scriptural books highly valued by the Theology of liberation, and this is because,

*... of the centrality of the divine person of Jesus, with his announcement of the kingdom, his liberating actions, and his death and resurrection—the final meaning of history.*<sup>51</sup>

In other words, the Boffs hold that the authority of Jesus exceeds that of the prophets because of his divinity. And, unlike the other prophets, Jesus is not only promising the messianic world, but he also assures the poor of the existence of that world or kingdom of Justice and Peace. Jesus lived and died for these values, and the poor and every other contemporary disciple of Jesus will have to do the same, in order to consolidate that kingdom here on earth. I further interpret the Boffs to be saying that, just as Jesus was vindicated by means of the resurrection, the poor will be rewarded in the same way for waging a war against the enemies of the kingdom. I do not see how else the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus – announced by the gospels – can be meaningful or relevant for the exploited masses of the poor who are struggling for their economic and political emancipation.

Leonardo and Clodovis jointly hold that the book of the Acts of Apostles is also highly valued by the Theology of Liberation. The Acts of the Apostles, the Boffs contend,

*...portray the ideal of a free and liberating Christian community.*<sup>52</sup>

I beg to differ with the Boff brothers, because the structure of the *Acts of Apostles* clearly shows that its author is not dealing with only one community, but more than twenty communities.<sup>53</sup> And the majority of these communities are characterized with a life of serious debates, violent confrontation, and endless faction fights which are at variance with the free and liberating Christian community discussed by the Boff brothers above.<sup>54</sup> The mention of only one exemplary community<sup>55</sup> is certainly deceptive in the sense that it gives the impression that the founding of the Apostolic Christian church was a peaceful process. On the contrary, it was unfortunately full of all kinds of persecutions and bloodshed. Thus, it would be advisable for the Boff brothers to mention the tension which characterized many of the early Christian communities – lest they are accused of being narrow and shallow in their scriptural approach – before they focus on the community of their interest or relevance.

Another New Testament book which – according to Leonardo and Clodovis – is highly valued by the Theologians of Liberation is the *Apocalypse* or *Revelation*,

*...because in collective and symbolic terms it describes the immense struggles of the people of God against all the monsters of history.*<sup>56</sup>

Is this the only task which the whole book of the *Apocalypse* is carrying out, namely to describe symbolically the struggles of the people of God against the monsters of history? Obviously I am painfully trying to understand the Boff brothers' evaluation of the *Apocalypse*. The book has got twenty-two chapters. Of these only a few – namely, chapters 12:1–14:20, chapter 15:1-4, chapters 17:1–19:10 and chapter 19:11-21 – are directly dealing with the evil deeds of the monsters of history.<sup>57</sup> The rest of the other chapters are dealing with the many other aims or functions of the book. My humble advice is that the Boff

brothers should acknowledge – even in passing – that there are many other functions of the Apocalypse (expressed through the many other chapters of this book) before they narrow themselves down to the function or chapter of their own interest or relevance. Failure to do so would leave them prey to critics who would dismiss their biblical exegesis as shallow and myopic.

The Boff brothers further explain that in some parts of Central America the *Book of the Maccabees* has been interpreted by the poor who congregate for worship services in Christian base communities – guided by their pastors – as legitimating wars waged for purposes of political emancipation and the defense of human rights.<sup>58</sup> The pastors or the clergy of Central America are certainly justified to use the *Book of the Maccabees* in order to legitimize – from the faith point of view – the armed struggle of the poor of Latin America against their oppressors, because the structure of the book shows that its major content comprises the Jews’ armed and religious resistance against their Greek colonizers, who used to deprive them of their rights, especially the right to monotheism.<sup>59</sup> The books of Ezra and Nehemiah have been interpreted to be encouraging the restoration of good relationships after a period of war, the Boff brothers maintain.<sup>60</sup> Is the story of Ezra–Nehemiah really relevant to the situation in Latin America, as the Boffs maintain? No, because it is not the story of the oppressed (captives) trying to liberate themselves from their oppressors (captors). Neither is it a story of the two parties – namely, the captors and the captives – making a concerted effort to establish terms of mutual benefit after a war of liberation. On the contrary, the structure of Ezra–Nehemiah shows that it is a story of captives (Israelites) who successfully begged the political authorities of Babylon to release them from the situation of captivity.<sup>61</sup> The Israelites were completely at the mercy of their captors who could easily deny them the right to freedom and self-determination. They were lucky to meet good-hearted authorities from the part of their captors. Why should they beg for their absolute right to be free? And that freedom should be demanded (not begged) whether or not the oppressors are good-hearted or wicked. In my opinion, this story will have to be modified a few times, if it is to be sold to any Third World country – including Latin America – as a model (story) for/of liberation.

The Boff brothers conclude this section by strongly arguing that every book of the bible should find its fulfillment in Christ. They write:

*We hardly need to say here that any book of the bible has to be read in a Christological key—that is, based on the high point of revelation as found in the Gospels. The viewpoint of the poor is thus placed within the wider viewpoint—that of the Lord of history—whence the word of God derives its consistency and strength.*<sup>62</sup>

Exactly how each scriptural book should find fulfillment in Christ, the Boffs do not explain. Nevertheless, concurring with them is Christopher MacMahon who explains that some of the titles given to Jesus in the New Testament – like, for example, Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah – are actually derived from the Old Testament.<sup>63</sup> I think his most convincing point lies in the genealogy of Jesus – located in Matthew and Luke – which he traces back in the Old Testament.<sup>64</sup> In so doing, I guess, MacMahon tries to prove beyond doubt that part of the Old Testament content consists of the historical (biographical?) or ancestral background of Jesus.

## 2.5. The Practical Mediation

The Practical Mediation deals specifically with actions – inspired by the biblical texts – which the poor are supposed to take in order to liberate themselves from the scuffles of political oppression and economic exploitation. The Boff brothers maintain that Liberation Theology starts with action and ends up with action. They say,

*From analysis of the reality of the oppressed, it passes through the word of God to arrive finally at specific action. “Back to action” is a characteristic call” of this theology. It seeks to be a militant, committed, and liberating theology.*<sup>65</sup>

My understanding of the Boff brothers is that Liberation Theology is not an armchair exercise: it is action oriented. At the same time it is a spiritual discipline in the sense that its actions are inspired by faith. In other words, it is from the point view of faith that the protagonists of Liberation Theology involve themselves in various deeds that will lead to the total liberation of the poor from all forms of dehumanizing conditions of life. And in explaining the kind of faith that would be relevant for the poor in their struggle for justice, the Boffs contend that,

*the true form of faith is “political love” or “macro-charity.” Among the poorest of the Third World, faith is not only “also” political, but **above all else** political.*<sup>66</sup>

The Boffs are aware that faith cannot be reduced to actions. At the same time faith is utterly useless if it does not bear fruits of political and economic justice for the poor of the Third World. And this faith which motivates its people to participate actively in the struggle for the political and the economic rights of the poor is the major content of Liberation Theology. The Boffs express it even more beautifully by saying that,

*Liberation Theology also leads one up the Temple. And from the Temple it leads back once more to the practice of the history, now equipped with the*

*divine and the divinizing powers of the Mystery of the world.*<sup>67</sup>

I interpret the Boffs to be saying that the Theology of Liberation is – to very large extent – a spiritual exercise, in the sense that it has a lot to do with the divinity and with the Mystery and the Temple. The divinity and the Mystery refer to God, while the Temple refers to a house of prayer and worship services. In other words, Liberation Theology does not exclude prayer and worship services, it does not rule out the significance of the divinity in its operation. Its project of liberating the poor is not atheistic. On the contrary, its exponents – through prayer and various worship services – draw strength from God in order to help the poor liberate themselves from all manifestations of injustice.

Also involved in this practical mediation is the planning of strategies and tactics to be employed in order to combat the factors militating against the promotion of the recognition of the socio-economic and political rights of the poor. The Boff brothers strongly maintain that the strategies in question should favor

*nonviolent methods such as dialogue, persuasion, moral pressure, passive resistance, evangelical resoluteness, and other courses of action sanctioned by the ethic of the gospel: marches, strikes, street demonstrations, and, as last resort, recourse to physical force.*<sup>68</sup>

Concurring with the Boffs is Gutierrez who specifically focuses on the justification of the question of violence – by the poor – after numerous fruitless attempts to attain their liberation through the process of peaceful negotiation. He emphasizes that,

*We cannot say that violence is all right when the oppressor uses it to maintain ‘order’, but wrong when the oppressed use it to overthrow the same ‘order’.*<sup>69</sup>

Thus, in the absence of a successful peaceful settlement, Liberation Theology does – according to the three exponents – accommodate some measure of revolutionary violence. The same applies to the Catholic Church’s highest office, namely the Second Vatican Council which declares that,

*As long as the danger of war remains and there is no competent and sufficiently powerful authority at the international level, governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defense once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted.*<sup>70</sup>

It is true that the Council seems to reserve the right of self defense to offended governments only, but the right to self defense – in the Catholic tradition – is extended to individuals, and various groups of people who seek socio-economic and political justice for their respective countries. As a result, Pope Paul VI – writing about these groups – holds that,

*There are certainly situations whose injustice cries to heaven. When whole populations destitute of necessities live in a state of dependence barring them from all initiative and responsibility, and all opportunity to advance culturally and share in social and political life, recourse to violence, as a means to right these wrongs to human dignity, is a grave temptation.<sup>71</sup>*

My interpretation of the word, ‘temptation’ in the foregoing statement is positive: it means that a group of people which, for many centuries, has been deprived of its fundamental rights – and has been trying unsuccessfully to settle this matter through peaceful negotiation – has no choice but to win its liberation by means of revolutionary violence. Temptation in this context does not refer to the general tendency of a human being who wishes to abuse the other: it refers, rather, to the situation of having no alternative but to resort to violence as a means to solve the complex problem of economic exploitation and political oppression.

Continuing to write about the absolute right of the oppressed or colonized people to defend themselves against any kind of colonial aggression, Pope Paul VI strongly maintains that,

*We know, however, that a revolutionary uprising – save where there is manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country – produces new injustices, throws more elements out of balance and brings on new disasters. A real evil should not be fought against at the cost of greater misery.<sup>72</sup>*

There is no doubt that the pope is condemning the idea of revolutionary violence. At the same time let us quickly note that his, is not a blanket condemnation of every form of revolutionary violence: on the contrary, he does accept that there are oppressive situations which leave the poor with no choice but to resort to the barrel of a gun as a means of self defense against the arrogance of political and economic injustice.

All I am saying above, is that not only are the poor supported by Liberation Theology in overthrowing their oppressors violently – once every means of peaceful negotiation has been exhausted – but the official church, expressing its policy through the words of Pope Paul VI, and those of the Second Vatican Council also considers the same revolutionary violence as an appropriate means to acquire socio-political and

economic liberation, in the event of a dismal failure to do so by means of a negotiated settlement.

## **2.6 Gutierrez's Analysis of the Social Circumstances surrounding the Theology of Liberation**

Like the Boff brothers, Gutierrez analyses the socio-political and economic situation of Latin America before he discusses his idea of Liberation Theology within that context. Gutierrez mentions that in the 1950s many Latin Americans were optimistic about the policy of economic self-sustenance which they jointly adopted. For the achievement of good results – promised by this policy – each Latin American country had to cut-off its international trade links to a very large extent, with the specific aim of developing very strong local markets which consisted of powerful manufacturing industries. These industries manufactured products from the raw material acquired from local suppliers. Countries which benefited to a large extent from this policy were Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, and Chile.<sup>73</sup>

The duration of the self-sustenance policy was shortened by the developmental policy introduced at the same time to the Latin Americans by Western countries. However, the Western agents of development never condemned the economic exploitation of Latin America by western multinational capitalist companies already operating in that continent. Indeed Gutierrez laments this state of affairs by saying that,

*The changes encouraged were to be achieved within the formal structure of the existing institutions without challenging them. Great care was exercised, therefore, not to attack the interests of the large international economic powers nor those of their natural allies, the ruling domestic group. The so-called changes, were often nothing more than new and underhanded ways of increasing the power of strong economic groups.*<sup>74</sup>

And since the agents of development failed to temper with the evils and the domination of capitalist powers and their allies, as observed in the foregoing statement, the term development came under severe attack by radical groups in Latin America who pejoratively reduced it to developmentalism. For them, according to Gutierrez, this term was,

*...synonymous with reformism and modernization, that is to say synonymous with timid measures, really ineffective and counterproductive to achieving a real transformation. The poor countries are becoming ever more aware that their*

*underdevelopment is only the by-product of the development of other countries.*<sup>75</sup>

That developmentalism failed dismally to attend to the economic needs of Latin America, is a fact also noted by some of its exponents. One of them – according to Gutierrez – observed that,

*After more than half of the decade of the 60s has passed, the gap between the two worlds is growing bigger, rather than decreasing as was expected... While from 1960 to 1970 the developed countries will have increased their wealth by 50 percent, the developing countries, two thirds of the worlds population, will have to struggle in poverty and frustration.*<sup>76</sup>

For a better understanding of the unbridgeable economic gap which existed between the developed countries and the underdeveloped countries, Gutierrez proposes to use a tool of analysis which he terms, ***The Theory of Dependence***. This theory functions and thrives within a capitalist mode of productions which – at the expense of the poor, whose labor and raw material it exploits – acquires maximum profits for its proponents. The theory explains the dependence of the underdeveloped countries on the expertise of the developed countries. The former is supposed to benefit from the charity of the latter, which is expressed in the form of some economic development offered by its experts. Unfortunately, capitalism does not work that way: it is the underdeveloped countries who suffer lots of financial loses – in the form of abused labor and raw material – for accommodating western economic experts in their respective fiscal programs. Gutierrez expresses this idea of the economic dependence of the underdeveloped countries on western capitalist expertise by arguing that,

*The dynamics of the capitalist economy lead to the establishment of a centre and a periphery, simultaneously generating progress and growing wealth for the few and social imbalances, political tensions and poverty for the many.*<sup>77</sup>

My interpretation of the analysis of Gutierrez is that the few who gain economic prosperity brought about by capitalism are western countries, while the many on whom capitalism inflicts the pain of social imbalances, political tensions, and numerous economic miseries are the inhabitants of the Third World countries. Gutierrez adds that Latin America has been in this situation – of a capitalist relationship with the West – for many decades. From its inception – in the colonial period – the relationship has never been healthy in the sense that while Latin America depended on the West for its economic development, it had to pay the West very heavily for the same development.



Instead of fighting the evils brought about by the capitalists, the Latin American political leadership has ironically learnt to accept and defend it. Analyzing this irony are two economists – Cardoso and Faletto – from whose critique of the theory of dependence Gutierrez borrows to some extent. They hold that,

*The relationships of dependence presuppose the insertion of specifically unequal structures. The growth of the world market created relationships of dependence (and domination) among nations. Differences were thus established within the unity comprised by the capitalist system.*<sup>78</sup>

I understand these scholars to be saying that the capitalist economic system is such that its designers – namely, the western countries – will dominate the third world on the international market and render them perpetually dependent on the West for their economic survival. The domination in question will take place in the form of the fixation of the prices of products – including products and labour from the third world – on the world market, together with the determination of currencies which should be stronger than all the others in the world. The analysis of the two scholars continues as follows:

*The system of external domination, from one country to another, cuts through the dependent structure and interpenetrates it. To the extent that it does, the external structure is experienced as internal.*<sup>79</sup>

My interpretation of these analysts is that the seductive power of capitalism lies in its power to generate maximum wealth. As a result, once it makes inroads into a poor country, it is accepted and adopted by the leadership of that country in spite of its cruelty to sacrifice or exploit the lives of the majority in its process of profit making. Cardoso and Faletto further refer to this uncritical acceptance of capitalism as “internationalization of the internal market” while Jose Nun – another resource person for Gutierrez – refers to the same process as the “internalization of dependence”<sup>80</sup>

The “internationalization of the market” refers to the act of the exposure of the Latin American products to the wrath or exploitation of the world market – according to my understanding – while the “internalization of dependence” refers to the process of the adoption and the defense of capitalism by the Latin American intelligentsia in spite of its (capitalism’s) bad reputation to generate colossal amounts of money at the expense of the populace.

According to Gutierrez, the theory of dependence further reveals that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening up not only from the economic point of view, but also from the cultural point of view. Indeed Gutierrez argues that,

*The imbalance between developed and underdeveloped countries—caused by the relationship of dependence—becomes more acute if the cultural point of view is taken into consideration. The poor dominated nations keep on falling behind; the gap continues to grow. The underdeveloped countries in relative terms are always farther away from the cultural level of the center countries; for some it is difficult ever to recover the lost ground. Should things continue as they are, we will soon be able to speak of two human groups.<sup>81</sup>*

At this point I find it extremely difficult to understand the concept of culture which Gutierrez has. Is he of the opinion that there is only one culture governing the lives of all people regardless of their economic background? If that is what he believes, then he is entitled to talk about the cultural gap which he claims to observe between the developed and the underdeveloped countries. My opinion is that there are numerous cultures in the world, and no culture is inferior or superior to the others. Within the same discussion on cultures, Bernard Haring maintains that,

*We live in a pluralistic culture. Not only do we have the opportunity to know about various now-existing cultures; we can also compare distinctive cultures. This knowledge can enrich us. Not everything that is beneficial in another culture is fitting in our own, but if we are mature, we shall critically choose from cultures whatever is good, healthy and beautiful. This can be done in creative fidelity to one's own culture and tradition.<sup>82</sup>*

I totally agree with Haring. While it is true that each nation has its own culture, at the same time it is equally true that these nations do not live in isolation from one another, because of the means of communication which keep them in constant contact with one another. As a result, it is easy in our days for a nation to purify and to improve its culture by critically adopting certain elements of beauty, integrity and goodness from other nations' cultures.

Gutierrez further proposes a scientific analysis which is free from any ideological influence for a better understanding of the dependence theory. The proper understanding of this theory will lead to the meaningful solution of all political and economic problems of the continent, argues Gutierrez. He claims,

*There is urgent need for a purification to eliminate less scientific approaches, for a clarification of terms used, for an application of*

*general categories to ever more complex and evolving realities.*<sup>83</sup>

In the next paragraph, Gutierrez strongly believes that the most understandable explanation is that which is offered by class struggle analysts, as it unmasks the economic domination inflicted on Latin America by the western countries. He contends,

*But only a class analysis will enable us to see what is really involved in the opposition between the oppressed countries and the dominant peoples. To take into account only the confrontation misrepresents and in the last analysis waters down the real situation. Thus the theory of dependence will take the wrong path and lead to deception if the analysis is not put within the framework of the world class struggle.*<sup>84</sup>

Is this not a contradiction in terms? On the one hand, Gutierrez recommends an ideologically-free scientific analysis for the proper understanding and the solution of the problem of the dependence of Latin America on the West for its economic survival, while he claims that class analysis offers the best way of explaining the question of the economic domination of the former by the latter, on the other. Surely class analysis belongs – in its original form – to the Marxist ideology.<sup>85</sup> It is therefore not clear at this stage which route would he recommend for the understanding and the solution of the socio-political and economic crisis in Latin America.

Elsewhere, Gutierrez does, however, recommend the instrumentality of socialism – as understood and articulated by Karl Marx – for the true solution of the economic and political problems of Latin America. As a result he holds in high esteem the research studies of Jose Carlos Mariategui, a Latin American philosopher, who contributed quite substantially toward the process of adapting Marxism for the situation in Latin America. Gutierrez quotes Mariategui to have said,

*We certainly do not wish...for socialism in America to be an exact copy of the others' socialism. It must be a heroic creation. We must bring Indo-American socialism to life with our own reality, in our own language. This is a mission worthy of the new generation.*<sup>86</sup>

Continuing to campaign for a Latin American version of a Marxist socialism Mariategui – according to Gutierrez – strongly argues that,

*Marxism is not a body of principles which can be rigidly applied the same way in all historical climates and all social latitudes... Marxism, in each country, for each people, works and acts on the situation, on the milieu, without overlooking any of its modalities.*<sup>87</sup>

My observation of Mariategui is that he does recognize that Marxism is an imported ideology, in the sense that it was not coined by a Latin American. On the contrary, it was fashioned in its original form by Karl Marx – a German Jew.<sup>88</sup> However, Mariategui realizes that the beauty and the strength of Marxism lie in its ability to be adapted to any country without losing its original texture. Gutierrez critically evaluates the research results of Mariategui's application of Marxism to the Latin American situation by arguing that,

*His socialism was creative because it was fashioned in loyalty. He was loyal to his sources, that is, to the central intuitions of Marx, yet was beyond all dogmatism; he was simultaneously loyal to a unique historical reality.*<sup>89</sup>

His critical fascination with Mariategui's findings on Marxism clearly reveals Gutierrez to be an analytic follower of Marxism. According to him, Marxism – if faithfully applied to the situation of Latin America – will bring about true liberation to the oppressed of that continent. Indeed he emphasizes that,

*Only a radical break from the status quo, that is, a profound transformation of the private property system, access to power of the exploited class, and a social revolution that would break this dependence would allow for the change to a new society, a socialist society—or at least allow that such a society might be possible.*<sup>90</sup>

By the private property system Gutierrez is referring to the capitalist ideology which has the tendency to privatize the means of production by putting them into the hands or control of a few entrepreneurs who would ruthlessly exploit the oppressed in order to acquire profit. This ideology, he suggests, has to be demolished and replaced by the Marxist socialism which would put the entire means of production into the hands or control of the victims of capitalism, namely, the workers (labourers) and the unemployed.

The process of liberation, however, will remain far from the completion level -- Gutierrez is convinced – up until the poor themselves are the driving forces behind it. He adamantly maintains that,

*...in order for this liberation to be authentic and complete, it has to be undertaken by the oppressed themselves and so must stem from the*

*values proper to them. Only in this context can a true cultural revolution come about.*<sup>91</sup>

For the poor to feel this vital responsibility of participating actively in the process of their liberation Gutierrez recommends the conscientization sessions – on the pedagogy of the oppressed – offered by Paolo Freire. Specifically what Gutierrez has learnt from these sessions is their ability to transform the lives of the poor from,

*...a “naïve awareness” – which does not deal with problems, gives too much value to the past, tends to accept mythical explanations, and tends toward debate – to a “critical awareness” which delves into problems, is open to new ideas, replaces magical explanations with real causes and tends to dialogue.*<sup>92</sup>

I understand Gutierrez to be saying that the poor have their own worldview. It is a limited worldview – to a very large extent – in the sense that a very large majority of them are illiterate.<sup>93</sup> As a result, they are not in a position to attribute their poverty to the scourge of capitalism, as Gutierrez does above, neither are they able to see Marxism as an alternative ideology meant to be of economic benefit to the workers and the rest of the populace. Seemingly, Paolo Freire’s workshops do enable the poor – among other things – to understand the content of the two ideologies or economic systems, at their own level.

Concluding his critique on the pedagogy of the oppressed, as articulated and taught by Paolo Freire, Gutierrez argues that,

*Freire’s ideas and methods continue to be developed. All the potentialities of conscientization are slowly unfolding, as well as its limitations. It is a process which can be deepened, modified, reoriented, and extended.*<sup>94</sup>

In other words, according to Gutierrez, Freire’s pedagogy – in spite of its excellence – does not pretend to be absolute: it is still subject to change and open to further development, up until it is of educational benefit to all the oppressed of Latin America.

## **2.6. Gutierrez’s Understanding of the Methodology of Liberation Theology**

Gutierrez’s presentation of the methodology of Liberation Theology is not as elaborate as that of the Boff brothers. Several authors concur that, for Gutierrez, the

formulation of theological ideas is only a second step in the whole program of doing the Theology of Liberation.<sup>95</sup> Indeed Gutierrez holds that,

*Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. Theology follows: it is the second step... The pastoral activity of the church does not flow as a conclusion from theological premises. Theology does not produce pastoral activity; it rather reflects upon it.*<sup>96</sup>

In the foregoing statement Gutierrez is clearly discussing the methodology of the Theology of Liberation. The statement implicitly contains a comparative study of the method of Liberation Theology and that of Western (Catholic) Theology. In the case of the latter theology is the first step. One has to learn theology prior to any kind of pastoral involvement. Theology, in this context, prescribes into some detail the guidelines to be followed in the pastoral work. The pastoral activity of the church – to use the inverse of the language of Gutierrez – follows as a conclusion from theological premises. The theological premises in question, according to Albert Nolan, refer to theological statements derived from church doctrines, immutable dogmas and the scriptures. He continues,

*Most Western Theologians have argued that at least in theology you have to use the deductive method. They say or used to say, that in theological matters you cannot argue from experience, you have to argue from the word of God, from the principles and doctrines that have been revealed by God in the bible and handed down to us by the Church. Theology is different because it can only find answers by appealing to God's revelation, to revealed doctrine.*

*Liberation theologians and many others today do not agree. They say that you can start also from experience because **faith is in the first place an experience**. The prophets and other biblical writers appealed to their experience of God. They discovered God in their own history, in the events of their times... The Biblical method is decidedly inductive.*<sup>97</sup>

Concurring with Nolan is Diarmuid O'Murchu who also delves into details of a comparative study of the two theologies namely, Western (Traditional) Theology and the Theology of Liberation, as follows,

*Traditionally, the starting point for Catholic theology was the revealed word of God, in the scriptures and in tradition as expounded by Catholic teaching. The theological task was essentially reflective, expounding the deeper meaning of immutable truths and outlining their application to daily life through a series of guidelines and laws. In this approach, theology began with the mystery of God and ended with the human condition. It was a linear, deductive, top-down approach.*

*Historically, such theology blossomed in all Christian circles, particularly since Reformation.*

*Liberation Theology adopts a whole new method. It begins with human beings in their struggle for liberation. It names the struggle for what it is both in its personal and political dimensions. It reflects on that struggle in the light of revealed truth; from these inspired sources it conjures ways of action to initiate and implement the liberation God intends for all people.<sup>98</sup>*

Western theology, according to the two authors, pretends to be a universal theology whose immutable language can solve problems in all contexts, regardless of their different historical backgrounds, while the theology of liberation seriously analyses a particular context, before it seeks theological illumination as to how social problems arising from that unique context can be solved. Nolan cautions us not to fall into the temptation of thinking that liberation theology rejected the deductive method so as to fully accommodate the inductive method. On the contrary, Liberation Theology is trying to strike a balance between the two methods, as they are not mutually exclusive of each other. Indeed Nolan writes,

*Not that they [liberation theologians] are suggesting that we abandon the deductive method in favour of the inductive method. It is not a matter of 'either-or' but a matter of 'both-and'. They feel that is necessary today, especially in their socio-historical context, to revive and to emphasize the inductive method in theology. They have found it extremely useful in their attempts to answer the questions that oppressed people ask about their faith itself, at the instinct of faith (sensus fidei) of the people and at the signs of our times. The word they use to describe all of this is PRAXIS, the practice of faith.<sup>99</sup>*

I expected Nolan to explain the relationship between the deductive method and the inductive method in the foregoing statement. He stops short at doing that, as he prefers, instead, to give a detailed account of why liberation theologians seemed to be overwhelmingly excited about the use of the inductive method. He later claims that the two methods influence each other circularly.<sup>100</sup> An example of this circular influence would have surely strengthened his argument about the harmonious relationship which he claims to exist between the two methods. The see-judge-act method – which he discusses below<sup>101</sup> – does not suggest any synthesis between the two methods. Perhaps the lack of harmony between the two methods clearly indicates to us that the two theologies are completely different from each other. Each – more especially the Theology of Liberation – is obliged by its context – to adopt a different method. The only common ground which they enjoy is that they are both dealing with God and humanity. How they methodically do that, is – according to Murchu and Nolan – different,<sup>102</sup> and will always be different because of the uniqueness of their respective contexts. On the same note, Martin McKeever tries recently to give an assessment of the

Theology of Liberation, thirty years after its inception in 1968. Among other things, he complains bitterly about the methodology of this theology as follows,

*A second limitation, linked to the first, is the question of theological method. In its most extreme form this takes the shape of equating theology with participation in the praxis of liberation, at least in the Latin American context. This idea has at times led to the negative attitude that things academic and intellectual are abstract and out of touch with the suffering of the poor.*<sup>103</sup>

I totally agree with the allegation expressed by McKeever above, namely that, things academic and intellectual are abstract and out of touch with the suffering of the poor. It will be quite clear, below, that McKeever is actually trying to defend the relevancy of Western theology within the context of Latin America – a Third World country. No doubt McKeever’s defense is an exercise in futility because Western theology is completely abstract and substantially it has nothing to do with the liberation of the oppressed in the Third World. What keeps it abstract and far above the head of average person in the Third World – let alone the poor, the majority of whom did not receive any formal kind of education<sup>104</sup> – is its deductive methodology which has, as its starting point, the extremely difficult doctrines of the church, explained by means of a very sophisticated Greek terminology.<sup>105</sup> The details of this methodology are provided respectively by Murchu and Nolan above. Latin American theologians became champions of the poor when they appeared with the inductive methodology which seriously takes, as its starting point, the experience of the poor in matters of social injustice. McKeever continues with his bitter complaint as follows,

*What is in question here is not the dedication or the sincerity of those who live and work with the poor but the way such experience qualifies one to do theology, or conversely, the one way in which the absence (or limited nature of) such experience excludes one from doing theology.*<sup>106</sup>

My response to McKeever is that the context within which the theology is done will also determine the eligible candidates. And this means that each theology – motivated by its context – will determine criteria through which a candidate qualifies. In the case of the Theology of Liberation – in addition to academic qualifications, which Western theology also requires – one has to “dirty one’s hands,” by participating actively in the struggle for the liberation of the poor. Failure to do this reduces one’s knowledge of poverty, oppression, revolution, new society – which partly constitute the content of liberation theology – to the general information acquired from dictionaries, the Boff brothers strongly hold.<sup>107</sup> Alistair Kee concurs. He focuses on the synthesis Clodovis Boff is trying to establish between his highly abstract dissertation, on the one hand, and his pastoral commitment among the poor who are working as rubber-gatherers along the Rio (river) Branco, on the other. He observes,



*In Chapter 8 we considered the sophisticated and scholarly work of Clodovis Boff, **Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations**. This was his doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Louvain. It is mainly a critical reflection on theology, not an example of theology itself. Something else must be added. Boff is a missionary priest and a professor of theology at the University of Sao Paulo. It is fundamental to liberation theology that the theologian is also a priest, the man of learning is also a man of the people, the intellectual is also a militant. It is therefore entirely consistent with this view that Boff should spend half of the year teaching theology in an urban university, and the rest of the year working with small communities of Christians in the Rio Branco area, some 1700 miles to the west, on the Bolivian border.<sup>108</sup>*

The sophistication that – Kee claims – characterizes the dissertation of Clodovis Boff is another way of saying that the dissertation is too abstract and far above the head of the man in the street. It is a dissertation of this nature which would have enabled Clodovis Boff to join other university professors – within the western framework – whose major academic job is to review and answer questions which the previous generations of professors left unanswered.<sup>109</sup> No wonder Clodovis Boff and all other exponents of the Theology of Liberation totally rejected this way of doing theology – within the Latin American context – so as to be in a position to adopt the inductive way which considers very seriously, as its point of departure, the experience of the poor in matters of socio-economic and political injustice. The pastoral commitment of Clodovis to the poor of Rio Branco enables him to be exposed to their plight. It is this active, militant, and priestly participation in the struggle of the poor for their liberation – highly recognized and respected by Kee, as a western theologian above – which distinguishes liberation theologians from western theologians. Thus, Clodovis Boff's engagement with the poor of Rio Branco gives a signal to McKeever and all other western theologians that – in addition to academic qualifications – active and militant commitment to the struggle for the liberation of the poor is a *conditio sine qua non* for any academic who wants to be recognized as a liberation theologian.

Gilbert Markus is also a constructive critic of the Theology of Liberation who is deeply concerned about the tendency of this theology to be immune to criticism, more especially if those academic attacks are from the West. He puts his case as follows:

*There is a frequently repeated expression of hostility to 'European' theology, the theology that arises from the Church of the colonial Old World, which is by implication a colonial theology, and as blind to the suffering of the poor as the Conquistadores were in the sixteenth century, and as IMF and World Bank officials seem to be in the twentieth. Thus, whatever criticisms are presented to liberation theology which might*

*raise questions as to its methods or its conclusions can be dismissed out of hand as 'European' or 'colonial'.<sup>110</sup>*

The response that I gave to McKeever above applies also to Markus because he – like McKeever – is partly concerned with the critique of the method of the Theology of Liberation. Let me add to my response by saying that if theologians can recognize the contextual nature of their respective theologies, then many of their unnecessary squabbles would come to an abrupt end. Albert Nolan implicitly concurs. He writes,

*Western theology grapples with the questions raised by Western culture and especially the modern questions of secularization. But these are treated as universal questions, and Western theology is thought of as applicable to all people of all cultures. Until recently, western theology was unaware of its own contextuality.<sup>111</sup>*

Nolan is clearly discussing the tendency of Western theology to impose or universalize its context. Nolan continues his discussion by pointing out the content that result from that particular context as follows,

*Almost all the theologies we have inherited and often still teach in our seminaries and our universities were developed and continue to be developed in an academic context. In other words, the questions that most professional theologians have been grappling with have been questions that arise out of what other professional theologians have said. For centuries, academic theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, have been engaged in arguments with one another in their own abstract and technical jargon that very few outside of their circles have been able to understand.<sup>112</sup>*

According to Nolan the tendency of western theology – whose content is very abstract – is to universalize arguments taught by western professors at our universities and seminaries. A closer look at the content of this theology clearly reveals that this theology had absolutely nothing to do with the suffering of the poor, as it grappled with questions, not emerging from the poor, but from academics who tried to answer questions of a purely western culture. This theology might have made sense in the context of Europe, but in South Africa – and to the rest of the Third World – it implicitly encouraged our seminarians to bury their heads in sand while the poor families from which they emerge were being ruthlessly exploited and oppressed by the West. As a result, I am not surprised by the hostility Markus claims that liberation theologians at times displayed against western theology: the main reason for this hostile attitude is indirectly what Nolan is discussing above, namely that for centuries – including the period before and after the colonization of the Third World – western theology never dealt with questions raised by the poor of the Third World. When exponents of the Theology of Liberation appear with a new theological method – namely, the inductive method – which directly addresses the impoverishment of

the poor by the West – western theology arrogantly condemns that method. Indeed, Jon Sobrino attests,

*There are those who say that Liberation Theology has had its day, its “kairos,” that it was a fad and has already given what it can give. But anyone who holds this opinion either has not grasped that liberation theology is based on the inbreaking of the poor (which ultimately only shows the difficulty of comprehending a new way of doing theology), or does not consider the inbreaking of the poor important enough to require a new theology.<sup>113</sup>*

In the same breath Francis McDonagh, an English Dominican theologian makes a similar observation. He notices that,

*There is a tendency to characterize liberation theology as a typical sixties phenomenon, romantic but unrealistic. Such a view could only come from the northern hemisphere.<sup>114</sup>*

McDonagh is just sharing with us how his fellow theologians – in the West – are backstabbing the exponents of the Theology of Liberation. The way forward is that the northern hemisphere should recognize the contextual nature of any theology, including western theology. And this only means that every theology has got limits imposed on it by time, culture and language. And perhaps the words of Murchu, who gives liberation theology as one of the many examples of a new paradigm or model of doing theology, are appropriate at this juncture. He writes,

*The realization that the new model is right for its time is an inner sense not easily put into words. It marks a distinctive shift in consciousness, posing exciting new possibilities, but accompanied by the painful awareness that the old model will resist what is new to the bitter end.<sup>115</sup>*

My interpretation of O’Murchu is that the Church consists of both conservative and progressive groups. The former will fight to the bitter end that the church utilizes old forms of human expressions in order to communicate with God and humanity, while the latter will constantly seek new models or ways which are understandable and relevant to every generation for the same purpose of relating to God and to humanity. And these models or paradigms are not universal, as they can be meaningful only to certain percentage of humanity. It is therefore unfair or sinful for progressives to impose their models on the conservatives, and vice versa. It is only through the process of dialogue that members of a group can join the opposing group, or borrow certain terminology from the same opposing group.<sup>116</sup> But even the process of dialogue becomes extremely difficult if the one group tends to impose its ideas on the other(s). This is what we understand the West to be doing to the Third World. The way forward is mutual understanding of the contextual nature of theology which will, in turn, foster a

very healthy spirit of dialogue between the two camps, as both need each other's critique in order to grow abundantly.

Nolan has already mentioned in his discussion above another important term, namely *Praxis*, which Gutierrez, and the majority liberation theologians employ in order to clarify the methodology of this theology. Nolan says that Praxis is the practice of faith. He further defines the term as follows:

*Our praxis is all our Christian activities: pastoral work, preaching, praying, feeding the hungry, struggling for justice and peace and generally trying to evangelize ourselves and the world around us.*<sup>117</sup>

Nolan's explanation of the word, 'Praxis' is further developed by Elinah Vuola, a Scandinavian feminist theologian, who holds that,

*Liberation theologians both use the concept praxis in classical Marxist sense and specify it to connote the Latin American historical, political and economic conditions, seen from the point of view of those most affected by them.*<sup>118</sup>

Thus, Vuola enlightens us that the word, *Praxis*, has been adopted by exponents of the Theology of Liberation – from Marxism – and it is being used in the area of the methodology of this theology. She cites scholars such as Stephen B. Bevans and Robert J. Schreiter who further helped her understand the use of praxis within the context of the Theology of Liberation. Bevans simply holds that praxis refers to the combination of reflection and action.<sup>119</sup> I guess the statement refers to the process through which action and reflection influence each other. Schreiter on the other hand, is understood by Vuola to argue that, among other things, theology – as praxis – has to be concerned with the on-going reflection on action, together with the motivation to sustain transformative praxis.<sup>120</sup> How confusing! How does theology serve as praxis – as Schreiter argues – when, at the same time Gutierrez holds that theology is a critical reflection on the historical praxis of the Church?<sup>121</sup> And how is theology, as praxis, concerned with the motivation to sustain transformative praxis? I sense lots of redundancy in Schreiter's understanding of praxis. Are we dealing in this case with two forms of praxis, namely, theology as praxis, on the one hand, and transformative praxis, on the other? How exactly are the two related to each other? My questions only suggest that Vuola needs to revisit her understanding of praxis – as articulated by Schreiter – because at the present moment it is extremely difficult to understand. I found the best explanation to be that of Ana Maria Pineda – a liberation theologian born in El Salvador – who strongly believes that,

*Praxis is the lived experience of human beings as they confront the challenge of how to live as committed Christians and what such life implies; it is a committed practice which seeks the liberation of the oppressed, poor and marginalized. Praxis precedes the act of doing*

*theology. Theology as a second moment seeks to understand the action, the liberating practice undertaken by committed Christians.*<sup>122</sup>

I think Pineda's explanation of praxis is almost identical with that of Nolan and that of Gutierrez, both of which are quoted elaborately above. What we are dealing with here is a methodology of the Theology of Liberation according to which we have, on the one hand, the Church's active commitment to the cause of the marginalized. This is what Praxis is all about. On the other hand we have, as a second step, theology whose major job is the critique of praxis.

The scholarly understanding of Praxis is not crystal clear.<sup>123</sup> This means that there is no academic consensus on the correct interpretation of the word, *praxis* outside the borders of Latin America. As a result, the conflict of academics who specialize on this matter is obviously inevitable. On the one hand we have scholars – like Nolan, Vuola and Pineda – who clearly explain that Praxis is the active commitment of the Church to help the poor and the oppressed achieve their total liberation, and that theology's job description is to critique or reflect critically, on the Church's commitment. On the other hand, we have another group of academics – like Bevans and Schreiter – who strongly hold that the process of reflection – which is supposed to be carried out by theology – can actually be located in praxis, for praxis consists of an interplay between reflection and action which, in this context, is the active commitment of the Church. If that is the case, then what is the role of theology in the whole project of this methodology?

The debate or conflict of ideas on the correct understanding of the word, *praxis*, leaves me with no choice but to take sides. This is normally the case with any active listener who is enjoying a debate between two groups. He/she does not leave the room happy with arguments of both groups: no, he/she is either on one side of the divide or another. Of course he/she would even give reasons why she prefers the one group to the other. I side with the group of Pineda, because of the clarity with which they explain the term under study. Concurring with this group's explanation is Enrique Dussel – a Latin American scholar – who takes a further step in the process of simplifying the term. He claims,

*“Praxis” or “practice” means many things in our daily life... praxis or practice denotes any human act addressed to another human person; further, praxis denotes the very relationship of one person to another. Praxis is both act and relationship: “Those who believed, lived at one” (Acts 2:44)*  
*Praxis is the here-and-now manner of our being in our world before another person. It is the real presence of one person to another.*<sup>124</sup>

The scripture reading – on the unity of the first Christians – in Dussel's explanation surely indicates that praxis is about human deeds of love, kindness, benevolence, and benignity. Even the here-and-now real presence he discusses does not refer to the cruel and merciless presence – for example,

like that of a capitalist to an underpaid worker – but it refers to the relevant help with which human beings should always attend to the needs of the others. Gutierrez would gladly concur with Dussel, but I think he would even be happier if the main focus of our generous help would be directed to the poor. Indeed Gutierrez writes,

*It is not enough to know that praxis must precede reflection; we must also realize that the historical subject of that praxis is the poor – the people who have been excluded from the pages of history. Without the poor as subject, theology degenerates into academic expertise.*<sup>125</sup>

In my attempt to synthesize the respective ideas of the two authors, namely Dussel and Gutierrez, I realize that our real or meaningful presence to the poor would concretely mean that we should actively participate in their liberation from all kinds of injustice. The major part of our liberation theology – in the Third World – should reflect this concerted effort of liberating the poor from all forms of oppression, for failure to do so, reduces this important theology into some cold armchair academic discipline which has nothing to do with the plight of the poor.

### **Juan Luis Segundo**

Juan Luis Segundo is another Latin American exponent of the Theology of Liberation who agrees with Gutierrez that this theology is a new method which consists of two steps. He begins his discussion by quoting Gutierrez's words as follows,

*“Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. Theology follows; is the second step. What Hegel used to say about philosophy can likewise be applied to theology; it rises at sundown.”*<sup>126</sup>

Segundo further engages Gutierrez in a dialogue by first asking the question,

*What is the first step, the one that precedes theology?  
Gutierrez answers: “It is – at least ought to be – real charity, action, and commitment to the service of men.”*<sup>127</sup>

Segundo asks Gutierrez another question. He says,

*What is the relationship between the first step – after which comes the second step known as theology – and politics?  
Gutierrez puts it in this way: “Human reason has become political reason. For the contemporary historical consciousness, things political are not only those which one attends to during free time afforded by his private life; nor are they even a well-defined area of human existence... It is the sphere for the exercise of a critical freedom which is won*

*through history. It is the universal determinant and a collective arena for human fulfillment... Nothing lies outside the political sphere understood in this way. Everything has a political color... Personal relationships themselves acquire an ever-increasing political dimension. Men enter into relationships among themselves through political means.*<sup>128</sup>

What is the relationship between the first step of the methodology of the Theology of Liberation, asks Segundo, and the political life? Gutierrez answers this question by emphasizing the importance of the political aspect of humanity. He calls it the area of human fulfillment, in the sense that it bestows – to humanity – all fundamental rights, once a political party highly sensitive to human rights is democratically elected by the populace. The first step of the Theology of Liberation obliges a Christian who claims to be fully committed to the cause of the poor to vote for a political party whose number one priority is the total liberation of the poor from every form of injustice. Segundo immediately provides a theological support to the political discourse Gutierrez has just presented above. He claims,

*Whatever one may think about the political stance or the political neutrality of Jesus himself, it seems evident that his commandment of love and his countless examples and admonitions concerning it in the Gospels must be translated in an era in which real-life love has taken on political forms. To say that machines have nothing to do with the gospel message because it says nothing about machines is to fail to understand that message. To suggest that almsgiving should continue to be the Christian response to the whole problem of wealth and its relationship to love is also to seriously distort the gospel message. And the same thing applies to any attempt to inculcate an apolitical love today – presuming that love can be apolitical at all in a world where politics is the fundamental human dimension.*<sup>129</sup>

In providing Gutierrez's political language with some theological background as he does above, Segundo is already dealing with the second step of the Theology of Liberation. And that second step consists of theology itself which in this context serves as a critique of the historical praxis of the Church.

Segundo argues that it is true that we may not be acquainted with the political vision of Jesus, and neither may we be sure about what the Gospels teach about His political neutrality. But the same Gospels certainly teach us about his love which is supposed to permeate all sectors of humanity. Christ's love reaches even the factory floor of our industrial lives, challenging the management to strike a sound balance between the labourer and the machines (which form part of the total capital) – a moral teaching highly valued by the Catholic Church.<sup>130</sup> . And while almsgiving may have been a form of Christian love relevant in the past – because it apolitically solved the economic gap which existed between

the wealthy and the poor – it is certainly not relevant in our days: To be relevant in our days – most especially to the poor – Christian love has to be expressed through the radical recognition and respect of the socio-political and economic rights of the populace. Indirectly concurring with Segundo and Gutierrez on the importance of the use of political language in theology are fifteen bishops from the Third World who – on the eve of the Medellin Conference in 1968 – jointly wrote that,

*Insofar as the Church maintains her essential and perduring ties, i.e., her fidelity to Christ and Her communion with Him in the gospel, she is never bound up with any social, political, or economic system. When a system ceases to promote the common good and favours special interests, the Church must not only denounce injustice but also break with the evil system. She must be prepared to work with another system that is juster and more suited to the needs of the day.*<sup>131</sup>

According to Segundo, Roger Vekemans – a Belgian Jesuit missionary in Latin America who has been a very strong opponent of the Theology of liberation for a quite a number of years – made use of the words of Karl Rahner to attack the statement of the bishops. Those words, found in Vekemans's book titled, *Caesar and God*, read as follows:

*This is the point at which the problem suddenly becomes awesome: how can the Church know the context of her action since this kind of knowledge obviously cannot be entirely deduced from revelation? ... Willingly or not, she is consequently dependent upon sources and method of knowledge which are partially beyond her control ... We are faced with the problem to which, if I may say so, ecclesiological epistemology has not yet paid enough attention ... How can the Church make obligatory pronouncements on such matters? In this context, how can the Church avoid the danger either of stating obvious things which are better expressed elsewhere, or of risking statements that can be refuted by specialists in sociological analysis?*<sup>132</sup>

What Rahner means is that the Church is not a qualified teacher of politics, economics, sociology, science, civil law, mathematics, engineering, agriculture, etc. As a result the Church cannot impart obligatory teaching on matters related to those disciplines. Rahner means that the Church is a competent teacher only in matters directly related to revelation, as it is articulated in various ways by the scriptures in the bible. Consequently, the Church can speak or teach authoritatively only in matters related to revelation. Thus, according to Rahner the Third World bishops cited by Segundo above – as representatives of the Church – are not qualified to utter any political or economic statement, as they do above, because by so doing they are already interfering in disciplines which are outside the Church's competence. Elsewhere, Rahner further holds that any statement similar to that of the Third World bishops is actually divisive as it



shows the hierarchical prejudice against other positions in the Church which also claim to be inspired by the gospel in their political orientation.<sup>133</sup> What these bishops are doing is actually very risky, continues Rahner, as their statement can easily be thwarted by people who have expertise in those disciplines. For Segundo, Rahner's understanding of Theology is too limited, for it implies that even the Theology of Liberation should stop dialoguing with the poor from the political point of view, as expressed by Gutierrez above. As a result, Segundo suggests that Rahner broadens the scope of theology, so that – like every other academic discipline – it responds positively to the social demands of the context within which it is formulated. Indeed Segundo writes,

*Now the plain fact is that the general human situation, the situation that hold true for all human beings including theologians, is exactly the opposite of what Rahner pictures it to be. Just to make the point clearer and more obvious, let us assume that in the theology of the Church human beings do possess a corpus of atemporal scientific certitudes akin to those of mathematics. Even in that forced and hypothetical instance, human options depend upon an understanding and appreciation of the surrounding context and must be taken before the scientific certitudes of theology have anything to say.<sup>134</sup>*

Thus, Segundo highlights the importance of the context within which any science – including theology – is done or formulated. That particular science – even the so-called atemporal or apolitical sciences, that is, the ones not conditioned by time or a particular culture, arose out of contextual demands, argues Segundo. Therefore, if theology wants to be understandable today – most especially to the oppressed – it has to be articulated in the most understandable language of our context, which is the political language because it is a language which stubbornly insists on the radical respect of the fundamental rights of every human being. No theology is meaningful in our context, which denies this positive relationship with politics. Segundo explains this point as follows:

- 1. Every theology is political, even one that does not speak or think in political terms. The influence of politics on theology and every other cultural sphere cannot be evaded any more than the influence of theology on politics and other spheres of human thinking. The worst politics of all would be to let theology do this function unconsciously, for that brand of theology is bound up with the status quo.*
- 2. Liberation Theology consciously and explicitly accepts its relationship with politics. First of all it incorporates into its own methodology the task of ideological analysis that is situated on the boundary line between sociology and politics. And insofar as direct politics is concerned, it is more concerned about avoiding the (false) impartiality of academic theology than it is about taking sides and*

*consequently giving ammunition to those who accuse it of partisanship.*

3. *When academic theology accuses liberation theology of being political and engaging in politics, thus ignoring its tie-up with the political status quo it is really looking for a scapegoat to squelch its own guilt complex.*<sup>135</sup>

The polemics between the Theology of Liberation and the academic theology of the West, discussed above, can easily be resolved if the latter would recognize the biblical tradition which underlies the former. In other words, the Theology of Liberation tries to imitate – in its own context – the Old Testament prophets who bitterly protested whenever the political authorities oppressed or exploited the poor in one way or another. Academic theology must broaden up its horizons in order to embrace this essential prophetic task of the Church, for failure to do so, exposes the poor of our days to the exploitative wrath of the multinational companies who will ruthlessly leave them poorer than before.<sup>136</sup>

May I bring Segundo's discussion – on the second step of the methodology of the Theology of Liberation – to completion by first saying that I do understand Rahner's opinion when he says that the Church is not a qualified teacher of the disciplines mentioned above, and therefore she can't pronounce any statement or obligatory teaching on anyone of these disciplines. At the same time I am of the opinion that the Church has got numerous sons and daughters that are highly competent in these disciplines. Thus, it is imperative for the leadership of the church to consult these experts prior to the pronouncement of any obligatory teaching based on a discipline which is not directly related to revelation. Actually this is how almost every papal encyclical is created. Indeed Roger Charles testifies,

*The decision to write an encyclical is the personal one of each pope, and its contents are for him to decide in the light of the tradition and of the current situation as he understands it. If he is expert in the matters in question there is less need for consultation on questions of substance; where he is not such an expert, he will be reliant on his advisers, though, as in civil government, he takes responsibility for what is issued in his name after such consultation; it is his teaching.*<sup>137</sup>

Bishops are highly expected to follow the same procedure. As a result they have various departments – like, for example, the department of health – run by experts who advise them on matters not directly related to revelation.<sup>138</sup> But Rahner is not complaining about the failure of the Third World bishops in question to consult expertise prior to the pronouncement of an obligatory teaching non-related (directly) to revelation: rather Rahner basically wants politics to be left entirely under the control of people who have expertise in this field. The same should apply to other disciplines. And of course this is very risky, to say the least. Lots of lives would definitely be sacrificed, exploited, and destroyed, if Rahner's opinion would be implemented by various governments

of the world. Evidence abounds.<sup>139</sup> Not only is Rahner's idea risky: it is also unbiblical. The biblical tradition recounts of numerous instances of confrontation and protests – emerging from the part of the Old Testament prophets – whenever governments or wealthy people deprived the poor of their human rights.<sup>140</sup> The Third World Bishops under discussion are definitely following the same tradition. And so is the Theology of Liberation. The Church as a whole should never abandon this valuable prophetic tradition, if it sincerely regards today's poor as its members. Yes, let the whole Church prophetically denounce every form of injustice, in words and deeds, and the poverty of the poor will come to an abrupt end. Thomas Massaro studies two contradictory statements – issued by the highest teaching office of the Church, namely, Vatican II – on the ideal political relationship which should exist between the Church and the political authorities of a country. He says,

*Gaudium et Spes asserts: "The role and competence of the Church being what it is, she must in no way be confused with the political community, nor bound to any political system."*<sup>141</sup>

Gaudium et Spes – a Latin phrase which translates, "Joy and Hope" – is one of the chapters of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). Massaro explains the teaching of the Church – expressed by Gaudium et Spes above – as follows:

*In other words, the world of politics has its own legitimate logic and operations, and the church has no intention of dictating its preferred policies or intruding in areas where it has no particular competence.*<sup>142</sup>

Soon after emphasizing the non-interference stance of the church in matters political, the same authors (bishops) of Gaudium et Spes – in the same document – Massaro continues, contradicted themselves by teaching that the Church,

*... has the right to pass moral judgment even on matters touching the political order, whenever basic personal rights, or the salvation of souls make such judgments necessary.*<sup>143</sup>

Now which is which? Massaro does not answer the question. Neither does he give us the bishops' answer for this terrible self-contradiction. Massaro only mentions that during the formulation of Gaudium et Spes the bishops soon realized that – in addition to their day to day responsibilities – they have to accommodate the unusual one, which is that of reading the signs of the times.<sup>144</sup> If reading the signs of the times partly meant the prophetic participation of the Church in political matters, I think that stance would be appreciated by the poor of the world. The bishops who met at Medellin in 1968 gave a good example of the contemporary prophetic involvement of the Church in politics when, among other things, they said,

*Faced with the need for a total change of Latin American structures, we believe that change has political reform as its prerequisite.*

*The exercise of political authority and its decisions have as their only end the common good. In Latin America such authority and decision-making frequently seem to support systems which militate against the common good or favor privileged groups. By means of legal norms, authority ought effectively and permanently to assure the rights and inalienable rights of the citizens and the free functioning of intermediary structures.*

*Public authority has the duty of facilitating and supporting the creation of means of participation and legitimate representation of the people, or if necessary the creation of new ways to achieve it. We want to insist on the necessity of vitalizing and strengthening the municipal and communal organization, as a beginning of organizational efforts at the departmental, provincial, regional, and national levels.*

*The lack of political consciousness in our countries makes the educational activity of the Church absolutely essential, for the purpose of bringing Christians to consider their part in the political life of the nation as a matter of conscience and as a practice of charity in its most noble and its most meaningful sense of the life of the community.<sup>145</sup>*

The bishops of Medellin – through these and many other words and resolutions – made a political commitment aimed at the liberation of the poor of Latin America from every form of injustice. A closer look at their statement above, gives the impression that they were really determined to make their hands dirty – to the extent of getting experts to provide the poor with political education – for the purpose of this liberation, no wonder they became such an unending source of inspiration for the Theology of Liberation.<sup>146</sup> Unfortunately, a few years later that conference of the bishops was divided into two camps, namely, the minority camp which held fast to the resolutions of Medellin, and the majority camp whose position served as a watershed of Medellin, as they bitterly complained about the interference of the Church in political matters, and at the Puebla Conference – discussed above – they resolved to adopt the quasi non-interference position of Vatican II, as explained by Massori above.<sup>147</sup> Elsewhere Segundo writes on this point as follows:

*“Medellin and Puebla” today constitute a formula as overused as it is mistaken, in the sense that we cannot cite the two documents as belonging to the same line of theology.<sup>148</sup>*

Segundo has been explaining the second step of the methodology of the Theology of Liberation, which constitutes its theological dimension. I now focus

on how he understands the first step of this methodology. This step consists of an active commitment to the liberation of the poor. He claims it might be extremely difficult for a Christian who is not a Latin American citizen to understand the model of commitment followed by most Latin American pastoral workers and theologians, for they follow no model from the scriptures: the model they follow is from the liberation movement itself. Indeed he elaborates,

*Curious and shocking as it may seem, then, various Latin American theologians have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to know what a specifically Christian contribution to liberation might be, prior to a personal commitment to liberation. Here, for example, is what J. P. Richard has to say: "It is not what are called 'evangelical values' that give meaning to social praxis. Quite the opposite is the case. Social praxis gives meaning to the former. Only this approach will enable theology to get beyond the subject-object distortion that characterizes the present ideological character of Christianity. The latter prevents Christianity from shouldering the social praxis of liberation. Christians should not define Christian praxis by starting with the gospel message. They should do the opposite. They should seek out the historical import of the gospel by starting with social praxis."*<sup>149</sup>

What Segundo and Richard respectively mean here is that if one considers the gospel as a point of departure within the process of looking for the model of a commitment to the liberation of the poor, one may end up failing to commit oneself to the cause of the poor, because of so many conflicting – even distorted – interpretations of the gospel. It is the influence of some of these distorted interpretations which may prevent one from making a commitment to help the poor achieve their liberation. Whereas if one starts the process by joining an already committed group of Christians to the cause of the poor, it is these committed Christians who will provide one with their joint interpretation of the love of Christ which they think should concretely help even those who have been ruthlessly deprived of their fundamental rights. Segundo further explains,

*Long before a Christian decides to swell the ranks of a liberation group, he or she has been bombarded on all sides with a specific image of Christ and his message. If liberation theology has become a live issue for many Christian groups in Latin America, one can certainly say it is because at some point in their Christian education priests and catechists began to draw new, unheard-of conclusions from the same gospel message. In other words, the pastoral success of the theology of liberation has been a process of moving from the gospel message to liberation, not from the liberation process to the gospel message.*<sup>150</sup>

Segundo is certainly not encouraging an arbitrary interpretation of the gospel. He is just recounting how pastoral workers within the Theology of Liberation

survived when they were confronted with the gospel interpretation which did not fit into the context of liberation they were dealing with. Elsewhere in the same volume, Segundo comes across a North American theologian – James Cone – who also had an insurmountable problem of telling the oppressed in the United States of America to “turn the other cheek” whenever they felt the deadly sting of oppression. The problems of this nature lead scholars to help the pastoral workers construct their own interpretation and image of the Jesus who would fit into their context of the struggle for the liberation of the poor, as the one who turns the other cheek, while he may have helped the context of the first community of Christians, he just couldn’t fit into the context of today’s poor. The conflicting interpretations of the gospel among today’s scholars is a clear indication, argues Segundo, that the gospels were not written to solve the problems of the whole world, but those of the first Christian Community, which are not similar to ours. Indeed he explains this point by saying that,

*First Protestant and then Catholic exegesis in Europe discovered over the last hundred years or so that it was impossible to get to any picture of the historical Jesus. (I am using “historical” here in the modern, scientific sense of the term.) It was found that the Gospels were not so much witnesses to who Jesus really was and what he really said and did as they were witnesses to the postpaschal faith of the primitive Christian community and how it saw and interpreted Jesus. Our own faith in Jesus, therefore, has to proceed by way of at least one theological interpretation: the theological interpretation of the Gospels themselves. For the Gospels present the interpretation (or interpretations) of a specific concrete community which had to face specific historical problems that bear little resemblance to our own problems.<sup>151</sup>*

If the gospels are saying absolutely nothing about what the historical Jesus did and said – as Segundo argues above – what can contemporary men and women learn from them? Love. I mean the love Jesus had for humanity. This is how Segundo started his discussion above. I interpret Segundo to be saying that this love seems to be the common ground uniting the final redactors of the gospels. This genuine love – which does not exclude the fundamental rights of the poor – should concretely characterize every disciple of Jesus. Segundo concludes his discussion by saying that the gospels are not to be treated like unmovable monuments, for Jesus would preach and practice his love differently if he were to be in our situation. Indeed Segundo concludes,

*Jesus is not an historical monument. If he were alive and active today, he would say many things that would differ greatly from what he said twenty centuries ago. Without him, but not without his Spirit, we must find out what he would say to free us if he were alive today.<sup>152</sup>*

I am narrowing down Segundo’s broad question asked above by asking, “If Christ were live and active today, would he pass by if he saw a group of people

oppressing another?" I think the question becomes more serious if I include the experience of the bishops of Latin America who met at their conference which took place at Puebla in 1979, to reflect anew,<sup>153</sup> on what the role of the Church could be in the midst of untold conditions of abject poverty which inflicted the majority of Latin Americans at that time. The bishops wrote,

*So we brand the situation of inhuman poverty in which millions of Latin Americans live as the most devastating and humiliating kind of scourge. And this situation finds expression in such things as a high rate of infant mortality, lack of adequate housing, health problems, starvation wages, unemployment and underemployment, malnutrition, job uncertainty, compulsory mass migrations, etc.*<sup>154</sup>

The bishops further reflect on how badly the horrifying conditions of poverty described above, deformed the lives of many Latin Americans. They say,

*This situation of pervasive extreme poverty takes on very concrete faces in real life. In these faces we ought to recognize the suffering features of Christ the Lord, who questions and challenges us. They include,*

- *The faces of young children, struck by poverty before they are born, their chance of self-development blocked by irreparable mental and physical deficiencies; and that of vagrant children in our cities who are so often exploited, products of poverty and moral disorganization of the family;*
- *The faces of young people, who are disoriented because they cannot find their place in society, and who are frustrated, particularly in marginal rural and urban areas, by the lack of opportunity to obtain training and work;*
- *Faces of the indigenous peoples, and frequently of Afro-Americans as well, living marginalized lives in inhuman situations, they can be considered the poorest of the poor;*
- *The faces of the peasants; as a social group, they live in exile almost everywhere on our continent, deprived of land, caught in a situation of internal and external dependence, and subjected to systems of commercialization that exploit them;*
- *The faces of labourers, who frequently are ill-paid and who have difficulty in organizing themselves and defending their rights;*
- *The faces of the underemployed and unemployed who are dismissed because of the hard exigencies of economic crises, and often because of development-models that*

*subject workers and their families to cold economic calculations;*

- *The faces of marginalized and overcrowded urban dwellers, whose lack of material goods is matched by the ostentatious display of wealth by other segments of society;*
- *The faces of old people, who are growing more numerous every day, and who are frequently marginalized in a progress-oriented society that totally disregards people not engaged in production.*<sup>155</sup>

If Christ were present, would he pass by and not do anything about the agony and the misery of the faces described by the Puebla bishops above? These faces are also symbolic of the situation of poverty experienced by the other countries of the Third World.<sup>156</sup> What lasting solution would Christ provide to these multitudes of the poor? Would it be a solution similar to capitalism or would it be a solution similar to socialism? Or would he blend the two ideologies into a new ideology which will satisfy the socio-economic and political needs of today's poor? My questions are already an implicit reflection of the fact that ours is a completely different historical context from that of the period of the first community of Christians, as Segundo holds above, as a result it will need a different solution.

### **Scriptural Influence on Gutierrez's understanding of Liberation Theology**

Closely linked to the methodology of Gutierrez is his concept of history. For him God is a god of history as he acts in history to save and liberate the poor from all forces or structures of evil. Indeed Gutierrez firmly holds that,

*Liberation theology's second central intuition is that God is a liberating God, revealed only in the concrete historical context of liberation of the poor and oppressed.*<sup>157</sup>

I understand Gutierrez to be saying that God acts in history. To be more specific, Gutierrez is of the opinion that God's saving and liberating help to the poor and the oppressed can be experienced in history. The pattern of the biblical God's concrete involvement with the Israelites in both the Old and the New Testaments – starting from the time of the encounter at Mt. Sinai (Exod. 24:12; Exod. 24:16-17; Deut. 10:1) through the times of the encounters at the Ark of the Covenant (Num. 1:1 ; Num10:35-36 ; 1 Sam. 4:17), the Tent of Meeting (Exod. 33:7-11; Num. 11:16, 24-26; Deut. 31:14) the Temple (2 Sam. 7:5 ; 1 Kings 3:1-3; Amos 1:2 and Isa. 2:2; 37:14; Ps. 27:4) and eventually the Incarnation of the Son of God(John 1:14) – leads Gutierrez to the conviction that human history is indeed the place of encounter between God and humanity.<sup>158</sup>

Furthermore, the biblical God (Yahweh) is a god of justice. As a result, the Israelites would encounter Him, or win and enjoy His presence only if they



treated the poor, and everybody else, justly. Whenever the people acted unjustly towards one another – especially towards the poor – God would rebuke them very severely. For example, Gutierrez quotes Yahweh to have reprimanded the unjust as follows:

*Your countless sacrifices, what are they to me? Says the Lord; I am sated with whole offerings of rams. ... The offer of your gifts is useless, the reek of sacrifice is abhorrent to me. ... Though you offer countless prayers, I will not listen. There is blood on your hands.... Cease to do evil and learn to do right, pursue justice and champion the oppressed; give the orphan his rights, plead the widow's cause. (Isa. 1:10-17)<sup>159</sup>*

I understand Gutierrez to be saying that it is not so much the sacrifices and the prayers of the Israelites that are abhorrent to Yahweh but the acts of cruelty and wickedness with which they oppress the poor. In other words, if they stopped oppressing the poor – if they started respecting and recognizing the fundamental rights of the widows and the orphans, then would their prayers and sacrifices be acceptable to Yahweh. Responding to favourable conditions of justice and mercy meted out to the poor is Yahweh who, according to Gutierrez, strongly maintains that,

*Is not this what I require of you as a fast: to loose the fetters of injustice, to untie the knots of the yoke, to snap every yoke and set free those who have been crushed? Is it not sharing our bread with the hungry, taking the homeless poor into your house, clothing the naked when you meet them and never evading a duty to your kinsfolk?(Isa. 58:6-7). Only then will God be with us, only then will God hear our prayer and will we be pleasing to God (Isa.58:9-11)<sup>160</sup>*

The general practice of social justice – more especially the radical justice with which the poor should be treated – is of vital importance in the Old Testament. As a result, Gutierrez argues that,

*The God of Biblical revelation is known through interhuman justice. When justice does not exist, God is not known; God is absent.<sup>161</sup>*

But God is always present. God is never absent. If God is sometimes absent, how does He judge a situation to be unjust or oppressive? I therefore interpret Gutierrez to be saying that God looks favourably at a just situation while He looks at any oppressive dispensation with disappointment and disgust.

Gutierrez accepts the limitation of his discussion on the subject of interhuman justice, as a means to encounter God in history, in the sense that the Old Testament focuses mainly on the Jews or the Israelites. However the New Testament – most especially the text Mt. 25: 31—45 – deepens and universalizes this essential historical encounter between God and humanity. Gutierrez further interprets this text by saying that,

*Our encounter with the Lord occurs in our encounter with others, especially in the encounter with those whose human features have been disfigured by oppression, despoliation, and alienation and who have “no beauty nor majesty” but are things “from which men turn away their eye”(Isa.53:2-3). ...the salvation of humanity passes through them; they are the bearers of the meaning of history and “inherit the Kingdom”(James 2:5)<sup>162</sup>*

My understanding is that Gutierrez interprets Mt. 25:25—31 to be saying that we (Christians) are supposed to serve God by attending to the needs of humanity. The poor deserve our special attention because they have been deprived of their most precious needs, namely their fundamental rights. This further means that the poor cannot be wished away, neither can their socio-economic and political rights be ignored by anybody who is seriously looking for salvation. That explains why Gutierrez strongly holds that the salvation of humanity passes through the lives of the poor. This only means that any Christian who seriously wishes to attain salvation will have to participate very actively in the process of the radical improvement of the quality of the socio-economic and political lives of the poor. Concurring with Gutierrez is Jon Sobrino who strongly holds the conviction that,

*Extra pauperes nulla salus (outside the poor there is no salvation).<sup>163</sup>*

Within the same context of Christians who seriously seek salvation, Sobrino simply means that the concerted effort to improve the socio-economic and political lives of the poor is an essential part of the salvation in question. Consequently, no Christian can attain salvation without participating actively in the process of totally eradicating all forms of injustice to which the poor are presently subjected. To emphasize the importance of this active participation of the Church or Christians in the socio-economic and political liberation of the poor, Sobrino powerfully maintains that,

*The great salvific task, then, is to evangelize the poor so that out of their material poverty they may attain the awareness and the spirit necessary, first to escape from their indigence and oppression, second to put an end to oppressive structures, and*

*third to inaugurate a new heaven and a new earth, where sharing trumps accumulating and where there is time to hear and enjoy God's voice in the heart of the material world and in the heart of human history. The poor will save the world; they are already saving it, though not yet. Seeking salvation by some other road is a dogmatic and historical error.*<sup>164</sup>

I interpret Sobrino to be saying that the criteria qualifying the Christian who seriously seeks salvation will be established by the indigent lives of the poor. This means that salvation can only be attained by people who are determined to improve the quality of the socio-economic and political lives of the poor. Anybody who tries to ignore or by-pass this route is making a very serious doctrinal mistake, because the author of the book of Matthew (Mt. 25: 31—46) dogmatically teaches that the active participation in the process of improving the lives of the poor is the most correct route to salvation. This doctrine is respectfully espoused by Gutierrez and Sobrino above. What Sobrino means (above) when he says that ‘the poor are already saving this world, but not yet’ is that gradually the non-poor are beginning to accept that liberating the poor from all forms of unjust and oppressive structures is an essential part of the route to salvation.

According to Sobrino's understanding, the salvation in question, is not a-historical. On the contrary, it is a historical reality in the sense that it will – to a very large extent – be of material benefit to the poor. Gutierrez concurs. And, elaborating the relationship between his idea of salvation on the one hand, and his understanding of human history, on the other, Gutierrez argues that,

*There are not two histories, one profane, and one sacred, “juxtaposed” or “closely linked.” Rather there is only one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history. His redemptive work embraces all the dimensions of existence and brings them to their fullness. The history of salvation is the very heart of human history. Christian consciousness arrived at this unified view after an evolution parallel to that experienced regarding the notion of salvation. The conclusions converge.*<sup>165</sup>

For Gutierrez there is only one history, namely the history of salvation. He does not intend to impose his understanding of history on the non-believers: on the contrary, he finds his own idea of history to be having similarities with the political or “profane” history of the unbelievers. The contents of the political history of the non-believers consists of the fight for the fundamental rights of the oppressed, while the content of his history of salvation consists of the efforts to realize the Kingdom of God on earth. The contents of the two histories are not

mutually exclusive of each other in the sense that the realization of the Kingdom of God partly or largely involves the fight for the recognition of the political rights of the oppressed. Gutierrez further explains the same point by holding that,

*The growth of the Kingdom is a process which occurs historically in liberation, in as far as liberation means a greater human fulfillment... Without the liberating historical events there would be no growth of the Kingdom. But the process of liberation will not have conquered the very roots of human oppression and exploitation without the coming of the Kingdom, which is above all a gift. Moreover, we can say that the historical, political liberating event is the growth of the Kingdom and is a salvific event; but it is not **the** coming of the Kingdom, and not **all** of salvation.<sup>166</sup>*

Gutierrez sees no opposition between liberation and the Kingdom. On the contrary he understands the former to be an integral part of the latter. For him liberation is instrumental in the historical (earthly) growth of the Kingdom. The growth of the Kingdom will never exclude the political liberation of the poor. The political liberation of the poor does not comprise the totality of the Kingdom, neither does it comprise the totality of salvation. The two realities, namely, the Kingdom and salvation – which are pure gifts from God – are largely made up of the political liberation of the populace, especially the poor. The achievement of salvation by the non-poor – to interpret Gutierrez further – will never take place outside the pale of the political liberation of the poor.

The relationship between the Kingdom and salvation, on the one hand, and the political liberation of the poor, on the other, inevitably leads us to Gutierrez's eschatological understanding of the question of liberation. This only means that the liberation of the poor, in its totality, will be achieved by the poor in future. Indeed Gutierrez strongly maintains that,

*The commitment to the creation of a just society and, ultimately, to a new humanity, presupposes confidence in the future... it has often been noted that a characteristic of contemporary persons is that they live in terms of tomorrow, oriented towards the future, fascinated by what does not yet exist.<sup>167</sup>*

Gutierrez means that the serious commitment humanity makes today to liberate the oppressed from all kinds of injustice will result in a very bright political future of society. Our future, in other words, is going to consist of the just socio-political and economic dispensation we are presently dreaming about. This just

and ideal dispensation does not yet exist. The present commitment or hard work toward the achievement of this future and ideal dispensation is motivated by the socio-political and economic prosperity it promises. What emerges out of this present commitment to a prosperous future, Gutierrez explains, is the idea of eschatology which can never be divorced from the urgency of the radical improvement of the present social life. Gutierrez claims that this eschatological idea is similar to the one preached by the Old Testament prophets whose works are researched by the exegete, Von Rad. He says,

*For Von Rad, the prophets have “eschatologized” Israel’s conception of time and history. However, what is characteristic of the prophets is, on the one hand, their orientation toward the future and, on the other, their concern with the present... it is due to their posture toward the future that the prophets are the typical representatives of the Yahwist religion. What is characteristic of the prophets’ message is that the situation they announce cannot be taken as the continuation of what went before. Their starting point is the awareness of a break with the past; the sins of Israel have rendered it unacceptable; the guarantees given by Yahweh are no longer in force. Salvation can come only from a new historical action of Yahweh which will renew in unknown ways the earlier interventions in favor of the people.<sup>168</sup>*

I am afraid, what Gutierrez and Von Rad are jointly saying about the present acts of Yahweh, is not as clear as what they are saying about His past and the future actions. That the starting point of the prophets is the break with the past which has been spoilt by Israel’s sinfulness, and that the same unacceptable sinfulness has led to the demolition of Yahweh’s future promises or guarantees, is very clear. What is not clear, however, are the present actions of salvation – on the part of Yahweh – which serve as a means to guarantee that the future salvation, in its fullness, will still be given to Israel in spite of her sinfulness. I do not deny that Gutierrez is aware of the saving actions of Yahweh – announced by the prophets – in the present: as a matter of fact, he says,

*But there is another facet of the prophetic message which we have already considered and which will help us—despite its apparent opposition to the orientation towards the future which we have just mentioned—to pinpoint the notion of eschatology. We refer to the prophets’ concern for the present, for the historical vicissitudes which they witness.<sup>169</sup>*

At this stage of his argumentation, I think Gutierrez is definitely in need of concrete present saving acts of Yahweh by means of which he would demonstrate the prophets' concern for the present. Failure to show these clear examples reduces the prophets' message to a pie in the sky. When Israel bitterly complained of starvation in the wilderness, Yahweh there and then provided manna and quails (Exod.16:8), which served as present and concrete examples that Yahweh was still interested in Israel's future and final act of salvation which would take place in the form of an entrance in the promised land (Exod.23:23-24). An example similar to the one I have just given – within the context of the O. T. prophetic ministry – would surely convince any reader of the importance of the prophets' eschatological idea as jointly understood and articulated by Gutierrez and Von Rad.

## **2. The Second Part of Chapter One**

### **2.1 The Historical Background of the Theology of Liberation**

This part of the chapter deals with factors which led to the advent or the birth of the Theology of Liberation. The part is subdivided into two components namely, The Recent, and the Remote Past of the Theology of Liberation. The reason why I divided this chapter in this manner is that I argue that the Theology of Liberation was written as a response to the immediate social problems of its time. In other words, this theology was formulated not so much as a means to address the social problems of the past, but it was written with the specific aim of addressing the economic exploitation and the political oppression of the poor of the 1970s in Latin America. It is these pressing needs of the 1970s which motivated the theologians of Latin America to write this vital theology. Of course, those social problems of the 1970s evolved from those of the past, and indeed it is Alfred T. Hennelly who contends that,

*Another key element for understanding liberation theology is the recognition that it did not fall on Latin America like some meteor from the skies, but had forerunners in Latin American history going to time of the conquest<sup>170</sup>*

For Hennelly the Theology of Liberation of the 1970s is not a completely new phenomenon, as it has forerunners who wrote something similar during their time. I agree with him. That explains why I have a subsection which deals with the remote past of this theology. The forerunners he mentions belong in this remote period. They dealt with the social problems of their time. And the same applies to the liberation theologians of the 1970s. Having clarified that point I now embark on the immediate factors that led to the birth of the 1970s' Theology of Liberation in Latin America.

### **2.2 Factors leading to the birth of the Theology of Liberation**

Social scientists and social movements in the form of Marxists in Chile and in Cuba may be categorized as factors which played pivotal role in the birth of the Theology of Liberation.<sup>171</sup> I am aware of that possibility. However, my focus is not on these social movements, but on the two major ecclesiastical factors namely, the Medellin Conference of Latin American Bishops which took place at Bogota in Colombia in 1968,<sup>172</sup> and the Second Vatican Council which took place from 1962-1965.<sup>173</sup> These two bishops' conferences contributed quite substantially towards the establishment of the Theology of Liberation. The Theology of Liberation is a Church project. In one of his research studies, Segundo Galilea observes that,

*One of the major options taken by the bishops of Latin America at the 1968 Medellin Conference was their decision to accept the liberation process of their people and commit themselves to it.*<sup>174</sup>

In the same research study, Galilea tries to explain how the Theology of Liberation is solidly in line with the resolutions of the 1968 Medellin Conference.<sup>175</sup> My point here is that, while I agree that social sciences and movements may have exerted some influence on the process of the creation of the Theology of Liberation, this theology, nevertheless, remains a project of the Church, and as such it is accountable to the structures, the traditions and the magisterium of the Church for its sustenance. It may dialogue and be partly sustained by social sciences,<sup>176</sup> but for its successes and failures it is highly obliged to account to the structures of the Church, as mentioned above, and not to the authorities of social science. As a result, because of this obligation, the Theology of Liberation – like every other – has to show clearly that it does draw its major strength from the structures of the Church, most especially from the magisterial teachings of the Church. This point is illustrated by the research study made by Galilea above. I now discuss the history of the Theology of Liberation which has two subdivisions, namely, the Recent Past and the Remote Past

### **2.3 The Recent Past of the Theology of Liberation**

This subsection is also subdivided into two components, namely **The Medellin Episcopal Conference of 1968**, and the **Second Vatican Council**.

### **2.4 The Medellin Episcopal Conference of 1968**

The Latin American Theology of Liberation was introduced to the whole world in 1971, by means of the book, *A Theology of Liberation*, written by Gustavo Gutierrez, a citizen of Lima in Peru.<sup>177</sup> Before the publication of this book lots of discussions around the theme of liberation theology were going on, and in 1968 at Chimbote in Peru, Gustavo Gutierrez gave a key address on this topic.<sup>178</sup> And laying the groundwork for this theology was the Conference of the Latin American Bishops at Bogota in Colombia in 1968. The theological reflections and resolutions emerging from this Episcopal conference served as the Catholic Church's official response to the abject conditions of political oppression and

economic exploitation suffered by the poor of that continent.<sup>179</sup> The resolutions in question are contained in the Medellin document with the title, *The Church in the Present-day Transformation of Latin America*.<sup>180</sup> This document contains seeds of Liberation Theology, and that explains why Rene Dupertuis boldly calls it the springboard of the Theology of Liberation in Latin America.<sup>181</sup>

Concurring with Dupertuis is Donald Dorr and Roger Charles who respectively deal into some detail with the content of the Medellin conference. For example, Dorr states that the Medellin document is divided into the following subsections:

*(1)Structural Injustice;(2)A Poor Church;(3) Conscientization; (4) The Struggle for Liberation.*<sup>182</sup>

Already noticeable in the four subsections of the Medellin document is the language of the Theology of Liberation: Its language consists of a fierce fight against Structural Injustice, a commitment to the process of the conscientization of the poor about their fundamental rights, and the struggle on the part of the poor for their liberation from all elements of oppression and exploitation by the rich people. It is this language of the Medellin Bishops which led Dupertuis to the statement that the Medellin document served as a springboard for the Theology of Liberation. With regard to the Structural Injustice discussed by the bishops in their above-mentioned document, Robert McAfee strongly contends that

*Medellin has become known as the conference in which the church chose to stand with the oppressed, attacked the political and economic structures of Latin America as purveyors of injustice, pointed out the unjust dependency of Latin America on outside powers, and called for radical change across the continent. Medellin saw clearly that the present order guarantees that the rich grow richer at the expense of the poor, with the inevitable result that the poor will grow poorer in relation to the rich. And the bishops refused any longer to bless such an order. A breakthrough, indeed.*<sup>183</sup>

According to Brown, the structural injustice discussed by the Medellin Bishops refers to the unjust governments of Latin America who from the Nineteenth Century were manned by the local intelligentsia which connived with Western powers in the ruthless economic exploitation of the poor.<sup>184</sup> The bishops were determined to side with the poor. This commitment to the cause of poor – because of its importance – is also remarked by Charles below and is expounded by different Latin American Liberation Theologians. Charles further explains that the word ‘Conscientization’ in the Medellin document refers to the education of the poor. And the education process in question goes way beyond



the solution of illiteracy, as it includes the various ways of making the poor to know and to understand their economic and political rights.<sup>185</sup>

The word, 'Liberation' also appears frequently in the Medellin document, Dorr observes, and while it has implications of the Church's involvement in party politics for the Vatican Magisterium,<sup>186</sup> for the Medellin Bishops it refers to the humanization or the improvement of the quality of life for the poor.<sup>187</sup> This word was actually borrowed from Gustavo Gutierrez who used it for the first time at Chimbote a few months before the convocation of the Medellin conference.<sup>188</sup> On the occasion of the Medellin conference the bishops of Latin America invited him to address them on the question of Liberation Theology. This dialogue between him and the bishops resulted in the latter's official adoption of that word.<sup>189</sup>

Under the subsection *A Poor Church* both Charles and Dorr respectfully observe that the Bishops of Medellin describe three kinds of poverty. For example, Charles understands them to be saying that,

*Three kinds of poverty must be distinguished.[i] The poverty which makes it impossible for human beings to live worthily and which is evil. [ii] Spiritual poverty, total dependence on God, breeds detachment from worldly possessions, and is ideal for the poor of Yahweh. [iii] Freely chosen poverty commits the individual to sharing the hardships of the people who suffer from want, which is an imitation of Christ who became poor for our sake [4]. The Church must denounce the first, preach and live the second, and is bound to material poverty.<sup>190</sup>*

The first point of the foregoing statement of the Bishops of Medellin speaks of the economic poverty of the majority of people in Latin America, and the fourth point is an official commitment on the part of the Church (voiced by the same bishops) to eradicate those abject conditions of economic poverty to which those large masses of people are subjected. Points (ii) to (iii) only emphasize the importance of material detachment on the part of those who want to improve the economic lives of the poor, because that task – if it involves revolutionary violence – is likely to fail if they have material wealth to worry about.

The language and the content of the Medellin conference, as discussed above, certainly served as one of the most important factors which led to the advent of the Theology of Liberation in Latin America. This point will be clearer at a later stage, below, when the content of the Theology of Liberation will be discussed into some reasonable detail. My next point is the discussion on the Second Vatican Council, which is the second immediate factor which led to the birth of the Theology of Liberation.

## 2.5 The Second Vatican Council

This council, sometimes referred to as Vatican II, took place in the Vatican City in Rome between 1962-1965.<sup>191</sup> Every Catholic bishop had to attend this council as its intention was to renew the Catholic Church's teachings on every aspect of Christian life.<sup>192</sup> Discussing the vital role this council played in the formulation of the Theology of Liberation is Rene Dupertuis who maintains that,

*Vatican II was the determining factor in the history of the Latin American Church. It had the effect of a violent earthquake and enabled the church to forge, for the first time, its future. The Latin American bishops met at Medellin in 1968 to discuss "The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council." This historic gathering can well be considered as the starting of Latin American liberation theology.*<sup>193</sup>

The word, Council in the foregoing quoted statement refers to the Second Vatican Council. The statement means that the Latin American bishops found the Second Vatican Council's Teachings to be very relevant for the Church in Latin America. As a result, they made a concerted effort at Medellin to implement them. The implementation of the Council's resolutions within the context of the Latin American Church had an indelible impact on the Theology of Liberation. In other words, the contextualized message of Vatican II – by the Medellin Bishops – served as part of the major resource material to be utilized by the Theologians of Liberation in Latin America.

Concurring with Dupertuis is Donald Dorr who contends that,

*One part of the world where the teaching of Vatican II on the role of the Church in the modern world was taken seriously was Latin America... It was something that affected every level of Church life, from the grassroot communities to the bishops and the leaders of religious orders.*<sup>194</sup>

Dorr is actually alluding to the decree of Vatican II called **The Church in the Modern World**, sometimes referred to as **Gaudium et Spes**. According to the Latin American Bishops, a very large portion of the contents of this decree were meaningful and relevant for the Church in Latin America in the sense that they dealt in detail with the question of the political and economic rights from the point of view of the Catholic Church's highest authority. For example, in the area of economic rights Vatican II teaches that,

*Among basic rights of the human person must be counted the right of freely founding labor unions.*

*These unions should be truly able to represent the workers and contribute to the proper arrangement of economic life. Another such right is that of taking part freely in the activity of these unions ...When, however, socioeconomic disputes arise, efforts must be made to come to a peaceful settlement... Even in present-day circumstances, however, the strike can still be a necessary, though ultimate, means for the defense of the workers' own rights and the fulfillment of their just demands.*<sup>195</sup>

The Second Vatican Council denounces terrible conditions of economic exploitation to which the majority of workers in the agricultural sector are subjected in some countries. About these countries the Council lamentably says,

*In many underdeveloped areas there are large even gigantic rural estates which are only moderately cultivated or lie completely idle for the sake of profit. At the same time the majority of the people are either without land or have only small holdings, and there is evident and urgent need to increase land productivity.*

*It is not rare for those who are hired to work for the landowners, or who till a portion of land as tenants, to receive a wage or income unworthy of human beings, to lack decent housing and to be exploited by middlemen. Deprived of all security, they live under such personal servitude that almost every opportunity for acting on their own initiative and responsibility is denied to them, and all advancement in human culture and all sharing in social and political life are ruled out.*<sup>196</sup>

What is significant is that the Council does not only denounce the evils of economic exploitation to which the workers are subjected in some countries: on the contrary, the Council highly recommends that,

*...reforms must be instituted if income is to grow, working conditions improve, job security increase, and an incentive to working on one's own initiative be provided. Indeed insufficiently cultivated estates should be distributed to those who can make these lands fruitful. In this case, the necessary ways and means, especially educational aids and the right facilities for cooperate organization, must be supplied. Still whenever the common good requires expropriation,*

*compensation must be reckoned in equity after all the circumstances have been weighed.*<sup>197</sup>

Never in the history of the Roman Catholic Church has a council of this magnitude stood for the economic rights of the poor as the Second Vatican Council did.<sup>198</sup> And indeed this was much to the joy of the Medellin Bishops and all other Vatican II participants who wanted to implement its economic position in their respective countries.

In the area of political rights, the Second Vatican Council – through the same decree namely, **Gaudium et Spes** – observes that,

*From a keener awareness of human dignity there arises in many parts of the world a desire to establish a political-juridical order in which personal rights can gain better protection. These include the right of free assembly, of common action, of expressing personal opinions, and of professing a religion both privately and publicly. For the protection of personal rights is a necessary condition for the active participation of citizens, whether as individual or collectively, in the life and government of the state.*

*...In many consciences there is a growing intent that the rights of the national minorities be honoured while these minorities honour their duties toward the political community. In addition men are learning every day to respect the opinions and the religious beliefs of others... Thus all citizens, and not just a privileged few, are actually able to enjoy personal rights.*

*Men are voicing disapproval of any kind of government which blocks civil or religious liberty, multiplies the victims of ambition and political crime, and wrenches the exercise of authority from pursuing the common good to serving the advantage of a certain faction or of the rulers themselves. There are some such governments holding power in the world.*<sup>199</sup>

In the first two paragraphs of the foregoing quoted statement, the Council is making an observation of what is going on in the world with regard to the area of politics. In the same area (of politics) the Council – in the last paragraph – observes certain political evils which occur in some parts of our planet. By means of this process of observation the Council is implicitly agreeing with the positive development in the area of politics, while it tacitly denounces the evil

that is menacing this part (political) of human life. Moving away from the level of observation, the Council strongly teaches,

*Let the rights of all persons, families, and associations, along with the exercise of those rights, be recognized, honoured, and fostered. The same holds for those duties which bind all citizens.*

*Authorities must beware of hindering family, social, or cultural groups as well as intermediate bodies and institutions. They must not deprive them of their own lawful and effective activity, but should rather strive to promote them willingly and in an orderly fashion.*

*When the exercise of rights is temporarily curtailed on behalf of the common good, it should be restored as quickly as possible after the emergency passes. In any case it harms humanity when government takes on totalitarian or dictatorial forms injurious to the rights of persons or social groups.<sup>200</sup>*

In its attempt to promote a culture of the recognition and the respect of political rights, the Council condemns the infringement of those rights in the strongest possible terms. For example, in one of its most vehement condemnations of injustice, the Council holds,

*Where public authority oversteps its competence and oppresses the people, these people should nevertheless obey to the extent that the objective common good demands. Still it is lawful for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against any abuse of this authority, provided that in so doing they observe the limits of imposed by natural law and the Gospel.<sup>201</sup>*

The condemnation of the violation of human rights is orchestrated by the Council Fathers from the point of view of the Gospel and from the point of view of natural law, with the specific aim of appealing to both Christian and non-Christian alike in this important task of promoting the respect of every person regardless of their race, colour or creed. And I think it does make sense for the Council to invite non-Christians to join the Christians in the fight against the infringement of human laws, because the human laws in question are meant to protect the dignity of every human being, be they Christian or not. Furthermore, in the context of morality the two groups do share some common ground expressed by the injunction, ***Treat others as you would like them to treat you.***<sup>202</sup>

Finally, the Council strongly recommends that the youth be properly educated in the area of politics and human rights so that they will be in a position to lead their respective nations in a worthy manner. Thus the Council teaches,

*Civic and political education is today supremely necessary for the people, especially the young people. Such education should be painstakingly provided, so that all citizens can make their contribution to the political community. Let those who are suited for it, or can become so, prepare themselves for the difficult but most honourable art of politics. Let them exercise this art without thought of personal convenience and without benefit of bribery. Prudently and honourably let them fight against injustice and oppression, the arbitrary rule of one or one party, and lack of tolerance. Let them devote themselves to the welfare of all sincerely and fairly, indeed with charity and political courage.<sup>203</sup>*

Through the above-quoted words, and through many other noble ones, the Second Vatican Council firmly stood for the political rights of the entire populace, in the process of which it seriously denounced all facets of corruption and injustice, and encouraged all present and future leaders of nations to do the same. The majority of Latin American bishops found the political views of Vatican II to be very relevant for their patria. That explains why they are counted among those who made a concerted effort to implement them immediately.

I have tried above, to discuss the Medellin Episcopal Conference, and the Second Vatican Council as the two immediate factors that led to the birth of the Theology of Liberation. These two factors certainly serve – directly and indirectly – as the official Catholic response to the situation of poverty which existed in Latin America between the 1960s and the 1970s. These two Episcopal convocations, according to the authors cited above, had a tremendous influence on the advent of the Theology of Liberation.

I am now discussing the Remote Past of the History of the Theology of Liberation. This subsection is also important, because it serves as a foundation from which the Immediate Past evolved.

## **2.6 The Remote Past of the History of the Theology of Liberation**

This is the longest part of the History of the Theology of Liberation, but I have summarized it into two subsections, namely The Beginning and the End of Colonialism on the one hand, and The Period of Neo-Colonialism on the other.

## 2.7 The Beginning and the End of Colonialism

Prior to the 1960s – the period when seeds of Liberation Theology were sown in Latin America<sup>204</sup> – no theology inspired Christians to rise against the evils of slavery brought about by Christopher Columbus and his fellow-Spanish colonizers who were strongly imbued with the following Spanish principles of colonialism:

*First, that it is pleasing to God to kill and rob unbelievers; second that warriors and priests form the noblest social class (as in India); third, that work is debasing, and that the land belongs to the crown and the nobility who conquered it, and the Church which sanctions and shares its possessions.*<sup>205</sup>

This unfortunate understanding of God and the Church dominated the minds of colonialists, from 1492 when Columbus and his crew arrived for the first time on the shores of Latin America,<sup>206</sup> right up to the nineteenth century when all the aborigines of Latin America began to rebel against the Church and the colonizers.<sup>207</sup> The colonizers of this period justified the application of the above-quoted principles on the American Indians (sometimes called the Amerindian) by the inhuman attitude which they had towards the latter, namely that,

*The Indians were debased, steeped in vice, “masters of gluttony, drunkenness, sexual excesses. The legend was created that Indians were savages, which meant that they had stagnated and were in a process of degeneration, never having achieved civilization. The Indians had no religion but superstitions; they did not speak languages but dialects; they were polygamous; they practiced human sacrifices, they worshipped demons and they were polytheistic.”*<sup>208</sup>

This enormous prejudice – partly expressed in the foregoing quotation -- which the colonizers had against the Amerindians convinced them more and more that it was really legitimate for them to conquer and to domesticate the latter in the name of Christ and the gospel.<sup>209</sup> At some later stage of this period, the missionaries introduced a Theology of the Cross which contributed quite substantially towards the domestication of the Amerindians. The theology in question, according to R. M. Brown, read as follows:

*You see the resignation and the acceptance on the face of the Son of God in his moment of greatest suffering? He knows that it is the Father’s will that he die this way, and so he gives himself, uncomplaining, in utter trust and love, assured that after these brief moments of suffering he will*

*be seen in paradise for ever. Is he complaining to God? Is he challenging Herod and Pilate who put him there? Is he trying to change society? Is he agitating among the poor for a redistribution of wealth or a new social order? Is he wishing he had a gun so that he could destroy his oppressors? Of course not! He knows that God knows best. So instead of turning aside from God's plan, He accepts it, and plays his assigned role.*

*This is a picture of how we are to bear our suffering, accepting it without complaint as God's will, just as Jesus did. Who are we to know more than God, or to challenge what God decrees? If it is God's will for us to be poor, we are to accept it without complaint. Who are we, whose pain is so small by comparison, to refuse to bear whatever pain God sends us while we live on earth? The joys of paradise will be so great that nothing we endure here below is too much to bear for the sake of what we will know on high, when God calls us back to our reward.<sup>210</sup>*

Brown further holds that this is the kind of theology which the people of Latin America have been taught from the colonial period, and for centuries they have successfully internalized it from one generation to the other.<sup>211</sup> Concurring with Brown is Gustavo Gutierrez, who maintains that,

*For a long time, and still today in the case of many people, Latin American Christians displayed an almost total lack of concern for temporal tasks. They were subjected to a type of religious upbringing that viewed the "hereafter" as the locale of authentic life. The present life was seen as the stage-setting where people were put to the test so that their eternal destiny might be decided. The reality of the "hereafter" was experienced and lived in a religious domain that was viewed as the only real world...Outside that world, beneath it to be precise, lay the realm of the profane, and of politics if you will...Eternal life was considered to be a wholly a future life. It was not thought to be actively and creatively present in our present involvement in human history as well.<sup>212</sup>*

According to the two authors, namely Brown and Gutierrez, the beauty of the heavenly paradise or the life hereafter was taught to the Latin Americans at the expense of the present world. From the colonial period (right up to the time of



Gutierrez?) the task of improving the quality of the life of this (profane) world by means of just measures was totally neglected by Christians. The picture of Christ which was given to the poor masses of Latin America, according to Brown, is that of a man who endured his passion and death without any form of resistance. The picture is a true reflection of how Christ acted in the face of suffering, but is this the standard position Christ wants every generation of his disciples to adopt in every occasion of persecution or torture? I doubt. And so does Albert Nolan. He strongly maintains that Christ's saying that 'Those who take the sword will die by the sword' is not a timeless truth: this means that,

*In some circumstances one can draw the sword without dying by the sword but in the circumstances of Jesus' arrest, when he and his disciples were so outnumbered, to draw the sword was plain suicide.*<sup>213</sup>

One could easily defend the missionaries of the colonial era for the kind of domesticating theology which they fed the Amerindians by saying that – at their time – there was no other way of theologizing, that is, they had no alternative but to think (theologically) in that way. As a result they cannot be compared to Albert Nolan who is writing only in the twentieth century. The argument is valid. However, it cannot be accepted in its totality, because already in the fifteenth century, there were prophetic voices in Latin America, in the form of Spanish Franciscans, Jesuits and Dominicans who were vehemently denouncing the question of slavery.<sup>214</sup> And it is remarkably interesting to note that some of the protests against the brutal enslavement of the Amerindians were spearheaded by bishops in their respective dioceses. Indeed it is Phillip Berryman who points that,

*Well over a dozen of the bishops in the sixteenth century, mainly Dominicans were outstanding in their defense of the Indians. The bishop of Nicaragua, Antonio de Valdivieso, was even stabbed to death in 1550 by one of the governor's henchmen. Today's liberation theologians regard this early generation of bishops as their precursors. They were exceptions, however.*<sup>215</sup>

I agree with Berryman that those Spanish bishops of the sixteenth century in Latin America served as an exceptional case, because generally-speaking, Catholic bishops would try by all means to retain a neutral position in any kind of a confrontational situation, with the specific aim of maintaining a friendly relationship with people on either side of the divide, be they oppressors or oppressed. And, indeed it is Gutierrez who claims that,

*The new and serious problems which face the Latin American Church and which shape the conflictual and changing reality find many bishops*

*ill-prepared for their function. There is among them, nevertheless, an awakening to the social dimension of the presence of the Church and a corresponding rediscovery of its prophetic mission.*<sup>216</sup>

It is the prophetic mission of the Church which poses lots of problems for many Catholic bishops, as it (prophetic mission) entails a downright condemnation of all forms of social injustices imposed on the oppressed by their oppressors. Both the oppressed the oppressors are members of the Church. As a result, many bishops who find themselves faced with this kind of social conflict, prefer to be silent so as to hurt nobody. Fortunately, some bishops are gradually protesting against the oppression and the economic exploitation of the poor of our times, because they realize that they cannot be silent for ever.<sup>217</sup>

Most outstanding in the protest against the brutal enslavement and the economic exploitation of the Amerindians in the sixteenth century was Antonio de Montesinos who constantly reminded colonists who were his compatriots that,

*You are in mortal sin...for the cruelty and tyranny you use in dealing with these innocent people.*<sup>218</sup>

As he rapidly became an impediment to his compatriots who abused the Amerindians by forcing them to till the soil and to extract ore from the gold and silver mines,<sup>219</sup> Montesinos was called back to Spain by his superiors. His unending condemnations of the colonists' ruthless enslavement of the Amerindians was taken over by Bartolome de Las Casas, who was also a Spanish Dominican missionary.<sup>220</sup> Prior to November 1511, when Montesinos preached a very powerful sermon by means of which he was forcefully denouncing the Spanish colonists' merciless act of depriving the Amerindians of their fundamental rights, Las Casas -- like many other missionaries<sup>221</sup> -- had his own Amerindian slaves. The sermon in question converted Las Casas into a radical defender of the political and economic rights of the Amerindians. The Church historian, Enrique Dussel, is of the opinion that,

*This prophetic conversion of a thinker who would afterward be so prolific in his writings as well as so profound and practical in his conclusions could be considered the birth of the Latin American theology of liberation.*<sup>222</sup>

Concurring with Dussel is Gustavo Gutierrez who observes some similarities between Las Casas's theology of the emancipation of the Amerindians on the one hand, and the Theology of Liberation as articulated in Latin America in the 1970s, on the other. For example, Gutierrez says,

1. *Las Casas affirmed that there was a close link between salvation and social justice, asserting that*

*to the degree the Spaniards were exploiting the Amerindians their salvation was jeopardized. "It is impossible for someone to be saved if he does not observe justice."*

*2. Instead of seeing the Amerindians as "infidels", Las Casas saw them as "the poor" about whom the gospel speaks so centrally. They should not be threatened with death if they do not convert — a necessary warning, for the Spaniards felt justified in killing the Amerindians who remained "infidels"*

*3. Las Casas judged the theologies of his opponents by their political consequences; theologies that led to murder and enslavement invalidate their claim to be Christian.*

*4. Las Casas's own method of theological reflection began with the specific case of exploited Amerindians, rather than with abstract principles from which "applications" could be deduced. (Sepuvela, his chief theological opponent in Spain, began with an Aristotelian principle that the Amerindians were "naturally inferior" to whites and could therefore be enslaved.)*

*5. Las Casas theologized as a participant in the struggle between the conquistadores and the Amerindians, rather than an outside spectator who could deal with their fate in purely intellectual terms.*

*6. In the midst of the Amerindian plight, Las Casas heard Jesus Christ speaking directly to him. "In the Indies I left behind Jesus Christ, our God, suffering affliction, scourging, and crucifixion, not once but a million times over." It was Las Casas's view, Gustavo concludes, that "in and through the 'scourged Christ of the Indies,' Jesus is denouncing exploitation, denying the Christianity of the exploiters, and calling people to understand and heed his gospel message."<sup>223</sup>*

No doubt, the 1970s Theology of Liberation inherited most of its terminology from the theology of the emancipation of the Amerindian slaves, as articulated by Las Casas. It is therefore correct to count him among the precursors of the Theology of Liberation of the 1970s, as does Dussel above. Las Casas utilizes statistics to reveal the callousness with which the colonists dealt with the recalcitrant Amerindians: One of his most important findings recounts that,

*Las Casas estimated in 1536 that in less than half a century, more than twelve million men, women,*

*and children had been slain by the Christians in their uncontrolled thirst for gold. The Spaniards were, according to him, extremely cruel in their treatment of the Indians, as if they were not human beings.*<sup>224</sup>

Prior to this ruthless extermination of the twelve million Amerindians, the total population of Amerindians is estimated to have been in the region of forty-eight million,<sup>225</sup> and when Columbus and his fellow-conquistadors arrived for the first time in Latin America the Amerindians had already been living in that part of the world for a period of 20,000 years, having been traveling from Asia across the Bering Straits.<sup>226</sup> How a population of 12,000,000 can be inhumanly destroyed – in the name of Christ and his gospel – is indeed, according to Bernard Haring, totally unacceptable.<sup>227</sup>

The eighteenth century saw the end of colonialism in Latin America, and the beginning of Neo-Colonialism which is the next point of my discussion.

### **2.8 The Period of Neo-Colonialism**

During the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the intellectuals among the Amerindians – most especially, the Creole Aristocrats -- began to talk the language of political independence they learned from the Napoleonic Wars and the French Revolution which they experienced while they were studying in Europe.<sup>228</sup> Sold to the masses of Amerindians, the idea of political emancipation eventually resulted in the endless wars which Amerindians waged against their oppressors. Following these wars the nineteenth century saw the total political independence of Latin Americans from their Portuguese and Spanish colonizers. The new rulers namely, the local Creole aristocrats, made the lives of their compatriots – especially the poor who fiercely fought for the political independence of the patria – economically worse. The Latin American countries sold raw material to Europe and the United States of America at a very cheap price. The latter countries then sold the former the goods manufactured from those raw materials at astronomical prices.<sup>229</sup> In his research on the same period, Miguel Bonino, a Protestant Theologian of Liberation, observes that the economic greed of the West led to the scarcity of agricultural products, which products used to be enough for every Latin American prior to the period of their commercialization by the West. He writes,

*The relative diversification and self-sufficiency of an agrarian economy was replaced by a monoculture of those products which were necessary for a metropolis: Argentina was supposed to supply corn and meat; Brazil, coffee; Chile, saltpeter and copper; the Central American countries, banana; Cuba, sugar; Venezuela, oil, and so on.*<sup>230</sup>

Thus, during this period, Latin America was victimized by international market forces who mercilessly exploited them at will, as they fixed prices of both the imported and

exported products for all inhabitants of the continent. What Gustavo Gutierrez holds is, therefore, true when he says that the former colonies – namely, all the Latin American Countries – entered the capitalist system as victims.<sup>231</sup> This sad economic situation – which continued even after the Second World War – is best described by Dupertuis who reports that,

*According to a report of the United Nations in 1952, two-thirds of the Latin American population was physically undernourished – to the point of starvation in some areas. One half of the population was suffering from infectious and deficiency diseases. About one-third of the working population continued to remain outside of the economic, social and cultural pale of the Latin American community. An overwhelming majority of the agricultural population was landless. Most of the extracting industries were owned or controlled by foreign and corporate investments, with a considerable part of the profits taken out of the Latin American countries.*<sup>232</sup>

For many poor people in the continent these abject circumstances of poverty were just far from acceptable. Radical intellectuals – after examining this desperate situation – saw no solution other than the revolution,<sup>233</sup> while a few moderate leaders opted for a peaceful solution.<sup>234</sup>

During this period, there appeared a reactionary theology to that which was preached by Montesinos and Las Casas. This particular theology,

*Not only ceased to denounce the continuing crimes against the Amerindians, but succeeded in creating a “sacred copy” that provided an ideological justification for their oppression.*<sup>235</sup>

No doubt the theology quoted above was just a continuation of the domestication theology against which Montessinos and Las Casas preached.<sup>236</sup> During this period of neocolonialism, Jose de Acosta in Peru, and many Jesuits of this period – to a very large extent – also laid the foundation for the 1970s Theology of Liberation by defending the cause of the Amerindians, not only through their sermons and writings, but also by improving the quality of their dwelling places.<sup>237</sup> This defence took place before the year 1808. And then the period 1808—1831, is the period of the political theology of the emancipation of the Amerindians, which according to the historian Enrique Dussell, was a movement which – although non-scholarly or non-academic in orientation – played an important role for the Church of this period because,

*[it] reflected the efforts of a wide variety of leaders to provide a theological justification for the wars of independence and religious motivation*

*to take part in the struggle. Because of the chaos created by the war, this theology was not published in books but rather in tracts, sermons, pamphlets, and other forms of ad hoc literature.*<sup>238</sup>

Theologically-speaking, the period of Neocolonialism is characterized by a few elements of Amerindian liberation on the one hand, and numerous occasions of Amerindian betrayal on the other, by the Church personnel of the time. As a result, there seems to be a variety of the theologies, and movements for the emancipation of the Amerindians from one generation of missionaries to the other, starting from the time of Las Casas. At the same time – during the same period – there were theologies, and movements among missionaries who were determined to counter-act the process of the political emancipation of the Amerindians. Among other things, the missionary opposition to the political emancipation of the Amerindians was motivated by the vast tracts of agricultural land the former expropriated from the latter. On this particular point, McGovern reports that,

*The churches gained immense wealth from the lands, although they left much of their land unproductive. According to one historian, the church controlled half of the property in Mexico by the end of the colonial period.*<sup>239</sup>

Expropriation is evil because, in its context, land is used without the owner's authorization. The worst evil is when the expropriated land lies fallow for ages, which is what the church did with some the land it expropriated from Amerindians who were desperately in need of the land in order to fight the question of starvation, no wonder why some priests – during this period – literally led the Amerindians in a revolutionary war against the colonizers. McGovern further states that,

*Fr. Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and Fr. Jose Maria Morelos led the first battles of independence in Mexico. They armed poor mestizos and Amerindian peasants, and fought for an independence that would address the needs of the poor. Priests in Argentina and Central America likewise shred in the battles for independence.*<sup>240</sup>

Very few catholic theologians would find it difficult to justify the revolutionary actions of the priests mentioned above: it's an old tradition and policy of the catholic tradition to support the question of self-defense, and to wage wars for the same purpose.<sup>241</sup> Although controversial among many protestant churches,<sup>242</sup> this tradition has – from the point of view of the Catholic Church – proven to be of vital importance in the area of the defense of human rights, hence its approval by the Second Vatican Council today.<sup>243</sup>

The period 1831- 1962 – although conservative from the academic point of view in the sense that it never severed ties with Europe – was remarkably characterized by great achievements in the following areas:

*Widespread promotion of the Catholic Action Movement; the rapid multiplication of theological faculties and theological journals in the universities; the founding of many centers for the study of social sciences; the founding of youth, social and labor organizations; the creation of political parties, such as the Christian Democrats; and finally the formation of the Latin American bishops conference in 1955, and the beginning of the continent-wide conference of religious (CLAR) in 1958.<sup>244</sup>*

According to Hennelly, the above-mentioned achievements of this period served to provide a good infrastructure for a truly Latin American Liberation Theology which was to be articulated between the late 1960s and the 1970s. Put in another way, these infrastructural components comprise the pillars of the Theology of liberation, as this theology is in dialogue with people of all walks of life for the true liberation of all: it may look biased against oppressors in its preferences, but – in reality – it does aim at the liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressors.<sup>245</sup> This means that while it is the main priority of Liberation theology to focus on the just treatment of the poor – from the point of view of faith – it is also the responsibility of the same theology to call upon the rich and the intellectual to join the poor in their struggle for social justice.

The period 1962-1965 saw the advent of the Second Vatican Council through which the Catholic Church showed for the first time, at conciliar level, that it does have a profound interest in the political and the economic rights of the poor.

The 1968 Medellin Conference of Latin American Bishops served as a means to implement the resolutions of the Second Vatican Council within the context of the continent of Latin America. And the respective resolutions of both the Second Vatican Council and the Medellin Conference – especially those of the latter – contributed quite considerably toward the creation of the 1970s Theology of Liberation.

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- <sup>1</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. R. Gibellini, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.22
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.24
- <sup>3</sup> Raul Vidales, "Methodological Issues in Liberation Theology," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. R. Gibellini, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979.p.43
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.44
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.45
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.46
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.47
- <sup>8</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1987. pp.2-3
- <sup>9</sup> Robert M. Brown, *Op. cit.* p.52
- <sup>10</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.3
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.22
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.23
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.24
- <sup>14</sup> See references 73 and 75 of this chapter, most especially the latter in which Hugo Assmann argues adamantly for a thorough analysis of the context within which the Theology of Liberation should be written.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.26
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid. p.26
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.26
- <sup>18</sup> See Alfred Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church: The New Praxis of Freedom*, Georgetown University Press, Washington: 1989. p.83. This volume is one of the many which have Puebla as reference. Puebla is a Mexican town at which the second Latin American Episcopal Conference on the question of the Theology of Liberation took place in 1979.
- <sup>19</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* pp.26-27
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.27. See also Leatt et al. *Op. cit.* p.67. See Samuel E. Stumpf, *From Socrates to Sartre*. Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, London: 1975 p.428
- <sup>21</sup> See James Leatt et al. *Op. cit.* p.225 See also Samuel E. Stumpf, *Op. cit.* p.425
- <sup>22</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.27
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.28
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid. p.32
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid. p.34
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.32
- <sup>27</sup> John S Kselman, "Modern New Testament Criticism" *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E Brown et al. Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1968. p.14. See also Hans Kung, *On Being A Christian*, Chaucer Press, Suffolk: 1978. p.153
- <sup>28</sup> Boff, L *Jesus Christ Liberator*, SPCK., London: 1985.pp.35-36
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.43
- <sup>30</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.12
- <sup>31</sup> See reference numbers 104-107
- <sup>32</sup> See Alex Muyebe and Stanslaus Muyebe, *The African Bishops on Human Rights*, Paulines Publications, Nairobi: 2001. p.71. See also Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.2
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid. p.35
- <sup>34</sup> Fierro, A. *The Militant Gospel: An Analysis of Contemporary Political Theologies*, SCM Press LTD, London : 1977. p.142
- <sup>35</sup> Gutierrez, G. *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p.89



- <sup>36</sup> Cone, J. *Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1986. p.5
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.5
- <sup>38</sup> See J. M. Oguogho, "South African Liberation Theologies versus Racism and the Apartheid System," *African Ecclesial Review* 31, No.3 (June, 1989): pp.172-173
- <sup>39</sup> Nurnberger, K.. *Theology of the Biblical Witness: An Evolutionary Approach*, Lit Verlag, Hamburg: 2002. p. 196
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid. pp. 196-197
- <sup>41</sup> Ellis, M. H. "Critical Thought and Messianic Trust: Reflections on a Jewish Theology of Liberation," *The Future of Liberation Theology*, eds. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1989. p.379
- <sup>42</sup> Norman K. Gottwald, "The Exodus as Event and Process: A Test in Biblical Grounding of Liberation Theology," *The Future of Liberation Theology*, eds. Marc > Ellis and Otto Maduro, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1989. p.253
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid.254
- <sup>44</sup> Jorge Pixley and Clodovis Boff (eds.) *The Bible, the Church and the Poor: Liberation and Theology* 6, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1989. p.21
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.23
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid. p.23
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid. p.25
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid. p.23
- <sup>49</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. Cit.* p.35
- <sup>50</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. pp.62-63
- <sup>51</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.35
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.35
- <sup>53</sup> McKenzie, J. L. *Dictionary of the Bible*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York:1965. p.9. See also Richard J Dillon and Joseph A Fitzmeyer, "Acts of the Apostles" *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E Brown et al, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1968. p.167
- <sup>54</sup> John L McKenzie, *Op. cit.* p.9. See also Richard J. Dillon and Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *Op. cit.* p.167. The cited authors, at times, do not explicitly indicate that some of the verses with which they are dealing – in the structure of the *Acts of the Apostles* – do contain acts of violence. Let me give a few examples to illustrate what I mean. John L McKenzie, for example, does not explicitly mention that Chapter 8:1-8 deals with the stoning of Stephen by the Jews. Neither do Dillon and Fitzmeyer mention explicitly that Chapter 6:1-6 deals with the Hellenists' complaint about the abandonment of their widows.
- <sup>55</sup> See Richard J Dillon and Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *Op. cit.* p.167. On this page the two authors jointly indicate Acts 4:32—5:16, as the verses which are specifically dealing with this ideal Christian Community which the Boff brothers found to be relevant for the liberation struggle in Latin America.
- <sup>56</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.35
- <sup>57</sup> Jean-Louis D' Aragon, "The Apocalypse" *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, et al. Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1968. p.470. See also John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York: 1965. pp.38-39
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid. p.35
- <sup>59</sup> See Neil J. McEleney, "1—2 Maccabees" *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown et al., Geoffrey Chapman: London. p.465. See also John L. McKenzie, *Op. cit.* p.531
- <sup>60</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.35
- <sup>61</sup> See Robert North, "The Chronicler: 1—2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah" *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown et al. Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1968. p.428. See also John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York: 1965. pp.264—265
- <sup>62</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.35
- <sup>63</sup> MacMahon, C. *Jesus Our Salvation: An Introduction to Christology*, St Mary's Press, Winona (USA): 2007. pp.98-99
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid. pp.112-113

- <sup>65</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.39
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid. p.39
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid. p.39
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid. p.40
- <sup>69</sup> See A. Germond, "Liberation Theology in the Service of Justice", *Theology and Violence*, ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio, Skotaville Publishers, Johannesburg: 1987. p.222
- <sup>70</sup> "The Church in the Modern World" article 79, *Catholic Social Thought – The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O' Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 2003. p.221
- <sup>71</sup> Pope Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio (On the Development of the People) article 30, *Catholic Social Thought – The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York:2003. p.247
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid. p.247
- <sup>73</sup> Gutierrez, G. *Op. cit.* p. 50
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid. p.17
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid. p.17
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid. pp. 50-51
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.51
- <sup>78</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p.52
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid. p.52
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid. p.52
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid. p.53
- <sup>82</sup> Haring, B. *Free and Faithful in Christ*, vol. 3, St. Paul Publications, Middlegreen, Slough: 1981. p. 212
- <sup>83</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. cit.* p.53
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid. p.54
- <sup>85</sup> See Samuel E. Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York: 1966. p. 420. See also *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, eds. James Leatt et al, David Philip, Cape Town: 1986. pp.206-207.
- <sup>86</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. cit.* p.56
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid. p.56
- <sup>88</sup> See Hans Kung, *Does God Exist?* William Collins & Sons Co Ltd, London: 1980.
- <sup>89</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. cit.* p.56
- <sup>90</sup> Ibid. p.17
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid. p.57
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid. p.57
- <sup>93</sup> See *The African Bishops on Human Rights*, eds. Alex Muyebe and Stanislaus Muyebe, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2002. p.71
- <sup>94</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. cit.* p.57
- <sup>95</sup> See for example A. F. McGovern, R. *Op. cit.* p.32 See also R. M. Brown, *Gustavo Gutierrez: Makers of Contemporary Theology*, John Knox Press, Atlanta: 1980. p.34. See also P. Berryman, *Op. cit.* p.86. See also James B. Nickoloff, *Op. cit.* p.24
- <sup>96</sup> G. Gutierrez, *Op. cit.* p.9
- <sup>97</sup> Nolan, A. and Broderick, R. *To Nourish our Faith: Theology of Liberation for Southern Africa*, Order of Preachers, Hilton (Pietermaritzburg): 1987
- <sup>98</sup> Diarmuid O Murchu, "New Paradigms in Theology," *Priests and People* 4, No. 10 (1990): pp.389- 390
- <sup>99</sup> Albert Nolan and Richard Broderick, *Op. cit.* p. 23
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid. p.24
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid. p.27
- <sup>102</sup> See reference numbers 164 and 165 of this chapter
- <sup>103</sup> Martin McKeever, "Liberation Theology After Thirty Years," *Theology Digest* 51, No. 3 (Fall 2004): p.240

- <sup>104</sup> See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1987. p.2. On this page the Boff Brothers give statistical information on the number of illiterate poor people in the Third World.
- <sup>105</sup> See reference numbers 164 and 165
- <sup>106</sup> Martin McKeever, *Op. Cit.* p.240
- <sup>107</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. Cit.* p.22
- <sup>108</sup> Kee, A. *Marx, and the Failure of Liberation Theology*, SCM, London: 1990. p.260
- <sup>109</sup> Nolan, A. *Hope in the Age of Despair*, St. Pauls, Mumbai: 2009. p.19
- <sup>110</sup> Gilbert Markus, "What Future for Liberation Theology," *New Blackfriars* 72, No. 853 (1991): p.442
- <sup>111</sup> Albert Nolan, *Op. Cit.*, p.18
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* p.19
- <sup>113</sup> Jon Sobrino, "Theology in a Suffering World," *Theology Digest* 41, No. 1 (Spring, 1994): pp.25-26
- <sup>114</sup> Francis McDonagh, "Accents in Theology," *New Blackfriars* 72, No. 853 (1991):p.434
- <sup>115</sup> Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Op. Cit.* p.389
- <sup>116</sup> See Robert McAfee Brown, *Op. Cit.* On this page Brown shows how the Puebla Conference of Latin American Conference focussed on the plight of the poor because of the heavy influence it acquired from the Theology of Liberation
- <sup>117</sup> Albert Nolan and Richard Broderick, *Op. Cit.* p.25
- <sup>118</sup> Vuola, E. *Limits of Liberation*, Sheffield Academic Press, London: 2002. p.39
- <sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* p.41
- <sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* p.41
- <sup>121</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p.12
- <sup>122</sup> Ana Maria Pineda, "Liberation Theology: Practice of a People hungering for Human Dignity," *The Way* 38, No. 3(1998): p.231
- <sup>123</sup> See reference number 183
- <sup>124</sup> Dussel, E. *Ethics and Community*, (Liberation and Theology Series, No. 3), Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1988. p.9
- <sup>125</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, "Two Theological Perspectives: Liberation Theology and Progressivist Theology," *The Emergent Gospel*, eds. Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1978. p.247
- <sup>126</sup> See Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1976. p.71
- <sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* p.71
- <sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* p.71
- <sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* p.71
- <sup>130</sup> See Pope John Paul II's "Laborem Exercens," *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2010. p.395
- <sup>131</sup> See Juan Luis Segundo, *Op. Cit.* p.72
- <sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* p.73
- <sup>133</sup> See Karl Rahner, "The Church as Critic of Society," *The Content of Faith: The Best of Karl Rahner's Theological Writings*, eds. Karl Lehmann et al., The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York: 2000. p.495
- <sup>134</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, *Op. Cit.*, p.76
- <sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* pp.74-75
- <sup>136</sup> Noble, T. *The Poor in Liberation Theology: Pathway to God or Ideological Construct?* Equinox Publishing Ltd, Sheffield: 2013. p.51
- <sup>137</sup> Roger Charles, *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus, Vol. 2*, Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. pp.12-13
- <sup>138</sup> An Example among many is that of the Catholic Directory, 2011-2012, pp.17-19, written by the Southern African Bishops' Conference. Bishops' Conferences throughout the whole world do possess a book of this nature which contains – among other things – names of highly

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competent people who advise bishops on various crucial matters which are not directly related to revelation.

<sup>139</sup> The massacre of 800,000 is one among the most horrible human transgressions of our times. Find the information from Elias O. Opongo's "Inventing Creative Approaches to Complex Systems of Justice," *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace*, ed., A. E. Orobator, Acton Publishers, Nairobi: 2011. p.75. The extermination of six million Jews during the Second world War is another example of the gross violation of human rights that takes place when the world is left to under the sole control of politicians or people who have competence in politics

<sup>140</sup> See Gunther Wittenberg, "The Rule of Justice versus the Rule of Violence," *Conflict and the Quest for Justice*, eds. K. Nurnberger et al. Encounter Publications, Pietermaritzburg: 1989. pp.84 and 89

<sup>141</sup> Massaro, T. *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, (A Sheed and Ward Book), Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham (Maryland): 2000. p.171

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. p.171

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p.172

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p.172

<sup>145</sup> Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops (at Medellin, 1968), *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council*, Secretariat for Latin America, National Conference for Catholic Bishops, Washington, D. C.: 1979

<sup>146</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1998. p.206

<sup>147</sup> Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *Op. Cit.* p.110

<sup>148</sup> Segundo, J. L. *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, (A Seabury Book), Winston Press, New York: 1985. p.2

<sup>149</sup> See Juan Luis Segundo, *Op. Cit.* pp. 84-85

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p.85

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p.85

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. pp.85-86

<sup>153</sup> See Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops (at Medellin, 1968), *The Church in the Present –Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council: Conclusions*, Secretariat for Latin America, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D. C.: 1979). p.32. This Second General Conference only serves as evidence that the bishops were not meeting for the first time to commit themselves to the cause of the poor. They met for the first time – for the same purpose – at Medellin in 1968, and now they were meeting for the same purpose at Puebla. My expectation was that – at Puebla – they were going to intensify their commitment. Let's go back to p.60 to find out what they did.

<sup>154</sup> Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *Puebla: Evangelization in the Present and in the Future of Latin America. Conclusions*, The Catholic Institute of Race Relations (CIIR), London : 1980. p.42

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. pp.42-43

<sup>156</sup> See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1987. pp.2-3

<sup>157</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op Cit.* p.247

<sup>158</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p.107

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p.111

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p.111

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. p.111

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. p.116

<sup>163</sup> Sobrino, J. *No Salvation outside the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2008. p. 71

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. p.76

<sup>165</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. cit.* p.86. See also James B. Nickoloff, *Op. cit.* p. 79

<sup>166</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. cit.* p.104

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. p.121

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. p.92

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p.94

- <sup>170</sup> Hennelly, A. T. *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p. xvii.
- <sup>171</sup> Charles, R. *Christian Social Witness and Teaching Vol. 2* Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. pp. 246-247. See also Dupertuis, A. R. *Liberation Theology: A Study in its Soteriology*, Andrews University Press, Michigan: 1987. p. 89. See also Berryman, P. *Liberation Theology: The Essential Facts About The Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond*, I. B. Tauris and CO LTD, London: pp. 27-28
- <sup>172</sup> Andrew Dawson, "The Origins and Character of the Base Ecclesial Communities" in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (ed) Christopher Rowland, University Press, Cambridge: 1999. p. 114
- <sup>173</sup> McGovern, A. F. *Liberation Theology and its Critics*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1989. p. 5
- <sup>174</sup> Segundo Galilea, "Liberation Theology and the New Tasks" in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, (ed) Rosino Gibellini, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.164
- <sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* p. 164
- <sup>176</sup> Sobrino, J. *The True Church and the Poor* SCM Press Ltd, London: 1985. p.19. See also P. Berryman, *Op. cit.* p. 26
- <sup>177</sup> Hennelly, A. T. *Op. cit.* p.xxiii
- <sup>178</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, "Towards a Theology of Liberation, (July 1968)" in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (ed) Alfred T. Hennelly, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p. 62
- <sup>179</sup> Charles, R. *Op. cit.* p. 239. See also G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p. xvii
- <sup>180</sup> Brown, R. M. *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p. 11
- <sup>181</sup> Dupertuis, A. R. *Liberation Theology: A Study in its Soteriology*, Andrews University Press, Michigan: 1987. p. 81
- <sup>182</sup> Dorr, D. *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1983. p 206
- <sup>183</sup> Brown, R. M. *Op. cit.* p.13
- <sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* p.4. See also A. R. Dupertuis, *Op. cit.* p. See also A. T. Hennelly, *Op. cit.* See also P. Berryman, *Op. cit.* p.
- <sup>185</sup> Charles, R. *Op. Cit.* p. 240; see also Dorr, D *Op. cit.* p. 208
- <sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* 209
- <sup>187</sup> *Ibid* p. 209
- <sup>188</sup> See reference number 6. See also R. M. Brown, *Op. cit.* p. . See Also P. Berryman, *Op. cit.* p. 24
- <sup>189</sup> Hennelly, A.T. *Op.Cit.*p.57
- <sup>190</sup> Charles, R. *Op. cit.* p. 243
- <sup>191</sup> Abbott, W. *The Documents of Vatican II*, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1966. pp. 741-742
- <sup>192</sup> Dorr, D *Op. cit.* pp.150-151
- <sup>193</sup> Dupertuis, A R. *Op. cit.* p. 72. see also P. Berryman, *Op. cit.* p. 12
- <sup>194</sup> Dorr, D. *Op. cit.* p.205
- <sup>195</sup> "Gaudium et Spes" in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (eds) David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2003) p. 212
- <sup>196</sup> *Ibid.* p. 214
- <sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 214-215
- <sup>198</sup> Of course, there has been individual saints and popes who wrote extensively on the subject of economic and political rights of the poor in the past. Among the popes, a good example is that of Pope Leo XIII, who wrote the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, a papal document regarded by many as a true reflection of the church's position on how the poor's rights should be recognized and respected.
- <sup>199</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 215-216
- <sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* p. 217
- <sup>201</sup> *Ibid.* p. 216

- <sup>202</sup> John L. McKenzie, "The Gospel according to Matthew" in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer and Roland E. Murphy (Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1969) p. 73. See also Bernard Haring, *Free and Faithful in Christ, vol 1*. St Paul Publications, Middlegreen, Slough: 1979. p.324. See also R. M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, Paulist Press, New York: 1989. p. 288
- <sup>203</sup> See David J. O'Brien Thomas A. Shannon, *Op. cit.* p.218
- <sup>204</sup> See A. T. Hennelly, *Op. cit.* p. 62
- <sup>205</sup> See A. R. Dupertuis, *Op. cit.* p.28
- <sup>206</sup> Brown, R. E. *Op.cit.* p.2
- <sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* p.4
- <sup>208</sup> Dupertuis, A. R. *Op. cit.* p.34
- <sup>209</sup> *Ibid.* p.36
- <sup>210</sup> R. M. Brown, *Op. cit.* p.5
- <sup>211</sup> *Ibid.* p.5
- <sup>212</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith" *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979). p.3
- <sup>213</sup> Nolan, A. *Jesus Before Christianity*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London: 1977. p.110
- <sup>214</sup> McGovern, A. F. *Op. cit.* pp.2-3; See also Hennelly, A.T. *Op. cit.* p.xvii. See also Dupertuis, A. R. *Op. cit.* p. 55
- <sup>215</sup> Berryman, P. *Op. cit.* p.10
- <sup>216</sup> Gutierrez, G. *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p.62
- <sup>217</sup> *Ibid.* p.63. For many other exemplary bishops of our times who prophetically promote the culture of the recognition of the fundamental rights of the poor, see the volume *The African Bishops on Human Rights*, (eds.) A. Muyebe and S. Muyebe, Paulines Publications, Nairobi:2002.
- <sup>218</sup> McGovern, A. F. *Op. cit.* p.3
- <sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* p.2
- <sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* p.3, See also A. R. Dupertuis, *Op. cit.* p.55; See also A.T. Hennelly, *Op. cit.* xvii.
- <sup>221</sup> McGovern, *Op. cit.* pp.2-3. See also Phillip Berryman, *Op. cit.* pp.9-10
- <sup>222</sup> See A. T. Hennelly, *Op. cit.* p.xvii
- <sup>223</sup> See R. M. Brown, *Op. cit.* p.3
- <sup>224</sup> See A. R. Dupertuis, *Op. cit.* p.31
- <sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* p.30
- <sup>226</sup> R. M. Brown, *Op. cit.* p.2
- <sup>227</sup> Haring, B. *Free and Faithful in Christ, vol. 3*. St Paul Publications, Middlegreen, Slough: 1979. p.405
- <sup>228</sup> See Dupertuis, A. R. *Op. cit.* p.40. See also McGovern, A. F. *Op. cit.* p.4
- <sup>229</sup> Dupertuis, A. R. *Op. cit.* p.41
- <sup>230</sup> Bonino, M. *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia: 1975. p. 14
- <sup>231</sup> See A. R. Dupertuis, *Op. cit.* p.41. See also Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p. 52
- <sup>232</sup> *Ibid.* p.42
- <sup>233</sup> *Ibid.* p.44
- <sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* p.44
- <sup>235</sup> Hennelly, A. T. *Op. cit.* p.xvii
- <sup>236</sup> I am motivated by Gutierrez to think so: he mentions that the domestication theology of the colonization period existed even during his own times. See reference number 43
- <sup>237</sup> See A. T. Hennelly, *Op. cit.* p.xvii
- <sup>238</sup> *Ibid.* p.xvii
- <sup>239</sup> McGovern, A. F. *Op. cit.* p.3
- <sup>240</sup> *Ibid.* p.3
- <sup>241</sup> The history of the Just War ethic as adopted by the Catholic Church from the fourth century right up to the twenty-first century, reveals lots of saints and popes who have written or spoken quite intelligently on the subject. The most recent is the stance of Pope Pius XII, who served the Church during the Second World War. For this study see Richard McBrien, *Catholicism*, vol. 2,

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Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1980. p. 1037. Protestant churches are quite divided on this issue. For this information see John W de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, David Phillip, Cape Town:1979. p.68

<sup>242</sup> Ibid. p.68. See also Sheena Duncan, “Radical Pacifism – An Option for Peace” *Theology and Violence*, ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio, Skotaville Publishers. Johannesburg: 1987. p.271

<sup>243</sup> See “Gaudium et Spes (Article 79) in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1966. pp. 292-293

<sup>244</sup> See A. T. Hennesly, *Op. cit.* p. xviii

<sup>245</sup> Jorge Pixley and Clodovis Boff, “The Bible, the Church, and the Poor,” *Liberation and Theology*, vol. 6, eds. Leonardo Boff et. al, Burns and Oates Ltd, Kent: 1989. p.228ff

## Chapter Two:

# The Relationship Between the Theology of Liberation and Black Theology

## Introduction

As mentioned in the last chapter, the Theology of Liberation was born in Latin America in the 1970s. The same period saw the birth of Black Theology in 1969, in the United States of America (USA or US) at the publication of the volume, *A Black Theology of Liberation*.<sup>1</sup> Planted on South African soil soon after their birth, the two theologies – in spite of their foreign origin – proved to be of contributive value in the protracted struggle against the brutalities of apartheid.

A critical revisitation of these two theologies is conducted in this chapter with the specific aim of examining how much they can still be of relevance to the situation in South Africa today. Actually it is the Theology of Liberation – under study in the whole thesis – which tries to establish a dialogue with Black Theology with the precise purpose of trying to be helpful to the victims of the Post-Apartheid South Africa.

## Similarities

### Similar Vocabulary of Analysis attributed to Similar Situational Background

A comparative study of the two theologies – together with all others dealing specifically with social justice – has amazingly revealed that the question of social injustice can produce similar theological reaction or protest, regardless of the place and time of the occurrence of that particular injustice. This research study is conducted by Albert Nolan – a South African liberation theologian – who holds that,

*What we are witnessing in the world today, then, is that people who live similar circumstances of poverty, exploitation, and oppression, whether it be in Soweto, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Rio de Janeiro, Manilla, or Harlem, New York, are developing much the same ideas about their poverty and about what they need to do... There is a growing body of common words that are used throughout the world by oppressed peoples; for example: oppression, liberation, struggle, revolution, class, proletariat, bourgeoisie, people's power, socialism and so forth... these words have been passed on around the world and oppressed peoples who are generating similar ideas have frequently found*



*these words, whatever their origin, useful expressions of their feeling.<sup>2</sup>*

Nolan is writing in the context of then apartheid South Africa. At the time of the publication of his book, marxism was banned in South Africa.<sup>3</sup> As a result he was not free to write that some of the words he is citing – for example, words like proletariat, socialism, class struggle – are derived from marxism.<sup>4</sup> Be that as it may, the implications of Nolan’s position are that no liberation theologian or oppressed people are borrowing vocabulary from the other. On the contrary, the similarities in vocabulary – regardless of the geographical situation – are brought about by the similar social circumstances. James Cone concurs. He writes,

*Unlike my moral blindness in relation to sexism, the absence of Third World issues in my perspective was due more to my lack of knowledge and personal exposure. Being so concerned about the problem of racism in the United States, and being so strongly influenced in my analysis of it made by the civil rights and black power movements, it was easy for me to overlook Third World problems... At the time of the writing of A BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION, I had not travelled to Asia, Africa, Latin America, or even the Caribbean; and unfortunately I had done very little reading about the problems of poverty, colonialism, human rights, and monopoly capitalism.<sup>5</sup>*

James Cone honestly confesses that at the moment he was writing his book – A BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION – he was totally ignorant of the Third World issues. Among these important issues was the Theology of Liberation in Latin America which was brought to the awareness of the international world in the same period as the book of Cone. Cone’s honest confession certainly strengthens the point Nolan is emphasizing above, namely, that there are similarities in vocabulary which exist among the protest theologies of the Third World in spite of the fact that none of them borrowed vocabulary from the other(s). Nolan attributes the similarities of vocabulary to the similar situational background.

### **Similar Mission of the Books, A Theology of Liberation, and A Black Theology of Liberation**

The two books, namely, A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION, written by Gustavo Gutierrez, a Latin American theologian, and, A BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION, whose author is James Cone – a black theologian in the United States of America – already indicate the common mission of the theologians in both camps: they had the intention of liberating – from the faith point of view – the oppressed in their respective communities. The two authors – by means of their respective publications which both appeared in the same period of the 1970s – became pioneers of this essential task of the liberation of the poor. Even in the second

edition of their respective publications, the two authors – although working in different continents – still emphasize the importance of highlighting the theme of liberation in their respective theologies. Indeed Cone strongly holds that,

*The chief reason for reissuing this text as it appeared in 1970 is its central theme: LIBERATION. More than any other text that I have written, A BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION represents a new start I tried to make in theology. Alone in Adrian, Michigan, searching for a constructive way in theology that would empower oppressed blacks, the motif of liberation came to me as I was re-reading the scriptures in the light of the African American history and culture.*<sup>6</sup>

It is from the faith point of view that Cone wanted to address the oppressed of the United States on the theme of liberation, hence his consultation of the scriptures. The consultation of the scriptures already imposes limits on Cone as a Christian theologian: he can make sense only to an audience which has accepted and internalized the scriptures as a norm. Most of the time, it is only to this audience, namely the Christians – and to no other – that a Christian theologian can make sense.<sup>7</sup>

On the same subject of liberation, Gutierrez – in the second edition of his book – insists that the liberation of the poor from all kinds of injustice is still imperative. He writes,

*To characterize Latin America as a dominated and oppressed continent naturally leads one to speak of liberation and above all to participate in the process.*<sup>8</sup>

Briefly describing the content of the liberation in question Gutierrez holds that,

*... the untenable circumstances of poverty, alienation, and exploitation in which the greater part of the people of Latin America live urgently demand that we find a path toward economic, social, and political liberation*<sup>9</sup>

For Gutierrez the question of the liberation of the poor is very essential. That explains why he – and Clodovis Boff – strongly hold that any Christian who seriously wants to attain the citizenship of the Kingdom of Heaven will be successful only if he/she does attend to the radical improvement of the socio-economic, and political lives of the poor.<sup>10</sup> No path to heaven by-passes the radical act of the recognition and the respect of fundamental rights of the poor. We have to participate actively in the process of liberating the poor from all facets of oppression impeding them from enjoying their human rights. Only in this way can we achieve heavenly citizenship. The liberation of the poor – more especially from economic exploitation and political oppression – forms an integral part of the Christian salvation.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the two theologies seriously hold that no Christian who ignores this important

task of the liberation of the poor – most especially from their socio-economic and political hardships – will become member of the Kingdom of God.

### **Similar Historical Origins**

The historical origins of the two theologies are almost similar. They both originate from the experience of slavery. While the Theology of Liberation is rooted in the sixteenth century's slavery of the Amerindians, on the one hand,<sup>12</sup> Black Theology dates as far back as the seventeenth century, on the other,<sup>13</sup> when African Americans were slaves of the whites. That explains why they share the common task of radically condemning every form of injustice in spite of their geographical distance. For example, Gutierrez – contemplating the incorporation of violence into the struggle against injustice in the Latin America – strongly writes,

*We cannot say that violence is all right when the oppressor uses it to maintain 'order', but wrong when the oppressed use it to overthrow the same 'order'*<sup>14</sup>

In the same breath, James Cone – in the context of the United States of America – outrightly condemns the oppression of blacks by whites. He strongly claims that God sides with the victims of oppression by saying,

*To say that God is color-blind is analogous to saying that God is blind to justice and injustice, to right and wrong, to good and evil. Certainly this is not the picture of God revealed in the Old and the New Testament. Yahweh takes sides. On the one hand, Yahweh sides with Israel against the Canaanites...On the other hand, Yahweh sides with the poor within the community of Israel against the rich and other political oppressors. In the New Testament, Jesus is not for all, but for the oppressed, the poor and unwanted of society, against oppressors. The God of the biblical tradition is not uninvolved or neutral regarding human affairs; God is decidedly involved... taking sides with the oppressed of the land.*<sup>15</sup>

Thus, for Cone there is no doubt whatsoever that the foregoing statement concretely implies that,

*God is not color-blind in the black-white struggle, but has made an unqualified identification with blacks. This means that the movement for black liberation is the very work of God, effecting God's will among men.*<sup>16</sup>

I do understand Cone's interpretation of the God of the biblical tradition. Fortunately or unfortunately, the picture of this God is not as clear and rigid as the one Cone is painting above. The exegesis of King David's adultery in the Old Testament, on the one hand,<sup>17</sup> and the exegesis of the call of Matthew in the New Testament, on the other<sup>18</sup> clearly show that the biblical God had time and compassion for the rich and the oppressors, in addition to the justice which Cone observes about Him. David and Matthew were very rich. David abused his power, as king, by committing adultery with Uriah's wife, and by playing an active role in the process of the murder of Uriah. Matthew, on the other hand, was among the most hated people of his fellow-Jews. He was a tax collector for the colonial government of the Romans. He and other Jews who were also doing the same job used to enrich themselves fraudulently, by overtaxing their fellow-Jews. Describing their relationship with the rest of the Jewish nation, exegete John L. McKenzie reports that,

*They were therefore not only considered oppressors; they were traitors to their own people because they collaborated with the foreign imperial power.*<sup>19</sup>

Thus, while Cone excludes whites from the program of black theology – because of their oppressive behaviour – the biblical God has room for them in His Kingdom. This God does not rejoice over the death of a sinner. No, He is a God who rejoices to see a sinner – like in the cases of David and Matthew – seriously repenting.<sup>20</sup> My proposal is that Cone's version of black theology accommodates God's compassion and His profound joy over a repentant sinner. In other words, let black theology joyfully welcome a seriously repenting white person, as does the biblical God.

### **Similarities in the Slave Drivers' Abuse of the Scriptures**

The abuse of the scriptures by the theologians of the slavery era – in the two countries – is a common complaint. In the context of Latin America the Amerindians were encouraged by preachers to imitate Jesus who never complained about the terrible pains and insults inflicted on him by his tormentors. On the contrary, he endured his agony until he died.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, Jesus is now in heaven rejoicing for ever with the angels and the saints.<sup>22</sup>

In the context of the United States of America, Katie Geneva Cannon – a black biblical scholar – painfully observes that,

*Central to the whole hermeneutical approach was a rationalized biblical doctrine positing the innate and permanent inferiority of blacks in the metonymical curse of Ham. The Ham "curse" in Genesis 9:25-27 was not only used to legitimize slavery in general, but it was also used by proslavery, pro-White supremacists to justify the enslavement of Blacks in particular. Ham became widely identified as the progenitor of the Black race and the story*

*of the curse, which Noah pronounced against Canaan, the son of his son Ham, was symbolically linked to the institution of slavery.<sup>23</sup>*

What is not clear in the research of Cannon above, is the biological connection between Ham and the Black people. And, will the biological link between Ham and Blacks – if it is established – be regarded as the legitimate OT foundation for the practice of slavery in the United States? Certainly not!!! The Biblical (OT) God is just, Cone and Gutierrez respectively attest,<sup>24</sup> consequently he will never allow the descendants of Ham – whoever they are – to suffer slavery or any other form of injustice because of the sins of their progenitor.

Cannon's research is extended to the area of the New Testament. In this context, she painstakingly discovers that the biblical scholars of the slavery era – backed by lawyers, politicians, and scientists – strongly felt that their practice of enslaving blacks had a firm scriptural foundation in the New Testament. About their argumentation, she says,

*The foundation of the scriptural case for slavery focused on an argument that neither Jesus of Nazareth, the apostles, nor the early church objected to the ownership of slaves. The fact that slavery was one of the cornerstones of the economic system of the Greco-Roman world was stressed and the conclusion reached that for the early church the only slavery that mattered was spiritual slavery to sin, to which all were bound.<sup>25</sup>*

Finding no explicit word of approval or disapproval of slavery from Jesus and his apostles, the biblical scholars of the slavery period concluded that slavery is of divine origin. And indeed, the white church of the same period – both Protestant and Catholic – officially adopted the standpoint of these exegetes. Cannon continues her observation by reporting that,

*The church made every effort by admonition and legislation to see that the authority of slaveholders was not compromised. For them the great truth written in law and God's decree was that subordination was the normal condition of African people and their descendants.*

*Ideas and practices which favoured equal rights of all people were classified as invalid and sinful because they conflicted with the divinely ordained structure which posited inequality between Whites and Blacks. The doctrine of biblical infallibility reinforced and was reinforced by the need for the social legitimation of slavery. Thus, racial slavery was accepted as the necessary fulfilment of the curse of Ham. This had the effect of placing the truthfulness of God's self-revelation on the same level of Black slavery and White supremacy. The institutional*

*framework that required Black men, women, and children to be treated as chattel, as possessions rather than human beings, was understood as consistent with the spirit, genius and precepts of the Christian faith.*<sup>26</sup>

Thus, Cannon shows in some detail how churches can abuse the scriptures in order to uphold policies or ideologies which are detrimental to the lives of other people. Of course Cannon's research is likely to bring about anger to the present generations of Africans and African Americans; but, what is the way forward? The way forward consists in focusing on redressing today's injustices. As today's Christians – both Black and White – we seriously need to address the past scandals of slavery by radically liberating the poor of today from every form of injustice which is enslaving their lives.

### **Similar Emphasis on the Contextual Nature of Theology**

The importance of the context within which one is doing theology is another common ground between the theologians of liberation, on the one hand, and black theologians, on the other. Both camps insist that a thorough analysis of the context within which a theology of liberation is done has to be one of the most essential components of this theology, if it is to be of any relevance to its audience. As a result, the majority of all the theologians of liberation concur that the liberation of the poor from all forms of injustice is the context within which this theology will be discussed.<sup>27</sup> Describing the liberation in question, Juan Carlos Scannone says,

*Viewed in the light of faith, the liberation would have to be not just social, political, and economic but total and integral.*<sup>28</sup>

It is important that Scannone reminds us that this important issue of the liberation of the poor should, first of all be studied – by the proponents of the theology of liberation – from the point of view of faith. Like the Boff brothers above, Scannone is of the opinion that Liberation Theology is not just banal or mundane exercise: Liberation Theology is a spiritual exercise. It has a lot do with prayer and the communion with the divinity.<sup>29</sup> In other words, for its programs to have a resounding success, it relies not only on the intellectual capabilities of its proponents, but also on divine power.

Scannone further studies the context of liberation of the poor from the holistic point of view. That explains why he emphasizes that it should be total, meaning that it should address every aspect of the lives of the oppressed. He continues to say that it should be integral. This means that it should not be treated as a triviality. On the contrary it should be valued as the highest priority of the whole nation.

The theme of the liberation of the poor – as described by Scannone above – is the inevitable context underlying the Latin American Theology of Liberation. Hugo Assmann develops this idea further. He holds that,

*Latin America does not signify one single and well defined context. A wide diversity of situations, both in socio-political and Christian terms, is certainly one of the hallmarks of our raised consciousness in the seventies. In the decade of the sixties much thinking was oriented around basic values and background features, and led toward a great deal of oversimplification. We saw a lot of comprehensive statements and efforts in the field of social analysis (e.g., the theory of “dependence”), Christian reflection (e.g., liberation theology), and official church pronouncements (e.g., the 1968 Medellin episcopal conference). In many instances, however, these efforts did not respond to the particular and specific nature of the context; what is needed now is a new definition of “contextuality,” of what it means to relate to a given context.<sup>30</sup>*

Assmann is very strict and adamant about the importance of contextuality within any expression of the Theology of Liberation. As a result he strongly holds that even if there are similarities of oppression among the countries of Latin America, nevertheless each country still retains its uniqueness, and it is this uniqueness which – forming part of its context – must be seriously addressed so that the Theology of Liberation becomes relevant for that particular country. Further elaborating on this point, Assmann continues,

*Our newfound awareness of context and its implications clearly suggest that we must move beyond surface realities. Basic to any effort now is the assertions that theologies must be inductive, pluralistic, experiential, partial, and related to their environment, in order to be relevant.<sup>31</sup>*

Thus, according to Assmann, a contextual theology has to bear the four characteristics – that is, it should be inductive, pluralistic, experiential, partial, and related to the local environment – if it seriously seeks to be meaningful or relevant to its addressees. The adjectives or characteristics **inductive, experiential and ... related to the environment**, are actually synonymous in the sense that they all refer to the fact that the contextual theology in question should emerge from the grassroots or local level – and not deductive or from above, e.g. from some European or any other foreign theology – and as a result, it should reflect the experience, the linguistic and cultural elements of the local context or environment. The adjectives, **pluralistic** and **partial** more or less refer to the same reality, namely, while the term *pluralistic* refers to the difference in style or approach of the theology in question, the term *partial* refers to the fact that the theology under discussion does not pretend to address the universal matters of faith: no, it focuses mostly on local or parochial matters, and that explains why it is not impartial.

James Deotis Roberts – an accomplished scholar in the area of black theology <sup>32</sup> – presents a detailed discussion on the importance of the context within which theology is formulated. He says,

*This is the time of world history in which the entire human situation must be explored. Our exploration must move, however, from particular to universal. The universal is abstract; the particular is concrete. Such an approach implies a serious encounter with ethnic theological programs everywhere. The context of belief, life and action must now be given priority.*<sup>33</sup>

For Roberts, the world history he discusses is made up of particular concrete contexts which must be addressed in their particular ethnic uniqueness, if any theological discourse intends making any sense to them. Thus, no particular context should claim to be universal by imposing itself on the others. In other words, the Christian message preached by Europe or the United States of America to communities outside its geographical perimeters, remains abstract and hollow, if that message does not address the uniqueness and the ethnic context of those particular communities. Roberts clarifies this point furthermore by asserting that,

*Today Christian theology is required to take the world of all people seriously. All must be reached in their lebenswelt if faith is to be a live option. Theology as developed in Europe and America is limited when it approaches the majority of human beings. Any “universal” theology arising out of the experience of such a small sample is a myth. Christian theologians unaware of the ways and thinking and believing of people elsewhere in the world make only a false claim to universalism.*<sup>34</sup>

According to Roberts, any missionary country – including those in Europe and those in the United States of America – which seeks to have its Christian message adopted and internalized by addressees outside its borders, must consider itself culturally and linguistically limited, so as to be in a position to accommodate very seriously, the linguistic and cultural background of its missionary audience. Trying to apply his argument to the creation of a black theology of liberation within the context of the oppression of the black person in United States, Roberts holds,

*What we are developing is a theology of liberation. If theology is to be more than dry bones for faith, if it is to address humans of flesh and blood, if it is to deal with ultimate issues of life and death, it must be more than a statement of doctrine, though it should include that. Theology cannot be truly universal if it refuses to deal with the particularities of the human situation.*<sup>35</sup>



Thus, the black theology of liberation – as a contextual theology – is expected to participate in the universal expression of the Christian faith by seriously attending to the contextual needs of the oppressed of the United States of America, without altering the doctrinal content of the same Christian faith. In other words, the black theology of liberation does not intend altering the universal Christian doctrines of the Incarnation, the Crucifixion and the Death of Jesus, the Resurrection, the Redemption, the Ascension etc.: on the contrary, pressurized by the socio-political and economic needs of the oppressed of the United States of America, black theology will certainly alter the linguistic outlook of all the Christian doctrines, with the specific purpose of making them relevant to the plight of the same oppressed masses. Gayraud Wilmore claims that James Cone expresses the same opinion in the book, ***A Black Theology of Liberation***. He interprets Cone to have said that,

*Black Theology is not prepared to discuss the doctrine of God, human being, Christ, Church, Holy Spirit – the whole spectrum of Christian theology – without making each doctrine an analysis of the emancipation of black people. It believes that, in this time, moment, and situation, all Christian doctrines must be interpreted in such a manner that they unreservedly say something to black people who are living under unbearable oppression.*<sup>36</sup>

Like Roberts, Cone's understanding of Black Theology – according to Wilmore's interpretation – consists not in the alteration of the universal doctrines of Christianity. On the contrary, Black Theology intends making these doctrines of Christian faith relevant to the oppressed by changing their idiomatic expression; meaning that the vocabulary used to express these doctrines should reflect the plight of the oppressed, thereby contributing substantially towards their socio-political and economic liberation. Wilmore's interpretation leads me to Cone's understanding of theology which is formulated as follows:

*Theology is not universal language about God. Rather it is human speech informed by historical and theological traditions, and written for particular times and places. Theology is contextual language – that is, defined by the human situation that gives birth to it. No one can write theology for all times, places, and persons. Therefore, when one reads a theological textbook, it is important to note the year of its publication, the audience for whom it was written, and the issues the author felt compelled to address.*<sup>37</sup>

For me the implication of Cone's understanding of theology is that the black theology he has written might make sense only to the oppressed of the United States of America of his time only. In other words, he does not expect his idea of black theology to be relevant to the oppressed of all times and places. Roberts would differ by maintaining that,

*As theologies become more contextualized, Black theology stands out as a powerful message for the oppressed people. The location of Black Theology in the heart of the First World, on behalf of a group who experience much of the deprivation of persons in the Third World, makes its impact more meaningful... Black Theology, as much as Latin American Liberation Theology, has a vital message for the oppressed everywhere. The relation to the South African racial situation is obvious... I can affirm the impact of Black Theology upon Dalit Theology in India and Minjung Theology in South Korea... Thus since 1971 I have become more and more aware of the global influence of Black Theology. However, the influence of other theologies among the oppressed people enriches and empowers Black Theology as well.<sup>38</sup>*

Thus, Roberts is of the opinion that while Black Theology – like any other contextual theology – has the primary responsibility of seriously addressing the local faith issues in order to remain relevant, it has however, proved to be relevant even to people outside the perimeters of the United States who are subjected to the wrath of similar oppressive and ruthless dispensations. As a result, those suffering people – influenced either by Black Theology or the Latin American Theology of Liberation – have in turn formulated their own contextual theologies which pay special attention to the most urgent needs of the oppressed.

Cone's concept of the contextuality of theology is still valid, however, as it serves as a strong protest against the domineering tendencies of the Western theologies: in the past the latter tended to forget that they are contextual. As a result, they imposed their "universality" on Christians of the Third World. Albert Nolan, a South African theologian, also shares the same protest, as he says,

*In the past theologians simply didn't even avert to the fact that they were doing theology in one particular historical and social context and so they presented their views to the world as something that was universally valid – for all times and all places. Scholastic theology, for example, was presented as a theology that was just as valid and useful in Africa, India, and Japan as it had been in medieval Europe—as if theology had no relevance to any particular socio-historical context. The one thing that modern theologies now acknowledge is that there is no such thing as a perennial and universal theology because all theology is of necessity contextual.<sup>39</sup>*

I understand Cone and Nolan to be saying that any theology which seriously seeks to have its Christian message adopted and internalized by its missionary audience will have to

acknowledge its linguistic and cultural limitations, in view of fully accommodating in its program, the linguistic and cultural tools of expression pertaining to its new context. Failure to do so – as happened in the case of those who imposed Scholastic theology on the Third World – reduces the noble missionary task into a futile exercise, because nobody can write a theology which makes sense to people living under various circumstances.

### **Similar Presence of Prophetic Voices**

Another point of similarity between the two theologies is that their respective histories are rich with prophetic figures who – like the prophets of the Old Testament – faithfully kept on condemning every manifestation of oppression inflicting the lives of the poor, on the one hand, and promoting a life of radical justice which largely involved the recognition and the respect of the fundamental rights of the poor, on the other. In the context of the history of the Theology of Liberation, the likes of Antonio de Montesinos, Bartolome de Las Casas were Dominican Spanish priests who – during the sixteenth century – continuously condemned their countrymen of the ruthless enslaving and the extermination of the Amerindians.<sup>40</sup> Another prophetic figure of that time worth remembering – among many others – because of his martyrdom is Antonio de Valdivieso, who was the bishop of Nicaragua.<sup>41</sup> The assassination of Valdivieso paved the way for the martyrdom of one of his successors – in our days – namely Bishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador who was assassinated for rebuking the murder ruthlessly inflicted by the army on the poor of that country.<sup>42</sup>

In the context of the United States of America the likes Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey and Frederick Douglass happen to be the most mentioned pioneers of the struggle – in the seventeenth century – against the ruthless enslaving of the African Americans by Whites.<sup>43</sup> Their struggle against every form of injustice imposed on the black person was taken over – in our days – by Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. For this noble cause, these two black prophetic leaders – like those in Latin America – were assassinated in the late 1960s.<sup>44</sup>

## **The Difference between Liberation Theology and Black Theology**

### **Difference in Historical Evolution**

The difference between the two histories is that the Latin American theologians are still continuing with the struggle for the liberation of the poor of that country, as a result, books are still being written with the specific purpose of suggesting further ways through which liberation theologians can be of help and relevance to the poor of today.<sup>45</sup> Black theology, on the other hand, has literally ceased to exist, James Cone reports.<sup>46</sup> J. Deotis Roberts concurs. He maintains that,

*Black theology is becoming more abstract and moving further away from the churches and their leadership... Furthermore the*

*leadership of the scholars seems to be gravitating toward those black professors who have plush professorships in Ivy League Universities... We need a theology emerging out of our experience of the Christian faith that informs our worship, our life and our witness in the world.*<sup>47</sup>

What Roberts is saying here is that black theology, in his time, was beginning to lose its significance, as its content was no more helping the majority of the oppressed blacks of the US to understand their faith within the dispensation of oppression. The exponents of black theology – trying to sell it to the academic world of the universities – unfortunately forgot the poor, for whose liberation black theology was mainly intended. Thus, the success of a true revival of black theology rests in its radical return to the grassroots level, which mainly consists of black Christians of various denominations.

Frederick Ware tries to find out the reasons for the unfortunate gap between the black theologians, on the one hand, and the black churches and their leadership, on the other. He claims,

*Dialogue between academic black theologians and black church intellectuals has been rare. Reflecting on his participation in a recent workshop with black theologians and black church leaders sponsored by the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on African American Church Studies, James Cone says their attempts at dialogue... was marked by suspicion.*<sup>48</sup>

And in trying to investigate the cause of this strange and strained relationship which existed between these two important parties, Ware discovered that,

*Black church intellectuals have little or no role in the selection and determination of canons or standards that academic black theologians use. African American churches, as a whole, do not control or set the standards of those educational institutions wherein academic black theologians pursue their research and teaching.*<sup>49</sup>

The Black church leaders are obviously having big problems with the academic independence of the black theologians. The latter apparently denies the former the rightful access to rules and policies determining the acceptable standard of black theology. While the right to academic independence and freedom of thought and expression are of vital importance to any academic institution, some measure of monitoring – exercised by some board of directors jointly appointed by both parties – is absolutely necessary for the proper administration of that academic institution. The non-existence of this board of directors is likely to result in a chaotic situation characterized by an abuse of the academic freedom of

thought and expression, on the one hand, and the unfortunate split of the grassroots level coupled with the mistrust or suspicion discussed by Ware above. Part of the chaos I am referring to, is already observed by Ware who further claims that,

*Furthermore, the radical tendency that academic theologians emphasize usually overshadows and, at worst, excludes those tendencies and aspects of African American religion of concern to black leaders.<sup>50</sup>*

Rules, criteria, and policies devised, approved and promulgated by the board of directors in question could certainly be utilized to unite the two parties in view of salvaging the impending demise of Black Theology.

Gayraud Wilmore is one of those black theologians who could not understand the unfortunate fading away of black theology. He says,

*By the end of the 1970s many of us were aware that the promise of this new way of doing theology was not being realized in the grassroots church. What happened? What brought the demise of NCBC and began the creeping deradicalization of many black Christians, even as the books and articles on black theology were still rolling off the presses?... But there seem to be four reasons why the movement which actually antedated the formalization of liberation theology by Gustavo Gutierrez in Latin America floundered in the United States where it had been introduced earlier by NCBC and James Cone.<sup>51</sup>*

The honesty with which Wilmore is dealing with the question of the demise of black theology is quite impressive. He openly admits that while liberation theology in Latin America remarkably flourished, on the one hand, black theology dismally failed in the US, on the other. An acknowledgement of the failure of a noble cause serves as a good starting point for the revisitation and the revision of the same worthwhile project, while the denial of its failure leads to a waste of time spent on its unnecessary defense. Wilmore partly attributes the demise of black theology to white televangelists whose method of spreading the gospel was secretly acceptable to many middle-class blacks. He claims,

*Of course the televangelists know how to exploit the kindred spirit between the black and the white evangelicalism. They make sure the cameras focus on black faces in their congregations and use black gospel choirs to prove that born-again Christians can rise above racial distinctions.<sup>52</sup>*

My interpretation of Wilmore is that the essential task of black theology – which is to enable the black person to confront the white counterpart on matters of radical liberation – is

rendered useless by televangelists who are capable of utilizing the media to deceive the world about the real relationship between blacks and whites. It is this evangelism, which is a common project between whites and blacks – and is spearheaded by white televangelists – which became one of the main sources of discord between black theology exponents and black church leaders, according to Wilmore and Ware.<sup>53</sup> Thus, black theology needs to come back to the grassroots level – it needs a dialogue with evangelism, and every other issue held in high esteem by the black church and its leaders – in order to regain relevance. Jeremiah A. Wright concurs. He begins his discussion by singing the praises and merits of Black Theology as follows:

*In the late 1960s, James H. Cone's challenging works (augmented by and buttressed by the writings of J. Deotis Roberts, Gayraud Wilmore and others) shook American Christianity to its foundations. The racist assumptions upon which the white supremacist theology had been constructed since the founding of the country, which declared "all men equal" while holding Africans in slavery was exposed for what it was and is. It is Dr. Cone's writings and those of his colleagues that I call the "systematized theology" of black liberation theology.<sup>54</sup>*

Thus, according to Wright, Cone and his colleagues founded a theology – namely, black theology – which critically showed how the colonial Christian faith in the US contributed quite substantially towards the economic exploitation and the racial discrimination of blacks. After presenting the achievements of Black theology, Wright strongly holds that this theology has, however, not been without shortcomings which need to be urgently addressed. And indeed he firmly argues that,

*First of all, to many members of the black congregations (and unfortunately far too many of their pastors), the writings of Cone and his colleagues, and his students were "for the academy." Black pastors and black parishioners felt that the writings of the black academicians were not intended for them. It was an analysis of what the academicians were doing, but it was not meant for them, the "ordinary" people in the pew.<sup>55</sup>*

Wright further gives reasons for the unfortunate situation of the element of non-collaboration between Cone and his colleagues, on the one hand, and the black pastors and black parishioners, on the other. He continues,

1. *Most black pastors in the United States of America are not seminary-trained.*
2. *Most black pastors, therefore, had not read, still have not read, and many **cannot** read the profoundly insightful works of Cone (or Cornel West or Michael Dyson, for that matter).*

3. *Many of the theologians in Cone's age group – Dwight Hopkins calls them the "first generation of Black theologians" – did not "do church." They did not and do not belong to church. They did not and do not attend church regularly. They were upset with the "other-worldly" focus of far too many black churches. They resented those black pastors who did not stand with Dr. King or with the National Committee of Black Churchmen and those who put together the Black Manifesto; and as a result they cut themselves off from the very congregations for whom and to whom they should have been writing.*
4. *Black parishioners were not aware of Cone's work and saw no evidence of his findings in their local congregations.*
5. *There were far too few churches in the African American church tradition that were trying to implement the principles embraced by Cone and as a result, "black theology" became over a forty-year period, a mere discussion that was held at the academic level by black scholars of religion, but not a reality put into practice at the black congregational level.<sup>56</sup>*

My understanding of Wright is that no Black Theology of Liberation can exist without the support of the grassroots level of the church – and its leadership – which constitutes its primary audience. It was therefore suicidal for black theology to cut itself from the masses of black parishioners – and their pastors – who desperately needed the expertise of black theology in order to understand how the Christian faith can contribute relevantly towards their liberation from whites' oppression. The unfortunate neglect of the majority of the black churches by black theology, no doubt, led to the eventual demise of this theology which is discussed by Wilmore further above.

### **Harmony and Confrontation**

Characterizing the Theology of Liberation is a spirit of harmony. This means that its proponents' approaches are complementing each in spite of the differences which they have. Complementing each other in this context does not necessarily refer to the uniformity of ideas, no, it only refers to the fact that while they jointly agree on the total liberation of the poor – from the theological point of view – each one of them contributes toward the growth of this theology by studying or focusing on the aspect which he/she deems to be of vital importance.<sup>57</sup>

However, what I am missing in Liberation Theology is the spirit of debate and open confrontation which characterize black theology. In addition to their respective contribution towards its substantial growth,<sup>58</sup> its exponents are capable of enriching black theology with their public debates. The public debates in question are not conducted in a formal sense – of people questioning one another's positions in the context of a panel discussion – but they appear as disagreements which form part and parcel of the thesis of the individual black

theologian. To illustrate my point, I shall make a comparative study of three major black theologians, namely James Cone, James Deotis Roberts, and William R. Jones.

### **James Cone**

I have already admired what I think is the most valid point of Cone's idea of theology, namely that theology is not a universal phenomenon. On the contrary, theology is contextual, that is, it does not pretend to address the concerns of the whole world. It is therefore parochial and biased in the sense that it will make sense to people of a particular place and a particular time. In other words, theology – including black theology – is not meant to be meaningful to people of all places and all times. Of course, a contextual theology – as we have learnt above – can indirectly exert some influence to people outside its geographical and cultural perimeters.

After reading Cone's second edition of *A Black Theology of Liberation*, I find him to be taking the contextuality of his black theology to extremes. The color or the blackness of his theology is my biggest problem. The blackness of his theology – which, to a very large extent, dominates his book – tempts me to dismiss it as racism in reverse. He totally rejects the white colour, and considers it to be satanic and Antichrist, as he associates it with the evil of oppression and the enslavement of the black people of the United States. He says,

*Insofar as black theology is a theology arising from an identification with the oppressed black community and seeks to interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of the liberation of that community, it is Christian theology. American white theology is a theology of the Antichrist insofar as it arises from an identification with the white community, thereby putting God's approval on white oppression of black existence.*<sup>59</sup>

On the same note Cone further states that,

*Black theology seeks to analyze the satanic nature of whiteness and by doing so to prepare all nonwhites for revolutionary action.*<sup>60</sup>

In the attempt to forge some unity between whites and blacks, Cones strongly holds that,

*In order to be Christian theology, white theology must cease being white theology and become black theology by denying whiteness as an acceptable form of human existence and affirming blackness as God's intention for humanity.*<sup>61</sup>

Cone must provide Christian criteria which dismiss the one colour of humanity as satanic. He must further provide Christian criteria which qualify other colours of humanity as an acceptable plan of God. In other words, which human colours are acceptable to God, and



which ones are considered by God to be the work of satan, and thus deserve to be destroyed by means of revolutionary violence? I totally sympathize with the blacks of the United States in their struggle against the racial oppression inflicted upon them by their white counterparts; but at the same time I strongly believe that all human colours are a creation of God. As a result, if one human color oppresses the others, it should not be dismissed as a creation of satan, but it should be reprimanded and reminded that it should behave accordingly as is expected of every color created by God. And if the domineering colour is motivated by its interpretation of the scriptures to oppress the others, those that are oppressed should correct that faulty interpretation in the strongest possible terms. What is at stake here is not the color of a nation or the color of a theology, but a wrong theology which anybody – regardless of color or gender – can formulate and put into practice. It is not the color of a nation which should be changed, but its faulty ways of theologizing. Neither should the presently oppressed nation seek to be the future dominator by regarding itself as God’s plan, to the detriment of the others, because such thinking brings about no remedy to the situation, but the replacement of one oppressive color by another.

Cone does not agree with me, as a result, he has even gone to the extent of painting both God and Christ black with the specific aim of emphasizing which side of the divide both are. He strongly maintains that,

*There is no place in black theology for a colorless God in a society where human beings suffer precisely because of their color. The black theologian must reject any conception of God which stifles black self-determination by picturing God as a God of all peoples. Either God is identified with the oppressed to the point that their experience becomes God’s experience, or God is a God of racism.<sup>62</sup>*

I understand Cone’s anger and frustration caused by the ruthless injustice inflicted on Blacks by whites. However, I think our anger should not lead us into the temptation of dictating to God which colour of the people He should like and which one He should dislike. He loves them all with love as unending as that of a mother to her children. ‘Does a woman forget her baby at her breast, or fail to cherish the son of womb? Yet even if these forget, I will never forget you.’(Isaiah 49:15). Commenting on these words, the exegete Carroll Stuhlmueller asserts,

*Here, perhaps, is the most touching expression of divine love in the entire Bible; John will transfer the idea to the fatherhood of God (3:16). Together they furnish us with an image of divine love so far beyond human love as to constitute the greatest mystery of faith (1 John 4:16).<sup>63</sup>*

Yes, the divine love – symbolized through the mother’s love – is wonderful and touching. This means that God loves people of all nations in spite of their sinful inclinations. In the context of the US, God loves both the oppressed and the oppressor with love as deep and unending as a mother’s. God mandates the oppressor to express this love by means of radical justice with which he/she should treat his/her black counterpart. God also commissions the oppressed of the US to show this love by means of a protracted struggle against all forms of injustice imposed on them by whites. In other words, God loves the oppressed and the oppressor of the US, and He treats each nation – namely, the oppressed and the oppressors – as an essential instrument of His love and liberation. Elsewhere Cone agrees that the love of whites which is acceptable to blacks is that which is inseparable from justice, most especially in the area of socio-economic and political powers. Indeed he writes,

*It seems that whites forget about the necessary interrelatedness of love justice and power when they encounter black people. Love becomes emotional and sentimental. This sentimental, condescending love accounts for their desire to “help” by relieving the physical pain of the blacks so they can satisfy their own religious piety and keep the poor powerless. But the new blacks, redeemed by Christ, must refuse their “help” and demand that blacks be confronted as persons. They must say to whites that authentic love is not “help,” not giving Christmas baskets but working for political, social, and economic justice, which always means a redistribution of power. It is a kind of power which enables the blacks to fight their own battles and thus keep their dignity. Powerlessness breeds a race of beggars.<sup>64</sup>*

Thus, Cone argues that white Christian love devoid of socio-political and economic powers is totally meaningless and unacceptable to blacks as it reduces them to the level of perpetual beggars. The only radical love which is relevant for blacks is that which is expressed through the radical recognition of their socio-economic and political rights by white people. So important are these rights and powers that God is even making use of Black Power methods – according to Cone – to enable Blacks to achieve them: Indeed Cone continues,

*The violence in the cities, which appears to contradict Christian love, is nothing but the black man’s attempt to say Yes to his being as defined by God in a world that would make his being into nonbeing. If the riots are the black man’s courage to say Yes to himself as a creature of God, and if in affirming self he affirms Yes to the neighbor, then violence may be the black man’s expression, sometimes the only possible expression, of Christian love to the white oppressor.<sup>65</sup>*

Cone makes an attempt, in the foregoing statement, to justify violence from the theological point of view: violence is absolutely good and pleasing to God, as a God of love and justice,<sup>66</sup> if it is utilized as means of self-defense against aggression, which (white) aggression has

been employed – over centuries – to debase the dignity of the black person in the US. In other words, Cone is trying to develop the idea or thesis which he expressed earlier on, namely that, God is making use of Black Power’s violent methods to combat the racial schizophrenia to which black folks have been subjected – by whites – for many years.<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore, Cone is aware of the conservative opposition his stance on the theological justification of the Black Power violence might provoke. Indeed he writes,

*It seems that the mistake of most whites, religionists included, is their insistence on telling blacks how to respond “as Christians’ to racism, insisting that nonviolence is the only appropriate response. But there is an ugly contrast between the sweet, nonviolent language of white Christians and their participation in a violently unjust system. Maybe the oppressor’s being is so warped by his own view of himself that every analysis made by him merely reveals his own inflated self-evaluation. Certainly as long as he can count on blacks remaining nonviolent by turning the other cheek and accepting the conditions of slavery, there will be no pressure to confront the black man as a person. If he can be sure that blacks will not threaten his wealth, his superiority, his power in the world, there will be no need to give up his control of the black man’s destiny.”<sup>68</sup>*

Cone is trying to reveal the hypocrisy of whites who condemn revolutionary violence while at the same they support an oppressive regime which, among other things, ruthlessly deprives blacks of their socio-economic and political rights. This cruel deprivation can certainly come to an abrupt end if blacks stop turning the other cheek, so as to adopt threatening means – including violent means – which will accelerate the process of their liberation by destroying all whites’ comfort zones. And focusing on the Churches – most especially the Catholic Church in the US – in matters of the liberation of blacks from all forms of injustice, he begins his discussion by saying that,

*I decided to focus my reflections on the failure of White Catholic theologians to address White supremacy as a **theological** problem. I placed the Catholic Church in America in the same boat with its Protestant counterpart. Both are racist institutions whose priests, ministers, and theologians seem to think that White supremacy offers no serious contradiction to their understanding of the Christian faith. While racism is America’s radical sin, White Catholic and Protestant theologians are virtually silent about its pervasiveness in seminaries, churches, and every segments of larger society. How People can claim to be Christian theologians in 20<sup>th</sup> century America and not engage this country’s original sin – racism – truly astounds me.<sup>69</sup>*

Cone develops his discussion by alluding to occasions of historical failure on the part of both Catholic and Protestant churches to denounce the question of racism downrightly. He claims,

*Like White Protestants, White Catholic theologians show no indication that they will end their conspicuous silence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both are following a tradition of nearly four centuries of silence. They were silent during 244 years of slavery and a 100 years of legal segregation and "spectacle lynching." With a few exceptions, White theologians were also silent during the 1960s Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. Instead of probing the theological meaning of the Black struggle for justice and White resistance to it, they focused their intellectual energies on the theological alternatives provided by Barth, Bultmann, and Rahner together with an emerging variety of antifoundational postmodernist thinkers.<sup>70</sup>*

The history of this deafening silence of White theologians on the matter as sensitive as racism – summed up by Cone above – is also summarized by Marvin Mich, who is the dean of studies at St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester, New York. He considers the present situation of racism in the US as a legacy of the slavery practice of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He strongly holds that,

*Twentieth-century institutional racism is the immoral and independent child of institutionalized slavery. On the question of slavery the Catholic Church in the United States reflected the attitudes of the larger society. Prior to the twentieth century the common Catholic teaching held that the social, economic, and legal institution of slavery was morally legitimate as long as the slaves were properly cared for materially and spiritually. As a consequence it was common for Catholic laity, bishops, priests, and religious orders to be slaveholders.<sup>71</sup>*

The racial situation described by Mich above, improved slightly after the majority of black catholic priests attended a meeting of ministers of all denominations which was convened by Martin Luther King at Selma, Alabama a few weeks before his assassination on the 4 April 1968.<sup>72</sup> King called this meeting with the specific aim of encouraging the black clergy – at national level – to participate actively in the civil rights movement. Soon after the murder of Martin King at Memphis,<sup>73</sup> black catholic priests who attended the Selma meeting founded an organization called the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, which shocked many whites when it openly described the Catholic Church as a white racist institution. Mich further reports that,

*The Caucus called for greater control by blacks themselves of the Catholic institutions in the black community, and warned that the church is seriously dying in the black community. In many areas there is a serious*

*defecting on the part of the black Catholic youth. The black community no longer looks to the Catholic Church with hope.*<sup>74</sup>

The concerns of the Black Caucus were presented to the American Catholic Bishops Conference, so that the latter – considering the seriousness of the black protests against racism within the Catholic Church – may review its policy, most especially by incorporating black personnel in the decision-making structures of the church.<sup>75</sup> Other black organizations – such as the National office for Black Catholics, the National Black Catholic Lay Caucus, and the National Black Seminarians Association<sup>76</sup> – were also established with the specific purpose of eradicating the disgrace of racism in the Catholic Church, more especially by recognizing Black folks as legitimate members sharing equal rights with White counterparts.

Seemingly the steps taken by Black Catholics to liberate themselves from the racism they suffered in the church were not radical enough for Cone. As a result, he says,

*As long as the Christian faith is connected with white supremacy, and other horrendous evils, I must struggle with it or reject it as the work of evil White men... When I think of how many black people have been enslaved, segregated, and lynched by White Christians, I would have to be stone crazy to affirm that faith without rethinking its meaning. How can slaves affirm the faith of slave masters and still keep their religious sanity? When I read Black Catholic theologians, I often feel they avoid the tough questions that challenge Catholic theology and dogma. It appears they want to prove their loyalty by not questioning the faith of the Catholic Church... If the Catholic tradition is really inclusive and belongs to Blacks, they must demand that faith give an account of the racism deeply embedded in the Church and its theology.*<sup>77</sup>

My blunt interpretation of Cone is that it is absolutely insane for Black Catholics to belong to a denomination – such as the Catholic Church – which has been enslaving and debasing Blacks for a number of centuries because of the colour of their skins. It is also cowardly for Black theologians in the Catholic Church not to challenge its discriminatory theology which highly promotes the supremacy of Whites over Blacks. My further interpretation of Cone is that Black Catholics should have broken away long time ago from their White counterparts – as the Protestant Blacks did during the slavery period<sup>78</sup> – so as to live a liberated Christian live.

Cone should have specified which Catholic dogma militates against the liberation of Blacks. It is extremely difficult to dialogue with him if he is not specific. Apparently Catholic scholar, Diana Hayes – who is Cone's fellow-black theologian and compatriot in the same context – understands Cone better. As a result, she responds to him as follows:

*We are proclaiming to the church and the world at large, that to be Black and Catholic is not a paradox; it is not a conflict, it is not a contradiction. To be Black and Catholic is correct, it is authentic, it is who we are and have always been.<sup>79</sup>*

I do not side with Cone, neither do I take the side of Hayes. I am only saying that no human institution is perfect. An institution might be better than the other(s) – perhaps morally or structurally – but it will never be perfect as long as it is human made. As a result, it will always be in constant need of being revisited, reviewed, and improved. Similarly the approaches to better an imperfect institution will always be different. For example the Black Protestants broke away from their headquarters – as a means to solve the problem of racism – while the Black Catholics solved the same problem by seeking substantial representation in the decision-making structures of the Catholic Church.

And my interpretation of the blackness of God and the blackness of Christ is the attempt – from the part of Cone – to bring God and Christ as near as possible to the plight of the blacks of the US. In this context, Cone uses the word ‘black’ not to denote the colour of God or Christ, but to symbolize God’s – and Christ’s – primary concern for the oppression and the liberation of the black people of the US. However, the analogy from the book of the Acts of the Apostles, most especially, the equation or synonymity of the terms ‘blackness’ and ‘salvation’ do not clarify the meaning of the symbolism of the blackness of God and that of Christ.<sup>80</sup> Neither does Cone’s denial that Jesus was white further help to understand the symbolism of blackness of Christ which Cone is trying to discuss. Cone concludes the discussion on the symbolism of the blackness of Christ by strongly maintaining that,

*The importance of the concept of the black Christ is that it expresses the concreteness of Jesus continued presence today. If we do not translate the first century titles into symbols that are relevant today, then we run the danger that Bultmann is so concerned about: Jesus merely becomes a figure of the past history. To make Jesus just a figure of yesterday is to deny the real importance of the preaching of the early church. He is not dead but resurrected and is alive today.<sup>81</sup>*

The foregoing paragraph certainly reflects Cone’s attempt to contextualize the implication of Christ’s resurrection. He is painting Jesus black with the specific aim of showing that – by virtue of his resurrection – he is actively present in and supportive of the liberation of the US blacks from oppression. By painting Christ, he has pioneered what many contemporary theologies need to do today namely, to free Christ of titles which reflect the ancient European Christologies of the fourth centuries, so as to give Him titles which reflect the contemporary understanding of His resurrection.

On the whole, Cone gives the impression that black theology is for blacks only. Throughout the edited version of the volume, ***A Black Theology of Liberation***, he still adamantly stood for the outright condemnation of whites and their theology, on the one hand, and the radical promotion of the exaltation of the colour 'black' together with the liberation of all Black people from various forms of contemporary slavery, on the other. Whiteness is evil and satanic, argues Cone above. If that is the case, then how did the likes of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Jurgen Moltmann, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Rene Descartes, Gunther Bornkamm, Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Marx, escape the wrath of Cone's condemnation? Surely these authors – together with those not mentioned by name – are whites of European descent. Cone does not even hide the fact that some of the ideas of these whites contributed substantially towards the creation of the volume, ***A Black Theology of Liberation***. How does their whiteness differ from that of the US whites? I suspect the answer lies in Cone's implicit agreement that not every white person is satanic and evil. Some whites – and some white scholars – mean well. As a result, no serious scholar – even in the area of contextual theology – should try to create his/her concepts in isolation from the others, be they of different race, colour or gender.

Having attempted above to discuss some of the concepts of James Cones on black theology, I now focus briefly on the same subject – namely, Black Theology – as understood and articulated by James Deotis Roberts.

### **James Deotis Roberts**

Roberts gives quite a detailed critique of James Cone's understanding of black theology. He bitterly complains about Cone's abuse of the scriptures by holding that,

*Cone's frequent reference to the bible is a mixed blessing. We are pleased that the bible takes on a central importance in his writings, but the manner of his interpretation is disturbing... he seems indifferent to sound historical criticism and careful exegesis. He is highly selective of his texts and contexts and put his blinders on if a given text does not say exactly what he intends. We are reminded that this approach to the bible has been used in the past to support slavery and discrimination, not to mention sexism. Even black theology should be oriented towards the unity of the bible and the whole gospel.<sup>82</sup>*

I understand Roberts to be saying that while Black Theology aims primarily to be of spiritual benefit to the blacks of the US, it should at the same time be open to the international scholarly critique: its biblical foundations should be open to the critical assessment of the international community of exegetes, if it needs development and further enrichment. The

failure to dialogue critically, with the international standards of biblical exegesis leaves black theology prey to the ridicule of unsympathetic critics who would dismiss it as nothing else but a political ideology which intends – like the proslavery ideologies of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>83</sup> – to achieve its evil ends through the distortion of the scriptures. Not only does Cone disregard international scholarly research, but he has the weakness of not dialoguing with his colleagues and the black denominations, continues Roberts as he says,

*Cone often writes as if God is speaking to him and only to him as a theologian of the black experience. All other theologians, including his brother Cecil, hear a different drummer. No theologian, it seems to me, is entitled to privileged information from God. Each theologian belongs to a community of believers. His role is to interpret the faith for that community, but he is painfully aware that many believers in that community may know more about God than he will ever know. The theologian, then who is faithful to his task, must learn from the religious experiences of the believing community, and enlighten that community regarding its faith claim.<sup>84</sup>*

Roberts contends that while a theologian might possess academic skills which enable him/her to interpret the scriptures and to analyze the faith of the community of believers, his/her faith may be of lesser strength than that of some of the members of the community. In other words the possession of academic qualifications does not necessarily generate a faith higher than that of people without those university degrees. As a result, a theologian should never be tempted to formulate his/her theology in isolation from the community of believers. On the contrary, he/she must constantly network with the community for the sake of the enrichment of his/her faith and that of the community, on the one hand, and for the maturity of his theology, on the other.

Cone's understanding of black theology is rejected by both black and white scholars alike, argues Roberts: while the majority of his black colleagues claim that Cone speaks for himself – because of serious problems they encounter in his method, content, and the implementation of his program – the majority of white scholars mock him as a spokesperson of black theology for negative reasons which Roberts does not discuss.<sup>85</sup> Black theology is not popular among the majority of the black tertiary institutions – in spite of the international fame of Cone – and the lack of substance from the part of Cone's theology, is the reason suspected by Roberts.<sup>86</sup>

Cone's defense is not as detailed and direct as Roberts's attack on him. On the recent occasion of honoring Roberts for his theological achievements, Cone claimed,

*He has been a friend, colleague, and critic of my perspective on black theology... In many ways our relationship to Martin Luther*



*Jr. and Malcolm X indicate the difference in our perspective on black theology.*<sup>87</sup>

Cone is trying to say that while Roberts understanding of black theology is heavily influenced by the theology of Martin Luther King Jr. on the one hand, the understanding of Cone's idea of black theology was influenced by Malcolm X, on the other. Cone's fascination with Malcolm X's ideas (on black power) does not necessarily mean that Cone did not respect King's theology. On the contrary, Cone strongly argued that,

*Before King, no Christian theologian showed so conclusively in his actions and words the great contradiction between racial segregation and the gospel of Jesus.*<sup>88</sup>

Cone greatly admired King's courage to condemn the racial discrimination that was practiced by the whites of the US as totally unjust and incompatible with the demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, Cone disagreed with the integrationist approach which King utilized to combat the evils of racism. As a result, he resolutely adopted the separatist method of Malcolm X – the founder of the Black Power movement in the US – whose influence led Cone to strongly state that,

*As long as black freedom and the Christian way in race relations were identified exclusively with integration and nonviolence, black theology was not possible. Integration and nonviolence required blacks to turn the other cheek to white brutality, join the mainstream of American society, and do theology without anger and without reference to the history and culture of African Americans. It meant seeing Christianity exclusively through the eyes of its white interpreters. Malcolm prevented that from happening.*<sup>89</sup>

My understanding of Cone is that black theology might not achieve its goals – which is the total liberation of blacks from oppression and exploitation if, for its strategy, it relies only on nonviolence and integration. He actually recommends revolutionary violence<sup>90</sup> – as one of the most important strategies for black theology – as it is capable of accommodating into its program the anger and the history of African Americans. Cone critically observes that,

*Malcolm saw more clearly than King the depth and complexity of racism in America, especially in the North. The North was more clever than the South and knew how to camouflage its exploitation of black people. White northern liberals represented themselves as the friends of the Negro and deceived King and many other blacks into believing that they really wanted to achieve racial justice in America. But Malcolm knew better, and*

*he exposed their hypocrisy. He called white liberals “foxes” in contrast to southern “wolves”. Malcolm saw no difference between the two, except that one smiles and the other growls when it eats you. Northern white liberals hated Malcolm for his uncompromising, brutal honesty. But blacks, especially the young people, loved him for it. He said publicly what most blacks felt but were afraid to say, except privately among themselves.<sup>91</sup>*

Thus Cone openly reveals the indelible impact which this fearless critic – Malcolm X – had on him. He further accepts that Martin and Malcolm unintentionally divided the subsequent generation of black theologians into two camps, namely the integrationists and separatists. Cone’s view is that this unintended division is indeed unfortunate, because the respective approaches of the two leaders were not opposed to each other. On the contrary, these approaches complement each other. As a result black theologians on either side of the divide – for the singular honor of the two leaders, namely, Martin and Malcolm – should ardently strive towards the synthesis of the two methods, instead of fighting among themselves, Cone argues.<sup>92</sup> Implicit in this argument is that Cone is separatist in approach, while his friend and colleague – Deotis Roberts – prefers integrationism.

What follows now is a critical investigation of Roberts understanding of black theology. Is he really integrationist in approach? Roberts bases his understanding of black theology on the exegetical findings of the black biblical scholar called Joseph A. Johnson. He says,

*Johnson is not naïve concerning the misuse of the bible in the area of race. He is aware that white theology has not presented an adequate message for blacks. According to Johnson it has not been able to reshape the life of the white church so as to cleanse it of racism and to liberate it from iron claws of the white racist establishment of this nation.<sup>93</sup>*

Johnson is saying nothing new: Kate has already provided us above, with a detailed account of how the bible was abused by the slave-owners, and Deotis Roberts – in his critique of Cone above – has also cautioned black theologians not to fall into the same temptation. John, however, does not offer Roberts an alternative biblical interpretation which enable the latter’s version of black theology to liberate both blacks and whites. It is not enough to denounce white theology for its failure to be of relevance to both blacks and whites – as does Johnson through the help Roberts – but it is also of vital importance to suggest or create a scriptural exegesis and a contextual theology which are going to replace the ones which failed dismally to achieve the intended purposes. Roberts concurs. He holds that,

*Black Theology has an awesome task. While we speak externally to liberation from white oppression, we must speak internally to the need for forgiveness from sin and exploitation within our*

*own group life. Black Theology must speak of liberation within from blacks and liberation from without from whites. But at the same time it must speak of reconciliation that brings blacks together and of reconciliation that brings blacks and whites together, both in the multiracial fellowship of the body of Christ and within the world where a multiracial society must be built.*<sup>94</sup>

I understand Roberts to be saying that Black Theology – if it still claims to be Christian – has to consider the possibility of dealing with the question of reconciliation in addition to liberation. The mission of reconciliation would be extremely difficult for blacks because of the evils of racial prejudice inflicted on them by their white counterparts. It is imperative for Black Theology to preach the reconciliation of blacks among themselves with the specific aim of preparing them to be ultimately reconciled with whites. Of course, this reconciliation will materialize only if whites show concrete signs of remorse and repentance. This partly means that Black Theology cannot entertain separatism for ever: Roberts contends that,

*Any black separatism, though arising directly from white resistance, must be understood as a strategic withdrawal for unity and empowerment and not as permanent. Authentic existence for black and whites can only be realized finally in reconciliation between equals in the body of Christ.*<sup>95</sup>

What Roberts is saying is that it is good for blacks to be temporarily separated from the whites, so long as this temporary separation is utilized as a strategy to intensify the consciousness – among blacks – that they are not inferior, but equals of whites and that they also possess the same intellectual capabilities which the latter has. This equality education should culminate in the sincere reconciliation which seriously implies the recognition and the profound respect of one another's rights. Thus Roberts – in spite of his inclination to subscribe to Martin King's integrationist approach through his insistence on the question of reconciliation – has been resoundingly successful in trying to forge some unity between Malcolm's separatist method which totally excluded any dialogue with whites as it regarded them as devils,<sup>96</sup> on the one hand, and King's integrationist strategy which aimed at convincing whites that justice is an essential part of the gospel, on the other.

I now wish to discuss the content of Black Theology as understood and articulated by William R. Jones, who is one of the major black theologians in the United States.<sup>97</sup>

### **William R. Jones**

According to Jones, black Americans suffer from what he calls the scandal of particularity, which consists of a maldistribution of suffering. He says,

*By accenting the ethnic factor I wish to call attention to that suffering which is maldistributed; it is not spread, as it were,*

*randomly and impartially over the total human race. Rather it is concentrated in a particular ethnic group. My concern in utilizing the concept of ethnic suffering is to accentuate the fact that black suffering is balanced by white non-suffering instead of white suffering. Consequently, black suffering in particular and ethnic suffering in general raise the issue of the scandal of particularity.<sup>98</sup>*

For Jones, the suffering of blacks in the US is out of sheer racism. If that is not true, then why – asks Jones – are whites not suffering the same way as the blacks? I interpret Jones to be saying that the whites of the US are enjoying various political and economic rights at the expense or detriment of blacks. Why? The failure to understand this situation leads Jones to the conclusion that it is God who is imposing these terrible conditions of oppression on the black people by siding with whites. As a result, Jones calls God a White Racist.

Jones holds that the ethnic suffering of the blacks in the US is not a value to be pursued, because – unlike asceticism – it does not have salvation as its ultimate goal. He asserts,

*If we differentiate between positive and negative suffering, ethnic suffering in my stipulative definition would be a subclass of negative suffering. It describes suffering without essential value for man's salvation or well-being. It leads away from, rather than toward, one's highest good. In contrast, certain advocates of types of asceticism, for instance, would regard suffering positively, as something to be actively pursued.<sup>99</sup>*

In other words, Jones strongly holds that the ethnic suffering of the black Americans would be tolerable if it clearly served as a stepping stone to their total liberation from all forms of oppression or injustice. Equally tolerable, continues Jones, would be the pedagogical understanding of the ethnic suffering of the black Americans. He contends,

*We learn from a burn to avoid fire. This makes little sense if the learning method destroys the learner. Suffering as a form of testing is also contradicted if the amount and severity of the suffering are incommensurate with the alleged purpose. It is for this reason that Rabbi Richard Rubenstein, for example, denies that the horror of the suffering of the Jews at Auschwitz could ever be likened to the testing of Job.<sup>100</sup>*

No reasons are put forward by scholars to affirm or deny that Job was a historical figure, argues exegete John McKenzie.<sup>101</sup> In other words, it is highly possible that Job was a historical figure, at the same time it is highly possible that Job was just a legendary figure whose folklore story was used by the biblical author in order to put across a message of

faith. My point is that we are doing injustice to the Auschwitz massacre if we compare its gravity to the test of Job who might have been an imaginary or fictitious character whose story happened to be fascinating to the biblical writer. So while I agree that it makes no sense for the method to destroy its learner, I think the comparison of Auschwitz with Job is an inappropriate example in this context. In other words, the homicide of Auschwitz should have been compared to an equally historical event like, for example, the bombing of Vietnam by the US between 1964 and 1966.<sup>102</sup>

Jones further observes that there is no end to the ethnic suffering which is inflicted on black Americans, and that explains why he calls it a transgenerational ethnic suffering. This means that it is being passed from one generation to the other. He bitterly complains,

*Ethnic suffering does not strike quickly and then leave after a short and terrible siege. Instead, it extends over long historical eras. It strikes not only the father but the son, the grandson, and the great-grandson. In short, non-catastrophic suffering is transgenerational.*<sup>103</sup>

As a theologian, Jones does not want to attribute the cause of this ethnic suffering of black Americans to forces of nature, but to God. Thus he cautions Black Theology never to take the goodness of God as its point of departure. He explains,

*It is my contention that the peculiarities of black suffering make the question of divine racism imperative; ... What I do affirm is that black theology, precisely because of the prominence of ethnic suffering in the black experience, cannot operate as if the goodness of God for all mankind were a theological axiom.*<sup>104</sup>

In my attempt to respond to the analysis of the suffering of African Americans which Jones is presenting above, I shall first of all, discuss the word 'Theodicy' which seems to be the context within which Jones wants Black Theology to discuss the plight of African Americans. He starts off his case by saying,

*It is often asserted that theodicy is the Achilles' heel of liberation theology: that God should be on the side of the poor or oppressed does not yet explain why there is poverty or oppression in the first place.*<sup>105</sup>

It is not only black theology which finds the question of theodicy to be complex, but all of theology. Basically, theodicy deals specifically with the question of evil in the world, most particularly does theodicy enquire in vain why God is unwilling or unable to eradicate the evil that menaces and frustrates the lives and noble projects of many innocent people. A very ancient Christian author, Lactantius – dealing with the same subject – speculated that,

*(i) God either wills to prevent evil but cannot (which would be to deny his omnipotence) or (ii) that he can, but does not will to (which seems to deny his goodness) or (iii) neither wills nor can prevent it, or (iv) can and wills to prevent it (which is belied by the reality of evil).<sup>106</sup>*

I have just cited Lactantius – a second century Christian author – in order to illustrate how old the question of this tense relationship between evil and God’s goodness is. Actually, long before the birth of Christianity ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and the Stoics were already preoccupied with the adamant existence of evil.<sup>107</sup> From time immemorial right down to our time evil has been emerging victorious over forces of good. Walter Kerns and Jorg Splett – after their joint study of the question of evil – claim that,

*Evil is a summons to action. This does not solve the question. The question remains. But as such action can take place only in hope, and not in despair, true hope exists in the face of evil only as the fighting hope which is struck as it strikes. If there are questions which are not to be answered but lived (R. Guardini), evil is one of them.<sup>108</sup>*

The question that is not being addressed or solved in the foregoing statement is why God permits evil to exist endlessly. If he is almighty why doesn’t he destroy evil, and if he is loving and compassionate, why doesn’t he free human beings from the terrible grip of evil. The joint contribution of Kerns and Splett is that evil serves as a call to action. Human beings should join minds and hearts to eradicate evil, regardless of the possibility of failure. I want to apply this joint vision of Kerns and Splett to the problem of African Americans which is analytically presented by Jones above. Suffering is evil, more especially if that suffering – like economic exploitation and racial discrimination – results from an evil political system imposed on human beings by others. Unending or transgenerational suffering caused by the deprivation of human rights is diabolically evil. The victims of this kind of suffering, namely the African Americans – motivated by a very strong hope to win – must club together to topple this evil political dispensation which debases their lives.

Kerns and Splett are actually saying nothing new: the biblical tradition – more especially from the time of the prophets right up to the period of Jesus – is full of exemplary occasions of serious protests against evil social systems, with the specific aim of replacing them with the ones that totally respect the fundamental rights of all, especially the poor.<sup>109</sup> Jones is aware of the biblical tradition under study, as a result he stubbornly maintains that,

*There is a contradiction between the continued reality of black suffering and the claim by black theologians that God is a friend of the oppressed, and this internal logical conclusion must be exposed not glossed over in the name unity among black theologians. If God is the liberator of the black race, where is the empirical evidence? If the deliverance of the black race is to be constantly compared by the black theologian to the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, then where is the event in the black community that is comparable to the Exodus?*<sup>110</sup>

Empirical evidence is not possible, for our faith goes far beyond the perimeters of empirical philosophy. If we want the empirical evidence of the deliverance of the African Americans by God – as Jones demands above – I am afraid, we have no choice but to have, as our point of departure, the empirical evidence for the existence of God. And we are not going to succeed in proving the existence of God through empirical means, for empiricism is a philosophical system which highly believes that it is absolutely stupid to talk about a phenomenon which one never touched, smelled, saw, heard nor tasted.<sup>111</sup> And indeed, one of the most influential European empiricists – Ludwig Wittgenstein – strongly holds that,

*Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.*<sup>112</sup>

Wittgenstein speaks from the empirical point of view. He means that one cannot make a statement about a phenomenon which one never saw, heard, tasted, touched nor smelled. Wittgenstein suggests that a person should keep quiet rather than talk or write about a phenomenon which does not appeal to our sense experience. We have never seen God, neither have we smelled, touched, heard, nor tasted his tears or his sweat. So how can we ever make a statement about Him if He does not appeal to any of our sense experiences? Furthermore, it does not make sense to talk about the achievements of God among the Israelites, nor does it make sense at all to make a statement about his works among the African Americans, exactly because his existence cannot be corroborated by means of any of our five senses.

The position of empiricism – like any other human or philosophical school – has got its own limitations. As a result it cannot accommodate God and his achievements. There are many other realities which cannot be accommodated by empiricism. A few examples are as follows: anger, frustration, joy, excitement, agony, animosity, tolerance, love, forgiveness, sorrow, oppression, exploitation, charity, liberation, sexism and racism. The existence of these realities cannot be denied. And yet none of them appeals to our five senses of experience. We have certainly seen or experienced the signs or results of these realities, but we have never seen these realities. Put in another way, many of us have certainly seen the results of charity – among other realities beyond sense experience – but we don't know the smell of charity, we don't know its sound, we don't know its color or its size, nobody has

ever touched it, how does it taste on the tongue? Nobody knows, and yet – like many others which are counted with it above – it does exist. The same applies to God. He and His achievements do exist in spite of his inaccessibility to an empiricist inquiry.

Of course, empiricism and many other schools of thought – like, for example, rationalism, Marxism, existentialism, liberalism, humanism, atheism, etc – are valuable in the sense that they challenge Christians to deepen their faith in such a way that it (Christian faith) is eventually in a position to be in dialogue with people of various creeds, be they religious or humanistic. I still repeat that empiricism has got limits like any other philosophical school. As a result, it is not empiricism which is going to help black theologians in the US to witness to God and His achievements among the African Americans: it is their faith. Faith, like the realities enumerated above, cannot be subjected to empirical investigation. And there is no doubt that Christian faith exists universally in spite of its inaccessibility to empirical inquiry.

Thus, it is only through faith – and not through empirical means, as they are limited in scope – that black theologians can convince their brother, Jones that God is the friend of the oppressed blacks of the US. Yes, just as God raised leaders in the caliber of Moses, Aaron, Mirriam (Exodus 15:20) and Joshua (Joshua 1:1-9) to liberate the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage, the same God – in the same way – raised African American leaders of the caliber of Frederick Russell, Morris Brown, Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, and Denmark Vesey<sup>113</sup> to be founder members of the struggle against racism in the US. God continued in subsequent generations to raise other leaders in the caliber of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.<sup>114</sup> These leaders, together with many black theologians, and many professional and unprofessional advocates of black theology,<sup>115</sup> should serve as clear evidence from the faith point of view – not from the empirical viewpoint – that God cares for the Black Americans, and that he will eventually bring them to the fullness of their desired liberation, as he did with Israel. Obama is the first black American president. Is this not one of the signs or steps that concretely show that God is just about to bring about the fullness of liberation to the African Americans, as he did in the case of the Israelites of old? If these concrete signs cannot convince Jones that God is not a white racist, I am afraid that nothing else – from the faith point of view – can. I fully agree that the process of liberation is not yet complete in the US until all African Americans have been provided with economic power equal to that of their white counterparts. It is therefore the onus of the black theologians to continue encouraging the laity to struggle on until the moment of victory dawns.

### **Conflicting Paradigms**

Alistair Kee is a European critical reader of Third World theologies. He begins his critique of the US version of Black Theology by saying,

*Whatever happened to black theology? Why has it stalled? The fact that its early criticism of racism is still being repeated, together with the usual biblical texts, does not count as*



*advance... If black theology in the United States is based on a race paradigm, then the successful challenging of racism, personal and institutional, in that society means that its work is largely done. Blacks are now emancipated to engage in the pursuit of cars, expensive furniture, large houses, and the finest Scotch.<sup>116</sup>*

According to Alistair Kee Black Theology stopped its program of liberation too early. In other words, for the black theologians the official abolition of racism marked the end of the war against the oppression of blacks by whites in the US. Only a small portion of blacks – namely, the elite, which included the black theologians<sup>117</sup> – began enjoying Scotch whisky and economic power with their former oppressors. Unfortunately, this was much to the detriment of the majority of African Americans who concretely experienced no economic quality or equality with Whites after the official abolition of racism. He likens this situation to the one in South Africa. He says,

*In South Africa, those who identified racism as the enemy find that with the end of apartheid their work is complete. To criticize the new black leadership would be politically incorrect, and yet in their liberal souls they are disappointed that things changed so slowly, or not at all. Twenty years before the end of apartheid, Motlhabi offered a more subtle analysis of the roots of oppression. No one who takes this view could be surprised that the new South Africa is so much like the old.<sup>118</sup>*

Kee extends his analysis to the neighbouring countries of South Africa. He claims,

*Forty years ago Malawi became independent, but for the sake of the economy the white tea planters were allowed to stay on. The race line lost its color. The black elite simply crossed the line to join those who held power and privilege. Twenty years ago Zimbabwe became independent, but for the sake of the economy the tobacco farmers and cattle ranches were allowed to stay on. The land issue was not addressed at that time. The race line lost its color. The new black elite crossed the line to join those who held power and privilege. Ten years ago the majority came to South Africa. The race line was declared illegal, but the black elite crossed the line to join those who held power and privilege.<sup>119</sup>*

Thus, the race paradigm is totally dismissed by Kee as an inadequate tool of analysis. Like Motlhabi, he recommends Marxism, which – utilized by black theology – would have helped the masses of black people to realize that political emancipation cannot serve as an end, but

as a means to an end, which – in both the US and South Africa – should take the form of power sharing in the area of the economy of the respective country. In other words, black theology failed the masses of poor black people – both in the US and in South Africa – by attributing their poverty only to racism. Black Theology – relying only on the race paradigm – failed dismally to realize that racism only served as a hiding place of the whites' domination of the economic power, which domination should have been seriously tackled, after the official abolition of racism in both countries.

Applied to the problem of Jones above – which leads him to conclude that God is a racist – Kee's analysis means that God is not responsible for the continued economic exploitation inflicted on the African Americans by the whites of the US. The blame should be shouldered by black theologians who unanimously utilized a very poor paradigm (viz., the race paradigm) in order to understand and to solve the socio-political and economic problem which the majority of African Americans had. The inadequacy of this paradigm appeared soon after the official abolition of racism, which still left the majority of African Americans as poor as ever. The only new beneficiaries of the new dispensation were the black intellectuals – including the black theologians – who started making use of the opportunity by complacently owning posh houses, driving expensive cars and enjoying the finest scotch whisky with former oppressors, at the economic detriment of the poor black masses. Black theologians should have learned from the new dispensation about the inadequacy of the race paradigm. Cornel West concurs. Making use of statistical data, he bitterly complains about the new dispensation by saying that,

*Twenty-one percent of all children live in poverty; 52 percent of young brown brothers and sisters live in poverty; and 51 percent of black children live in utter poverty in the richest nation in the history of the world.<sup>120</sup>*

West does not explain who the brown brothers and sisters are.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, he continues to strengthen his case by utilizing statistical information. He holds that,

*With 1 percent of the population owning 30 percent of the wealth and 80 percent of fellow citizens wrestling with long-term tendencies of wage stagnation since 1973, what good times do you have in mind?<sup>122</sup>*

West is furnishing us with the statistic information of 1998 – thirty-four years after the official abolition of racism in the US<sup>123</sup> – and if the figures are correct, then Kee is also correct to say that Black Theology in the US went on holiday too early. The statistics given by West clearly show that lots of work – more especially in the form of the balance of economic power between blacks and whites – still awaits exponents of Black Theology. During the same period, Cone directed his bitter complaints to white and black theologians alike. To the white theologians he said,

*Racism is one of the great contradictions of the gospel in modern times. White theologians who do not oppose racism publicly and rigorously engage it in their writings are part of the problem and must be exposed as the enemies of justice. No one can be neutral or silent in the face of this evil. We are either for it or against it.*<sup>124</sup>

Thus, Cone was trying to find out how genuine the opposition of white theologians was to the question racism. In 1964 the US government officially scrapped racism from its constitution. What the government did was an external act of the abolition of racism. What Cone wants to establish is the reality of the internal or wholehearted support of the government by white theologians and the whole community of white Christians. I further interpret Cone to be saying that he will truly believe that the white theologians are genuinely against racism when he sees and hears them theologizing and publically speaking against it (racism) on a regular basis. And to his fellow black theologians, during this same period, Cone strongly felt that,

*Black theologians must end their silence too. We have opposed racism much too gently. We have permitted white theological silence in exchange for the rewards of being accepted by the white theological establishment. This is a terrible price to pay for the few crumbs that drop from the white master's table. We must replace theological deference with courage, and thereby confront openly and lovingly silent white racists or be condemned as participants in the betrayal of our people.*<sup>125</sup>

I understand Cone to be saying that the period after 1964 partly saw the recognition and the acceptance of black theologians into the ranks of white theologians in the US. That gesture, Cone continues, did not necessarily mark the end of racism, as none of the white theologians was willing to condemn racism from the theological point of view. In other words, the struggle against racism is not yet finished – in spite of its abolition by the US regime in 1964 – up until the black theologians succeed in forcing their white counterparts to break their silence on this sensitive matter (of racism), argues Cone.

Even if he is still critical of the possible dishonesty of the white theologians, in the post-1964 period, let us note that Cone is still strongly making use of the race-paradigm – in spite of its inadequacy<sup>126</sup> -- to attack them. In other words he does not yet see the danger of this paradigm which economically benefits black intellectuals at the (economic) detriment of a very large majority of African Americans at grassroots level, as Kee observes above. Indeed, during the last decade of the twentieth century, Cone still held that,

*The challenge for black theology in the twenty-first century is to develop an enduring race critique that is so comprehensively*

*woven into Christian understanding that no one will be able to forget the horrible crimes of white supremacy in the modern world.*<sup>127</sup>

Thus, Cone pays lip-service to the class-analysis he claims to have learnt from the liberation theologians of Latin America by opting for an intensified version of race critique, which will still benefit black intellectuals – including black theologians – at the economic disadvantage of the large majority of the grassroots level of African Americans. In other words, the failure of black theology to adopt stronger tools of analysis – like those displayed by a class critique – necessarily leads to its dismal failure to achieve the total liberation of the majority of African Americans, which still remains its desired goal. How do the Black Theologians of South Africa respond to the challenge of Kee? The answer to this question will be dealt with in the major chapter of my thesis below.

A comparative study of the three black theologians which I have conducted above, serves as some illustration of the openness with which black theologians dialogue and confront one another, with the specific purpose of deepening the understanding of the particular theology they are writing about. Taking notice of this open confrontation among black theologians is Battle who assures us that there is fortunately no animosity characterizing these debates.<sup>128</sup> I miss these debates among Latin American Theologians of Liberation: one learns exactly where the one theologian differs from the others in the same field. And those differences in approach and style contribute quite substantially towards a broader and deeper knowledge of the subject. Failure to express these differences – I am afraid – gives a deceptive impression that all is well in the Liberation Theology of Latin America! From time immemorial there has been differences expressed in the field of theology,<sup>129</sup> not only with Rome,<sup>130</sup> but also at the level of theologians among themselves. These past debates of former generations of theologians surely serve as some kind of stimulus for the present generation of theologians to pay special theological attention to the faith and social issues of today, with the specific aim of helping the Christian Church to establish a critical relationship between them.

### **Methodological Differences**

Edward P. Antonio is an exponent of Black Theology based in Colorado in the United States of America. He studies the whole question of the debate between the race and class paradigms from the methodological point of view. He contends that this debate should be considered to be part and parcel of what he terms methodological pluralism. Indeed he writes,

*This pluralism is not merely a matter of fashion, style or variation in emphasis among practitioners of liberation theology but rather a reflection of genuine differences in history, content, and experience of injustice, and methods and approaches of identifying, analyzing, resisting,*

*and overcoming the oppression that causes such injustice. The dissimilarities mirrored in this pluralism in turn lead to serious differences in how the concept of liberation itself is understood and deployed. Evidence for this methodological pluralism is global. It can be seen in the existence of liberation theology in Latin America, black theology in various parts of the world such as South Africa, Britain, Brazil, the Caribbean, and others.<sup>131</sup>*

I understand Antonio to be saying that while there might be methodological similarities among countries that are practitioners of liberation theology or black theology, because of the similar conditions of injustice; there might be at the same time methodological differences – among the same countries – because of the uniqueness of each country's oppressive situation. The uniqueness of the country's context will surely determine the methodology to be followed by the populace for their authentic liberation. This is what methodological pluralism is all about. It forces us to respect the variety of methods – taken by others – whether they resemble ours or not. Indeed Antonio repeats,

*Second, the race versus class debate is important precisely because, instead of pointing to methodological commonality within the theologies of liberation, it points to serious methodological difference.<sup>132</sup>*

This last statement of Antonio seems to contradict the first: in the first statement I thought he was trying to explain that methodological pluralism is not only about methodological similarities among the countries whose citizens suffer pains of injustice, but it (methodological pluralism) is also about the methodological difference which reflects the different (non-identical) methods utilized by these countries to achieve a just dispensation. The methods are different because of the uniqueness of each country's socio-political and economic problems. The second explanation – of methodological pluralism – seems to exclude the methodological commonality, so as to focus only on the question of methodological difference. I think that Antonio's self-contradiction serves as his reaction against what he calls an exaggerated or false sense of commonality among the oppressed nations who overemphasize class distinction as a main cause of injustice at the expense of race and many other important causes involved. He denounces the view of these oppressed nations as follows,

*The debate has not been resolved. It continues to fuel heated discussion on the left and to influence liberationist thinking across the world such that race or class, identity or economic exploitation, cultural justice or redistributive justice continue to be taken for granted by the contestants as radical discursive binaries that orient different understandings of liberation. Liberation theologies are no exception to this despite the false sense of settlement to which they have descended in the name of commonality and solidarity. According to this false sense of settlement it*

*is enough to assert recognition of the interdependence of modes of oppression as a sign of a good liberation theology. Social complexity is proclaimed, but hardly every analyzed.*<sup>133</sup>

Antonio means that the Theology of Liberation – instead of being complacent with what he calls the present false sense of commonality and solidarity which focuses only on class distinction as the cause of injustice – should continue to debate the class/race issue until participants on either side of the divide are satisfied with its research result. Antonio's global research on the question of methodological pluralism leads him to justify black theology's present methodological stance that the total abolition of racism in the US will bring about a radically just socio-political and economic dispensation for the masses of oppressed in that country. Indeed Antonio concludes,

*Third, black theology, qua theology of liberation, marks a particular kind of discursive difference by the manner in which it inscribes race at the center of its analysis of oppression. This difference defines its mode of belonging to the field of liberation theologies. It is within this difference that it seeks to encompass and account for the multiplicity of experiences of oppression and its relationship to other theologies.*<sup>134</sup>

Thus, Antonio firmly holds that the US theology of liberation, namely, black theology does deserve to emphasize the eradication of the question of racial discrimination as the major task within the process of the creation of a radically just dispensation in the US. In other words, racial discrimination – not class distinction – is the main obstacle to be ruthlessly removed so that justice in its radical form can be ushered into the US. And this is how uniquely different black theology is from all other theologies of liberation which – according to Antonio – falsely think that class distinction is the only major problem to be eradicated so that justice can reign. Which of these positions is correct? I have tried to answer this question above by saying that the two paradigms are not mutually exclusive of each other, meaning that the problem would be totally solved if the abolition of race would be followed immediately by the eradication of the distinction of the two classes, namely the rich and the poor. I would like to revisit my answer under the subheading, *ideological differences between black theology and liberation theology*.

### **Ideological Differences**

Underlying the Theology of Liberation in Latin America is the socialist ideology which – among other things – aims at the equal distribution of the national means of production among the people of the country.<sup>135</sup> As opposed to the capitalist ideology which puts the ownership of the national means of production under the absolute control of a few entrepreneurs, socialism – the exponents of the Theology of Liberation argue – is ideal as it will satisfy the socio-political and economic demands of the poor. And since socialism is not Latin American, in its original form, attempts are being made – by various Latin American

Marxist scholars – to adapt it (socialism) in such a way that it will help the Theology of Liberation to be of radical relevance to the masses of the poor. Jose Mariategui is one of these Latin American scholars, and he strongly holds that,

*We certainly do not wish for socialism in America to be an exact copy of others' socialism. It must be a heroic work. We must bring Indo-American socialism to life with our own reality, in our own language.*<sup>136</sup>

Mariategui explains his view further by strongly maintaining that,

*Marxism is not a body of principles which can be rigidly applied the same way in all historical climates and all social latitude. Marxism for each country, for each people works and acts on the situation, on the milieu, without overlooking any of its modalities.*<sup>137</sup>

Thus, Mariategui explains that the kind of socialism which Latin America wishes to adopt is the one which has Karl Marx as its author and founder. It is a socialism easily adaptable to any country's life situation, and that explains why it should not be a copy of the other countries' understanding of Marxism, continues Martegui: instead, it should totally reflect the Latin American situation which he terms Indo-American. Following Martegui, Marxism is the ideology underlying the majority of findings based on the Theology of Liberation. Let me explain the term ideology before I proceed with my discussion. It is a word with a multiplicity of meanings. Indeed John Leatt et al. write,

*The Bedouins are said to have a hundred names for a camel. Ideology in the overcrowded desert of contemporary political and social disputes, seems to be an animal with a hundred names, none of which captures adequately the elusive reality signified by the term.*<sup>138</sup>

Among the many inadequate meanings of ideology discussed by Leatt et al. above, I have chosen one which I think will fit well into my investigations, and it reads as follows:

### **Ideology as an Action-related System of Ideas and Institutions: level of Politics and Economics**

*On this level we call ideologies only those world-views that have a specific political and economic outlook. Ideology here is understood as an action-related system of ideas and institutions intended to change or defend an existing socio-economic order. We can distinguish between political ideologies (like nationalism, Marxism, anarchism, liberalism, fascism, racialism) and economic ideologies (like feudalism, capitalism, socialism). These ideologies present a specific analysis of the present social order, relate to a future social ideal, and outline a strategy to achieve the*

*desired state, whether by maintaining the present order, or by reforming it, or by replacing it with a new order.*<sup>139</sup>

Ideology, as explained above, serves as a socio-political and economic vision a group of people intend pursuing. Ideology reflects the kind of political and economic dispensation a group of people wishes to enjoy, after toppling the present one which happens to be overwhelmingly oppressive. In other words, the function of an ideology is two-fold. First, it helps people to eradicate an oppressive regime. Secondly, ideology is a guide or a blueprint which keeps challenging its subscribers to work hard for the achievement of the new dispensation. The group gathers together from time to time to evaluate its progress, and the adopted ideology remains the yardstick to judge the progress of the group. After toppling the oppressive government, the victorious group immediately embarks on the concrete ways through which the new dispensation can benefit every citizen. Black Theology might have had an ideology, but it was the kind that failed dismally to meet the socio-political and economic demands of the grassroots level, for it never continued with the second phase of the struggle which was the equal share of the means of production among the citizens of the US, most especially the poor. It stopped short at the victory over racism which brought about lots of overwhelming joy to the elite – including black theologians – because of their educational backgrounds. No wonder black theology never took root among the ordinary African Americans, as different scholars testify above: it was mainly an academic exercise enjoyed by black theologians at some black universities and at some black seminaries.<sup>140</sup>

Let there be a sound ideology underlying black theology, when the latter is revisited in view of making it popular among the rank and files of African Americans. A sound ideology is not necessarily socialism, but one that will genuinely address the socio-political and economic aspirations of the poor of the US. And for as long as black theology does not have a sound ideological base it will be ridiculed – and rightly so – by Alistair Kee, critics of good will and those that are negative about black theology.

### **Difference in Philosophical Orientation**

The philosophies underlying the two theologies are also different. While the majority of Latin American Liberation Theologians partly rely on the Marxist philosophy for a thorough analysis and understanding of the socio-political and economic situation in that continent,<sup>141</sup> the majority of black theologians rely on the Black Philosophical School for the same purpose. However, my observation is that the Black Philosophical School serves as a commentary of black theology: it serves as black theology's forum of self-criticism and self-enrichment. Indeed Ware observes that,

*Thinkers in the Black Philosophical School accept the Black Hermeneutical School's assertion that the tasks of black theology are description, analysis, evaluation, explanation,*



*construction, and revision. The Black Philosophical School places great emphasis on the task of revision.*<sup>142</sup>

The revision discussed above involves the analysis – by the Black Philosophical School— of the findings of various exponents of black theology.<sup>143</sup> I understand the exercise of this revision to be a critical deepening and broadening of the content or subject of black theology. It is a special kind of a philosophical school in the sense that some of its exponents do not have queries about the contents of the bible. Indeed, Frederick Ware claims that,

*For the Black Philosophical, like the Black Hermeneutical School, liberation is the content of black theology, albeit with some notable alterations. In the Black Hermeneutical School liberation is defined using the bible and the black story. Conceptions of liberation by thinkers in the Black Philosophical School, though, are not necessarily antithetical to conceptions of liberation espoused by thinkers in the Black Hermeneutical School... In the Black Philosophical School, liberation is defined using social and political philosophies that may or may not be compatible, at all points, with the Bible or black story.*<sup>144</sup>

Thus, while some of the Black philosophical trends highly value and embrace the bible, the modern Western schools of philosophy – like rationalism, empiricism, Marxism, existentialism, etc. – totally reject the content of the bible as many of its accounts, especially the miracles, are not understandable to the average human mind.<sup>145</sup> And the words, ‘Black Philosophical School’ are certainly misleading, as there is nothing characteristically black or African American in the philosophy of this school. On the contrary, underlying each variety of Black Philosophy is some trend of western philosophy. Ware gives some examples of a few Black Philosophers – like Henry Young, Cornel West, William R. Jones, and Anthony Pinn – whose ideas are influenced by western philosophy. He claims,

*For the liberation of the black mind, Henry Young recommends process metaphysics, Cornel West pragmatism, and William R. Jones and Anthony Pinn humanism.*<sup>146</sup>

The philosophies underlying the thinking of the Black scholars mentioned above are surely of western origin.<sup>147</sup> There is absolutely nothing wrong in utilizing ideas of other people if they are relevant to one’s situation, so long as one humbly acknowledges their appropriate origin. I am missing that sense of acknowledgment in the Black Philosophical School.

## **Difference in Organized Contact with Grassroots Communities**

Black theologians do not reveal the method or people who help them to reach out to the poor. In the context of Latin America, Paolo Freire – an educationist – is reported to be in possession of some expertise which he utilizes to help the poor at grassroots level to understand the Theology of Liberation.<sup>148</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff also give an account of the various levels of the Theology of Liberation and how these levels interact on a regular basis.<sup>149</sup> No interaction similar to this one is reported in the context of Black Theology, neither is there any expert reported to be helping Black Theologians to reach the grassroots level, the majority of whom are its intended audience. Failure to have the expertise of this nature reduces black theology into an exercise in futility: in the absence of such expertise, who will help the majority of the poor to understand the exegesis, the sophisticated philosophies underlying black theology, together with some of the technical terms it utilizes. It is therefore important for black theology to possess experts similar to those in Latin America, who serve as a vital link between the theologians and the poor.

## **The Relevance of the Two Theologies to the Post-Apartheid South Africa**

I am concluding this section by asking the question, ‘What can a proponent of Liberation Theology in South Africa learn from the comparative study of the US black theology and the Latin American liberation theology? Are these two foreign theologies of any relevance to the current Post-Apartheid South Africa? We are not yet answering the question, ‘In which way are the two theologies relevant to the present South African situation?’ Rather, ‘which points – in the comparative study of the two theologies – can be of vital importance to an exponent of the Theology of Liberation in South Africa, and ultimately to all the economically disadvantaged people of the same country?’

Of utmost importance is the contribution of Paulo Freire – a Latin American educationist – who forms a very essential link between liberation theologians, on the one hand, and the masses of the poor who are supposed to be the primary addressees of the Theology of Liberation, on the other. Freire is in possession of skills which he utilizes to help the poor understand the technicalities, the complicated language and the difficult philosophies which underlie the Theology of Liberation. Without the person of the caliber of Freire, the Theology of Liberation is futile exercise as it makes no sense to its intended listeners, the majority of whom are illiterate, because the yoke of apartheid which denied them educational opportunities.<sup>150</sup>

A point which a proponent of Liberation Theology should consider to be of relevance to the situation in South Africa is the openness and the public debate which characterizes the US black theologians. The public debates in question are meant, in my opinion, to critically deepen and broaden the content of faith. It is very educational to know where and how theologians beg to differ in spite of the same interest they may have in a special branch or

methodology of theology. The differences which theologians have among themselves contribute quite substantially towards the understanding of the plural nature of theology.

Finally, the race critique employed by black theology, on the one hand, and the class analysis utilized by the Theology of Liberation, can both be of relevance to any proponent of the Theology of Liberation in South Africa. In my opinion, the two different analyses are not necessarily exclusive of one another. The race critique – in any situation of racism – can easily serve as a stepping stone for a class analysis. In the context of the US, racism – most especially prior to its abolition by the government in 1964 – was the major social problem of the country. The period after 1964 saw no economic improvement whatsoever among the majority of African Americans; only the intellectuals – including the black theologians -- thrived from the new dispensation. It is exactly at this point that the black theologians should have realized that the race critique – on its own – was just not strong enough to help black theology bring about the desired liberation to the whole black populace. A stronger critique, namely, the class paradigm – in addition to the race paradigm – was absolutely necessary to complete the task of the liberation of the black masses: for class analysis strongly holds that the liberation process is not yet complete, up until economic power is evenly distributed among the citizens of the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Cone, J. *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 1986. p.vii

<sup>2</sup> Nolan, A. *"TO NOURISH OUR FAITH" Theology of Liberation for Southern Africa*, Order of Preachers, Hilton (South Africa):1987. p.65

<sup>3</sup> Lodge, T. *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, Longman Group Ltd, New York: 1983. p.33

<sup>4</sup> Leatt, J. et al., *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town: 1979. p.206

<sup>5</sup> James Cone, *Op. Cit.* p. xvi

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. xix

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*p.57.The language of attaining liberation from the point of view of faith does not make sense to the black atheists Cone is discussing on this page.

<sup>8</sup> Gutierrez, G. *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1988. p.54

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p.55

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*p.104. See Clodovis Boff, *No Salvation Outside the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2008. p.72

<sup>11</sup> James Cone, *Op. cit.* pp.137-138

<sup>12</sup> Hennelly, A. *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p.xvii

<sup>13</sup> Kurrie, J. *Models of Black Theology: Issues in Class, Culture and Gender*, Trinity Press International, Pennsylvania: 1994.p.6

<sup>14</sup> See A. Germond, "Liberation Theology in the Service of Justice" *Theology and Violence*, ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio, Skotaville Publishers, Johannesburg: 1987. p.222. See also Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. Cit.* pp.63-64

<sup>15</sup> James Cone, *Op cit.* p.6

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p.6

<sup>17</sup> James C. Turro, "1-2 Samuel" *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown et al, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1969. pp. 175-176

- <sup>18</sup> John L. McKenzie, "The Gospel According To Matthew" *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E Brown et al. Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1969. p.78
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.78
- <sup>20</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, "The Gospel According To Luke" *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown et al, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1969. p.148. Stuhlmueller focuses on three parables of mercy (Luke 15:1-32) which are symbolic of God's joy over a repentant sinner.
- <sup>21</sup> See McAfee Brown
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid. p.45
- <sup>23</sup> Katie G. Cannon, "Slave Ideology and Biblical Interpretation" *The Recovery of Black Presence: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*, Eds. Randall C. Bailey and Jacquelyn Grant, Abingdon Press, Nashville: 1995. p.121
- <sup>24</sup> See James Cone, *Op. Cit.* pp.70-71 See also Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. Cit.* p.111
- <sup>25</sup> Katie Geneva Cannon, *Op. Cit.* p.125
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.122
- <sup>27</sup> The pattern shared jointly by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff in their book, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, and Gustavo Gutierrez in his book, *A Theology of Liberation*, on the other, is disputed by no Liberation Theologian in the book, *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America* edited by Rosino Gibellini
- <sup>28</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone, "Theology, Popular Culture and Discernment" *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1975. p.214
- <sup>29</sup> See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1987 p.39. The two authors say Liberation Theology leads one up to the temple, and back from the temple to action. Temple in this context, is symbolic of a life of prayer, as the temple is literally a place of prayer. Thus, Liberation Theology is supposed to partly draw its strength from a life of prayer expected from its exponents.
- <sup>30</sup> Hugo Assmann, "Liberation Theology and New Tasks" *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1975 pp.133-134
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.134
- <sup>32</sup> See Patrick Anthony Bascio, *Black Theology: Its Critique of Classical or Scholastic Theology*, University Microfilm International, Michigan: 1987. p.158. On this page Bascio considers Roberts as one of the major black theologians without providing any criteria which qualify him as a major black theologian.
- <sup>33</sup> Deotis Roberts, *J. Black Theology Today: Liberation and Contextualization*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Toronto: 1983. p.106
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.106
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.108
- <sup>36</sup> Gayraud Wilmore, "Revolution unfulfilled, but not Invalidated," James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Orbis books, Maryknoll, New York: 1986. pp.145-146
- <sup>37</sup> James Cone, *Op. Cit.*, p.xi
- <sup>38</sup> Deotis Roberts, *J. Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville: 2005. p.xiv
- <sup>39</sup> Albert Nolan, *Op. Cit.* p.13
- <sup>40</sup> Alfred Hennelly, *Op. Cit.* p
- <sup>41</sup> Berryman, P. *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond*, Pantheon Books, New York: 1987. p.10
- <sup>42</sup> Alfred Hennelly, *Op. Cit.* p.292
- <sup>43</sup> James Cone, *Op. Cit.* p.102. Julian Kunnie, *Op. Cit.* p.9
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid. pp. 14-15
- <sup>45</sup> I'm referring particularly, to a concerted effort from the part of the Liberation Theologians, of updating – as a team – their audience by means of volumes of books which focus on the subject of Liberation Theology. The first volume focussed on the Introduction to the subject of Liberation Theology. Following this introductory book – apart from reviews – there were other seven volumes dealing with various dimensions or aspects of Liberation Theology.
- <sup>46</sup> My statement is based on reference number 30, which contains Cone's bitter complaint the black denomination's lack of support for black theology, which resulted – among other things – in the abandonment of the revolutionary solutions black theology was offering for the problem of the oppression of blacks in the US. This lack of support from the part of the black churches became one of the signs of the beginning of the demise of black theology. For no black theology can exist without the support of the grassroots masses, the majority of whom belong to the black denominations. This is my interpretation of Cone's understanding of the

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relationship between theology and the church based on the subtitle, "Black Theology and the Black Community" from page 8 of his book, **A Black Theology of Liberation**.

<sup>47</sup> See Patrick Antony Bascio, *Black Theology: Its Critique of Classical and Scholastic Theology*, University Microfilm International information Service, Michigan: 1990. p.185

<sup>48</sup> Ware, F. *Methodologies of Black Theology*, The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, Ohio: 2002. p.21

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p.21

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p.21

<sup>51</sup> Gayraud Wilmore, *Op. Cit.* p.152

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.153

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p.153 See also Frederick Ware, *Op. Cit.* p.21

<sup>54</sup> Jeremiah A. Wright, "Protestant Ecclesiology," *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, eds. Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2012. p.191

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p.191

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. pp.191-192

<sup>57</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1987 pp.70-73. On these pages the Boff brothers are discussing the different authors who have played an important role towards the growth of Liberation Theology.

<sup>58</sup> Frederick Ware, *Op. Cit.* p.5 On this page, Ware is also making a list of authors who played a vital role towards the growth of black theology.

<sup>59</sup> James Cone, *Op. Cit.* p.6

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p.8

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p.9

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p.63

<sup>63</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, "Deutero-Isaiah," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown et al. Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1969 p.376

<sup>64</sup> Cone, J. *Black Theology and Black Power*, The Seabury Press, New York: 1969. pp.54-55

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p.55

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. pp.43-45

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p.48

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p.56

<sup>69</sup> James H. Cone, "Black Liberation Theology and Black Catholics: A Critical Conversation," *Theological Studies* 61, No. 4 (2000): pp.731-732

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p.732

<sup>71</sup> Mich, L. K. M. *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements*, Twenty-Third Publications, Bayard, Mystic, C. T. 2003. p.135

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p.143

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p.143

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p.144

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p.144

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p.145

<sup>77</sup> James Cone, *Theological Studies* 61 No.4 (2000): p.735

<sup>78</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Historical Perspective," *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, eds. D Hopkins and E. P. Antonio, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2012. pp.24-25

<sup>79</sup> See James Cone, *Theological Studies* 61, No. 4(2000): p.735

<sup>80</sup> James Cone, *Op. Cit.* p.66

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p.123

<sup>82</sup> James Deotis Roberts, *Op. Cit.* p.40

<sup>83</sup> See Kate Cannon, *Op. Cit.* p.121 and p.125

<sup>84</sup> James Deotis Roberts, *Op. cit.* p.41

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p.41

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p.41

<sup>87</sup> James Cone, "Martin, Malcolm, and Black Theology," *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honour of J. Deotis Roberts*, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky: 2005 p.53

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p.56

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p.58

<sup>90</sup> James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1986. pp. 6,8,and 10

- <sup>91</sup> James Cone, "Martin, Malcolm, and Black Theology" *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honor of J. Deotis Roberts*, ed. Michael Battle, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky: 2005 pp.58-59.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid. p.59, pp. 60-61
- <sup>93</sup> James Deotis Roberts, *Op.cit.* pp.79-80
- <sup>94</sup> Ibid. p.80
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid. p.7
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid. p.60. It is actually the black Muslims of the US who say whites are devils; but this includes their leader – Malcolm X – who is a fierce critic of White racism in that country.
- <sup>97</sup> See Patrick Anthony Bascio, *Op. cit.* p.158 See also Frederick Ware, *Op. cit.* p.5
- <sup>98</sup> William R. Jones, "Is God a White Racist?" *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*, ed. Mark Larrimore, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Victoria, Australia: 2001 pp.362-363
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid. p.363
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid. p.363
- <sup>101</sup> McKenzie, J.L. *Dictionary of the Bible*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York: 1965. p.440
- <sup>102</sup> Boyce, A. N. *Europe and South Africa: A History for Standard 10*, Juta and Company Limited, Johannesburg: 1974. pp.119-121
- <sup>103</sup> William R. Jones, *Op. cit.* p.363
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid. p.364
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid. p.362
- <sup>106</sup> See Walter Kern and Jorg Splett, "Theodicy" *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner, Burns and Oates, London: 1975. p.1665
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid. p.1665
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid. p.1671
- <sup>109</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. cit.* pp.111 and 113. See also James Cone, *Op. cit.* p.6
- <sup>110</sup> See Patrick Antony Bascio, *Black Theology: Its Critique of Classical or Scholastic Theology*, University Microfilms International, Michigan: 1987. p.193
- <sup>111</sup> See Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *From Socrates to Sartre*, McGraw and Hill, Glasgow: 1975. p.276
- <sup>112</sup> See Hans Kung, *Does God Exist?* William Collins Sons and Company Ltd, London: 1980. p.94
- <sup>113</sup> See Julian Kunnie, *Models of Black Theology: Issues in Class, Culture and Gender*, Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: 1994. p.9. See also James Cone, *Op. cit.* p. 102.
- <sup>114</sup> See James Cone, "Martin, Malcolm and Black Theology" *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honor of J. Deotis Roberts*, ed. M. Battle, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky: 2005. pp. 58-60
- <sup>115</sup> See Frederick Wares, *Op. cit.* pp.xii, 5, and 21
- <sup>116</sup> Alistair Kee, "The Criticism of [Black] Theology is Transformed into the Criticism of Politics" *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honor of J.Deotis Roberts* , ed. Michael Battle, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky: 2005 pp.51-52
- <sup>117</sup> See Patrick Antony Bascio, *Op. cit.* p.185
- <sup>118</sup> Alistair Kee, *Op. cit.* p. 51
- <sup>119</sup> Ibid. p.51
- <sup>120</sup> Cornel West, "Black Theology and Human Identity" *Black faith and Public Talk: Critical Essays on James H. Cone's Black Theology and Black Power*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York:1994. p.18
- <sup>121</sup> See James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1986. p. 123. On this page Cone is discussing the different degrees of blackness, namely, light and dark. West must be referring to the one or the other by using the word, 'brown' I guess.
- <sup>122</sup> Cornel West, *Op. Cit.* p.18
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid. p.17
- <sup>124</sup> James Cone, "Looking Back , Going Forward: Black Theology as Public Theology" *Black Faith and Public Talk: Critical Essays on James H. Cone's Black Theology and Black Power*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1999. p.257
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid. p.257
- <sup>126</sup> See James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1986. p.xvii. On this page, Cone clearly recognizes the importance of class-analysis.
- <sup>127</sup> James Cone, *Op. Cit.* p.257
- <sup>128</sup> See Michael Battle, *Op. cit.* p.xiii
- <sup>129</sup> Nicolson, R. *A Black Future? Jesus and Salvation in South Africa*, SCM Press, London: 1990. pp.7-8

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<sup>130</sup> Segundo, J. *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, Geoffrey Chapman: London: 1970. pp.2-4. Actually the whole book serves as Juan's protest against the document, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" written by Cardinal Ratzinger on behalf of Rome (i.e. the pope and his administration)

<sup>131</sup> Edward P. Antonio, "Black Theology and Liberation Theologies," *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, eds. Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2012.p.34

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p.35

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p.41

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. p.42

<sup>135</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1988. pp. 20, 66 and 67

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p.56

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p.56

<sup>138</sup> Leatt, J. et al. *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, David Philips, Cape Town: 1986. p.273

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p.282

<sup>140</sup> See Ware, Deotis Roberts, Gayraud, and Jeremias Wright

<sup>141</sup> See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* p.28

<sup>142</sup> Frederick Ware, *Op. cit.* pp.68-69

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. pp.70-71. On these pages, for example, Ware critically compares the respective concepts of James Cone, James Deotis Roberts, and Albert Cleage on the subject of Black Theology

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. pp.73-74

<sup>145</sup> See Hans Kung, *Op. cit.* pp. 123-124

<sup>146</sup> Frederick Ware, *Op. cit.* p.76

<sup>147</sup> Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Op. cit.* pp. 381, 396, 485

<sup>148</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *Op. cit.* p.57

<sup>149</sup> See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. cit.* pp.12-14

<sup>150</sup> "Right to Education" *The African Bishops on Human Rights*, ed. S Muyebe and A. Muyebe, Pauline Publications Africa, Nairobi:1988 p.73

## Chapter 3: An African Theology of Liberation

### A. Introduction

I am deeply challenged by the comparative study of the Latin American Theology of Liberation and the Black Theology of Liberation of the United States – conducted in the previous chapter – to propose the study of an African Theology of Liberation. It will be a theology similar to the two mentioned above in the sense that it will be seriously addressing the economic poverty of the majority of Africans from the faith point of view. At the same time it will differ from the same two in the sense that it will be written primarily by indigenous African scholars – in their respective countries – together with theologians of other nations who sincerely sympathize with Africans in the past and present conditions of political oppression and economic exploitation inflicted on them by the West. It will identify itself as African in the sense that it will focus mainly on the analysis of the situation of poverty in Africa, and the possible ways through which it can be solved from the theological point of view. Obviously, this is an enormous and endless responsibility, and that explains why it is given primarily to each individual indigenous African theologian to start and develop it within the context of his/her country.

Underlying the proposed study will be the history of African enslavement and colonization by the West. The function of this history is twofold. First, it will serve to unify the exponents of the proposed African Theology of Liberation. In other words, it will serve to illustrate that, even if we may differ culturally in most cases, there is, nevertheless, a very sad history which unites us very intimately – as Africans – and which therefore needs to be addressed earnestly. Secondly, basing the African Theology of Liberation on the African history of slavery and colonization will enable us to prevent any neo-colonial tendencies or any other forms of cruelty – especially the cruelty that results from a breach of fundamental human rights – in our days.

### B. Motivational Factors

Motivating me to consider pondering on the question of the creation of the African Theology of Liberation are some of the reports given by African people and missionaries, on African slavery period, and subsequently on colonialism. For example, Ofelia Tembe of Mozambique – recounting factual stories of slavery and colonialism in her country – bitterly starts off by citing the bull of Pope Alexander VI, which read,

*By the authority We enjoy, given for all time to the Spanish and the Portuguese kings and their successors so that the barbarian peoples in these lands may be reduced to submission and be led to the faith.*<sup>1</sup>



Tembe proceeds by challenging her audience, most especially the Christian missionaries who were listening to her speech to reflect on the debasing words with which the pope referred to the African peoples, and the encouragement he gave to the Portuguese and the Spanish Kings to subject them to ruthless treatment. She said,

*Doesn't it make you blush, ladies and gentlemen, when you read texts like that? The Christian prazeros, using Christianity as a cover, permitted themselves every form of cruelty. Even as late as the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century 25,000 slaves were being exported every year. As a consolation prize they were baptized before they departed.<sup>2</sup>*

To answer Tembe's rhetorical question, I think it is shocking to learn that Christian authorities as high as the pope could explicitly authorize the subjugation or enslavement of one nation by the other, as happened in the case of the colonization of Mozambique by Portugal. Roman prelates of the calibre of the pope are supposed to inculcate the spirit of love and justice among nations, not the seeds of prejudice and injustice which reduce Baptism into a ridiculous rite, as mentioned implicitly by Tembe above. The question of the slavery of the Africans – not only by the European powers, but also by the Muslim Arabs – is discussed by Bishop Joseph Blomjous, a Dutch missionary who worked in Tanzania till 1965. He defends his fellow Christian missionaries – against the Muslims – as follows:

*If Christians are to be reproached with having destroyed the African character, what was it the Muslims were doing in the 11<sup>th</sup> century when under the pretext of a crusade, they broke up the Ghanaian empire at the peak of its civilization? Or in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when they conquered the southern Sudan, decimated the population and destroyed the native culture? Or even in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, long after the white men had stopped trafficking in slaves, when they, the Muslims, were still taking away something like 80,000 slaves a year? The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that there has probably never been a religious community which has not been tied up with power in the course of history. All of us should be converted now and must finally recognise that we are children the one God and Father of all.<sup>3</sup>*

In my opinion, no African theologian can afford to have records of this nature missing from his/her theological program. Such annals should serve as part and parcel of the proposed study of African Theology of Liberation and its historical evolution. The aim of keeping such records is not to incite any African to avenge our ancestors who were uprooted from the shores of Africa to go and labour in foreign countries as slaves, no: the aim is to combat contemporary manifestations of slavery and neo-colonialism. The annals of slavery and colonialism are supposed to serve as part of the content of the proposed African Theology of Liberation. To be successful, the theological project of fighting subtle elements of neo-colonialism in our days will have to be nurtured and inspired by the actual history of slavery

and colonialism. The Theology of Liberation in Latin America partly draws its strength and inspiration from its history. The same applies to the Black Theology of the US. In the same way I argue that African Liberation Theology – stripped of this essential historical background – will fail dismally to be supported and accepted with passion by its intended audience, namely, the poor of Africa.

Many of the listeners of Tembe were European missionaries. As a result, they angrily thought that she was one-sided in her presentation, as they retorted,

*What about Bishop Lamont of Umtali, who hid guerrillas in his house and for doing so was sentenced by the Rhodesian government to ten years in prison and then expelled?*<sup>4</sup>

Concurring with this group was another group of missionaries who added more ammunition by saying,

*What about the bishops of Madagascar and Tangayika, who as early as 1953, in a pastoral letter demanded as a natural right the people's right to self-rule?*<sup>5</sup>

Tembe responded to the challenge of the missionaries by acknowledging that it is true that not every European missionary connived with the evils of colonialism. She continues,

*I am talking about Mozambique. The fact that here and there in Africa there have been a few individual bishops or groups of bishops who were enlightened does not alter the fact that the bishops on our country were asleep, or, rather, that they co-operated actively with the government against the liberation movement. The only bishop who would have nothing to do with this kind of attitude was Manuel Vieira Pinto of Nampula: he, together with a number of non-Portuguese missionaries who had recognised the signs of times, took official action against the 'Church' and, in return, were faced with difficulties created by the hierarchy and by the government and even with expulsion. A Church like that has made a fool of itself for good and all.*<sup>6</sup>

No doubt, Bishop Lamont, Bishop Manuel Vieira Pinto and his team, and the missionary bishops of Tanganyika and Madagascar – as prophets of the Church during the colonial era – had an indelible impact on Tembe and the protesting missionaries discussed above. For them, these prophetic bishops and missionaries of the colonial era proved to be exemplary exceptions to the general rule of racial cruelty orchestrated jointly, by European colonialists and the Church during this period. The debate or dialogue between the missionaries and Ofelia Tembe serves as a sign of hope that it is possible in Africa to produce a Theology of Liberation whose unprejudiced historical origins – in slavery and colonialism – can be jointly written by the Africans and the Western missionaries. No, we do not need the approval of

the West or its missionaries in order to give credit to the African history of slavery and colonisation: but since it is not war but reconciliation the African Theology of liberation is aiming at, it would be highly wise and advisable – for the exponents of that theology – to establish a tension-free process towards that noble goal. The barrel of the gun – even though recommended by the Church as a last resort<sup>7</sup> – might slow down or even blur quite considerably, the attainment of this wonderful goal.

Another person who writes quite critically and passionately about the history and the morality of African slavery is Barthelemy Adoukonou, who is an African Catholic priest from Benin . He is not popular among his fellow Africans, because he partly blames some of the African kings and chiefs for selling large numbers of their subjects to European slave merchants. Sedbe Sempore, also an African Catholic Priest, took special interest in the history of African slavery, as articulated and written by Adoukonou. He claims,

*As priest and shepherd, Adoukonou has followed the example of Pope John Paul II, who begged Africa's pardon for the crimes and misdeeds of colonisation and slave trade. Adoukonou proposed a similar approach by Africa towards the slaves sold by her to slave traders.*<sup>8</sup>

Thus, according to Adoukonou, the present descendants of the African royal families owe a sincere apology to those families whose ancestors were sold to European slave traders, continues Sempore,

*The petty kings and the Black potentates that collaborated to the slave trade and to the bloodletting of Africa were often the same who tyrannised their own people keeping them in servitude. Historians can trace the evidence up to those who hunted the population and undertook raids to feed the trade to amass fortunes. The question of the responsibility of the Africans in trade is therefore complex, as is that of their collective guilt in regard to slaves.*<sup>9</sup>

The exponents of the proposed African Theology of Liberation will have to be as courageous as Adoukonou in getting the descendants of the royal houses to apologise sincerely – on behalf of their predecessors – for the horrible act of selling some of the African ancestors as slaves to the West. This honest apology is one of the most important steps towards a true reconciliation among ourselves as Africans. Unity amongst ourselves – as Africans – is also crucial, if our cry for liberation is to be taken seriously at international level.

My invitation is extended also to indigenous Africans who are Muslim theologians to join hands with theologians of Christian orientation in the total liberation of the poor of Africa. The Prophet Muhammad was radically opposed to racism. He clearly instructed his disciples that,

*An Arab is not superior to a non-Arab, nor a red man to a black man except through piety and virtue.<sup>10</sup>*

Thus, the enslavement of Africans was not in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. He always wanted his followers to be pious and virtuous. Piety denotes a very profound respect for God,<sup>11</sup> while virtue refers to moral excellence.<sup>12</sup> Underlying the terms, piety and virtue is a total exclusion or rejection of any form of human slavery. That explains why I invite African Muslim theologians who are as radical as their religious founder to join hands with African Christian theologians in the noble task of creating an African Theology of Liberation. This inter-faith commitment of African Theologians is meant to facilitate the reconciliation of all African Muslims and Christians so as to jointly liberate the continent of Africa from all forms of oppression. Ali Mazrui, however, foresees some complex problems in the area of the compensation which Arab Muslims are supposed to give to African tribes who became victims of the Arab slave trade. He claims,

*At some future date Africans and Arabs would need to negotiate what kind of reparations would be appropriate for the Arab slave trade. One factor that differentiates the Arab slave trade from the others is the Arab lineage system. This regards the child as Arab if the father is Arab, regardless of who the mother is. Thus Sheikh Saad Abdallah Salim al-Sabah became Prime Minister of Kuwait although descended from a black mother. Likewise, Anwar Saadat became President of Egypt without being faulted for his black mother. Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan became a distinguished, long-serving ambassador to Washington although genealogically half African. There are millions of people of mixed blood in the Arab world classified as Arabs. This is a vastly different system from that in the US where a child is black if either parent is black, even if the father is a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP).<sup>13</sup>*

Slavery is a very serious transgression against humanity. Whether slavery results in a better life for generations who emerge from slavery parentage or not, the institution of slavery remains, and will always remain a gross violation of human rights, because it (slavery) militates against the individual's absolute right to choose the nationality to which they want to belong.<sup>14</sup> The African women slaves who gave birth to present generations of mixed blood Arabs never chose to become Arab nationals. On the contrary, force and violence were employed to uproot them from the continent of Africa, so as to sell them as products on the markets of the Arabs. No culture, no lineage system – no matter how beautiful – can serve as bait to justify the diabolic institution of slavery. As a result, the present generations of Arabs have to recompense Africans who lost their ancestors through the Arab slave trade. The mixed blood Arabs descending from African women slaves, stand a very good chance – by virtue of their biological status – to accelerate the process of reconciliation and compensation between Africans and Arabs. No, as Africans we do not have to rely on Arabs

of African descent for the success of a genuine reconciliation between Africa and the Arab world. But it is not war we are aiming at: we are aiming at peace, reconciliation, and compensation, and so is the Theology of Liberation which we are doing within this context. Consequently, let us – as African theologians and nations – use the peaceful means at our disposal to achieve our noble aim. And some of the most important people at our disposal are Arab royal and non-royal political authorities of African descent who should be challenged to take an active role in this reconciliation process which eventually will lead to the liberation of Mother Africa from all forms of neo-slavery and neo-colonial ills.

### C. The Response of African Theologians

To some extent the proposed study of an African Theology of Liberation serves as a revisitation of one of the resolutions arrived at by the African Theologians who gathered together in a Pan-African Conference at Accra in 1977. The resolution reads,

1. *African Theology must be contextual theology, accountable to the context people live in... Contextualization will mean that theology will deal with the liberation of our people from cultural captivity.*
2. *Because oppression is found not only in culture but also in political and economic structures and the dominant mass media, African theology must also be liberation theology. The focus on liberation in African Theology connects it with other Third World theologies. Like black theologians in North America, we cannot ignore racism as a distortion of the human person. Like Latin American and Asian Theologians, we see the need to be liberated from socio-economic exploitation. A related but different form of oppression is often found in the roles set aside for women in the churches. There is the oppression of Africans by colonialism, but there is also the oppression of blacks by blacks. We stand against oppression in any form because the Gospel of Jesus Christ demands our participation in the struggle to free people from all forms of dehumanisation.<sup>15</sup>*

My understanding of the African Theologians cited above is that the context within which African Theology is done forces it (African Theology) to be liberatory in orientation. Characterising the African context, argue the African Theologians who conferred at Accra, are various forms of oppression from which the continent of Africa needs to liberate itself. Thus, there is no doubt that Africa is desperately in need of a Theology of liberation which will seriously address the different forms of oppression enumerated by the African Theologians above. And for me, the proper name for this most relevant theology for Africa is an African Theology of Liberation. It will certainly consist of a multiplicity of chapters, because of the numerous kinds of oppression from which Africa should be liberated. And

because of this very wide scope, the exponents will have to share the various tasks of this theology among themselves.

While they discuss all forms of oppression from which Africa needs to be freed, the theologians gathering at Accra particularly emphasize the liberation of women from all forms of injustice. Feminist theologians fortunately or unfortunately differ among themselves on this essential question of the liberation of women to the extent that some are no more doing feminist theology but womanist theology.<sup>16</sup> It is therefore imperative for my African sisters, most especially those involved in these movements, to explain the differences between feminist and womanist theologies, on the one hand, and on the other, let them explain how the two conflicting theologies relate to the envisaged African Theology of Liberation. And in the process of explaining, let their disunity not scandalize the grassroots masses of the poor who are the ultimate addressees of these conflicting theologies.

Outside the perimeters of South Africa, there are African Theologians whose works show signs that it is possible for Africans to come together so as to contemplate on the creation of an African Theology of Liberation. The signs appear in the form of their respective reflections on the question of slavery, or on the question of the urgent need for Africa to develop its own Theology of Liberation. In other words, none of the theologians I am discussing in this subsection is writing systematically, on the African Theology of Liberation, with its historical origins in African slavery and colonialism. No, but their respective reflections either on the question of slavery and colonialism, on the one hand, or their respective focus on the urgent question of the liberation of Africa, on the other, does give me hope that it is possible to create such a theology. Included in my discussion will be a brief revisitation of the Theology of Liberation within the context of my country – South Africa.

### 1. Peter Kanyandago

Kanyandago is an African theologian born and brought up in Uganda. He is presently teaching at the Martyrs of Uganda University.<sup>17</sup> Bitterly protesting against African slavery, he writes,

*Of all dehumanising African experiences, one must single out the slave trade. We will never be able to measure how much harm was done to people of Africa in this inhuman commercial transaction. What is more insidious is that the slave trade was justified with pseudo-scientific and theological theories that tried to prove the inferiority of the African people.*<sup>18</sup>

One of the important tasks facing the proposed African Theology of Liberation is to address the harm inflicted on the Africans by various slave merchants. The aim of this is not to fuel the spirit of vengeance among Africans: no, the aim is to see to it that neither slave trade

nor colonialism – each in its subtle forms – is able to destroy our contemporary Africa. The analysis of the pseudo-scientific theories and theological theories discussed by Kanyandago above, is also another essential task facing the African Theology of Liberation proposed. Kanyandago continues with his bitter reflection as follows,

*In this ignoble trade, Africans were reduced to objects to be used in the rising capitalist industries. The economic development of the North Atlantic region cannot be separated from the profits of cheap labour provided by slaves. What is disheartening is that, despite some stands taken by individual Christians in Europe, one finds no official document condemning the trade before the Second Vatican Council. The slave trade depopulated large areas, interrupted human and material development, and left scars and traumas on the beloved ones who were left behind. The African slave trade remains a stigma not only on Africa but on the whole of humankind, and especially on those who were involved in this trade. It could be carried out because the humanity of Africans was either underrated or denied.<sup>19</sup>*

Instead of finding church documents through which the church condemned the institution of slavery, as Kanyandago demands, we discover the Bull of 1493 which is a Papal document through which the church allegedly fuelled the imposition of slavery – by the Portuguese and the Spanish nations – on the Third World.<sup>20</sup> The language used in the Bull allegedly confirms the doubts which the slave drivers had about the humanity of the Africans. It is part of the proposed Theology of Liberation to subject such allegations to critical scrutiny, so that the guilty party may apologise. All this is done in view of the peace and reconciliation intended by the Theology of Liberation.

On the colonisation of Africa by Western powers, Kanyandago expresses his reservation as follows,

*The slave trade prepared the ground for or went hand in hand with colonization. From the anthropological point of view, this was a mere change of guards. After, or even with the humiliating experience of slave trade, some western European countries including Holland, Britain, Italy, Belgium, Germany, France, Spain, and Portugal undertook the most aggressive policy of colonization. This was another dehumanizing experience which denied Africans the right to determine their destiny, to rule themselves, and to use their resources.<sup>21</sup>*

Colonisation as described by Kanyandago above, surely calls for a very serious process of compensation. Africans have to be compensated for the labour and the valuable resources which were snatched away from them by the European powers enumerated by Kanyandago above. At this stage, proponents of the African Theology of Liberation need to network with

churches, governmental and non-governmental structures, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations Organization (UN) for this project to be truly successful. The most important allies of the African Theology of Liberation are the mainline churches who acknowledge their collaboration with the victimisation of Africans by means of the evil system of colonialism.<sup>22</sup> This kind of acknowledgement serves as a very significant point of departure of the difficult task of compensating the Africans for the loss of human dignity, human labour, and the natural resources sacrificed during the period of colonisation.

Kanyandago's research also serves to indicate that some of the noble aims of the African Theology of Liberation – most especially reconciliation and compensation – will not be easily achievable. This is on account of prejudiced ideas of some of the prominent figures in society. He says,

*However, it is useful to point out how Albert Muller, a Belgian Jesuit, as late as 1927, tried to look for a Christian justification of colonization. He says that the retarded people do not know how to put to proper use the goods that God has given to them, and so it is right for other people to take the place of these incapable stewards and to exploit the goods they do not put to good use for the benefit of all.<sup>23</sup>*

Muller likens Africans to retarded people. What an insult! Unfortunately, his ideas about the African are just the tip of the iceberg, for there are numerous professional people who hold these distorted ideas even in our days.<sup>24</sup> People are entitled to their ideas,<sup>25</sup> no matter how prejudiced those ideas are. As a result, African theology of liberation will have to consider the fact that it is not force which will liberate people from their prejudiced ideas, but a peaceful dialogue. Force can only be applied in the event of the total failure of a peaceful negotiation, teaches the Church.<sup>26</sup> The price of a peaceful negotiation or a revolutionary violence might be the assassination of its respective candidates.<sup>27</sup> It is definitely at this difficult point that the exponents of the African Theology of Liberation – emerging from both the Christian and the Islamic orientations – should try to enlighten one another as to how to theologize relevantly in the face of a possible violent elimination of racial prejudice, conducted by Africans at grassroots level.

Kanyandago's intention was not to write an African Theology of Liberation, neither are his ideas a direct response of the challenge of the Pan African Conference of 1977 at Accra. However, his reflections on the sensitive matters of African slavery and colonialism do, nevertheless give me hope that such a theology – with its historical foundations in slavery and colonialism – can be formulated. The other African scholar who gives me that hope is Jesse N.K. Mugambi.



## 2. Jesse N. K. Mugambi

Mugambi is an African Anglican theologian and a citizen of Nairobi in Kenya. He critically writes an African Church History of the period 1500-1800 – which has a lot to do with questions of slavery and colonialism in Africa – with special reference to the East Coast of the continent. He claims,

*To the Portuguese, Africa was not very important except in terms of providing ports of call on the long voyages to the East. However, it turned out that Africa became the source of slaves. Not only were slaves transported from the West Coast to European colonies in America – African slaves were transported in European ships from the East African coast to European colonies in Asia.*<sup>28</sup>

Can the international community of nations afford to be silent about this slave trade? Can the European citizens, the majority of whom are Christians, not do anything to heal the African wounds of slavery and colonialism which were never attended to by anyone, hence the need to re-diagnose them? Surely the western powers did try to address Hitler's murder of the Jews during the period of the Second World War. Qualms of conscience, argues Richard P. McBrien, motivated the western citizens to recompense the Jews. He writes,

*But, of course, no episode affecting the Jews has had a more profound effect on the Christian conscience than the Nazi extermination of six million Jews at the time of the Second World War. "After Auschwitz there can be no more excuses," Hans Kung has written. "Christendom cannot avoid a clear admission of guilt" (On Being A Christian).*<sup>29</sup>

My interpretation of the profound effect which the Nazi extermination of six million Jews had on the Christian conscience, as discussed by McBrien, is that this tragedy did yield sincere feelings of remorse among western Christians. Kung concurs by emphatically mentioning that western Christians have no alternative but to acknowledge their unfortunate participation in this shameful bloodshed of the Jews in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Mazrui is reflecting on some of the concrete actions the West adopted in order to make up for the Jewish massacre discussed above. He says,

*But in the longer term, the scale of the Holocaust and the martyrdom of the Jews under the Nazis brought the Jews and the Christians in the western world closer together than they had been since the days of the Roman Empire. One healthy reason for the Christian-Jewish rapprochement was a heightened western awareness of the evil of ethno-religious bigotry. But there was also an unhealthy reason, the enormity of the guilt felt by western Gentiles. The guilt was so great that western support grew rapidly for the creation of a national home for the Jews, provided such a home was not created on European soil.*<sup>30</sup>

The West, motivated by its feeling of remorse for the murder of six million Jews at Auschwitz, tried to make up for that transgression by providing a national home for the Jews, of course, with strings attached. It is one of the tasks of an African Theology of Liberation to challenge the West to address the question of the slavery and the colonisation of the Africans. The West concretely addressed the Auschwitz massacre by providing some compensation to the Jewish nation, in the form of a national home in the Middle East. This offer was not without serious problems with Israel's neighbours, more especially the Muslims, continues Mazrui.<sup>31</sup> The African Theology of Liberation has to investigate if a meaningful gesture serving as compensation for slavery and colonisation – with no strings attached – can be offered to Africans by the West, just as the latter did to the Jews after the Second World War.

Mugambi also deplores the involvement of western missionaries in the slave trade. He is discussing the question of priests who were always called upon to bless the achievement of the conquering and the shipping away the conquered slaves. He claims,

*A report of 1505, less than a decade of Vasco da Gama's voyage describes the method of occupation adopted by the Portuguese as follows: "upon landing, the friars set up a cross before which the canticle **Te Deum Laudamus** was chanted, and when this was completed, the place was given up to plunder. Part of the plunder was a consignment of Africans who were shipped to Lisbon (as slaves) together with other merchandise. In order to dispose the slaves, the markets were set up in Portuguese ports. The first of these was founded in Lisbon in 1537, and became the proto-type of European slave market."<sup>32</sup>*

To some extent, one can understand the despicable participation of the friars (the Franciscan Order) in the enslavement of the Africans. Neither the scriptures nor the teaching of the early Church Fathers told them that it was absolutely immoral. Roger Charles concurs. He writes,

*Following the New Testament example, there was no question of challenging the existence of slavery. A letter of Ignatius of Antioch to Polycarp, dating from about AD 105 advises that it is not right to treat slaves, male or female, condescendingly; nor is it right that the slaves give themselves airs or pine for release at the expense of the community since it was clearly impractical for those communities to emancipate them all.<sup>33</sup>*

None of the two church fathers above, namely, Ignatius and Polycarp, condemns the institution of slavery: all they do is to encourage both parties – the slaves and their owners – to treat each fairly. The same applied to church fathers who lived a few centuries after Ignatius and Polycarp. About them Charles writes,

*The Fathers therefore see slavery as lawful, and the slave is exhorted to obedience. A man should patiently accept his lot, was Ambrose's advice. Christ will make good slaves of bad ones, was Augustine's view. The idea of the liberation of slaves in the seventh year, which was the law among the Hebrews, was rejected by him. But equally the Fathers urged the slave masters to treat the slaves as fellow men and not as things; Augustine tells them to bring up their households in the service of God, their slaves as well as their children, and Gregory warns that those who own slaves will have to give an account for them.*<sup>34</sup>

My observation is that the Fathers' priority was not so much the abolition of the slavery institution, but the humane treatment of slaves. In other words, the Fathers never had problems with the practise of buying and selling of slaves: they only condemned the ill-treatment of slaves.

The church's official interpretation of the scriptures, together with the teachings of the first Fathers of the church condoned and justified slavery. This is the background of the friars who actively helped the Portuguese slave merchants to plunder East Africa. Can anyone blame the friars for collaborating with slave traders? Not easily, because of the background already indicated above. However, these friars, together with the Jesuit monastery at Luanda which possessed 12,000 slaves,<sup>35</sup> cannot remain blameless forever, because there were prophetic voices elsewhere – during the same period – who fiercely condemned slavery as a diabolically inhuman institution.<sup>36</sup> The same applies to Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary to the Chinese who – during the same period – collected a substantial number of African slaves along the shores of Mozambique on his way to Asia.<sup>37</sup>

The Nineteenth Century saw the beginning of the emancipation of slaves. During the same period another evil spirit, namely colonisation, befell Africa. European powers conferred at Berlin from 1884-1885 to decide – without the consultation and the approval of their respective African subjects – how to share Africa among themselves. The missionaries at this time were busy preparing African minds to accept obediently, the resolutions of the Berlin Conference. Mugambi claims,

*The missionaries served as a link between the rulers and the ruled, between the powerful and the powerless. They provided literacy and other skills to people who were later to become interpreters, clerks, teachers, evangelists and artisans when colonial administration became established. The mission stations became centres of westernization. New methods of agriculture, architecture, nurture, education, and medical care were taught at those stations. The converts became like extension officers in the process of Europeanization. Evangelization was defined in terms of acculturation. The degree of conversion to Christianity was*

*determined in terms of the extent to which the convert has adopted the culture of the resident missionary.*<sup>38</sup>

Surely, there is nothing morally wrong if a group of people teaches another new and profitable ways of nurturing, architecture, agriculture, etc. as happened in the case of European missionaries and African people above. The problem arises when the teaching group begins to feel culturally superior to the group that's being taught. Cultural competition or superiority has absolutely nothing to do with Christianity: an African does not have to adopt a European culture in order to be a good Christian. Tired of this cultural imposition from Europe is Meinrad Hegba, an African Jesuit theologian from the Cameroons. He claims,

*To sum up, what we wish for is a long moratorium in which we will be left alone with our God, so that his spirit can visit us – without intermediaries and witnesses, without having to request permission from some distant authority, so that his light can enlighten us without having, as did till now, to pass through the prism of a foreign culture.*<sup>39</sup>

Equally tired of the cultural domination of Africans by European missionaries is Kalenga Matambe, an African Catholic priest from the African Republic of Congo. He says,

*Now that Africa has been Christianised, Christianity must be Africanised. Thank God we are being helped in this attempt by different governments and heads of state, who are talking about negritude, authenticity, and returning-to-ourselves. These words are not directed against Christianity as such, but they are directed against the spiritual alienation and cultural uprooting which the missions have brought us.*<sup>40</sup>

Cultural equality is one of the major areas which the African Theology of Liberation should study seriously in order to bring about cultural emancipation to Africans who consider their cultures to be inferior to European ones. In so doing, the African Theology of Liberation is partly attending to the mandate the African theologians who conferred at Accra in 1977 gave to every African theologian: they commissioned every African theologian to take interest in the liberation of Africa from all manifestations of oppression. This is a very vast responsibility and – because of its overwhelming magnitude – it will have to be shared among the exponents, with each one taking the part which he/she likes mostly. It is certainly not a task to be taken and completed by a single theologian. In other words, while some theologians may be interested in the cultural liberation of Africa, others may be interested in the socio-economic and political liberation of this beautiful continent.

Mugambi further notes that there were African converts who – to the dislike of many European missionaries – insisted on the question of a critical separation of the Gospel and the European culture. He puts his observation as follows:

*Other Christians challenged the insistence of the missionaries that conversion to Christianity and adoption of Western culture were inseparable. Thus they accepted the Christian faith, but rejected Western domination. They appealed to the Gospel which proclaimed liberation, maintaining that from the first passover to the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus, liberation (or deliverance) was the central message of the bible.<sup>41</sup>*

It is unfortunate that Mugambi does not provide the names of these Africans who seriously resisted the cultural domination of the European missionaries. In my humble opinion, these Africans – because of their resistance and because of their liberation vocabulary expressed above – are supposed to be recognised as forerunners of the African Theology of Liberation under study. It is indeed interesting to learn that already during this period of colonisation there were African prophetic voices which had the ability to interpret the scriptures in a manner relevant to the liberation of fellow Africans from the brutal claws of Europe.

According to Mugambi, the emergence of the African political leadership after the Second World War (1945-1964) ironically led to the worst conditions of hunger and poverty in Africa, as the African leadership collaborated with the European powers in the process of the ruthless exploitation of African labour, on the one hand, and African agricultural and mineral resources, on the other. He expresses his bitter complaints as follows:

*The attainment of constitutional independence did not automatically bring about economic freedom. Indeed the constitutional settlements tended to ensure continued economic ties between the former colonial masters and the new republics. These ties have not enabled the former colonies to break off their economic dependence on their former masters. Rather the level of dependence is continuing to grow, as the so-called developing countries (former colonies) become poorer and the so-called developed ones become richer. The former colonies have continued to be producers of raw materials (both mineral and agricultural) which are exported to the former master for processing in exchange for machinery and processed goods at exorbitant prices.<sup>42</sup>*

My understanding of Mugambi is that the political liberation of each African state from its colonial authorities never addressed the economic poverty of the great majority of Africans. On the contrary, the multinational companies, representing the former colonial powers, made use of the new dispensation – made up of African leadership – to orchestrate the exploitation of African labour, agricultural and mineral resources. In other words, the African political leadership enriched itself economically – by allowing itself to be bribed by the European multinational companies – at the expense of the poor masses of Africa.

It is exactly at the stage of the post-colonial rule that the African Theology of Liberation will have to network with African political leaders, to remind them of their primary responsibility of seriously looking after the economic needs of the poor of Africa. This task won't be easy as some African political leaders are tyrants,<sup>43</sup> who do not want to be disturbed in the brutal abuse of national economic assets.<sup>44</sup> Louise Kretzschmar gives an account of African Church leaders who vehemently protested against the splurge of national economic values as follows,

*Statements of censure by churchmen against exploitation and discrimination have appeared in documents such as the Kinshasa Declaration (1972) and in the Confession of Alexandra, as well as in the activities and pronouncements of the AACC (All African Conference of Churches).*<sup>45</sup>

Thus, the proponents of the African Theology of Liberation will not be the first prophets to try to uproot the corruption of the African political leaders. Their success in this essential task will come from the awareness that Liberation Theology is not only about the analysis of the context from the point of view of faith: it also involves the act of going up to the temple.<sup>46</sup> This only means that liberation theology is also an act of prayer. It draws its strength – in the face of persecution – from a protracted life of prayer. The temple is a place of prayer. The temple is symbolic of the prayer which liberation theologians are supposed to offer constantly – with the poor – for the success of the attainment of liberation.

Mugambi's critical reflections on the African periods of slavery and colonisation does give me lots of hope that the proposed African Theology of Liberation, done by each exponent in his/her patria – with its historical origins in slavery and colonisation – is a possible phenomenon. Another African theologian whose ideas strengthen that hope for me is Benezet Bujo. We examine his arguments in the next subsection.

### **3. Benezet Bujo**

Bujo is a Congolese Catholic theologian working presently in Switzerland. He is one of the African theologians who gives the impression that he is open to a discussion based on the creation of an African Theology of Liberation. Unlike Kanyandago and Mugambi, Bujo does not discuss the slavery period of Africa: he gives a detailed study of the horrors of colonialism in his patria. Most particularly, he focuses on the active role played by the Belgian missionaries in the ruthless colonisation of Congo by Belgian imperial forces. He bitterly complains that the missionaries – without the consultation and the approval of the Congolese people – signed an agreement to destroy Congolese cultural values judged by the missionaries to be harmful to society. He claims,

*A document issued in September 1923, in Stanleyville, now Kisangani, by the Superiors of the Belgian Congo Mission lists customs considered harmful to public order, and requested the colonial government to take action against them. The customs included: offerings to spirits and ancestors; co-operation in ancestor rituals; dancing and hunting ceremonies; magical or religious rites on the occasion of a birth, or the appearance of a child's teeth, or circumcision, or a girl's puberty, or marriage, or illness. Likewise forbidden were traditional rites in honour of ancestors performed before a hunting or a fishing expedition, and carvings representing the spirits of the dead.*<sup>47</sup>

Obviously Bujo is complaining about the destruction of cultural values of the people of Congo, orchestrated jointly, by Belgian missionaries and colonial forces. This indirectly implies that Bujo – like the exponents of the African Theology of Liberation – fully backs up the idea of the theologians who conferred at Accra in 1977, that the liberation of Africa should be multidimensional: meaning that it should address cultural issues, and all other aspects of African life that are at present, heavily oppressed. Continuing to respond indirectly to the challenge of Accra, Bujo discusses the socio-political and economic problems of Africa from the theological point of view. He starts off by the challenge he obtained from an African university student who said,

*Father, if your God is talking to us more by means of our ancestral traditions and customs rather than in the drama of four million refugees in Africa, I should like to return to you my baptismal certificate, and ask to cancel my name in your register, for I have no interest in such a God.*<sup>48</sup>

Bujo is responding to the young person by exposing the inadequacy displayed by the theologies of inculturation and incarnation in addressing the concerns of the young person. He claims,

*Anyone who takes an interest in contemporary African theology can understand such bitterness. The theology of inculturation, so often preached triumphantly in our churches, is a pompous irrelevance, truly an ideological superstructure at the service of the bourgeoisie. It may be a cause of satisfaction that the African hierarchy has adopted a theology of incarnation as its official policy. So far however there has been more words than actions, and one cannot help wondering how serious is the commitment of the bishops of Africa to a truly effective incarnation of Christianity in Africa.*<sup>49</sup>

My understanding is that Bujo does not respond to the challenge posed by the student: instead, Bujo – although in the form of a destructive criticism – invites proponents of the theologies of inculturation and incarnation to attend to the socio-political and economic

needs such as raised by the student above. In other words, the theologies of inculturation and incarnation remain inadequate and irrelevant to Africa, if their focus is only on cultural matters. They should make a concerted effort to include in their programs, the serious solution – from the theological point of view – of the contemporary African refugees problem raised by the student, together with all other socio-economic and problems of Africa. And emphasizing the importance of the prophetic role of African Theologians, Bujo claims,

*The African theologian whose interest is personal profit cannot hope to inspire confidence. It cannot be denied that such an interest has not always been absent from the practitioners of African theology, which only too easily become a valuable export. African theologians can easily turn into eager proselytizers whom you keep meeting in international gatherings but whom you never see in the bush, which should be their preferred pulpit. Many prefer to publish their studies on African theology in Europe to catch the European and American market. Their chief object often seems to be to gain prestige and international recognition for themselves and for African theology. There must of course be dialogue with other cultures; no one would wish for African theology to be practised in the ghetto. Nevertheless, it must be addressed in the first place to the people of Africa themselves, and it must be seen as a sign by the poor and the underprivileged. Theologians for their part can only too easily turn into petty bourgeoisie, forgetful of the poor, and concerned only with their material advantage.<sup>50</sup>*

Thus, Bujo is calling for a balanced approach of doing African theology. High up on the agenda of each African theologian should be the imperative service of the poor of Africa, followed by the important commitment of making African theology known to the international community of theologians. Bujo has in actual fact touched upon some of the important aspects of the proposed African Theology of Liberation. The first aspect is its main concern for the liberation of the poor of Africa, first from the socio-political and economic hardships, and from all other forms of oppression. This means that this theology will be periodically revisited by its proponents with the specific aim to see how faithful it is to this important task of the liberation of the poor. The second aspect is the exposure of the African Theology of Liberation to the critique of the international community. This means that – even if it claims to be contextual like all other theologies – the African Theology of Liberation will still be in need of the constructive criticism of the international expertise for its further development and growth.

With these few reflections, Bujo has certainly helped me see how the envisaged African Theology of Liberation is to evolve. In particular his idea that – to be relevant to the people of Africa – even the theologies of inculturation and incarnation – will have to incorporate



the liberation of Africans from all forms of socio-political and economic problems, in their present cultural programs. In other words, these theologies are also challenged by Bujo to be emancipatory in orientation, they cannot deal with cultural matters in isolation from the socio-political needs of the poor of Africa.

Another African Theologian whose ideas give me hope that it is indeed worthwhile to campaign for a successful African Theology of Liberation is Jose Chipenda of Angola. Let us study his reflections in the next subsection.

#### 4. Jose B. Chipenda

Chipenda's indirect contribution to the creation of the African Theology of Liberation lies in his effort to focus on the liberation of Africa from the exploitation of the West within the Post-Colonial Period. He claims,

*Liberation is about victims of exploitation. The Prime Minister of Jamaica told us in Nairobi in 1975:*

*Every weak nation exploited by a strong nation is a victim, every man and woman denied the chance to read and write is a victim, ... every family that is undernourished is a victim. Not only the unemployed, but every man and woman whose work is underpaid, irregular, or insecure are victims. ... Every nation that is condemned to comparative poverty while a transnational corporation accumulates profits out of its national resources is a victim. Liberation is about the victims, and as long as there is a victim on the face of the earth, the process of liberation must continue.<sup>51</sup>*

Chipenda starts off with a very obvious reality, namely that whenever and wherever a gross violation of human rights manifests itself, human beings who suffer the consequences will always cry 'foul'. This means that human beings who are victimized by a situation of structural injustice will make a concerted effort to liberate themselves from that oppressive situation. Economic exploitation – appearing in various forms discussed by Chipenda above – is certainly one of the many manifestations of structural injustice, and it will always be resisted and confronted by forces of liberation, whenever it tries to victimize the populace. Thus, Chipenda is saying nothing new. So far his views can only serve as an indirect reminder to proponents of the African Theology of Liberation that they should stay as close as possible to the exploited of Africa, as these are the main addressees of this theology. Within this context of focussing firmly on the needs of the economically exploited of Africa, Chipenda discusses the difference between Freedom and Liberation. He claims,

*African theologians realize that our countries are free but they [African countries] are not liberated. We hear resounding sounds of our national anthems; we rejoice seeing bright and colourful flags in the sky. These are*

*undeniable symbols of our freedom but also of a reminder of an unfinished task to liberate Africa from ignorance, poverty, disease, ethnocentrism, and other “isms.” We should not confuse freedom with liberation; freedom is exemption from external control; liberation is the inner ability to handle freedom constructively.*<sup>52</sup>

I understand Chipenda to be saying that freedom – within the context of his discussion – refers to the legal abolition of colonialism, hence the mention of breaking free from the external control imposed by the colonial power; while liberation refers to the wisdom which motivates a person or a group of people to use freedom for the benefit of the populace. Like Mugambi, Chipenda bitterly complains of African leaders who profited financially from the constitutional freedoms of their respective countries at the economic detriment of their compatriots. Indeed Chipenda contends,

*In Africa we are familiar with colonial conditions that created domination and institutionalized dependence. This situation of dependence goes on unabated. People with newly acquired power exploit nationals who are weak; by the same token the new elite has its hands tied because of the economic, political, and military support they receive from friends abroad.*<sup>53</sup>

Thus, Chipenda observes painfully, that the Post-Colonial period did nothing whatsoever to improve the economic conditions of the populace. The only African group which gained economically from this period were the African elite and the African political leaders who continued to strengthen their trade links with the former colonial powers at the economic expense of the grassroots level. Chipenda boldly claims that the situation of neo-colonialism which he has described above, calls for the urgency of the act of liberation, which should be mainly orchestrated by an African Theology of Liberation. He claims,

*We ask ourselves whether there will be a time when neo-colonial forces will cease to exist in order to give way to true liberation? Friends visiting us can easily be led to say: Africa is ripe for a theology of liberation. Liberation is needed, but we must guard ourselves from being involved in a purely intellectual game. Our theology should be rooted in the soil that produced it and connected to the commitments that underlie it.*<sup>54</sup>

Chipenda’s observation of the strong commercial links between the multinational companies and the post-colonial African elite – and the African leadership – leads him to the conviction that it would be extremely difficult to uproot the question of neo-colonialism in Africa. But he insists that it is that very seemingly impossible task of eradicating neo-colonialism that signals – as strangers rightly notice – that the time has finally arrived in African to do a Theology of Liberation which will be highly committed to the concrete

actions of liberating the poor of Africa from all forms of socio-political and economic injustice.

Peter Paris strongly holds that in the majority of African countries the old colonial elements of economic, educational and political dependence on the West were still powerful during the post-independence period. Indeed he writes,

*Yet it is important not to lose sight of the fact that neither political nor ecclesiastical independence in Africa resulted in any absolute separation of these newly independent nations from their colonial powers. Rather, most African nations have continued to remain heavily dependent on economic assistance and educational curricula from their former rulers.<sup>55</sup>*

The Post-Colonial period of Africa, as analysed respectively and similarly by Paris above partly means that the West continued to dominate the socio-political and educational lives of the majority of Africans during the post-independence period. This act of domination surely rendered the task of the Theology of Liberation – to liberate Africans from all forms of domestication – extremely difficult. But Chipenda did not lose heart. On the contrary, he proceeded – in the midst of those difficulties – to charter the content of the African Liberation Theology which should serve as guidance to the poor of Africa. He strongly believes that the African Theology we envisage should reflect the following human rights,

*the right of peasants to the land; the right of workers to the fruit of their labor; the right of children to education; the right of the ill to medical and hospital attention; the right of [the unemployed] youth to work; the right of students to free education; the right of women to civil, social, and political equality; the right of the aged to secure age; the right of intellectuals, artists, and scientists to fight with their works, for a better world; the right of nations to turn fortresses into schools , and to arm their workers, their peasants, their students, and their intellectuals ... so that they may themselves defend their rights and their destinies.<sup>56</sup>*

I understand Chipenda to be saying that liberation can be defined as the achievement of all the fundamental rights of the populace. Put in another way, the recognition and the respect of the human rights listed by Chipenda constitute the content of liberation. Of course, there are other fundamental rights that are missing from Chipenda's list,<sup>57</sup> but on the whole I am impressed by Chipenda's understanding of the concept of liberation, and I am tempted to adopt it as a yardstick to evaluate any Theology of Liberation practised on the African soil. In other words, Chipenda's concept of liberation – together the missing rights and fundamental freedoms<sup>58</sup> – should constitute the criteria through which the African Theology of Liberation evaluates itself. Any African Theology of Liberation which ignores – as its basis

– the discussion on the achievement of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the populace is totally irrelevant to the poorest of the poor in Africa: as the true route to liberation just cannot bypass the subject of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the poor.<sup>59</sup>

Chipenda's contribution towards the creation of an African Theology of Liberation, has really been helpful, because his understanding of the content of liberation – namely, the recognition and the respect of African human rights and fundamental freedoms – provides a foundation and pillars which will constantly serve as a reliable support system for the proposed theology.

## 5. M. J. Oguogho

Dr. M. J. Oguogho is a Nigerian priest lecturing at the University of Ibadan, in Nigeria. He also has a particular interest in matters of the liberation of the African Continent. As a result, he has written a dissertation with the title, ***A Critique of African Liberation Theologies from the Perspective of North American Liberation***. Prior to the 1994 democratic dispensation of South Africa, Oguogho wrote an article with the title, ***South African Liberation Theologies versus Racism and Apartheid***. In this article Oguogho critically studies the Theology of Liberation as articulated respectively by two South African academics, namely the Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Reverend Allan Boesak. He is highly impressed by the biblical foundation on which both scholars discuss their respective opinions on the Theology of Liberation. He is, however, not happy with the respective analysis of the two scholars, as each one of them seems to consider racism as the root cause of the oppression and exploitation of the majority of blacks by whites. He disagrees with them by arguing that,

*Although their efforts are highly commendable, nevertheless, it must be remarked that their liberation theologies lack a critical analysis of their ideological substructures and the problems in South Africa. They fall short of challenging the economic system and structure, which in the first place has produced and nourished racism and apartheid. Moreover, they do not recognize enough that racism and apartheid are capitalist categories. These, among other things, explain why the solutions which Tutu and Boesak are proposing are reformist on the one hand, and on the other hand, seek to integrate blacks into the capitalist system, in which they would still remain exploited and oppressed. In such a situation as that, prevailing in South Africa, Tutu and Boesak must realise that, there is no alternative to revolution, and the establishment of socialism: in order to bring authentic and total liberation to all its exploited and oppressed races.<sup>60</sup>*

In short, for Oguogho the major problem in South Africa was not so much racism, but capitalism which had to be totally demolished and be replaced by socialism which Oguogho thought would be of economic benefit to every citizen of South Africa. The removal of racism – proposed by Tutu and Boesak – was not going to be the real solution, as it would benefit a few black elites who would join the whites in the economic exploitation of their fellow blacks. And the socialist dispensation proposed by Oguogho would not be achieved through peaceful negotiation, as it would not be easy for whites to let go the capitalist system which helped them to be as wealthy as they are. The socialist regime in question would be attained through revolutionary violence waged by the ‘have nots’ against the ‘haves.’

Oguogho’s critique of the Theology of Liberation – as expressed by Tutu and Boesak – surely qualifies him as an eligible candidate for the African Theology of Liberation which I propose. His courage to challenge the analysis of the two South African scholars only reminds us that the proposed African Theology of Liberation will truly flourish if its proponents are radically open to constructive criticism emerging from fellow-Africans, and from the international family of experts.

I now focus on the contribution of South Africa – my home country – towards the growth of the African Theology of Liberation. Several theologians contributed quite substantially towards the development of this theology, even though they never named it **The African Theology of Liberation**. The lack of time and space does not allow me to discuss all of them. As a result, I shall focus only on the contributions of Alan Boesak, Desmond Tutu, and Mokgethi Motlhabi.

#### **D. The South African Situation**

In my home country, the African Theology of Liberation was named **Black Theology** or **The Theology of Liberation** or **Liberation Theology**. The three names are derived from the title of the book of James Cone – namely, **A Black Theology of Liberation** – an African American theologian in the US.<sup>61</sup> Black theology was then imported from the US by a South African scholar whose name is Basil Moore.<sup>62</sup> It was overwhelmingly welcome by several black South Africans – among whom we can count Simon Maimela, Bonganjalo Goba, Desmond Tutu, Alan Boesak, Tinyiko Maluleke, Takatso Mofokeng, Frank Chikane, Barney Pityana, Buti Tlhagale, Itumeleng Mosala, and Manas Buthelezi<sup>63</sup> – because of its relevance. Alan Boesak attributes this passionate welcome of this Black Theology of Liberation Theology – by local theologians – to the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. He claims,

*Through black consciousness black people discover that they are children of God and that they have rights to exist in this world. Black people discover that they are part of history and that they share this history with*

*God, which means that they are responsible to act as human persons. The situation in South Africa did not happen just accidentally. It did not just come about. The situation was created by people. It is a system that is still being maintained by people through various methods.*<sup>64</sup>

The situation which did not happen by accident to which Boesak is referring is the situation of the oppression of black people by whites. Apartheid was the name of this oppressive situation, and it was structurally created by the whites of South Africa with the specific aim of denying blacks the socio-political and economic rights which they had. Boesak describes this situation a little further by saying,

*At the very top of the social ladder in South Africa we have the white South Africans. They have everything: all the economic, social, and political privileges. They vote and they have a very high standard of living. Next there are the coloured South Africans: the Asians, the Indians, etc. This is a clear, politically recognised category in South Africa, whether one is "colored," or "Cape coloured," or "other coloured." At the very bottom of the social ladder is what the government calls the Bantu, the African people.*<sup>65</sup>

Expounding on the disadvantages of those at the very bottom of the social ladder, Boesak continues,

*Those at the bottom of the social ladder have almost nothing in South Africa, have no property rights nor the right to live with their families or children. They have to carry passbooks. But the "coloured," because they have some white blood, share white people's culture to a large extent and speak their language, either Afrikaans or English. We listen to their music and we share their religious concepts. We are therefore civilised and have more rights to more things than the Africans. I may own property in South Africa, but an African cannot. I may live with my wife and children, but an African cannot. This special situation has been a creation of the white people, who tell us who we are and where we belong. They call us the "brown" people. Black consciousness says this is nonsense.*<sup>66</sup>

'Divide and rule' was the name of the game played by the apartheid regime, as it succeeded in creating divisions among the people it ruled, so that they could not unite easily to combat the racism inculcated by the same regime. Boesak is saying that his people, the 'coloureds,' were given certain political privileges – like, for example, being part of the so-called 'Tricameral Parliament'<sup>67</sup> – so as to prevent them from being united with Africans in their struggle against the apartheid. Black Consciousness, according to Boesak helped the 'coloureds' to discover the dirty tricks of the divide and rule strategy used by the racist regime to keep its subjects apart from one another. Liberation Theology then reflects from

the point of view of faith on the new consciousness the oppressed should have about themselves, namely that they are Children of God. Boesak explains further to say,

*When I discover that God has made me a human being though I am not white, it means that I have a right to be here; I have a right to exist. I am not less in his eyes. I believe in him. He has sent His Son for me. And when the word became flesh, God became a human being. He became like me. He shared the same feelings that I share. When I begin to understand this, we begin to ask the question, "What am I then?" White law says that I am not a human being. What do you do when you are black and you are a Christian and the people that oppress you say that they are also Christians?*<sup>68</sup>

I interpret Boesak to be saying that while the Black Consciousness Movement helps the victims of apartheid to discover their new consciousness, on the one hand – by means of questions asked above – the Black Theology of Liberation helps the same victims of racism to answer the same questions, on the other. In other words, Black Theology of Liberation reflects seriously – from the point of view of faith – on the oppressive situation of Blacks, as analysed and articulated by the Black Consciousness Movement. For him it is important to emphasize that Black Theology is a situational theology because of its focus on the situation of the Blacks, and all other oppressed people of South Africa. Indeed he strongly maintains that,

*Black liberation theology is a situational theology. All theology has always been situational; it has always been theology in context. The only new thing that we have discovered is that it is theological foolishness (and I am not sure whether that is equal to sinfulness) to say that what is good in Germany as discovered by a good German Reform theologian is also good for the situation in North America and therefore also good for the situation South Africa. Each theological concept develops within a particular context, and our theological thinking—the way we read the Gospel, the way we understand the Gospel, the way we interpret the Gospel, the way we interpret our situation in the light of the Gospel—has everything to do with what we eat and how many times a day we eat, what salary we earn, whether we own a home, whether we live happily with our family, and so on. The situation in which we live, the context in which we live, profoundly influences the way we do our theology.*<sup>69</sup>

I totally agree with Boesak when he says that the situation in which we live profoundly influences the way we do our theology; but I think he needs to explain himself further, because – left in that form – that phrase might find itself subject to lots of erroneous interpretations. In other words, does the situation necessarily justify the way we do our theology? No. Charles Villa-Vicencio expresses this point much better. He says,

*Many have argued that religion is by nature a legitimation of ruling-class ideology. Others have promoted it as a spiritual resource for revolutionary change. An objective analysis of the history of religion in the West seems to suggest that it can be both. It is a multifaceted, many-levelled, complex, and ambiguous reality. Gregory Baum suggests, for example, that it is possible to read the bible as a textbook on the pathology of religion – giving rise to hypocrisy, idolatry, group-egotism, and collective blindness. On the other hand it can also be read as a textbook on the therapeutic nature of religion – overcoming the maladies of society by being a source of social and political renewal.<sup>70</sup>*

The mention of the bible in the analysis above, surely serves to prove that Christianity is one of those religions which can be used for the good, or the oppression of the populace. Villa-Vicencio tries to apply his research to the situation in South Africa. He claims,

*The role of the white Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) in South African politics illustrates this phenomenon in a pertinent manner. Today it is the church of the political establishment. It provides political legitimation for apartheid, while its leaders repeatedly attack the World Council of Churches (WCC), the South African Council of Churches (SACC), black theology, and liberation theology for allegedly using religion for political ends.<sup>71</sup>*

Which of the two groups is doing a good job? Is it the NGK which is theologically promoting the apartheid government's official policy of racial discrimination, on the one hand, or is it the alliance of the WCC, the SACC, and black theology which is theologically upholding the cause of justice for the poor, on the other? Theologians on either side of the divide are surely basing their respective theologies on the socio-political and economic situation in South Africa. In other words, both parties are doing situational theology. Which of the two situational theologies is legitimate? On which grounds do we legitimize the one or the other? Our answer was surely not going to be easy, had we not discovered – through the help of Villa-Vicencio – that the theological support of the apartheid was just a sheer self-contradiction from the part of the NGK, which earlier on firmly stood by the side of the poor and oppressed Afrikaner workers. As a result, C. D. Brink, a renowned NGK theologian in 1947 rebuked the authorities of the NGK by saying,

*The aim of the church is to bring about social justice. Justice must be done to the poor and the oppressed, and if the present system does not serve this purpose, the public conscience must be roused to demand another. If the church does not exert itself for justice in society, and together with the help she can offer also be prepared to serve as champion for the cause of the poor, others will do it. The poor have their right today: I do*



*not ask for your charity, but I ask to be given an opportunity to live a life of human dignity.*<sup>72</sup>

What a powerful statement of Liberation Theology emerging from an NGK theologian! It is the same NGK which in the 1970s, condemned the same liberation language – done by black theology and its allies mentioned above – as nothing else but pure political ideology disguised in religious garb. What a contradiction in terms! In my opinion, if a theology is self-contradictory, then that theology is false.

Coming back to Boesak, I would suggest that already at the level of definition he should explain to his readers what kind of situational theology he is dealing with; meaning that, in addition to the emphasis that black liberation theology is contextual, he should also mention that the same theology is partisan: it prioritizes the upliftment of the lives of the poor, while it prophetically condemns every facet of injustice which prevents the poor from achieving their socio-political and economic rights. It is also important to mention that, unlike the NGK liberation theology, the black theology of liberation does not change its partisanship: meaning that when the oppressed become the new oppressors – in the new dispensation<sup>73</sup> – black theology will always be on the side of the newly oppressed. Desmond Tutu strongly thinks that it is the kind of questions asked by the oppressed which pressurize the black theology of liberation to speak a partisan language. The oppressed ask, Tutu holds,

*“Why do we suffer so?” “Why does suffering seem to single out us blacks to be the victims of a racism gone mad?” Another way of putting the same anguished cry is, “God, on whose side are you?” or even more disturbingly for some people, “God, are you black or white?”*<sup>74</sup>

Liberation Theology proceeds to wrestle with the question of God, contends Tutu, after listening to the cries of the oppressed cited above. In other words, Liberation Theology investigates if it still makes sense to believe in God in the face of political injustice and economic exploitation. After this inquiry, Liberation theology – helped by various liberation accounts in the bible – comes back to the oppressed and assures them that god is on their side. Continuing to encourage the oppressed not to lose hope in God, Tutu says,

*He is a God in charge in his universe. He is not impotent despite all appearances to the contrary, despite the fact that evil and injustice seem to be on the ascendant. He is the Lord, the all-ruler of the book of Daniel and the revelation of St. John the Divine. Nothing that happens can ever catch him off guard... He has not fallen asleep, or gone on a journey, or turned aside to relieve himself so that our cries rise to an empty void; our cries do not fall on deaf or unheeding ears. No, our God has heard and seen our affliction and has come down to deliver us. And He is strong to save. Our people here in Southern Africa need to here this.*<sup>75</sup>

Thus, Tutu, guided by the scriptures – like every other proponent of the Theology of Liberation – shares his faith with the oppressed of Southern Africa: he strongly believes that – just as He liberated the Israelites of old – God will liberate the oppressed of Southern Africa, in spite of the injustice which seem to continue unabated.

Like Boesak, Tutu strongly believes that liberation theology is, and should remain a contextual theology. Its purpose is to focus on the liberation of a particular area at a particular time, and when this task has been satisfactorily exhausted, Liberation Theology must make way for future theologies which will seriously attend to future people's joys and sorrows. Tutu strongly maintains that,

*More than most theologies, it [Liberation Theology] accepts that there can be no final theology, that all theology is provisional and cannot lay claim to a universal validity, for any relevant theology must accept the scandal of its particularity, which, after all, is the price of its relevance. And no theology can easily transcend the limitations and the conditioned-ness of those who theologize... There is no one true way of theologizing. Even in the bible there is a rich diversity of theologies, all existing check by jowl, theologies that may complement one another, though they may also be quite incompatible. Liberation Theology claims it is part of this rich diversity; it glories in its limitations and it is ready to leave the stage to its successors once it feels it has fulfilled its task.<sup>76</sup>*

Having thus explained the limitations of Liberation Theology and the conditioned-ness of its proponents, Tutu concludes this impressive explanation – in the next paragraph – in a rather contradictory way. He writes,

*But we should not canonize the determinations of yesteryear and so make the awful mistake of identifying theology with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Theology is temporal, the Gospel is eternal. Our understanding of that Gospel, of that divine revelation will change constantly. That is what theology is about.<sup>77</sup>*

I don't understand the distinction between theology and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If the distinction refers to the authority the Gospel of Jesus Christ has over all theology, then I totally agree with Tutu, for the scriptures – including the Gospel of Christ – constitute the soul of theology.<sup>78</sup> This means that the Gospel of Christ – as articulate and written by all the New Testament authors – serves as a standard by means of which we judge the legitimacy of any Christian Theology. However, every New Testament author is a theologian. Jesus Christ is the Good News or the gospel about which these authors are writing. Each is writing in his style, from the faith point of view – to a particular community, at a particular time – about Jesus Christ. None of them is writing a biography,<sup>79</sup> none is writing a history of Jesus Christ:<sup>80</sup> each is writing a Christology, which is a theology – or an understanding from the

point of view of faith – of the Christ. And clarifying the manner through which these New Testament Christologies are supposed to work harmoniously with one another is James Dunn who argues that,

*Christology should not be narrowly confined to one particular assessment of Christ, nor should it play on against another, nor should it insist on 'squeezing' all the New Testament conceptualisations into one particular 'shape', but it should recognize from the very first the significance of Christ could only be apprehended by a diversity of formulations which though not always strictly compatible with each other were not rendering each other invalid.*<sup>81</sup>

My understanding of Dunn is that the New Testament christologies are theologies like any other; they are situational theologies like any other. They are also written for a particular situation, and for no other. In other words, their authors never, for example, had the South African Sharpeville massacre of 1961 in mind when they wrote their Christologies. The symbolism utilised in these Christologies is extremely difficult to understand, exactly because it was not for everybody but the intended listeners of that particular theology. As a result, it is not easy to study the New Testament theologies without exegetical assistance. The same applies to Old Testament theologies. Richard Gula concurs. He says,

*The biblical view of revelation from a critical perspective is that God reveals divine love through human words and historical experiences of people, pre-eminently in Jesus. Historical experience implies limitedness—chronological, geographical, linguistic, cultural, socio-economic, philosophical, religious, etc. the bible is subject to these limitations in a way that all of experience is. Because of their being subject to historical conditioning biblical texts must be interpreted in order to be applied to a contemporary situation.*<sup>82</sup>

The contemporary condemnation of the biblical practice of slavery – resulting from the critical study of the New Testament biblical theology<sup>83</sup> – only shows how humanly limited biblical theology is, and how much it needs to be interpreted before it is in a position to be applied to our own situation. Albert Nolan, also relying heavily on critical exegesis, discusses the use of violence – from the New Testament perspective – and he discovers that,

*All we can be sure of is that Jesus decided that in his circumstances and in his time the use of force to seize power for himself (or for anyone else) would be harmful to man and therefore contrary to the will of God. The saying 'Those who draw the sword would die by the sword', which Matthew found somewhere and inserted into the story of Jesus arrest (26: 52) is not, and was surely never meant to be a timeless truth. In some circumstances one can draw a sword without dying by the sword but in*

*the circumstances of Jesus' arrest, when he and his disciples were so outnumbered, to draw the sword was plain suicide.*<sup>84</sup>

My understanding is that Nolan is only reinforcing the opinion that it is imperative to subject New Testament theology to a very rigorous exegesis, before one tries to apply its arguments to the contemporary situation. In other words, biblical theology – in spite of the authority status it holds over all theology – still remains a contextual theology like any other, as a result it needs to be thoroughly interpreted prior to its application into any contemporary context.

Opposed to the implementation of the Black Theology of Liberation in Africa were two African theologians, namely Gabriel Setiloane of Botswana,<sup>85</sup> and John Mbiti of Kenya. May I focus on the ideas of Mbiti, because Tutu tried to dialogue with him, as he (Tutu) was making a concerted attempt to show the relevance of Black Theology to the situation in Southern Africa. (To avoid confusion, let me mention that the name **Black theology** is a synonym of the name **The Black Theology of Liberation**. So if Tutu is talking about Black Theology at one stage, and then about Liberation Theology, at another, he is actually referring to the same reality which we term the US version of the Theology of Liberation as adopted and articulated by its Southern African exponents.)

In his comparative study of African Theology and Black Theology, Mbiti observes that the former emerges from a situation of excitement and happiness, while the latter arises from the context of sadness and gloom. He says,

*One would hope that theology arises out of spontaneous joy in being a Christian, responding to life and ideas as one redeemed. Black Theology, however, is full of sorrow, bitterness, anger and hatred. Little wonder Black Theology is asking for what Black Americans should have had from the start—freedom, justice, a fair share in the riches of their country, equal opportunities in social, economic and political life.*<sup>86</sup>

It is true that Mbiti is not yet saying that African theology – compared to Black Theology – emerges out of spontaneous joy: he will say that quite explicitly at the later stage of his argument.<sup>87</sup> In the statement quoted above he does show that he is aware why Black Theology is done in a spirit of anger, bitterness, and hatred. It is indeed the situation of racial discrimination and economic exploitation which forces the proponents of Black Theology to do theology angrily. No human being deprived of his/her socio-political and economic rights is expected to be excited and happy, no Christian theologian victimised by forces of oppression and injustice is expected to produce a theology full of spontaneous joy. The situation of injustice under which Black Theology is done denies this theology the opportunity and the privilege of being joyful. And that explains why both Tutu and Boesak strongly hold that Black Theology – like any other theology – is a contextual or situational theology. This means that it focuses seriously on the situation of injustice, with specific aim

of contributing substantially – from the point of view of faith – towards the liberation of the victims of this oppressive situation. It is only the attainment of liberation from every facet of injustice which will bring about the spontaneous joy of being a Christian.

Mbiti further holds that only those countries which are in the southern part of the African continent would find Black Theology to be relevant, because their problems happen to be similar to those of African Americans of the US. He writes,

*To a limited extent the situation in Southern Africa is similar to that which produced Black Theology in America. African people in Southern Africa are oppressed, exploited, and unjustly governed by minority; they have been robbed of their land and dignity and are even denied a minimum of human rights. For them Black Theology strikes a responsive chord and perhaps offers some hope, if that be any consolation.*<sup>88</sup>

The situation of political oppression, economic exploitation and the deprivation of human rights described by Mbiti above, is not only in the southern part of the continent, but in almost every part of the African continent. In other words, almost every country of Africa is thirsting for a socio-political and economic liberation. Indeed Odomaro Mubangizi writes,

*The first synod of 1994 came up with a new vision of church as family. But even as the synod deliberated on the meaning of this model of church genocide erupted in Rwanda, raising questions about the depth of evangelization in Africa. Years later, at the time of the second African Synod in 2009, challenges facing the African church have become even more complex, requiring new pastoral strategies.*

*While African Catholics busied themselves with the **lineamenta** in preparation for the second African Synod, Kenya and Zimbabwe were still nursing wounds inflicted on the population during electoral violence. Besides, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remains fragile as various rebel groups claim legitimacy against the government. Sudan negotiates the delicate process of deciding whether to allow the southern part of the country to become autonomous from the Khartoum government.*<sup>89</sup>

Surely Sudan, Rwanda, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are not situated in the southern part of Africa. Therefore, what Mubangizi's recent research results prove is that the war against socio-economic and political injustice is fought not only in the southern part of the African continent, but in almost every country of the continent. Elias Omondi Opongo concurs as he also gives a list of African countries most in need of justice and peace. He starts off with Rwanda in which 800,000 people were massacred in the 1990s. He proceeds to Uganda, Nigeria, Darfur in the Ethiopia-Eritrea area, Sierra Leone, Burundi, and Liberia.<sup>90</sup>

None of these countries that are enumerated by Opongo belong in the southern part of Africa: some belong in the central part, while others are situated in the western part of the continent. Thus, Opongo's research results only prove the point further, that it is not only Southern Africa which thirsts for the liberation from all forms of socio-political and economic injustice, but all of Africa. Even at the time Mbiti was delivering the paper that I am presently trying to critique, some few countries situated respectively in the central and western parts of Africa were having domestic wars caused by social injustice.<sup>91</sup> Today the situation has deteriorated. As a result the number of central and western countries of Africa complaining of domestic social injustice has increased.<sup>92</sup> And Kenya – the home country of Mbiti – is no exception among central or Eastern countries of Africa complaining of the results of domestic social injustice. Indeed, Joseph Healy, an American missionary teaching at the University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi, reports,

*The 2009 Kenya lenten campaign booklet describes the efforts of the Kenya Government and the Food and Agricultural Organization to strengthen the capacity of farmers, especially the poor, to maximize food production and reduce poverty and hunger. But after the post-election crisis in January 2008, which was deeply connected to tribalism and ethnicity, many farmers were displaced from their farmlands. Recent statistics show that the government of Kenya has been slow to resettle these farmers on their productive farms, especially in the rift valley, which is known as the Bread Basket of Kenya for its food crops of corn and wheat. Food production is down, and there is starvation, especially in northern Kenya. It was recommended that through fasting during the season of Lent, SCC members can have practical solidarity with millions of hungry people in Kenya and throughout the world.*<sup>93</sup>

The starvation of the millions of the people of Kenya, partly fuelled by elements of tribalism and ethnicity, should serve as adequate evidence that even Kenya – the patria of Mbiti – is in dire need of the liberation from tribalism, ethnocentrism, and all other forms of injustice, discussed by Healy above, which prevent the majority of Kenyans from having equal access to food and every other economic assets of the country.

Mbiti has reservations about the term, 'Black Theology,' he says,

*The main concerns of Black Theology are directly related to the circumstances that brought it into being. One such concern is "blackness" itself. It wants to see "blackness" in everything. It speaks of a Black God, Black Church, Black Liberation, Black this and Black that.*<sup>94</sup>

I share Mbiti's concerns. I find it extremely difficult to give a colour to a theology, let alone to God. At times James Cone refers to black as a colour of the skin,<sup>95</sup> while in some contexts, he refers to black as a condition of being oppressed.<sup>96</sup> The former understanding dominates

most of his Black Theology of Liberation volume. My biggest problem is that this understanding might estrange the other categories of oppressed people – in Africa and in America – whose skin colours are not black. Mbiti and I can solve our common problem by looking beyond the colour aspect of this theology, so as to focus mainly on its content. The major part of its content consists of the commitment to liberate the oppressed from all forms of injustice. This commitment is valid and relevant to all of Africa and in most of the Third World countries.<sup>97</sup> Ours – in Africa – is to remove the improper name and replace it with the one which will reflect the adaptation and the real adoption of Black Theology in the African continent. And I have repeatedly suggested the name, An African Theology of Liberation. In Africa there are already theologians whose theological contents resemble those of Black Theology. A very good example is that of Elochukwu Eugen Uzukwu of Nigeria whose theology resembles black theology and Latin American Theology of Liberation in content, but he has named his, **The Theology of Reconstruction**.<sup>98</sup> The same applies to Sedbe Sempore of Burkina Faso: his theology was based on the Christian **Commitment to Development, Justice and Peace**.<sup>99</sup> The works of these African Theologians really give me hope that it is possible to construct an African Theology of Liberation. Put in another way then, it is not so much the colour of the US version of liberation theology which enables us to see its relevance for Africa, but its content which constitute the total liberation of all the oppressed from all facets of injustice.

In the attempt to show how substantially different African Theology is from Black Theology, Mbiti gives a list of theological items which African Theology deals with on a regular basis. He strongly maintains that,

*African Theology is concerned with many more issues, including all the classical theological themes, plus localised topics, such as religious dialogue between Christianity and African Religion, and between Christianity and Islam. Relations between Christianity and African culture, between Church and State, together with innumerable pastoral and liturgical problems, give African Theology a very full agenda for the years ahead. African Theology is not something that can be done in a decade or covered in one volume.*<sup>100</sup>

Surely, Black Theology is also dealing with the same issues that have been enumerated by Mbiti. Gayraud Wlimore, a black theologian teaching at the Interdenominational Theological Centre, in Atlanta, makes a list of some of them. He claims,

*Black Theology is not prepared to discuss the doctrine of God, human being, Christ, Church, Holy Spirit – the whole spectrum of Christian theology – without making each doctrine an analysis of the emancipation of black people. It believes that, in this time, moment, and situation, all Christian doctrines must be interpreted in such a way that they*

*unreservedly say something to black people who are living under unbearable oppression.*<sup>101</sup>

Thus, black theology is dealing with the same classical issues, but it does that from the liberation point of view, as Wilmore is trying to explain. In other words Black theology discusses classical doctrines in such a way that the oppressed will clearly see their relevance in the struggle against injustice. Omitted, however, in the list of Wilmore – as opposed to that of Mbiti – is the mention of African Traditions and African Religions; but this does not mean that black theology has nothing to do with the two of them. On the contrary, there are black theologians who write on the two subjects from the liberation point of view.<sup>102</sup>

I find nothing characteristically African in Mbiti's critique on Black Theology. I expected him, as an African Theologian, to explain how a characteristically African Theology would make use of its features to liberate the oppressed people of the African continent. A comparative study of African Theology and Black Theology does force him to display components unique to African Theology – as an alternative to those offered by Black Theology – which can be utilised for the liberation of Africa. Alas! He displays none.

Tutu's response to the challenges posed by Mbiti leaves a lot to be desired. I am levelling the same accusations against him as I did with Mbiti. He contends that the two theologies have a lot to learn from each other. African Theology, he continues, has to learn to be as abrasive as Black Theology in approach. This particular approach will help African Theology to respond adequately to the call – it has in common with Black Theology – of looking after the needs of the poor and the oppressed of Africa.<sup>103</sup> What, in particular, is it that Black Theology can learn from African Theology? I am afraid, Tutu does not have an answer to this question, as he gives no substance whatsoever about African Theology. Indeed, at the end of his paper he does confess that the only relevant version of African Theology he knows is Black Theology. He emphasizes this point as follows:

*I myself believe I am an exponent of Black Theology coming as I do from South Africa. I also believe that I am an exponent of African Theology coming as I do from Africa. I contend that Black Theology is like the inner and smaller circle in the concentric circle. I would not care to cross swords with such a formidable person as John Mbiti, but I and others from South Africa do Black Theology, which is for us, at this point, African Theology.*<sup>104</sup>

Tutu claims to be both African and Black theologian, but he does not tell us clearly how African Theology differs from Black Theology. I want Tutu to delve deeply into the essentials of African Theology in order to convince me that he is an African theologian. In other words, I want Tutu to give a critique of the key concepts of African Theology. A critique of this nature – done within the context of the struggle against social injustice – will certainly show how inadequate African Theology has been, hence the adoption of a foreign theology in the



form of Black Theology. John de Gruchy does say that, during the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, Black Theologians dropped African Theology – because of its irrelevance – in favour of Black Theology. He claims,

*As intimated, the first distinctly South African theology was undoubtedly African Theology whose origins lay in the struggle against European hegemony, both colonial and missionary. Ironically, however, African theology was largely sidelined during the apartheid era except among those missiologists, such as G. C. Oosthuizen, who focused specifically on the African Independent Churches. The major reason for this lacuna was the way in which the ideologists of apartheid turned culture into a tool of repression. If the missionaries had previously spurned African culture as pagan, apartheid ideologists argued that each cultural group should develop separately. This was perceived by Black theologians as a stratagem for racial domination. Hence African Theology as developed in the rest of the continent in the post-colonial period had few exponents.<sup>105</sup>*

Does Tutu concur with de Gruchy? If he does, then let him do so as an African theologian, that is, let him critically give us the specific contents of African culture – promoted by African Theology – which failed dismally to contribute substantially towards the liberation of the oppressed of South Africa. If an element of African culture contributed towards the further oppression of the populace, then that element needs to be evaluated. It does not need to be thrown away, neither does it have to be divorced from our theologies. Africans cannot afford to get rid of their cultures just because some oppressor or ideologue happens to abuse those cultures. I do not say that African culture is perfect. No culture is perfect. Neither should any culture be superior to the others.<sup>106</sup> I am only saying that if African culture – promoted and articulated by African theologians – does very little to liberate Africans from oppression, then let those oppressive elements of African culture be scholarly exposed, debated, and evaluated for the betterment of African Theology. Tutu highly values African culture within African Theology,<sup>107</sup> but he fails to argue convincingly that African Theology can make use of the same culture to liberate the whole Africa. Mokgethi Motlhabi's critique of Tutu is slightly different. He holds that,

*While Tutu took African Theology to task for its omission of the socio-political and economic aspects of struggle, he did not take Black Theology – in its South African version – similarly to task for neglecting the cultural aspect.<sup>108</sup>*

Motlhabi continues his critique by offering a suggestion as to how the two theologies, namely African Theology and Black Theology, can be synthesized within the South African context, He writes,

*If deficiencies perceived as inherent in African Theology at the time were to be fully addressed and its scope broadened, it would be in a position to address equally the concerns that were traditionally ascribed to Black Theology. In other words, African Theology would no longer be confined to issues of cultural appropriation and indigenisation. Rather, it would also address issues of liberation in response to the various manifestation of oppression in South Africa. If this happened, it would become a fully representative and properly focused theology, not only for South Africa, but for Africa as a whole.*<sup>109</sup>

What Motlhabi is suggesting above, is exactly what I proposed earlier on about the shape our envisaged African Theology of Liberation would take: Following the challenge of the African Theologians who conferred in Accra in 1977, the African Theology of Liberation will focus mainly on the cultural liberation of Africa, and on the liberation of African people from their socio-political and economic agonies. This further means that African Theologians will decide among themselves who – among them – will deal with cultural issues, while the others will be dealing with socio-political and economic matters. My suggestion hopefully solves the problem which two South African theologians, namely, Manas Buthelezi and Itumeleng Mosala had in connection with the relationship between African Theology and Black Theology:

*If Black Theology were to heed Mosala's call and extend its concerns to include African religio-cultural issues, there would obviously no longer be any difference between itself and African Theology. They would be two different theologies in name only, while sharing the same scope and concerns and addressing the same issues. This, it appears, is where Buthelezi's question becomes really pertinent. Firstly, is it necessary to have two different theologies in the same country, addressing exactly the same issues and having the same scope? Is it necessary to have what is seemingly a single type of theology with two different names, while its content, method and scope remain the same? Secondly, if a choice of one name were to be made for this type of theology, which one of the two names would it be: Black Theology or African Theology?*<sup>110</sup>

Only one name – namely, the African Theology of Liberation – suffices to solve the problem raised in the foregoing statement, as it homogenises two different theologies which share the same content, same method, and the same issues. Hopefully, this single name will unite the exponents of the two theologies in such a way that they will realise that, uniting them firmly, should be this most important and common commitment of liberating Africa from the cultural and socio-political and economic injustices.

Unfortunately, Black Theology did not live long in South Africa. Motlhabi attests to this fact by saying that,

*The fact that some people already declared Black Theology dead as early as the middle of the 1980s, and that some even found it necessary to protest against such claims, is perhaps quite revealing. To have 'Black Theology Revisited' as a conference theme, where the need was expressed to 'sharpen its tools' – as Goba declared – raised serious questions even then regarding the continued endurance of Black Theology in South Africa. It was obviously in recognition of the shaky ground on which it continued to stand that a stalwart like Buti Tlhagale, now bishop of Johannesburg, could admit courageously that it was, indeed, dead. For many of its advocates in South Africa, Black Theology remains in existence only in name and as a memory. Many of them continue to cling to the belief of its endurance only in spirit. In the flesh, on the other hand, it has receded into history.<sup>111</sup>*

True, no dialogue is possible between exponents of Black Theology and those of African Theology, if Black Theology does no longer exist. My suggestion at the moment is to investigate the reason for the sudden demise of such a valuable religious asset at the time it could help many poor people understand their faith in the context of the Post-Apartheid dispensation. Motlhabi, like Alistair Kee,<sup>112</sup> points out at the inadequacy of the race paradigm employed by Black Theologians – to understand the oppressive situation victimising Black People – as one of the major causes for the demise of Black Theology. He writes,

*A paradigm shift from focussing chiefly and solely on matters of racial justice to broader issues of social justice and socio-moral integrity in general has so far eluded them. If Black Theology is to survive and remain relevant in South Africa, therefore, it must undergo reorientation and adjustment in its approach to socio-ethical issues so that it can focus in these new developments in, and changed problems of, the new South Africa.<sup>113</sup>*

Lebamang Sebidi – a South African Theologian – concurs with Motlhabi. He makes a comparative study of the race paradigm and the class paradigm, in their respective relationship with Black Theology. Starting mainly with the US context, Sebidi writes,

*There seems to be no doubt that central to the concerns of Black Theology stands the category of 'blackness'. This type of theology has taken up the role of uncovering, in a systematic way, the structures and forms of black experience. In short, it aims at investigating anew 'the problem of the color-line'. Black Theology hates to trifle with the social phenomenon of colour. It takes colour seriously because it regards colour as co-terminous with the 400 years of slavery in the Deep South and the 330 years of blatant discrimination in the southern tip of Africa. In these regions*

*'blackness' connotes man-imposed suffering. This category of 'blackness' needs to be put in theological perspective and expressed in God-oriented terms. The beginning and the end of this exercise is the beginning and the end of Black Theology.*<sup>114</sup>

Extending his discussion on the centrality of the colour 'black' for Black Theology, to the South African context, Sebidi holds that,

*Such a theology finds its natural home in an analytic approach which diagnoses South Africa's problems as being first and foremost 'racism'. Within the race-analysis paradigm, therefore, Black Theology is merely a systematic religious manifestation of a state of oppression experienced primarily in racial, colour terms. 'Blackness' is the vehicle through which this oppression comes through. Liberation or salvation, outside this specific category of 'blackness' becomes an obscene irrelevancy. Black Theology is a theology of liberation from this specific category of suffering. To introduce class into this process of liberation, is to intrude dilatory dynamics that would hamper the natural momentum of the national liberation movement. This would have the effect of diluting the struggle to a considerable degree.*<sup>115</sup>

According to Sebidi the proponents of race-paradigm are aware of the existence of an alternative or complementary paradigm – namely, class-analysis – but they just dismiss it as a misguided paradigm. Class-analysts are equally angry with Black theology for adopting the race paradigm – in spite of its inadequacy – as the best tool of analysis for a better understanding of the situation of oppression in South Africa. As a result they dismiss Black Theology as a theology not fit for the liberation of the poor. Sebidi puts their case as follows:

*Class-analysts turn around to reject Black Theology as a theology which is based, not only on a superficial, but also erroneous reading of the South African situation. While colour in South Africa, they argue, enjoys a high visibility, and a biting pervasiveness, it must be read not as the cause but as the effect of a much deeper structural malady in society. Therefore, to base one's theologising on an epiphenomenon of a social sickness is to run the risk of being incurably shallow in one's theological task. Black Theology operates at the level of 'mopping up water' from a room, while the tap is left completely uninterfered with. Needless to say, this is the classical exercise in futility. It is Liberation Theology a la Latin American style, that one could opt for, because whilst Liberation Theology does not minimise the 'nuisance value' of water (if we were to carry on with our metaphor), it throws its whole weight behind the attempt to close the tap.*<sup>116</sup>

Now that Black Theology is dead, why would it be necessary today to analyse the two paradigms discussed by Sebidi above? Each of them claimed to be competent in the area of providing the root causes of the structural injustice in South Africa. The race paradigm saw racial discrimination as the real source of the structural malady of South Africa. In other words, if South Africa would abolish racial discrimination, there would be peace and joy in South Africa. The class paradigm saw class distinction as the major cause of social injustice in South Africa. It says that there are two classes in South Africa: The one class, regardless of its race or colour, is economically rich; while the other class, regardless of its colour or race, is economically poor. Let every person, regardless of his/her colour, have equal access and control of the economic assets of the nation, the class analysts argue, then there'll be peace and joy in South Africa. Of the two paradigms, which one would have been most helpful to Black Theology?

The discussion on the shift of paradigms, raised by Motlhabi and developed further by Sebidi above, is not meant for the resuscitation of Black Theology, but for the bright future of the envisaged African Theology of Liberation. The African Theology of Liberation must make use of reliable tools of analysis if it intends to contribute substantially to the liberation of the people of Africa. And I am afraid at times this theology will have to meditate on the possibility of combining the so-called irreconcilable tools of analysis. For example, there is value in each of the paradigms analysed by Sebidi above. They also appear to be mutually exclusive of one another. A closer look at them reveals that they can complement each other quite considerably. And this means that it is only after the dismantling of racial discrimination – in the context of the US – that we realised that the struggle is still incomplete. The abolition of racial discrimination meant that the race paradigm had achieved its aims. It is at this stage that the class paradigm should have stepped in to say, 'Hey! The majority of people whose liberation we have been fighting for, are still as hungry and destitute as ever, because their absolute right to own and control the means of production is not yet recognised and respected by the new dispensation. Thus, the two paradigms are vitally important – for the future African Theology of Liberation – because they complement each other very well. And this means that the one – namely, race paradigm – can easily serve as a stepping to the other. In other words, the equal share of the national means of production by all classes – as articulated by the class critique – brings to a beautiful completion, the abolition of racism, as taught by the race critique

## **E. Concluding Remarks**

What I have discovered, as I was investigating the possibility of the existence of an African Theology of Liberation, is that such a theology can indeed be created, because in almost every country of the continent, there are already African scholars who have written on a similar subject. Secondly, this chapter of my thesis has helped me to discover that almost every country of Africa is in dire need of liberation from the cultural, and from the socio-political and economic point of view. Africa's thirst for liberation urgently puts pressure on

its intelligentsia to attend to this task, most especially from the theological point of view, since many of its inhabitants are Christian. Lastly, the exponents of the future African Theology of Liberation are bound to revisit the failure of its implementation in South Africa and the United States. This review in South Africa and in the United States is meant to help the future proponents of the African Theology of Liberation not to repeat the mistakes made by Black Theologians of Liberation in those two countries. In the context of South Africa this partly implies that Black Theologians who are presently affiliated to the Black Consciousness Movement, on the one hand, and those who broke away in the 1980s in order to be affiliated to the non-racialism of the African National Congress,<sup>117</sup> should get together – in the new dispensation of the Post–Apartheid South Africa – in order to produce one meaningful, relevant, and liberating theology for every South African, regardless of his/her colour, race, gender, or creed. And the name I suggest for that relevant theology is the **African Theology of Liberation**

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<sup>1</sup> See Walbert Buhlmann, *The Missions on Trial*, St. Paul Publications, Slough: 1978. p. 27

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.27

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.73

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.28

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.p.28

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.p.28

<sup>7</sup> “Gaudium et Spes-Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, article 79.3” *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds, Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, Collins Liturgical Publications, London: 1984. p.132

<sup>8</sup> See Sidbe Sempore, “Barthelemy Adoukonou: A Pioneer of Inculturation in West Africa,” *African Theology In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds Benezet Bujo and Juvenal Ilunga Muya, Paulines Publications, Nairobi: 2003. p.165

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.165

<sup>10</sup> See Ali A. Mazrui, “Africa’s Wisdom Has Two Parents and One Guardian” *African Ethics*, ed. Munyaradzi Felix Murove, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville: 2009. p. 40

<sup>11</sup> See Betty Kirkpatrick, *The Cassell Concise English Dictionary*, Cassell Publishers, London: 1989. p.1001

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.1469

<sup>13</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, Op. Cit. p.39

<sup>14</sup> Stanislaus Muyebe and Alex Muyebe, *The African Bishops on Human Rights*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2002. p. 52

<sup>15</sup> “Final Communique” *African Theology en Route*, eds. Sergio Torres and Koffi Appiah-Kubi, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.194

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- <sup>16</sup> See Dolores S. Williams, "Black Theology and Womanist Theology," *The Cambridge Companion of Black Theology*, eds. Dwight Hopkins and Edward Antonio, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2012. pp.61-62
- <sup>17</sup> See "Contributors," *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E Orobator, Acton Publishers, Nairobi: 2011. p.246
- <sup>18</sup> Peter Kanyandago, "Rethinking African Ecclesiology Challenges from People's Rights and Participation" *Inculturing the Church in Africa: Theological and Practical Perspectives*, eds. Cecil McGarry and Patrick Ryan, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2001. p.99
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.99
- <sup>20</sup> See reference number 1 of this chapter
- <sup>21</sup> See Peter Kanyandago, *Op. Cit.* p.100
- <sup>22</sup> See Walbert Bullmann, *Op. Cit.* p.73. After defending his fellow-missionaries against Islam in Africa, Bishop Blomjous realises that – in the final analysis – that Christianity did no better than Islam: meaning that Christianity abused its powers by actively collaborating with slave traders and colonizers in the process of enslaving and dehumanising the African.
- <sup>23</sup> Peter Kanyandago, *Op. Cit.* pp.100-101
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid. pp.101-103
- <sup>25</sup> See Stanisluas Muyebe and Alex Muyebe, *Op. Cit.* p.60
- <sup>26</sup> See reference number 4.
- <sup>27</sup> History has numerous examples to prove my point. The best example for me is that of Martin Luther King who deeply believed in a peaceful negotiation for the attainment of the total liberation the United States of America, while his fellow-black brother, Malcolm X, who lived in the same period stood for the total annihilation of the white oppressors by means of revolutionary violence. They were both assassinated in the late 1960s. For a detailed account, see Julian Kunnie, *Models of Black Theology: Issues in Class, Culture and Gender*, Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: 1994. pp. 14-15
- <sup>28</sup> Jesse N.K.Mugambi, *African Christian Theology – An Introduction*, East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi: 1989. pp.26-27
- <sup>29</sup> McBrien, R. P. *Catholicism, volume 1*, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1980. p.271
- <sup>30</sup> Ali A. Mazrui. *Op. Cit.* p.48
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid. pp.48-49
- <sup>32</sup> Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *Op. Cit.* p.27
- <sup>33</sup> Charles, R. *Christian Social Witness and Teaching, vol. 1*, Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. p.67
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.78
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.27
- <sup>36</sup> Comblin, J. *People of God*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2004. pp. 127-128. On these pages, Jose Comblin gives a list of the prophetic voices to which I am referring.
- <sup>37</sup> See Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *Op. Cit.* p.27
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.32
- <sup>39</sup> See Walbert Buhlmann, *Missions on Trial*, St. Paul Publications, Middlegreen, Slough: 1978. p. 56
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 50
- <sup>41</sup> Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *Op. Cit.* p.33
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid. p.35
- <sup>43</sup> See Theron, B. M. et. al. *New History to the Point*, Educum Publishers, Johannesburg: 1987. p.140
- <sup>44</sup> Stinton, Diane B. *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*, Paulines Publications, Nairobi: 2007. p.211
- <sup>45</sup> Kretzschmar, L. *The Voice of Black Theology in South Africa*, Ravan Press, Braamfontein: 1986. p.38
- <sup>46</sup> See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, London: 1987. p.39
- <sup>47</sup> Bujo, B. *African Theology in its Social Context*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2003. p.42
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid. pp. 65-66

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- <sup>49</sup> Ibid. p.66
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid. p.67
- <sup>51</sup> Jose B. Chipenda, Theological Options in Africa Today, *African Theology En Route*, eds. Koffi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p. 66
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.67
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid. p.67
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid. p.67
- <sup>55</sup> Peter J. Paris, "African Contributions and Challenges to the Ecumenical Movement," *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honor of J. Deotis Roberts*, ed. Michael Battle, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky: 2005. p.97. See also Alister Kee, ' "The Criticism of [Black] Theology Is Transformed into the Criticism of Politics." – Karl Marx' *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honour of J. Deotis Roberts*, ed. Michael Battle, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky: 2005. p.51
- <sup>56</sup> Jose B. Chipenda, *Op. Cit.* p.69
- <sup>57</sup> See Stanislaus Muyebe and Alex Muyebe, *The African Bishops on Human Rights*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2002. This volume provides us with numerous human rights that are missing from Chipenda's list. For example, the right to life (pp.23-26); the right to self-determination and participation in political governance (pp.96-98); the right to property (pp. 183-184); the right to an adequate standard of living (pp. 193-198); the right to marriage and family life (pp. 250-252); and others.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid.pp. 60-61. On these pages we find the freedom of opinion and the freedom of the press as good examples of the fundamental freedoms existing within a democratic dispensation. Other important freedoms such as the freedom of conscience, belief and religion (pp. 85-88); the freedom of association and assembly (pp.242-245); and the freedom from racial discrimination (pp.259-262) are also reflected in this volume.
- <sup>59</sup> Sobrino, J. *No Salvation Outside The Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2008. p. 76
- <sup>60</sup> M. J. Oguogho, "South African Liberation Theologies Versus Racism and the Apartheid System," *African Ecclesial Review vol.31, No.3* (June, 1989): p.181
- <sup>61</sup> Cone, J. *My Soul Looks Back*, Abingdon Press, Nashville: 1982. p.53
- <sup>62</sup> See Barney Pityana, "Black Theology," *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives*, eds. John de Gruchy and C. Villa-Vicencio, David Philip, Cape Town: 1994. p.173
- <sup>63</sup> See John de Gruchy, "African Theology: South Africa," *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford: 1997. p.448
- <sup>64</sup> Alan Boesak, "Liberation Theology in South Africa" *African Theology En Route*, eds. Sergio Torres and Kofi Appiah-Kubi, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p. 170
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 172
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 172
- <sup>67</sup> Leon Louw and Frances Kendall, *South Africa: The Solution*, Amagi Publications, Bisho: 1986. p.77. See also Shirley du Boulay, *Tutu: Voice of the Voiceless*, Hodder and Stoughton, London:1988. p. 191
- <sup>68</sup> Allan Boesak, *Op. Cit.* p.171
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid. pp.171-172
- <sup>70</sup> Villa-Vicencio, C. *Between Christ and Caesar: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Church and State*, David Philip, Cape Town: 1986. p.xv
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid. p.xv
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid. p.xvi
- <sup>73</sup> David Kaulem, "The African Synod for Those of Us Who Stayed at Home," *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, ed. Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, Acton Publishers, Nairobi:2011. p. 151 The author painfully mentions Zimbabwe as a contemporary example of the abuse of power in Africa: the ruling party which used to be victimised by colonial powers is now – after independence – victimising the other parties by denying them the democratic right to govern.
- <sup>74</sup> Desmond Tutu, "The Theology of Liberation in Africa," *African Theology En Route*, eds. Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.163
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid. p.166



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- <sup>76</sup> Ibid. p.165
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.165
- <sup>78</sup> Lucie-Smith, A. *Foundations of Moral Theology*, Paulines Publications in Africa, Nairobi: 2007. p.18
- <sup>79</sup> Kung, H. *On Being A Christian*, the Chaucer Press, Suffolk: 1978. pp. 150-151. On these pages the author gives a detailed account of why it would be very difficult to write about the biography of Jesus in accordance with modern scientific criteria.
- <sup>80</sup> O'Collins, G. *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, University Press, Oxford: 2009. pp. 2-3. On these pages the author discusses reasons into some detail as to why it would be extremely difficult to write the history of Jesus, in the modern scientific sense of the word.
- <sup>81</sup> See Ronald Nicolson, *A Black Future*, SCM Press, London: 1990. p.8
- <sup>82</sup> Gula, R. *Reason Informed By Faith*, Pualist Press, New York: 1989. p.166
- <sup>83</sup> McKenzie, J. K. L. *Dictionary of the Bible*, MacMillan Publishing Company. New York: 1965. p.825
- <sup>84</sup> Nolan, A. *Jesus Before Christianity*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London: 1984. p.110
- <sup>85</sup> Gabriel Setiloane, "Where Are We In African Theology?" *African Theology En Route*, +-eds. Sergio Torres and Koffi Appia-Kubi, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.65
- <sup>86</sup> John Mbiti, "An African Views American Black Theology," *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966—1979*, eds. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.478
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid. p.481
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid. p.481
- <sup>89</sup> Odomaro Mubagizi, "Agent of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace," *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2011. p.105
- <sup>90</sup> Elias Omondi Opongo, "Inventing Creative Approaches to Complex Systems of Injustice," *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2011. p.75
- <sup>91</sup> See B.M. Theron et. al. *Op. Cit.* p.145. On this page the authors are referring to the internal wars which were fought respectively in Nigeria and in Uganda in the post-colonial period.
- <sup>92</sup> See reference numbers 77 and 78
- <sup>93</sup> Joseph Healy, "Small Christian Communities; Promoters of Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace in Eastern Africa," *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2011. p.65
- <sup>94</sup> John Mbiti, *Op. Cit.* p.478
- <sup>95</sup> James Cone, *My Soul Looks Back*, Abingdon, Nashville:1982. p.42. In this context, Cone speaks of blackness as a colour: his friend, Lester Scherer, is a white person – as opposed to a black person – as a result he could not understand Cone's feelings on the urgent liberation of blacks.
- <sup>96</sup> James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Orbis books, Maryknoll, New York: 1986. p.7 At the bottom of this page Cone refers to blackness as a symbol of oppression.
- <sup>97</sup> "Final Communique," *African Theology En Route*, eds. Sergio Torres and Koffi Appiah-Kubi, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.194
- <sup>98</sup> See Roger Gaise, "Elochukwu Eugen Uzukwu," *African Theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Contribution of the Pioneers*, eds. Benezet Bujo and Juvenal Ilunga Muya, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2003. p.172
- <sup>99</sup> See Mauto R. Afan, "Sedbe: Spiritual Itinerary of an African Theologian," *African Theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds. Benezet Bujo and Juvenal Ilunga Muya, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2003. p.86
- <sup>100</sup> John Mbiti, *Op. Cit.* p.482
- <sup>101</sup> See James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1986. pp. 145-146
- <sup>102</sup> For example, see Dwight Hopkins, "Black Theology: The Notion of Culture Revisited," *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honour of J. Deotis Roberts* ed. Michael Battle, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky: 2005. p.63. See also Julian Kunnie, *Models of Black Theology: Issues in Class, Culture and Gender*, Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: 1994. p.33

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- <sup>103</sup> Desmond M. Tutu, "Black Theology/African Theology – Soul Mates or Antagonists" *Black Theology: A Documentary History 1966—1979*, eds. Gayraud S Wilmore and James H. Cone, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.490
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid. p.490
- <sup>105</sup> John de Gruchy, "African Theology: South Africa," *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford: 1997. pp.446-447
- <sup>106</sup> Desmond M. Tutu. *Op. Cit.* p.490. On this page cautions his fellow African theologians not to mimic western cultures of Montpellier, Cambridge or Harvard in their attempt to theologize within an African context. On the contrary, let each theologian be true to the cultures of Africa, if he/she wants his/her theology to be understandable and relevant to fellow Africans.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid. p.489
- <sup>108</sup> Motlhabi, M. *African Theology/Black Theology in South Africa: Looking Back, Moving On*, UNISA Press, University of South Africa: 2008. p.46
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid. p.47
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid. p.48
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid. pp.15-16
- <sup>112</sup> Alistair Kee, "The Criticism of [Black] Theology Is Transformed into the Criticism of Politics," *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honour of J. Deotis Roberts*, ed. Michael Battle, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky: 2005. pp. 51-52
- <sup>113</sup> Mokgethi Motlhabi, *Op. Cit.* pp.14-15
- <sup>114</sup> Lebamang Sebidi, "Critical Analysis Of The Dynamics Of The Black Struggle In South Africa And Its Implications For Black Theology." *Institute for Contextual Theology: Black Theology and the Black Struggle*, UNISA Press, University of South Africa: 1984. p.40
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid. pp.40-41
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid. pp.41-42
- <sup>117</sup> See John de Gruchy, *Op. Cit.* p.448

## Chapter 4

### *The Relationship between the Theology of Liberation and the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church.*

#### *Introduction*

This chapter is sub-divided into two parts. The first part introduces the reader into the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church, while the second part consists of a comparative study of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church and the Theology of Liberation. The first part is meant to familiarise the non-Catholic aspect of my audience with the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church, before I deal – in the second part – with the main section of the chapter, which focuses on the comparison between the Theology of Liberation and the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church.

In reading this chapter the reader will often come across the phrase, “the Social Teaching(s) of the Church.” The word ‘church’ in the phrase refers to the Catholic Church.

#### **Part 1: The Social Teachings of the Catholic Church**

I begin part 1 of this chapter by giving a brief explanation of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church, and its short historical background. The Social Teachings of the Catholic Church refers to a set of guidelines, formulated by the Church’s Magisterium – from the point of view of the gospel – to help individuals or groups of Catholics to act responsibly in the socio-political and economic aspects of their lives. The Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses this idea much better, as it holds that,

*The Church’s Social Teaching comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of the whole of what has been revealed by Jesus Christ... The Church’s social teaching proposes principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgement; it gives guidelines for action.<sup>1</sup>*

In other words, the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church consists of principles and guidelines – written in the light of the gospel by the Magisterium – which are utilised as criteria of judgement in the socio-political and economic aspects of life, with the specific purpose of helping Christians to act responsibly in those aspects.

Of course, without the mention of its sources, the study of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church is incomplete. Rodger Charles summarises these sources as follows:

*In summary then the origins of the teaching are fourfold. It is derived from (i) the Scriptures, (ii) the tradition of the Church, that is, the teaching of its Fathers and Doctors, the decisions of councils and popes, the witness of the saints, and the writings of approved theologians and philosophers, (iii) the experience of the Church and her members throughout her history among peoples of all cultures and social, political, and economic systems, and (iv) in the relevant findings of non-Christian thinkers and writers on the social, political, and economic life of man. It also draws on the lessons to be learned from the experience of different non-Christian social, political, and economic systems.<sup>2</sup>*

Obviously, it is highly expected that Catholics – enriched with the immense wisdom emerging from the sources mentioned above – will be in a position to act justly in any kind of a political and economic dispensation.

Charles further holds that the Social Teaching of the Church consists of four historical epochs which he enumerates as follows,

*Part One: The Scriptures and the Early Church.*

*Part Two: Western Christendom c604—1500; the social role of the Church.*

*Part Three: The marginalization of the Church in the modern world [c1500—1878]: absolutisms, imperialism and revolutions.*

*Part Four: The modern teaching: contexts, summaries, and analysis.<sup>3</sup>*

Parts two and three are clear as to which years of the respective periods the author wishes to discuss. On the other hand, as to which period of the Scriptures and of the Early Church the author wishes to discuss, he does not indicate, neither does he say exactly which period of the modern teaching he intends discussing. Be that as it may, I focus on the Social Teaching of the Church from the year 1891—1987.

#### ***The Choice and the Definition of Papal Encyclicals***

At this stage let me introduce the comparison under study by stating clearly that the Social Teaching of the Church on which I focus, is that which is contained in the papal encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum*, *Octogesima Anno*, *Mater et Magistra*, *Octogesima Adveniens*, and *Laborem Exercens*. I have chosen the above-mentioned encyclicals because they deal specifically with the plight of the workers – at papal level – and how the entire membership of the Catholic Church is

supposed to respond to those depressing conditions to which the workers of the world are subjected. *Rerum Novarum* written in 1891 by Pope was the first papal document to raise the concern of the Catholic Church about the economic exploitation of the workers. The other encyclicals mentioned above – I shall explain below – were written at different historical epochs to commemorate the various anniversaries of *Rerum Novarum*. I have excluded a few other relevant encyclicals, because, first of all, they are dealing in passing with the plight of the workers – that is, not in detail, as they are expected – and they are not written with the specific intention of commemorating *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>4</sup> I shall summarise the contents of each encyclical, before I conduct a comparative study between these encyclicals and the Theology of Liberation.

I need to explain what encyclicals are before I deal with each of those mentioned above. I am enriched by the clarity with which Charles defines these papal documents. He says,

*They are moral tracts or exhortations, faithful to the Scriptures and the tradition, presenting a reasoned case for their moral judgements and for their analysis of the issues involved, seeking to convince a Catholic Christian of good will that what they say should be taken and obeyed. Their moral judgements are those of the ordinary teaching of the Church, which means they are binding in conscience.*<sup>5</sup>

Thus, a papal encyclical contains a much more serious social teaching of the Church, and what makes it more serious than any other social teaching of the church is its authorship: it has been written – or its creation has been sanctioned – by the pope.<sup>6</sup> As a result, it is binding on any Catholic's conscience. I now summarise the papal encyclicals mentioned above in accordance with their chronological sequence.

#### *Rerum Novarum 1891*

*Rerum Novarum* is an encyclical written by Pope Leo XIII. It was published in 1891.<sup>7</sup> Poorly translated as 'The Condition of Labour'<sup>8</sup> the literal translation refers to 'making things new.'<sup>9</sup> Things are made new within the context of labour. In other words, the encyclical is about the renewal of the conditions of labour. Citing terrible labour conditions which needed urgent attention – as a motivation which led him to write the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* – is Pope Leo himself who writes,

*It is not surprising that the spirit of revolutionary change, which has long been predominant in the nations of the world, should have passed beyond politics and made its influence felt in the cognate field of practical economy. The elements of conflict are*

*unmistakable: the growth of industry, and the discoveries of science; the changed relations of masters and workmen; the enormous fortunes of individuals and the poverty of the masses.*<sup>10</sup>

The pope is critically discussing the terrible Labour conditions, on the one hand, and the success of individual entrepreneurs or employers, on the other, brought about by the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. Before he became pope, Leo was directly exposed to the conflicting interests of employers and employees orchestrated by the Industrial Revolution in Belgium and in England.<sup>11</sup> And that explains why he became so articulate in expressing the aspirations of the workers of this period. Workers' Guilds, Leo continues, were destroyed in the previous century. As a result, workers remain defenceless in the face of the ruthless exploitation generated by the economic greed of their avaricious employers.<sup>12</sup>

However, socialism is not the ideal solution to the problems of the workers, continues Leo: He fiercely attacks the socialists by saying that,

*To remedy these evils the socialists, working on the poor man's envy of the rich, endeavor to destroy private property, and maintain that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies. They hold that by thus transferring property from private persons to the community, the present evil state of things will be set to rights, because each citizen will then have his equal share of whatever there is to enjoy.*<sup>13</sup>

Leo dismisses the socialists' solution as contrary to his days' interpretation of natural law, on the one hand, and some of the functions of reason, on the other, according to which a human being is entitled to the ownership of private property.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the idea of the individual's absolute right to own private property, Leo strongly recommends the Church as the only competent body which can resolve the relationship crisis which existed between the management and the workers of his time. He writes,

*First of all, there is nothing powerful than religion (of which the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing rich and poor together, by reminding each class of its duties to the other, and especially of the duties of justice. Thus religion teaches the labouring man and the workman to carry out honestly and well all equitable agreements freely made, never to injure capital, nor to outrage the person of an employer; never to employ violence in*

*representing his own cause, not engage in riot and disorder; and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles, who work upon the people with artful promises, and raise foolish hopes which usually end in disaster and in repentance when too late. Religion teaches the rich man and the employer that their work people are not slaves; that they must respect in every man his dignity as a man and as a Christian; that labour is nothing to be ashamed of, if we listen to right reason and to Christian philosophy, but is an honourable employment, enabling a man to sustain his life in an upright and credible way; and that it is shameful and inhuman to treat men like chattels to make money by, or to look upon them merely as so much muscle and power. Thus, again, religion teaches that, as among the workman's concerns is religion herself, and things spiritual and mental, the employer is bound to see that he has the duties of piety; that he be not exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions; and that he be not led away to neglect his home and family or to squander his wages. Then, again, the employer must not tax his work-people beyond their strength, nor employ them in work unsuited for their sex or age.<sup>15</sup>*

According to Leo the role of the employer stretches far beyond the perimeters of labour legislation. For example, he is expected to attend to the religious and family needs of the workman. My view is that the authority or management of the employer should be exercised within the limits of the factory. What the employee does beyond the boundaries of the manufacturing company is totally within the sphere of his privacy. And that privacy must not be disturbed by any paternalistic attitude from the part of employer. Secondly, Leo advances his economic ideas within the capitalist mode of production,<sup>16</sup> whereby a few entrepreneurs or company owners enrich themselves by overworking and underpaying the workers.<sup>17</sup> Leo is quite aware of the fact that – within the context of capitalism – the workmen are totally at the economic mercy of their respective employers who may exploit them at will. As a result, Leo – in the paragraph quoted above – begs the employer not to overtax nor give the employee the work not suited to their sex or age. What if the employer refuses to do as he is begged? How, according to Leo, are the workers supposed to defend themselves if the employers continue to enrich themselves by overworking and underpaying them? Should the workers continue never to injure the capitalist's capital, never to outrage the person of the employer, never to engage in riot or public disorder, and never join to hands with 'foolish' revolutionaries who call for radical change? No doubt, *Rerum Novarum*, was a document through which Leo tried to protect the workers from the economic exploitation of the day. Unfortunately, he could not stand by the side of

the workers for long, as this involved lots of public disorder in the form of strikes – which the workers necessarily had to cause – in order to defend themselves against their exploiters. Donald Dorr has a similar view. He writes,

*He[Leo] allowed such words and phrases as ‘disorder’ (RN 16) and ‘danger of disturbance to the public peace (RN 29) to remain vague in meaning and therefore capable of being invoked to cover almost every situation which threatened the interests of the rich and the powerful. He did not distinguish clearly between, on the one hand, an altogether unacceptable level of violent, or disruptive action and, on the other hand, a certain level of disturbance and instability which may be necessary if structural injustices are to be overcome despite the resistance of powerful groups. In other words, he failed to develop guidelines for confrontation.’<sup>18</sup>*

Dorr maintains that Leo failed dismally to provide the workers with guidelines for confronting the evil actions of the management of his day, and it is exactly on account of the fact that Leo never thought of any economic conflict that can divide the two parties. He argues,

*The great mistake that is made in the matter now under consideration is to possess oneself of the idea that class is naturally hostile to class; that rich and poor are intended by nature to live at war with one another. So irrational and so false is this view, that the exact contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the body is the result of the disposition of the members of the body, so in a State it is ordained by nature that these two classes should exist in harmony and agreement, and should, as it were, fit into one another, so as to maintain the equilibrium of the body politic. Each requires the other; capital cannot do without labour nor labour without capital. Mutual agreement results in pleasantness and good order; perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and outrage. Now, in preventing such strife as this, and in making it impossible, the efficacy of Christianity is marvellous and manifold.’<sup>19</sup>*

Leo decides to make an option between two conflicting interpretations of Natural Law: The one interpretation firmly holds that it is quite natural for the rich to be perpetually in conflict with the poor, while the other interpretation strongly maintains that the two parties are naturally ordained to co-exist peacefully and harmoniously. Leo agrees with the latter position. And at the industrial level this means that the rich who own and control capital are in need of the poor who are in possession of the labour necessary to improve the quantity and quality of capital. Leo does not question the status quo. On the contrary, he recommends



the Church's mediation for the further improvement of the quality of this important relationship between the rich and the poor. In other words, it is no doubt natural for the rich to own and control the national means of production. Implied in this position is the universal tendency that it is quite natural for the poor to be at the mercy of the rich who can exploit them at will. And indeed, Leo maintains that the poor should be happy with the scraps of bread falling from the tables of the rich. He says,

*True, no one is commanded to distribute to others that which is required for his own necessities and those of his household; nor even to give away what is reasonably required to keep up becomingly his condition in life; for no one ought to live unbecomingly. But when necessity has been supplied, and one's position fairly considered, it is a duty to give to the indigent out of that which is left over.<sup>20</sup>*

'That which is left over' in the context of the foregoing paragraph, is symbolic of the gifts of charity, whose quantity and quality are determined by the rich whenever they are giving those charity gifts to the poor. Since they have nothing – compared to the rich – the poor have no choice but to be perpetually grateful to the rich; but the poor deserve better: they don't have to depend on gifts of charity – from the part of the rich for their living – they need to have a full share of the national means of production in their respective patria. And up until this absolute right of the poor to have a full share in all the economic assets of the country is properly addressed – by the Church – the poor will always be naturally opposed to the rich. Leo must stop calling upon the State to persecute those who are calling for the revolutionary change of society,<sup>21</sup> for the revolutionary change in question refers mainly to the radical or equal access of all citizens – including the poor – to the national means of production. Because of their substantial contribution in the national economy – which Leo recognises whenever he speaks in terms of capital and labour – the poor deserve a slice as big as that of the capitalists, not the left-overs of the cake.

The last pages of Rerum Novarum deal with the following rights of the workers: the right to be given work which suits their gender, the right not be overworked, the right to a just wage, and finally the right to be affiliated to a trade union.<sup>22</sup> The ideas of Leo on the question of trade union affiliation, however, leave a lot to be desired: He insists that Catholic workers should have their own trade unions, thereby trying to keep their faith from being contaminated by evil (socialists'?) influences.<sup>23</sup> Leo thus broke the unity which workers – regardless of their colour, race, or creed – should have created in order to have successful negotiation with

the menacing managements. Donald Dorr concurs, after making the following observations about Leo's ideas about trade unions:

*The reluctance of the pope to dissociate spiritual from temporary welfare is very important. He wanted to ensure that Catholic workers would not be 'led astray' by associations that were not explicitly Catholic. So he encouraged Catholic workers to form their own associations as an alternative to those which might expose their religion to peril (RN 40). There were two unfortunate results of this policy. In the first place it contributed notably to the fragmentation of the trade union movement. Instead of uniting with other activists in a strong united workers' movement, very many socially-oriented Catholics, in various European countries, formed Catholic trade unions. This had the effect of greatly weakening the solidarity of workers; for, inevitably, the different unions began to compete with each other and adopted different policies and strategies on particular issues. A second result of Leo's policy was that it diminished the influence that Catholic activists could have on those of other Churches, or of no church, and vice versa; so the Catholic social movement remained cut-off from similar movements outside the Church, while the emerging 'secular' trade unions tended to become secularist and even at times anti-Catholic.<sup>24</sup>*

What I learn from Dorr's critique is that the idea of exclusivism is deadly: meaning that an emphasis on the importance of one's own opinions is unpalatable if – within the common project of creating a trade union – it excludes the vital views of other people. Leo's overemphasis on the importance of Catholic trade unions badly isolated the Catholic workers from the whole world of the worker movement with which they were supposed to network in order to liberate the workers – and the poor – from the exploitative avarice of the managers. Leo's morbid fear of socialism – which socialism proved to be more radical than Catholicism in the sense that it demanded the economic equality of all citizens before the law – greatly influenced him to arrive at the deadly decision of isolating the Catholic workers from the rest of the world.<sup>25</sup> And, of course, revolutionary violence – which Leo was scared of – is always highly recommended by socialists, in the event the dismal failure of a peaceful negotiation. But why should Leo recommend the formation of trade unions if he does not want them to revolt against the evils of Industrial Revolution. Dorr does not give us a satisfactory answer. He thinks that,

*The attitude of Leo XIII to trade unions was largely determined by two of his major concerns. On the one hand he wanted to vindicate the right of the individual to free association in the protection of personal interests; so he affirmed the basic right of the worker to join a union or form a new one. But on the other hand the pope had an overriding concern for public order. It was this that led him to oppose any movement that sought to change the social structures of society by vigorous action 'from below'.<sup>26</sup>*

In the attempt to make the reader understand what Leo tried to do in the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, Donald Dorr concludes his critique by saying that,

*Leo called for changes in the socio-economic order. He maintained that the State has a duty in the short term to protect the workers against exploitation, in the long term to ensure that the ownership of private property is widely distributed. But Leo wanted these changes to be initiated 'from top down', that is, by the very people or classes who were benefitting from the existing liberal-capitalist order. If they failed to introduce a more equitable society, Leo was not prepared to encourage the poor or workers to engage in confrontation. He defended the right of workers to form trade unions, but he did not want the unions to play a political role in changing society. Nor did he want Catholics to join the other workers in the kind of strong united trade union movement that could bring about major social changes.<sup>27</sup>*

What a confusing church document! Most consoling about the document is that even if it failed the workers of its day, in the sense that it did not encourage the trade unions to take drastic steps to protect themselves against economic exploitation, it certainly marked the beginning of the process of taking the cries of the poor seriously, and of considering the importance of networking with people of different approaches who also seriously longed for the total liberation of the workers and all other economically disadvantaged people. Roger Charles has a similar reflection, as he maintains that,

*Neither *Rerum Novarum* nor any other encyclical presents a once-for-all complete teaching which does not allow of additions, variations, changes of emphasis or direction, in short, of all that is implied in the idea of the 'development of doctrine', which is the way the living magisterium adapts to new situations, maintaining the same principles but looking at the needs of those situations in which they have to be applied.<sup>28</sup>*

With these words of Charles in mind we now reflect on the encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, to see how much of it evolves from *Rerum Novarum*, and to

study the additions, the variations, and the changes in emphasis it made in order to adapt itself to its own historical period.

#### *Quadragesimo Anno 1931*

The encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, was written by Pope Pius XI in 1931,<sup>29</sup> as a means to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*,<sup>30</sup> hence the name *Quadragesimo Anno*, which literally reads 'the fortieth year' of the existence. Thus, Pius XI decided to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* by reflecting on the meaning of its content during the period of his pontificate.

Characterising the political situation of the period of the pontificate of Pius XI was a thorny question of despotism or totalitarianism which took the forms of Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy, and Communism in Soviet Russia. Charles Rogers, in some of his reflections on this period, maintains that,

*By the 1930s totalitarianism was assuming more sinister forms and challenging Christian and civilised values in a manner which few had imagined could be so fundamental. First, the Fascism of Hitler's Nazis in Germany was flourishing, and was a much more malignant than Mussolini's version, while Hitler was setting the course for a second and more terrible war. Second, Stalinism in Russia was demonstrating the real force of its evil, an evil which its ambitions were seeking to spread world wide as the clash with Fascist forces in Spain, and the popularity of the People's Front, and other fellow-travellers' organizations in the Western democracies, demonstrated.<sup>31</sup>*

The above, in short, are political conditions under which Pius XI wrote the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Ideally, Pius should have condemned all three forms of despotism mentioned above, because underlying all three of them is the greed to deprive humanity of its fundamental rights. Unfortunately, Pius – in the encyclical under study – prefers to condemn only one, namely, Communism. He exposes the evils of communism by saying,

*Now communism teaches and pursues a twofold aim: merciless class warfare and the complete abolition of private ownership. This it does, not in secret and by hidden methods, but openly, frankly and by every means, even the most violent. To obtain these ends, it shrinks from nothing and fears nothing, and when it comes to power, it shows itself cruel and inhuman in a manner unbelievable and monstrous. Witness to this are the tragic ruins and destruction with which communism has left throughout the vast reaches of*

*Eastern Europe and Asia. Moreover, the antagonism and open hostility which it has shown Holy Church and God himself are, alas! Well proven by facts and known to all.*<sup>32</sup>

But, equally nefarious, cruel, and diabolically unchristian is Nazism and Fascism. Why did Pius not expose their monstrosity, their wickedness, and their ruthless methods – to the whole world – as he did in the case of communism? By condemning communism alone, he surely made the impression that the Catholic Church was an ally of Mussolini and Hitler. This impression became clearer when he dismissed socialism – be it in its communist or mild form – as totally opposed to Catholicism. Indeed he wrote,

*Whether socialism be considered as a doctrine, or as a historical fact, or as a “movement,” if it really remain [sic] socialism, it cannot be brought into harmony with the dogmas of the Catholic Church, even after it has yielded to truth and justice in the points we have mentioned; the reason being that it conceives human society in a way utterly alien to Christian truth.*<sup>33</sup>

Are Fascism and Nazism – like Communism – also enemies of the dogmas and doctrines of the Catholic Church? If that is the case, then let the pope tell the world about it, so that the world should be aware that there are three nefarious forces – namely, fascism, Nazism and communism – that impede seriously, not only the right to religious affiliation, but also every other fundamental human right. Yes, the pope utilised the encyclical, *Mit Brennender Sorge*<sup>34</sup> to denounce Nazism, and the encyclical, *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*<sup>35</sup> to condemn Fascism. The former was written in German, while the latter was written in Italian. Why did Pius XI limit himself to domestic languages in addressing the gross transgression of human rights committed respectively by Nazism and Fascism? The exclusive use of domestic language – in each encyclical – certainly gives the impression that the content of each encyclical was internationally insignificant. Put in another way, including the outrageous atrocities of both Nazism and Fascism in the international encyclical of the magnitude of *Quadragesimo Anno*, would have heightened quite considerably, the urgency with which Christians – and the international community – were to confront the three totalitarian forces.

Donald Dorr is of the opinion that *Quadragesimo Anno* is not just a mere repetition and development of *Rerum Novarum* in a new situation and a new pontificate. He says,

*Pius XI was not content merely to repeat, develop, and apply the teaching of Leo XIII. As the French theologian Chenu rightly remarks, he was concerned not only about the condition of the*

*workers but with the whole socio-economic order of society  
(Chenu 35)<sup>36</sup>*

I disagree with Dorr because in *Quadragesimo Anno* – to a very large extent – Pius XI is merely repeating and trying to apply the content of *Rerum Novarum* to a new situation, namely, that of the period of his pontificate. Let me make a few examples. Like Leo XIII, Pius XI recognised the conflict between capital and labour. In other words, he came to the realisation that the conflict of economic interests between the capitalist management and the labourers is bound to be endless, as the former continued unabated to make lots of profit at the expense of the latter. This clash of interests – most of the time caused by the avaricious greed of the entrepreneurs – became an insurmountable problem during the pontificate of Pius XI. Indeed he writes,

*In the first place, then, it is patent that in our days not alone is wealth accumulated, but immense power and despotic economic domination is concentrated in the hands of a few, and that those few are frequently not the owners but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, who administer them at their good pleasure.<sup>37</sup>*

Pius concludes his critique of the capitalist system of his time by briefly giving some of its inevitable results. He says,

*This concentration of power has led to a threefold struggle for domination. First, there is the struggle for dictatorship in the economic sphere itself; then, the fierce battle to acquire control of the State, so that its resources and authority may be abused in the economic struggles. Finally, the clash between States themselves.<sup>38</sup>*

To combat and uproot the capitalist problems he analyses above, Pius XI – like Leo XIII – highly recommends the intervention of the State and Church. Indeed he strongly holds that,

*Now this is a major and pressing duty of the State and of all good citizens: to get rid of conflict between “classes” with divergent interests, and to foster and promote harmony between the various “ranks” or groupings of society.<sup>39</sup>*

And for the desired harmony of the various groups to come to fruition, Pius recommended that people should group themselves not so much in accordance with the economic contribution they provide at the market place, but in accordance with their vocations and professions. The idea of working for the common good of society – if taken as a priority – should unite workers of all ranks.

And if there is some misunderstanding arising between capitalists and labourers, it should be resolved by voting, and not by the latter revolting against the former, as usually expected. Pius emphasizes that,

*From this it is easy to conclude that in these associations the common interest of the whole "group" must predominate: and among these interests the most important is the directing of the activities of the group to the common good. Regarding cases in which interest of employers and employees call for special care and protection against opposing interests, separate deliberations will take place in their respective assemblies and separate votes will be taken as the matter may require.*<sup>40</sup>

The harmony at the marketplace – between labour and capital – is obviously difficult to achieve. Leo tried to achieve it by dividing the workforce into catholic and non-catholic trade unions, so as to have firm control on the latter. Pius tries to achieve the desired harmony by dividing the workforce into vocational groups united by the idea of working for the common good. Pius further suggests the vote as a solution to a possible conflict which may arise between management and labourers. Let us suppose the labourers want an increment in their wages and the management declines. Obviously a very large majority of labourers – in their assembly – will certainly vote for the increment; while a very large majority of capitalists (management) – in their separate assembly – will vote against the increment of the wages of the labourers. Of the two assemblies discussed by Pius above, whose vote is legitimate? And how is the State going to protect the vote of the labourers, if it is now being manipulated and dominated by the capitalists of the times of Pius? This problem brings to the Church as another highly recommended institution which can bring about peace and harmony in society. About this institution Pius, like Leo, strongly holds, that,

*No one indeed is unaware of the many and splendid works in the social and economic field, as well as in education and religion, laboriously set in motion with indefatigable zeal by Catholics. But this admirable and self-sacrificing activity not infrequently loses some of its effectiveness by being directed into too many channels. Let, then, men of good will stand united. Let all those who, under the pastors of the Church, wish to fight this good and peaceful fight of Christ, as far as talent, powers and stations allow, strive to play their part in the renewal of human society, which Leo XIII inaugurated in his immortal encyclical Rerum Novarum. Let them seek not themselves and the things that are their own, but the things that are Jesus Christ's.*<sup>41</sup>

Still emphasizing the importance of the Church as custodian of the Christian principles without which – according to the pontiff – the attainment of the just and charitable society is impossible, Pius wrote,

*All those versed in social matters demand a rationalisation of economic life which will restore a sound and true order. But this order, which we ourselves desire and make every effort to promote, will necessarily be faulty and imperfect, unless all man's activities harmoniously unite to imitate and, as far as is humanly possible, attain the marvellous unity of the divine plan. This is the perfect order which the Church preaches, with intense earnestness, and which reason demands: which places God as the first and supreme end of all created activity, and regards all created goods as mere instruments under God, to be used only in so far as they help toward the attainment for our supreme end.<sup>42</sup>*

In other words, in accordance with the opinion of Pius, the Church firmly believes that any social and economic restoration which does not align itself with God's plan for the well-being of humanity, is bound to fail dismally.

It is certainly good for the Church to be the voice of the voiceless workers, but it is not enough to preach against injustice: the Church must also encourage the workers to take drastic measures – like strikes – so as to combat the evils inflicted on them at the marketplace. But like Leo, Pius did not encourage the workers to go on strike so as to contain the greed for wealth – from the part of capitalists – which was rapidly becoming uncontrollable during his pontificate. Instead, like Leo, he literally tamed the workers by encouraging them to form themselves into associations which seek the common good. Thus, he betrayed the masses of the workers who, at that point in time, desperately needed the encouragement from the authority figure of the calibre of a supreme pontiff, to group themselves into radical trade unions which would liberate them from the ruthless exploitation of the capitalists.

Thus, while Pius, like Leo, recommended the State and the Church as ideal institutions to bring about peace between capitalists and labourers, they both failed dismally – during their respective pontificates – to solve the problem of the wicked exploitation of labourers by capitalists.

Donald Dorr claims that Pius had the skill of blaming neither the structures nor the individuals for the social evils that seemed to plague the populace. He writes,

*He avoided the mistake of adopting a purely 'moralising' approach, an attitude which explains social evils in terms of the sinfulness of individuals.*



*On the other hand he also avoided the opposite mistake, namely, that of blaming the structures of society for all its ills.*<sup>43</sup>

My understanding of the second sentence of Dorr is that one cannot apply a blanket condemnation to the structures of society for all the evils of that particular society, meaning that the structures can be blamed for some, and not all the evils. And in the first sentence I understand Dorr to be saying that the social evils of society cannot be attributed to the shortcomings of individuals. If Pius said so, then he is certainly contradicting himself, because he did, at times, attribute the evils of the populace to the wickedness of individuals. Indeed Pius claims that,

*At one stage there existed a social order which, by no means perfect in every respect, corresponded nevertheless in a certain measure to right reason according to the needs and conditions of the times. That this order has long since perished is not due to the fact that it was incapable of development and adaptation to changing needs and circumstances, but rather to the wrong doing of men. Men were hardened in self-love and refused to extend that order, as was their duty, to the increasing numbers of the people; or else, deceived by the attractions of false liberty and other errors, they grew impatient of every restraint and endeavoured to throw off all authority.*<sup>44</sup>

The men to whom the pope is referring may be individual men or groups of men. In the latter case, I think the pope would have mentioned the name of the group or structure, as he does – for example – in the case of ‘trustees’ and ‘directors’ on the one hand,<sup>45</sup> and frequently in the case of structures such as the State, the Church, the unions, the classes, employers, the socialists, etc., on the other.<sup>46</sup> The pope does not indicate who the men he is discussing are. He leaves the reader guessing. My strongest suspicion is that, in the foregoing quoted statement, the pope is referring to a group of individual entrepreneurs who, infatuated by individual profits offered by liberalist capitalism – at the expense of the labourers – strongly resisted any form of State intervention which would temper with their economic gains. Thus, the men the pope is referring to, are individual capitalists, as liberalism – to which Pius XI alludes – is concerned not so much with economic enrichment of the community, but that of the individual capitalists.<sup>47</sup>

### **Pope Pius XII**

#### *A Lost Opportunity*

Why Pius XII did not write an encyclical in 1941 and, another one in 1951 to commemorate Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* – on the occasions of its fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries – is a historical fact not yet explained by Church historians. One would speculate that perhaps the tumultuous situation of the Second World

War (1939—1945) – during which he served the Church – must have prevented him from finding a conducive moment of meditating and writing properly about the Church’s policy on socio-political and economic matters. Donald Dorr disagrees with my sympathetic speculation. He writes,

*He did not issue any document or make any statement which as an intervention had the same kind of impact as the two great social encyclicals of his predecessors. But he made the most significant to the body of social teaching or doctrine of the Catholic Church. This contribution has to do mainly with the question of ownership and distribution of property. It came quite early in his pontificate, in the broadcast he made to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum.*<sup>48</sup>

I interpret Dorr to be implicitly saying that Pius XII did have time to write encyclicals to commemorate *Rerum Novarum* on the occasions of its fifth and its sixtieth anniversaries: During his pontificate (1939-1958) he had time to contribute significantly towards the creation of the Social Doctrine of the Church, as Dorr claims, and he also had time to write the encyclical *Evangelii Praecone*, which contained his policy on the missions;<sup>49</sup> and therefore had nothing to do with the war, neither did it have anything to do with the policy of the Church on socio-political and economic matters. I am saying that I am inclined to agree with Dorr that in spite of the turmoil of the war, Pius XII could have written those two encyclicals to commemorate *Rerum Novarum*, with the specific aim of bringing solace and encouragement to millions of workers suffering as prisoners of war in Nazi Germany.

During the pontificate of Pius XII, the Catholic Church in France – under the leadership of Cardinal Suhard of Paris – clandestinely sent two hundred and seventy-five volunteer chaplains to Germany, to look after the spiritual needs of the French people who were languishing in German factories and concentration camps, as prisoners of war.<sup>50</sup> Four thousand priests were among prisoners of war, and they were subjected to manual labour in German factories. Writing about the experience of these priests is Albert Gauche, who was also a worker-priest working in the factories of Germany. He writes,

*The suffering and the privation of these clandestine and the other priests and seminarians in Germany had a deep effect on the growing sense that the church must reach out to the working class. Priests and clerical candidates in German camps and factories came to know the harsh life of the working class first hand. When they returned they brought with them the burning zeal for a priest cast in lifestyle of the proletariat, a priesthood which could be dedicated*

*to working class liberation as well as evangelization. They carried their message back to the Mission de France and other seminarians; they took it to their bishops; and they influenced the future worker-priests both directly and indirectly.*<sup>51</sup>

For the resounding success of the mission of the church to the proletariat, the French priests who have been to Germany as prisoners of war, continued – with the authorisation of Cardinal Suhard, and many of his fellow-prelates – to do manual labour at the factories. Many of them even joined Marxists' trade unions so as to have a deeper knowledge of Marxism. Writing about his fellow worker-priests, Joseph Robert, who was also a Dominican priest, observed,

*Most of them had come to the conclusion that the Marxist workers were the avant-garde of the entire proletariat, the source of its struggle against injustice and for a better world. The Limoges equipe reported that it was Karl Marx who gave the working class both its vision and its will to combat unjust conditions. These priests were convinced that the only way Catholics could establish credibility among the workers was to join Marxists in the "social revolution."*<sup>52</sup>

Robert further observes that,

*It was feared that, wittingly or unwittingly, the worker-priests were being seduced by the philosophy and ambience of Marxism. It was true that these missionary clergy had begun slowly and increasingly to form bonds of friendship and cooperation with grass-roots communist militants. This did not mean, however, that they had become converts to the tenets of Marxism, as their foes suspected. Yet, it did ensure that worker-priests would never again view the communists from the narrow and negative perceptions in which their traditional faith had trained them.*<sup>53</sup>

What I learn from the experience of the French worker-priests, is the importance of dialogue. Through dialogue and direct contact with the world of workers, the worker-priests acquired a very deep understanding of the plight of workers. As a result, among other things, they participated very actively in trade unionism – and some of them were even elected to union leadership positions<sup>54</sup> – for the liberation of all workers from all forms of exploitation and oppression. Secondly, through the process of dialogue, the worker-priests acquired a broader picture of Marxism. As a result, they never considered Marxism as an archrival of Christianity anymore – as the papal prejudice of the day taught<sup>55</sup> – on the contrary, they discovered Marxism to be having the same yearning as Christians, namely, the

radical recognition and respect of all socio-economic and political rights of all workers, be they employed or not.

Unfortunately, Rome was not impressed with the initiative taken by the French Church to establish some relationship with Marxism. Without giving the French delegation the opportunity to present and defend their case, the pope and his council actually condemned the dialogue the French Church had begun with Marxists. Remembering the day on which the ruthless condemnation was pronounced is Andre Depierre – another worker-priest, who recounts,

*On November 4, 1953 France's three most prominent cardinals Maurice Feltin of Paris, Achille Lienart of Lille, and Pierre-Marie Gerlier of Lyon travelled to Rome to receive a harsh judgement from the hands of the Holy Father. There was no room for negotiations; they were to receive instructions; Pius XII was prepared to let these priests continue some type of apostolate in the midst of workers' milieu, but it was abundantly clear that the old idea of worker-priest would not be tolerated.<sup>56</sup>*

It is a word of encouragement, not a merciless denouncement which the French delegates expected from the pope. The French bishops expected some kind of negotiation which would perhaps result in some form of the purification or papal critique of their initiative before it could be sent – as a model – by the pope to the whole world. Depierre helplessly observing how a moment of true dialogue and reconciliation could be easily contaminated and destroyed by a papal condemnation, wrote,

*The Roman decree wreaked havoc with the already strained relationships existing between the worker-priests and their religious superiors. From this moment until the bishops' ultimatum in 1954, all attempts to breach this chasm ended in bitterness and failure.<sup>57</sup>*

Thus, Pius XII destroyed altogether every effort the French church made in order to establish some dialogue and relationship between the Catholic workers and workers of Marxist orientation. If there is any pope in the history of the Catholic Church who stood the chance of evangelizing Marxism successfully, that was Pius XII. The French Church – during his pontificate – had already started the ball rolling. His was just to critique and to compliment the French initiative by recommending it – as a model – to the whole Catholic Church. Alas! He condemned the initiative, first, by abusing the moment of reconciliation and evangelisation between the Catholic Church and Marxism; and secondly, by placing the whole Catholic Church inadvertently, on the ideological side of liberal capitalism – the exploitative enemy of all workers – against which Marxism had

been fighting for decades. Will his successors be interested in repairing this damage? Let us read their encyclicals in order to see how much interest they showed in repairing the damage incurred. The first encyclical on which I focus – after the lost opportunity of a fruitful dialogue – is *Mater et Magistra*.

#### *Mater et Magistra 1961*

The encyclical *Mater et Magistra* which was written by Pope John XXIII in 1961, as a means to mark and to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>58</sup> Did John XXIII, like Pius XI – in the encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* – make the same mistake of merely repeating the ideas contained in *Rerum Novarum* during the period of his pontificate? In other words, will *Mater et Magister* be a completely new document attempting to solve the problems of its time in its own way? Or, will it try to attend to the problems of its period by making use of the solutions similar to those provided by *Rerum Novarum*, just as *Quadragesimo Anno* unfortunately did? A critical study of the document – which now follows – will tell.

*Mater et Magistra* – a Latin phrase which means *Mother and Teacher* – is a title which Pope John XXIII is giving to the Church with the specific aim of reminding people about its two-fold task, namely, that of acting like a mother and a teacher of all people. Indeed John writes,

*The Catholic Church has been established by Jesus Christ as Mother and Teacher of nations, so that all who in the course of centuries come to her loving embrace, may find in her salvation as well as the fullness of a more excellent life. To this Church, “the pillar and mainstay of the truth,” her most holy founder has entrusted the double task of begetting sons unto herself, and of educating and governing those whom she begets, guiding with maternal providence the life of both individuals and of peoples.*<sup>59</sup>

The opening words of the encyclical indicate that the pope wishes – in the same encyclical letter – to focus on the theme of the Church as Mother and Teacher. He is already explaining that symbolic in the two terms, namely, *Mother and Teacher* is a combination of two most important functions of the Church, namely, to give birth and to educate. To give birth in this context means to increase the number of Christians, and to educate – in the same context – implies the equipment of the faithful with proper teachings of the Church.

Like his predecessors, Pope John XXIII describes the historical conditions within which he writes his encyclical. Characterising these conditions are numerous scientific discoveries, among which mention should be made of the discovery and the use of atomic bombs in warfare, on the one hand; on the other hand, the

same bombs are used as means to deter unexpected hostilities of war.<sup>60</sup> Also characteristic of John's pontificate was a multiplicity of social reforms, among which the introduction of social securities is worth mentioning as it served to look after the economic needs of the unemployed.<sup>61</sup> During the same period, the trade union movements were qualitatively improved, as a result, many of its members became more and more aware of their fundamental rights. However, in spite of devoting a very large section of his encyclical on the multiple rights of workers at national level and at international level,<sup>62</sup> John – like his predecessors, namely, Leo XIII and Pius XI – does not encourage the workers to go on strike if the peaceful negotiations fail dismally. No doubt, this confirms Donald Dorr's opinion that – in spite the fame he acquired because of convoking the Second Vatican Council for the renewal of the whole Church – John remained as flatly conservative as his predecessors. Indeed Dorr quotes John – from the encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (PT) – to have held that,

*There are indeed generous souls who ... burn with desire to put everything right and are carried away by such an ungovernable zeal that their reform becomes a sort of revolution. To such people we would suggest that it is in the nature of things for growth to be gradual and that therefore in human institutions no improvement can be looked for which does not proceed step by step from within. The point was well put by our predecessor Pius XII: 'Prosperity and justice lie not in overthrowing the old order but in well planned progress. Uncontrolled passionate zeal always destroys everything and builds nothing.'* (PT161-162)<sup>63</sup>

It is therefore clear that John was not determined to deviate from the traditional and conservative stance of his predecessors, no matter how economically harmful that stance was to the masses of unemployed and exploited workers who – according to John and Pius XII – must not be quick to overthrow the old order of avaricious capitalists: on the contrary, this old oppressive order must be reformed after its owners have eventually seen how evil it is on the labourers. Will the proper reforms ever take place, if they are conducted by capitalists who thrive from the exploitation of the workers? No. Was John going to be a friend of Liberation Theology which demands the liberation of the poor – here and now – from the social structures that deprive them of their fundamental rights? Yes, but the method and the speed at which that liberation should take place was going to be a very big problem for John, given the gradualist moral stance which he adopts above. Life is just too short to be wasted on gradualist stances which benefit nobody else but the rich and the elite.

Coming back to the historical period within which he wants to write his encyclical, John further studies this period from the political point of view. He observes that during this period the African and the Asian continents have succeeded in liberating themselves from the colonial domination of the West. In the context of Europe he further observes that more and more people are beginning to participate actively in the socio-political structures of society. This active participation in various strata of society stretches beyond national boundaries; the more it does so, the more it needs supervision from the part of the individual States. Indeed John asserts,

*As the mutual relationships of peoples increase, they become daily dependent one upon the other. Throughout the world, assemblies and councils have become more common, which, being supranational in character, take into account the interests of all the people. Such bodies are concerned with economic life, or with social affairs, or with culture and education, or, finally, with the mutual relationship of peoples.*<sup>64</sup>

The interdependence of people at national and international levels discussed by John above already introduces us to what Donald Dorr thinks is the novelty and the contribution of John in the whole area of the social teaching of the Church. John expresses the novelty as follows:

*One of the principal characteristics of our time is the multiplication of social relationships, that is, a daily more complex interdependence of citizens, introducing into their lives and activities many and varied forms of association, recognised for the most part in private even in public law. This tendency seemingly stems from a number of factors operative in the present era, among which are technical and scientific progress, greater productive efficiency, and a higher standard of living among citizens.*<sup>65</sup>

I fail to locate the teaching of the Church in the foregoing paragraph, let alone the novelty mentioned by Donald Dorr. What I discover is John's observation of the reality of socialisation which he thought was rapidly becoming a characteristic feature of the period of his pontificate. Under these new circumstances, John still insists that a balance be struck between the individual interests, on the one hand, and public interests on the other. John writes,

*Accordingly, as relationships multiply between men, binding them more closely together, commonwealths will more readily and appropriately order their affairs to the extent these two factors are kept in balance: (1) the freedom of individual citizens and groups of*

*citizens to act autonomously, while cooperating one with the other; the activity of the State whereby the undertakings of private individuals and groups are suitably regulated and fostered.*<sup>66</sup>

But John is certainly not saying anything new to address the new socialisation situation of his time: what he holds in the foregoing paragraph is a repetition of what he considered earlier on to be the teaching of his predecessors. He said,

*At the outset it should be affirmed that in economic affairs first place is to be given to private initiative of individual men who, either working by themselves, or with others in one fashion or another, pursue their common interests.*

*But in this matter for reasons pointed out by our predecessors, it is necessary that public authorities take active interest, the better to increase output of goods and to further social progress for the benefit of all citizens.*<sup>67</sup>

Thus John makes no secrets that striking a balance between the state intervention and the private initiative of entrepreneurs does not – as a solution – belong to him in its original form: his predecessors have tried to implement it during their respective pontificates. What motivates John to continue along lines of his predecessors is that capitalists, during his pontificate, underpaid workers – in almost every continent – so as to attend to the endless purchase and manufacturing of expensive armaments.<sup>68</sup> No doubt the intervention of the state is crucial for the prevention of the unnecessary underpayment of workers which is orchestrated in a bid to manufacture and purchase the latest models of missiles.

In my opinion John's novelty lies in the baptismal or official adoption of the idea of the Welfare State into the social teaching of the Church, which Donald Dorr describes as 'capitalism with a human face'<sup>69</sup> After the Second World War, Donald Dorr claims, countries of the West preferred neither capitalism nor socialism for their post-war economic survival: The Welfare State became an ideal compromise for most of them, as it consisted of a combination of both economic systems, namely, capitalism and socialism.<sup>70</sup> John's unique contribution was to extend the perimeters of the idea of the Welfare State by including the economic needs of the agricultural communities, at national and at international levels. At national level – that is, at the level of the national boundaries of the West – the modernisation and the technological improvement of agriculture, argues John, would certainly contribute quite substantially towards the reduction of a massive exodus of rural people, to the urban areas, to seek better means of livelihood. Indeed John writes,



*First, it is necessary that everyone, especially public authorities, strive to effect improvements in rural areas as regards the principal services needed by all. Such are, for example: highway construction; transport services; marketing facilities; pure drinking water; housing; medical services; elementary, trade, and professional schools; things requisite for religion and for recreation; finally, furnishings and equipment needed in the modern farm home. Where these requirements for a dignified farm life are lacking to rural dwellers, economic and social progress does not occur at all, or else very slowly. Under such conditions, nothing can be done to keep men from deserting the fields, nor can anyone readily estimate their number.<sup>71</sup>*

At international level, John recommended that developed countries help the developing ones to achieve maximum economic growth. For the same purpose the pope encouraged people with economic expertise – especially those who are members of the Catholic Church – to use their skills for the technological advancement of agriculture in the Third World. At the same time the pope urged the developed countries to accommodate in their tertiary institutions, the students from the Third World. After finishing their studies these students are supposed to utilise the academic qualifications they acquired for the economic development of their respective countries. John happily recommends the United Nations' agency called F.A.O. (Food and Agriculture Organization) as a role model of how developed countries can be of economic help to the Third World. He continues,

*Here, however, we cannot fail to express our approval of the efforts of the Institute known as F.A.O. which concerns itself with the feeding of peoples and the improvement of agriculture. This Institute has the special goal of promoting mutual accord among peoples, of bringing it about that rural life is modernised in less developed nations, and finally, and that help is brought to people experiencing food shortages.<sup>72</sup>*

And while he recommends FAO as a role model for developing countries, John at the same time strictly cautioned them against neo-colonialism by saying,

*Moreover, economically developed countries should take particular care lest, in giving aid to poorer countries, they endeavor to turn the prevailing political situation to their own advantage, and seek to dominate them.*

*Should perchance such attempts be made, this clearly would be but another colonialism, which, although disguised in name, merely reflects their earlier but outdated dominion, now abandoned by many countries. When international relations are thus obstructed, the orderly progress of all peoples is endangered.*<sup>73</sup>

The lack of trust in one another – which the nations of the world experienced after the Second World War – was another problem considered by John to be a serious obstacle in the way of desired international co-operation. He wrote,

*Indeed, men, hence States, stand in fear of one another. One country fears lest another is contemplating aggression and lest the other seize the opportunity to put such plans in effect. Accordingly, countries customarily prepare defenses for their cities and homeland, namely, armaments to deter other countries from aggression.*<sup>74</sup>

According to John the mistrust in question is aggravated by the conflict of philosophical positions existing among the various nations. It is actually the atheistic philosophical opinions John is repeatedly complaining about. He worriedly says,

*Yet there are today those who assert that, in view of the flourishing state of science and technology, men can achieve the highest civilisation even apart from God and by their unaided powers.*<sup>75</sup>

This process of absolutizing science and technology as the means through which human beings can attain happiness at the exclusion of God continued to worry John in his pontificate. As a result, he repeats it as follows,

*In our day a very false opinion is popularised which holds that the sense of religion implanted in men by nature is to be regarded as adventitious or imaginary, and hence, is to be rooted completely from the mind as altogether inconsistent with the spirit of our age and the progress of our civilisation. Yet this inward proclivity of man to religion confirms the fact that man himself was created by God, and irrevocably tends to Him. Thus we read in St. Augustine: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."*<sup>76</sup>

John – basing his argument on the wisdom of St. Augustine above – is already condemning elements of atheism present in the foregoing paragraph. He continues his condemnation by adding that,

*Wherefore, whatever the progress in technology and economic life, there can be neither justice nor peace in the world, so long as men fail to realize how great is their dignity; for they have been created by God and are his children. We speak of God, who must be regarded as first and the final cause of all things he has created. Separated from God, man becomes monstrous to himself and others. Consequently, mutual relationships between men absolutely require a right ordering of the human conscience in relation to God, the source of all truth, justice and love.<sup>77</sup>*

Of course, John's language – like the atheists' convictions – is not universal. It is a limited language, understood only by a section of the world population, namely, the Christians. In other words, no matter how forceful it may be, John's theology expressed above will make sense only to the Christian audience, and not to everybody else, let alone the atheists who are questioning the existence of the very God John is claiming to be the source of truth, justice and love. John does not specify the kind of atheists he is discussing, but I think – like his predecessors – he is complaining about socialism (Marxism) which dismisses Christianity as opiate of the people.<sup>78</sup>

#### *Concluding Remarks*

The pope concludes by strongly recommending that the social teaching of the Church – contained in the document, *Mater et Magister* – should not only be contemplated upon, but it should also be implemented in the lives of the Catholics, at grassroots level. This social teachings of the church should be studied into some deeper detail at all Catholic institutions of learning, namely, the universities, the seminaries, and the primary schools. It should also be studied and implemented at parish level, and the modern media, namely, radio and television should be employed in order to make it known to the public.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, not every Catholic in the West happened to be interested in this valuable teaching of the Church. Edward DeBerri regrettably discusses this situation within the context of the United States. He says,

*“The best kept secret in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States!” That is how the Church's social teaching has frequently been described. That the Church has a body of teaching on social, economic, political, and cultural matters and what that body says seem to have been forgotten – or have never been known – by a majority of the Roman Catholic community in the United States.*

*Even the recent commemorations of the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of modern Catholic social teaching did not receive sustained attention in the secular or Catholic media. Catholic social teaching still remains outside the mainstream of ordinary parish life.*<sup>80</sup>

The situation in the United States is really unfortunate, because the encyclicals contain the teachings of the Church which are supposed to renew the lives of Catholics in the areas of political and socio-economic rights. John holds that reading *Mater et Magistra*, would certainly help many Catholics strike a balance between earthly happiness brought about by discoveries in science and technology, on the one hand, and the heavenly bliss preached by the Church, on the other. The two are not of necessity, mutually exclusive of one another, as they emerge from the same Divine and Provident Source. Hence the apostle's exhortation:

*"Whether eat or drink, or do anything else, do all for the glory of God." And elsewhere: "Whatever you do in word and in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*<sup>81</sup>

The pope quotes the scriptural texts above to strengthen his argument that there is or there should be some strong bond between heavenly life and earthly life. He expresses this relationship by urging human beings to do everything – including the manufacturing of atomic weaponry discovered by science and technology<sup>82</sup> – to magnify the name of God and to thank Him as He is the one who gave human beings the skills to shape the world, from the scientific and the technological point of view. And if scientific and technological skills are displayed with the specific aim of magnifying the name of God, then there is no way those skills are going to be harmful to human beings, neither will they alienate human beings from one another, as they did during the pontificate of John XXIII.<sup>83</sup>

And in the attempt to rededicate the whole Church – which he likens to the mystical body of Christ – to the importance of justice, the pope bases his words of encouragement on the sermon of Christ who said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and every other good will be given to you" (Matthew 6:33). I interpret the pope to be saying that the charity which unites today's disciples to form symbolically, the body of Christ, should be combined with justice. For the combination of the two virtues is essential, for a thorough task of qualitatively improving the moral fibre of society.

Finally, giving his blessing, especially to those members of the Church who would generously give their constructive feedback, the pope encourages every Catholic to implement the encyclical, *Mater et Magistra* in their various social contexts.

### *Evaluation*

That the content of *Mater et Magistra* is partly groundbreaking is far beyond doubt. John wrote extensively on what he considers to be the rights of workers at national and international levels. No predecessor of his dwells so deeply into the international recommendations John discusses about the workers. His other unique contribution was substantially in the area of agriculture. He highly recommended the infrastructural improvement of the rural areas and the recognition of the rights of the farming communities, thereby preventing a massive exodus of these folks to the urban areas in search for a better economic life.

John was also outstanding in the area of the international co-operation of the nations. His emphasis was that the West should shoulder the responsibility of the scientific and technological improvement of the socio-economic and political life in the Third World. He regarded the church – which was already doing its missionary in the Third World – as a model for this international programme.

Paragraph 239 of the encyclical partly reads as follows:

*But in the exercise of economic and social functions, Catholics often come in contact with men who do not share their view of life. On such occasions, those who profess Catholicism must take special care to be consistent and not compromise in matters wherein the integrity of faith and morals would suffer harm. Likewise in their conduct, they should weigh the opinion of others with fitting courtesy and not measure everything in the light of their own interest. They should be prepared to join sincerely in doing whatever is naturally good or conducive to good. If, indeed it happens that in these matters sacred authorities have prescribed or decreed anything, it is evident that this judgement is to be promptly obeyed by Catholics. For it is the Church's right and duty not only to safeguard principles relating to the integrity of religion and morals, but also to pronounce authoritatively when it is a matter of putting these principles into effect.<sup>84</sup>*

The last two sentences of the foregoing paragraph clearly refer to the papal pronouncements in matters of faith (religion) and moral life. Any Catholic is expected to obey every decree in the area of faith and morals, pronounced by the papacy,<sup>85</sup> but, what about matters ideological? If a pope is inclined to be

prejudiced against socialism – as was clearly the case with Pius XI – is a socialist Catholic at grassroots or professional levels bound to obey him? Donald Dorr, above, claims that John XIII was patently capitalist in orientation: If that's true, are socialist Catholics – or Catholics who have emotional ties with socialism – obliged to obey his papacy? These questions surely belong in the subsection which discusses the real relationship of the Theology of Liberation with the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church. Suffice it at the moment to say that the pope, like every other human being, will be partisan in matters ideological. Whether he does accord each Catholic, as he should, the fundamental right to differ ideologically – from the papacy – will be proved below.

My next point is to discuss the encyclical, *Octogesima Advenience*.

#### *Octogesima Adveniens 1971*

*Octogesima Adveniens* translates 'the coming eightieth (anniversary)'<sup>86</sup> is a pastoral letter written by Pope Paul VI in the year 1971, to Cardinal Maurice Roy – at that time, the President of the Council of the Laity and of the Pontifical Commission of Justice and Peace – to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>87</sup> The letter is Pope Paul VI's response to the reflections of the Latin American Bishops as jointly articulated in the Medellin Conference of 1968.<sup>88</sup> Even if it is not an encyclical – but an Apostolic Letter written to an individual – it still carries the weight and the authority of an encyclical.<sup>89</sup> And that explains why it is deemed relevant and made public, not only to the Cardinal and the Latin American Bishops, but to the entire church throughout the whole world.

Like his predecessors, the pope gives a very impressive analysis of the socio-political and economic situation within which he wants to write the message of his Apostolic Letter. The difference between Pope Paul VI and his predecessors is that – in addition to reading – he has witnessed what he is analysing: he has been to Latin America. As a result, he is able to make a comparable study of the West and Latin America. For example, he writes,

*We have had opportunities to meet these people, to admire them, to give them our encouragement in the course of our new journeys. We have gone into the crowds and have heard their appeals, cries of distress, and at the same time cries of hope. Under these circumstances we have seen in a new perspective the grave problems of our time. These problems of course are particular to each part of the world, but at the same time they are common to all mankind, which is questioning itself about its future and about the tendency and the meaning of the changes taking place. Flagrant inequalities exist in the economic, cultural, and political*

*development of the nations: while some regions are heavily industrialised, others are still at the agricultural stage; while some countries enjoy prosperity, others are struggling against starvation; while some people have a high standard of culture, others are engaged in eliminating illiteracy. From all sides there rises a yearning for more justice and a desire for a better guaranteed peace in mutual respect among individuals and peoples.<sup>90</sup>*

One's knowledge of a particular nation becomes deeper and broader, if in addition to reading about that nation, one finds time to visit it. This is exactly what Pope Paul experienced when he visited the Third World. On this occasion he was overwhelmed by the situation of social injustice he is describing above to the extent that he left the solution of the problem of this nature completely in the hands of the local bishops and their respective people. He said,

*In the face of such widely varying situations it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyse with objectivity the situation which is proper to their country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgement and directives for actions from the social teaching of the Church.<sup>91</sup>*

Pope Paul VI gives the impression – in the foregoing statement – that he is breaking away from the conservative tradition of making use of the solutions of the past to solve problems of today. The two scholars, namely, Donald Dorr, and Marvin Mich utilise the terminology of another scholar, namely, Fr. Land, who called this conservative process 'handing down solutions to specific questions,'<sup>92</sup> or 'one size fits all' as expressed by Mich alone.<sup>93</sup> This Roman process is conservative in the sense that it does not want any changes to be introduced in its program, in order to address new social problems arising out of new situations in different continents. As a result, solutions acquired in the past, were handed down from the previous papal documents to solve problems of today. Mich and Dorr utilise the terminology of another theologian, namely, Marie-Dominique Chenu who described Paul VI's initiative – to break away from this conservative tradition – as follows:

*Formerly there was a deductive method by which a universally valid 'social doctrine' was applied to changing circumstances. But now there is an inductive method in which the different situations are themselves the primary location from which theology springs through a discernment of the signs of the times.<sup>94</sup>*

Chenu's interpretation of Paul, above – shared respectively by Dorr and Mich – is absolutely correct. However, its implementation cannot be carried out without Paul's betrayal of his predecessors. And Paul does not want to deviate from the tradition of handing down outdated solutions to problems of the day, as his predecessors faithfully did. As a result, Paul condemns in the strongest possible terms, those Christians of his times who see value in joining socialists or Marxists – in Latin America – in the combat against injustice. He says,

*Too often Christians attracted by socialism tend to idealize it in terms which apart from anything else are very general: a will for justice, solidarity and equality. They refuse to recognise the limitations of the historical socialist movements, which remain conditioned by the ideologies from which they originated.*<sup>95</sup>

Thus, the pope finds it extremely difficult to accept the ideological part of Marxism, because it contains atheistic elements which may destroy the faith of a Christian. Indeed he argues,

*Therefore the Christian who wishes to live his faith in a political activity which he thinks of as service cannot without contradicting himself adhere to ideological systems which radically or substantially go against his faith and his concept of man. He cannot adhere to Marxist ideology, to its atheistic materialism, to its dialectic of violence and to the way it absorbs individual freedom in the collectivity, at the same time denying all transcendence to man and his personal and collective history.*<sup>96</sup>

It is high time the pope believed in the political and ideological maturity of Christians who live within and without the walls of the Vatican City. Many of those who live outside the perimeters of Rome have proven beyond doubt that it is highly possible to work hand in glove with Marxists without losing their faith or identity as Catholic Christians. A very good example is that of the French worker-priests who successfully joined Marxist trade unions with the specific aim of having a meaningful dialogue with Marxists. This noble decision of the French clergy – authorised by Cardinal Suhard of Paris, and the majority of his fellow prelates<sup>97</sup> – was ruthlessly silenced by Pope Pius XII in 1953.<sup>98</sup> By the time Pius crushed this successful project, the worker-priests had already been liberated from the prejudice and the morbid fear of Marxists with which every catholic was imbued during that period. Let me repeat what one of them – Joseph Robert – happily said,

*It was true that these missionary clergy had begun slowly and increasingly to form bonds of friendship and cooperation with*



*grassroots communists militants. This did not mean, however, that they had become converts to the tenets of Marxism as their foes suspected. Yet it did ensure that the worker priests would never again view communists from the narrow and negative perception in which their traditional faith had trained them.*<sup>99</sup>

What I learn from Robert is that it took a conscious and courageous decision – blessed by courageous leadership, like that of Suhard and his fellow bishops – to liberate part of the French priesthood from the narrow and prejudiced education on Marxism offered at that time by Rome through the national seminaries.

Examples of Christians who work hand in hand with Marxists to combat injustice are abounding in Latin America,<sup>100</sup> but let me focus on two of them very briefly. The first Christian of my focus is Gustavo Gutierrez who, after his critical studies on Marxism – with the help of a Latin American Marxist expert, named Carlos Jose Mariategui – highly recommended the Marxist tools of analysis for the liberation of the poor in Latin America, without losing his faith as Catholic Christian. Writing on this subject, he claims,

*Nevertheless, the search for indigenous socialist paths continues. In this field the outstanding figure of Jose Carlos Mariategui, despite the inconclusiveness of his work, continues to chart the course. “We certainly do not wish,” he wrote in an often-quoted text, “for socialism in [Latin] America to be an exact copy of the others’ socialism. It must be a heroic creation. We must bring Indo-American socialism alive with our own reality, in our own language. This is a mission worthy of a new generation.” According to Mariategui, Marxism is not “a body of principles which can be rigidly applied in the same way in all historical climates and all social latitudes... Marxism, in each country, for each people, works and acts on the situation, on the milieu, without overlooking any of its modalities.”*<sup>101</sup>

I understand Gutierrez – helped by Mariategui – to be saying that Marxism is capable of being adopted and adapted to various socio-cultural and economic situations without losing its identity. The same applies to Christianity. Both are liberation oriented. As a result, Marxism can serve as an efficient tool – most especially through its mode of analysis – to bring about a Christian liberation to the poor of Latin America. This is my understanding of Gutierrez. And this understanding does not mean that Gutierrez does not know the negative aspects of Marxism:<sup>102</sup> He knows them, but our main focus these days – even *Octogesima Adveniens* maintains – is not what divides us, but rather what unites us as fellow human beings.<sup>103</sup> What this means is that these days we do not focus on the past

sins of Christianity, neither do we focus on those of the Marxists; no, the most central part of our attention is that which is common to both parties, namely, the liberation of humanity from all forms of injustice.

Fernando Cardenal, a Nicaraguan priest who joined the Marxist Sandinista Party in order to topple the oppressive Somoza regime is another example – among the many in Latin America – of a Catholic Christian who highly recognized the value of working hand in hand with the Marxists in order to liberate the poor of Latin America.<sup>104</sup> In the 1970s, while the Sandinista revolutionary forces were still in combat against Somoza, Cardenal spoke,

*In Nicaragua there has been a positive integration of Christians in the popular revolution. This is precious for the Church. It's the first revolution in the history of the human race that Christians have been this positively involved in. If any of us left the revolution I would consider it a loss for the Church, because the church would lose its presence in the revolution. If the church doesn't want the revolution to be atheistic, and atheizing, then the first thing it should do is to be present in it as God's witness. If the church pulls Christians out of the revolution, it will be cooperating in the 'atheization' of the revolution: the revolution will become atheistic and it will make atheists of others.<sup>105</sup>*

It is true that in the foregoing statement, there is no explicit word about Marxism. It is the word *revolution* which indicates implicitly that Cardenal's discussion is on Marxism.<sup>106</sup> The word does not belong exclusively in Marxism, but it is to a large extent part and parcel of Marxist terminology, and it has a lot to do with the radical transformation of the socio-political and economic situation by the workers (proletariat) through bloodshed, if the peaceful negotiation route fails.<sup>107</sup> The Catholic Church speaks the same language in its teaching on the Just War ethic.<sup>108</sup> Common areas such as these can indeed serve as points of departure for a fruitful dialogue between the two camps

Another word which indicates that Cardenal is implicitly discussing Marxism is atheism. Cardenal is aware that Marxists of Nicaragua – like their founder, Karl Marx<sup>109</sup> – are atheists; but that does not deter him from working hand in glove with them. On the contrary he finds the collaboration of Christianity with Marxists to be a golden opportunity for the former to reveal to the latter that it is the God of Justice – whose existence the Marxists deny – who encourages the Christian Church of Nicaragua to be deeply involved in the process of the total liberation of the poor of Latin America.

Thus, the fear which Rome has about the loss of faith which might take place from the part of Christians, if they dialogue with Marxists, should dwindle abruptly, because that dialogue – as discussed above – has already started and is going very well, most especially in Latin America. A very detailed discussion will be given on the same subject towards the end of this chapter. Suffice it at the moment to say that Rome must firmly believe that Christians outside the walls of Rome are ideologically mature, and therefore they can handle the dialogue with Marxists much better than what Rome has been conservatively doing for centuries.

Pope Paul VI also raises the important matter of the relationship which should take place between the economic power and the political power. Unfortunately, his analysis of the relationship in question is not flawless. He begins his critique by describing the economic conditions of his period. He says,

*Economic activity is necessary and if it is at the service of man, it can be a source of brotherhood and a sign of Providence. It is the occasion of the concrete exchanges between men, of rights recognised, of services rendered, and of dignity affirmed in work. Though it is often a field of confrontation and domination, it can give rise to dialogue and foster cooperation. Yet it runs the risk of taking too much strength and freedom. This is why the need is felt to pass from economics to politics.*<sup>110</sup>

I understand Paul to be saying that economic activity needs to be complemented or supported by political activity in order to achieve the goals he enumerates above. For the achievement of the economic goals listed above, Paul discusses certain functions – belonging in political power – which should be recognized and respected. He claims

*Political power, which is the natural and necessary link for ensuring the cohesion of the social body, must have as its aim the achievement of the common good. While respecting the liberties of individuals, families, and subsidiary groups, it acts in such a way as to create, effectively and for the well-being of all, the conditions required for attaining man's true and complete good, including his spiritual end. It acts within the limits of its competence, which can vary from people to people, and from country to country. It always intervenes with care for justice and with devotion to the common good, for which it holds final responsibility... Politics are a demanding manner – but not the only one – of living the Christian commitment to the service of others.*<sup>111</sup>

Political power is supposed to bring about justice in the area of economics, because – in spite of its vital importance – economic activity is fraught with domination and voracious greed, if I were to understand Paul VI. But, is it true that political activity can successfully control, in a just manner the economic activities of all entrepreneurs in such a way that nobody gets cheated in the process? Paul should learn, not only from Karl Marx,<sup>112</sup> but from his predecessors – more especially Pius XI who was very articulate in this area<sup>113</sup> – that within the capitalist mode of production, it is a few wealthy entrepreneurs who control the economic power of the country. Those few greedy businessmen and businesswomen even control the political power of the country in such a way that it will promote their economic avarice satisfactorily at the expense of the exploited masses of labourers, Pius XI claims.<sup>114</sup> Thus, political power certainly needs lots of qualitative improvements before it can be recommended as an efficient tool of economic delivery.

Closely related to the proposed harmony between politics and economics – discussed above – is Paul VI's idea of the trade union movement. He places trade unions as part of the solution to the problem of urbanisation which, to a large extent has alienated women, youth, emigrants, the handicapped by depriving them of the fundamental rights.<sup>115</sup> The restoration of the rights of these categories of people, the establishment of the economic balance between the rural and urban communities; and the recognition and the respect of the trade union movement – among other things – serve as important components of the solution of some of the problems encountered in the process of urbanisation, claims Paul. And expounding on the right of trade unions, Paul writes,

*The important role of trade union organizations must be admitted: their object is the representation of various categories of workers, their lawful collaboration in the economic advance of society, and the development of the sense of their responsibility for the realisation of the common good. Their activity is not, however, not without its difficulties. Here and there the temptation may arise of profiting from a position of force to impose, particularly by strikes – the right to which as a final means of defense certainly remains recognised – conditions which are too burdensome for the overall economy and for the social body, or to desire to obtain in this way demands of a directly political nature.*<sup>116</sup>

For Paul VI the lines of demarcation between actions of a political nature and those of an economic nature are clear. As a result, trade unions may not – as he holds above – interfere in matters political. It is the political parties which should

look after matters of a political nature in society. Economic matters, on the other hand should be handled by the entrepreneurs and the workers.

Unfortunately the pope does not provide criteria which determine the economically burdensome matters; neither does he provide criteria which determine the actions that deserve to be uprooted by means of a strike. In my opinion, it is the workers themselves who should provide those criteria, because they are the ones who feel the pain of economic exploitation inflicted on them – on a daily basis – by the avaricious greed of the entrepreneurs. As a result, they have to use the only effective weapon – the strikes – to defend themselves. Like his predecessors, Paul VI is reluctant to support the effort of the workers to defend themselves through strikes,<sup>117</sup> neither does he propose any other effective weapon the workers can utilise in order to liberate themselves from the excruciating agony of exploitation. The State within this context, is supposed to intervene so as to establish justice and peace between the two factions, namely the workers and the entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, the entrepreneurs – through their massive economic power – have a way of controlling the State in such a way as to force the latter to tolerate their exploitative ways.<sup>118</sup> This situation of corruption leaves the unions with no choice but to strike so as to liberate themselves from the oppression of their rights orchestrated jointly by the State and the entrepreneurs. Secondly, there are times when the trade union is forced to intervene in political matters, so as to reinforce the struggle for justice. Dorr concurs. He holds that,

*In practice this means that in such situations of blatant injustice it is far more difficult for trade unions to avoid playing a political role. Take a situation where the economic difficulties of workers are due mainly to the unjust structures of the society: if unions are really to promote justice for workers then they must be involved in wider political issues. To claim that even in such circumstances unions ought not to concern themselves with matters that are 'directly political' would be to condemn them to impotence and futility. Furthermore, to say that the strike-weapon should not be used even in such situations for 'directly political' purposes would be to deprive the poor of the most effective means they have of changing society in not-too-violent way.<sup>119</sup>*

Thus, trade unions are the only effective and non-violent weapon the poor can utilize under circumstances of an extreme deprivation of their economic and socio-political rights. As a result, the pope must find a way of encouraging the workers to make use of it to the utmost of their ability. Failure to do so, leaves his condemnation of liberalist capitalism null and void.<sup>120</sup>

### *His Opinion on Human Sciences*

Credit must certainly be given to Pope Paul for what I consider to be the most profitable dialogue he conducts with the Human Sciences in this Apostolic Letter. He begins his input by exposing some of the shortcomings of Human Sciences as follows,

*The “human sciences” are today enjoying a significant flowering. On the one hand they are subjecting to critical and radical examination the hitherto accepted knowledge about man, on the grounds that this knowledge seems either too empirical or too theoretical. On the other hand, methodological necessity and ideological presuppositions too often lead the human sciences to isolate, in the various situations, certain aspects of man, and yet to give these an explanation which claims to be complete or at least an interpretation which is meant to be all-embracing from a purely quantitative or phenomenological point of view. This scientific reduction betrays a dangerous presumption. To give a privileged position in this way to such an aspect of analysis is to mutilate man and, under the pretext of a scientific procedure, to make it impossible to understand man in his totality.<sup>121</sup>*

I understand the pope to be saying that some of the analyses offered by Human Sciences are fraught with deceit. As a result, the deceptive human sciences – influenced by certain ideologies – make it extremely difficult for the average person to achieve a holistic concept of humanity. However, the pope insists that the Church should not reject all the human sciences because of a few which are misleading in character. On the contrary, dialogue should steadfastly continue, for the sake of a qualitative knowledge of a human being. Indeed the supreme pontiff continues,

*Prompted by the same scientific demands and the desire to know man better, but at the same time enlightened by their faith, Christians who devote themselves to the human sciences will begin a dialogue between the Church and this new field of discovery, a dialogue which promises to be fruitful. Of course, each individual scientific discipline will be able, in its own particular sphere, to grasp only a partial – yet true – aspect of man; the complete picture and the full meaning will escape it.<sup>122</sup>*

As part of his words of encouragement to the Christians – to dialogue with human sciences – the pope tries to remind them that human sciences are human

products and, like every other human project they will have limitations. And the limitation of human sciences is the fact that they can give a true picture of an aspect of humanity, but they certainly can't provide us with the knowledge of the totality of humanity. Putting the same idea in another way the pope holds that,

*These sciences are a condition at once indispensable and inadequate for a better discovery of what is human. They are a language which becomes more and more complex, yet one that deepens rather than solve the mystery of the human heart; nor does it provide the complete desire that springs from his innermost being.*<sup>123</sup>

### *Implications of the Opinion*

I'm deeply impressed by the words of wisdom expressed by the pope in the foregoing quoted statement. But is the pope aware of the implications of this statement within the context of a contemporary pluralist society?<sup>124</sup> The function of the human sciences is not to provide us with an exhaustive or holistic concept of humanity, claims the pontiff, rather their function is to help us deepen the mystery of humanity. Does the same function apply to religions, ideologies, and various Christian denominations? Certainly, none of them is able to exhaust the mystery of humanity. None of them can claim to address all the longings of humanity in a satisfactory manner. Each one of them has got its insights, its revelations, and its ethical codes by means of which it deepens – as opposed to solving – the mystery of humanity. It would therefore be necessary that they come together – recognising their human limitations and their common ground – with the specific aim of liberating humanity from all forms of injustice. Each one's contribution will be complemented by the others. Yes, each one has got its limitations, but at the same time each has got its own riches. The brilliant combination of riches – emerging from these ideologies, religions and different denominations – can be utilised to solve contemporary problems which need urgent attention.

### *International Economic Justice*

One of the major problems of humanity during the pontificate of Paul was the question of injustice. In trying to encourage the nations of the world to consider justice as a solution, Paul is aware of the insurmountable problems of the socio-political and economic domination which the greater nations may have on the smaller ones most particularly in the area of the international marketplace, he writes,

*But, as we have often stated, the most important duty in the realm of justice is to allow each country to promote its own development, within the framework of a co-operation free from any spirit of domination, whether economic or political. The complexity of the problems is certainly great, in the present intertwining of mutual dependences. Thus it is necessary to have the courage to undertake the revision of the relationships between the nations, whether it is a question of the international division of production, the structure of exchanges, the control of profits, the monetary system – without forgetting the actions of human solidarity – to question the models of growth of the rich nations and change people’s outlooks, so that they may realize the prior call of international duty, and to renew international organizations so that they may increase in effectiveness.<sup>125</sup>*

In the foregoing paragraph the pope does not encourage the Third World to resist the domination exercised by the West on the international market. The domination in question is in the form of the exchange of products and services on the international market; it is also about whose monetary system must dominate the international market? And, who should control prices and profits at international level? The pope leaves these questions at the mercy of the rich nations of the West. The Third World Christians – including many Catholics<sup>126</sup> – saw things differently: they saw value in joining hands with Marxists in order to liberate themselves from the international domination discussed by Paul above. This worried the pope profoundly as he could not see how Marxists – because their atheism<sup>127</sup> – could work together with Christians. It is only the spirit of pluralism – featuring as one of the most important component of this document (Octogesima Adveniens) – which can help him to understand that Christians and Marxists can work together if they jointly concentrate on issues (of radical justice) which joins them, and not on issues (of religion) which divide them quite considerably.<sup>128</sup>

#### *The Urgency of the Implementation of Octogesima Adveniens*

The theme of Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Letter is **A Call to Action**. Through the Medellin Conference of Bishops, the pope is calling all Christians to work hard to bring about a situation of justice within the context of their countries, for Christianity to be credible. He writes,

*Laymen should take up as their own proper task the renewal of the temporary order. If the role of the hierarchy is to teach and to interpret authentically the norms of morality to be followed in this matter, it belongs to the laity, without waiting passively for orders*



*and directives, to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which they live. Let each one examine himself, to see what he has done up to now, and what he ought to do. It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these will lack weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility.<sup>129</sup>*

I understand the pope to be saying that ‘Actions speak louder than words.’ In this context, the pope means that it is so easy for people to preach beautiful sermons on justice, to lecture on justice, to speak eloquently on justice, to make resolutions on justice and never to implement them. Accompanied by no actions, promises and resolutions remain horribly empty, and most frustrating to the poor who await radical justice for their survival. Some sense of personal guilt in the complicated saga of injustice should motivate every Christian to speed up the advent of justice; but most motivating for everybody – Christian and non-Christian alike – should be the new understanding of the words, *liberation* and *service*. He explains,

*Today men yearn to free themselves from need and dependence. But this liberation starts with the interior freedom that men must find again with regard to their goods and their powers; they will never reach it except through a transcendent love for man, and, in consequence, through a genuine readiness to serve. Otherwise, as one can see only too clearly, the most revolutionary ideologies lead only to a change of masters; once installed in power in their turn, these new masters surround themselves with privileges, limit freedoms and allow other forms of injustice.<sup>130</sup>*

Thus, according to Paul, true liberation should have as its primary aim, the radical service of the needy neighbour, in the form of having their fundamental rights recognised and respected. True and meaningful liberation is totally opposed to occasions of self-enrichment of the leadership at the expense of the poor, as often happens within the context a very powerful ideology, argues Paul. It is this lack of service delivery which leaves many powerful ideologies null and void. Therefore, any leader who is seriously interested in the meaningful liberation of the poor, should thoroughly critique their ideologies to see if they still have as their number one priority, the active implementation of the radical respect of the fundamental rights of the populace.

#### *Concluding remarks*

I found some of the insights of Paul very impressive and educational. This applies most particularly to his ideas on the media, the human sciences, and his call to action. I have already written a few remarks on the human sciences and on his call to action. His gratitude on some of the positive functions of the media is expressed as follows:

*Among the major changes of our time, we do not wish to emphasize the growing role being assumed by the media of social communication and their influence on the transformation of mentalities, of knowledge, of organization, and of society itself. Certainly they have many positive aspects. Thanks to them news from the entire world reaches us practically in an instant, establishing contacts which supersede distances and creating elements of unity among all men. A greater spread of education and culture is becoming possible.<sup>131</sup>*

The pope certainly acknowledges the many achievements of the media, most especially the speedy communication of the global news, and the education which we acquire from some of its programmes. However, the pontiff seems to suspect the existence of some hidden agenda from the part of those who control the media. He claims,

*Nevertheless, by their very action the media of social communication are reaching the point of representing as it were a new power. One cannot but ask about those who hold this power, the aims they pursue, and the means they use, and finally, about the effect of their activity on the exercise of individual liberty, both in the political and ideological spheres and in social, economic, and cultural life. The men who hold this power have a grave moral responsibility with respect to the truth of the information that they spread, the needs and the reactions they generate, and the values which they put forward.<sup>132</sup>*

The pope is worried about those financially powerful people in society, who use their economic power to control the media. They determine which products and services are going to be advertised by the media. Furthermore they determine which socio-political and economic ideologies should dominate the media; they use their financial power to determine which educational or cultural programmes should be the most dominant in the media. Karl Marx used to say that the dominant ideas in the media are those of the ruling party.<sup>133</sup> This situation has certainly not changed because of the powerfully rich entrepreneurs – who invest money into the State media – so as to have every aspect of life publicised or televised from their point of view.<sup>134</sup> The pope is implicitly saying that there is no

news free from ideological influence. The news or education which we acquire from our media is polluted with all kinds of hidden agenda influences. To combat this pollution, the pope calls upon the financially powerful entrepreneurs to remember the responsibility of allowing all people – be they rich or not – to air their views on the media.

Finally, *Octogesima Advenience*, would have been most powerful, had the author deviated from the traditional condemnation of Marxism. Unfortunately, the pope preferred to be faithful to tradition instead of studying critically the times which had changed: During his pontificate, Christians – in France, in Rome and in Latin America – had already started a journey together with Marxists in search for social justice. They forgot about their differences so as to focus only on justice. The papal approval of this journey was crucial at this moment, not a traditional condemnation. The pope needed to trust wholeheartedly, in the intellectual and the spiritual maturity of the Third World Theologians and ordinary members of the Church, in order to allow them to dialogue with Marxists. Will Pope John Paul II be different? The critical study of his encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*, might help us find out. We focus on that investigation in the next subsection.

#### *Laborem Exercens 1981*

The encyclical *Laborem Exercens* was written in 1981 by Pope John Paul II, as a means to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, whose author is Pope Leo XIII.<sup>135</sup> Like his predecessors, Pope John Paul II had the gift of analysing superbly, the socio-political and economic situation within which he would write his encyclical. He describes the historical background of *Laborem Exercens* as follows:

*We are celebrating the ninetieth anniversary of the encyclical **Rerum Novarum** on the eve of the new developments in technological, economic, and political conditions which, according to many experts, will influence the world of work and production no less than the industrial revolution of the last century. There are many factors of a general nature: the widespread introduction of automation into many spheres of production, the increase in the cost of energy and raw materials, the growing realisation that the heritage of nature is limited and that it being intolerably polluted, and the emergence on the political scene of people who, after centuries of subjection, are demanding their place among the nations and in international decision-making.*<sup>136</sup>

The developments enumerated by the pope above are, however, not without side-effects, chief among whom is unemployment for multitudes of skilled and unskilled workers throughout the world. The pontiff further observes,

*These new conditions and demands will require a reordering and adjustment of the structures of the modern economy and of the distribution of work. Unfortunately, for millions of skilled workers these changes may mean unemployment, at least for a time, or the need for restraining.*<sup>137</sup>

Having thus cautioned the workers about the unfortunate results of unemployment which would accompany the new development in various industries of the modern economy, the pope concludes his introduction by assuring the same workers that, even if the Church is not competent in the field of the scientific analysis of any economic dispensation, it is nevertheless imperative that the Church – from her prophetic point of view – denounces any economic system or ideology which militates against the total respect of the fundamental rights of the workers. Indeed the pope writes,

*It is not for the Church to analyse scientifically the consequences that these changes may have on human society. But the Church considers it her task always to call to attention the dignity and the rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to help to guide the above-mentioned changes so as to ensure authentic progress by man and society.*<sup>138</sup>

In other words the pope says that the Church does welcome technological and scientific developments in the socio-economic and political areas of human life. However, care should be taken that no workers' rights are grossly violated during the process of the introduction of those industrial or scientific changes. On the contrary, the new industrial developments in question should benefit both worker and entrepreneur alike.

### *The Honesty of the Pope*

Pope John Paul honestly indicates right at the beginning of his encyclical that he does not intend deviating from the tradition of the Church – on the workers' rights – as initiated and developed by his predecessors. Indeed John Paul holds,

*The present reflections on work are not intended to follow a different line, but rather to be in organic connection with the whole tradition of this teaching and activity. At the same time, however, I am making them, according to the indication in the Gospel, in order to bring out from the heritage of the Gospel "what is new and what is old." Certainly work is part of "what is old" – as old as man and his life on earth. Nevertheless, the general situation of man in*

*the modern world, studied and analyzed in its various aspects of geography, culture, civilization, calls for the discovery of the new meanings of human work.*<sup>139</sup>

In other words, while John Paul values the traditional teachings of his predecessors on human work, at the same time he wishes to add his own reflections – which do not contradict those of his predecessors – in response to the contemporary demands on the same issue of human work. Donald Dorr concurs. He thinks that it is not so much the content but the approach of John Paul which makes his encyclical different from those of his predecessors. He puts his case as follows:

***Laborem Exercens** represents a new style of social teaching. What John Paul offers here is a painstaking and profound reflection on the nature of human work and organisation of economic life. This is more than 'teaching' in the usual ecclesiastical sense of propounding truths. It is far more like teaching in the ordinary sense of the word, namely, explaining and helping people to understand why things are the way they are – and how they might be changed.*<sup>140</sup>

My understanding of the approach of John Paul is thus, slightly different from that of Donald Dorr, in the sense that while Donald Dorr thinks that John Paul's style is different from that of his predecessors, on the one hand, on the other hand I think John Paul makes use of the two approaches – as he claims above – because he does not see any disharmony between them. As a result, he is just adding the new one to the old. I interpret him to be holding that two styles, namely, the traditional and his own, can co-exist without any difficulties. Can the two approaches really coexist? The next two subsections will tell.

#### *Pope John Paul II's Novelty*

Like all other encyclical which deals with human work, *Laborem Exercens* focuses on themes like Capital and Labour, Marxism, Trade Unions, Employment, Ownership of Property, Workers' Rights, Women's Rights as Mothers and as Industrial Workers. His moral position on these themes is exactly the same as that of his predecessors. For example, like his predecessors, John Paul highly recommends the existence of workers' unions or workers' organizations for the protection of all the workers' rights. And like his predecessors John Paul tells the workers' unions not to abuse their strength by usurping the function of political parties which, alone, should wage political struggles against political injustice. Trade unions should limit their struggles to factory floor issues. They should never

be tempted to meddle in problems of a political nature. Thus, John Paul deals with the problem of workers' unions – and every other problem based on themes mentioned above – in exactly the same way as did Paul VI, John XXIII, Pius XI and Leo XIII in their respective encyclicals.<sup>141</sup>

The novelty or the strength of John Paul's encyclical lies in studying the themes mentioned above from the subjective point of view. The subject we're dealing with here within the context of work is a person. John Paul strongly maintains that,

*As a person, man is therefore the subject of work. As a person he works, he performs various actions belonging to the work process; independently of their objective content, these actions must all serve to realise his humanity, to fulfil the calling to be a person that is his by reason of his very humanity.*<sup>142</sup>

Thus, according to John Paul, to say that a person is the subject of work means that a person is supposed to find joy, self-realization and self-fulfilment in and through the work he/she is doing. John Paul contrasts this subjective understanding of work with its objective understanding which – among other things – considers work as an object outside the life of a person. As a result it is possible to talk about various kinds of work, says John Paul. But, at the subjective level, the person has already chosen and internalised the kind of work which he/she wants to do for his/her self-fulfilment and his/her self-realisation as a human being. At subjective level, the work which used to be out there – as an object – is now part and parcel of his/her life. Paolo Freire concurs: He writes,

*People are fulfilled only to the extent that they create their world (which is a human world), and create it with their transforming labour. The fulfilment of humankind as human beings lies, then, in the fulfilment of the world. If for a person to be in the world of work is to be totally dependent, insecure, and permanently threatened – if their work does not belong to them – the person cannot be fulfilled. Work that is not free ceases to be a fulfilling pursuit and becomes a means of dehumanization.*<sup>143</sup>

I understand Freire to be indirectly saying that even if a person is working for a massive multinational company – which, of course, he/she does not own – he/she should still see his/her unique contribution in this huge establishment, failing which a person is going to feel like cog in big machine. The opposite of this feeling is the value the person feels he/she has brought to the product, because of his/her personal involvement – as the subject of work – in the creation of the same product.

Primitively, people began to have this feeling of self-realisation and self-fulfilment – as individual subjects of work – through acts of tiling the earth and taming animals, says John Paul. Later on the same self-realisation and self-fulfilment of people – as fully fledged human beings – manifested itself through the technological and scientific discoveries in various industries, down through the centuries.<sup>144</sup>

Underlying all the themes dealing with human work – in the encyclical, *Laborem Exercens* – such as Capital and Work, Marxism, Agricultural Workers, Employment, Wages, is this concept of a person as a subject of work. So important is this contribution of the pope – of a person as the subject of work – that I think it can be instrumental in solving most of the problems that are discussed under the abovementioned themes, and under many unmentioned ones. For example, the theme of Marxism – which has been a subject of concern for his predecessors – is also approached from the point of view of subject of work, namely, a person. John Paul first describes the Marxist attempt to defend the worker from exploitation as follows:

*The Marxist program, based on the philosophy of Marx and Engels, sees in the class struggle the only way to eliminate class injustice in society and to eliminate classes in themselves. Putting this program into practice presupposes the collectivization of the means of production so that through the transfer of these means from private hands to the collectivity, human labour will be preserved from human exploitation.*<sup>145</sup>

John Paul further gives a critical assessment of the aspect of the Marxist vision which he has just given above by maintaining that,

*For it must be noted that merely taking these means of production out of the hands of their private owners is not enough to ensure their satisfactory socialization. They cease to be property of a certain social group, namely, the private owners, and become the property of organized society, coming under the administration and direct control of another group of people, namely those who, though not owning them, from the fact of exercising power in society manage them on the level of the whole national or the local economy.*<sup>146</sup>

The pope insists that this new Marxist economic dispensation – whereby the means of production are now being administered and controlled by a group representing the populace – can still be abused by the State appointed managers who wish to satisfy their individual economic greed. John Paul further argues the

new Marxist economic system will still not meet the economic demands of society up until provision is made for the individual persons to feel and see their unique contribution in the whole new economic vision. He claims,

*This group [of State appointed managers] in authority may carry out its task satisfactorily from the point of view of the priority of labour; but it may also carry it out badly by claiming for itself a monopoly of the administration and disposal of the means of production and not refraining even from offending basic human rights. Thus, merely converting into state property in the collectivist systems is by no means equivalent to “socializing” that property. We can speak of socializing only when the subject character of society is ensured, that is to say, when on the basis of his work each person is fully entitled to consider himself a part-owner of the great workbench at which he is working with everyone else.<sup>147</sup>*

Allowed to be the pillar and foundation of any discussion on the rights of the workers, this novelty of John Paul – on the person as the subject of human work – can solve lots of workers’ problems, both at national and at international levels. This brings us to his discussion on the Direct and the Indirect Employers.

#### *The Direct and Indirect Employers*

The relationship between the worker and the direct employer, on the one hand, and the worker and the indirect employer, on the other, is another unique contribution of Pope John Paul II in the area of the Social Teaching of the Church. Let us quickly note that the novelty within the context of this discussion is the terminology – namely, the words, *Direct Employer and Indirect Employer* – utilized to explain the old concepts of work discussed at both national and international levels. John Paul himself makes us aware that the encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* focussed on issues of labour at national level while *Mater et Magistra*, *Populorum Progressio*, and *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council deals with the same question of labour rights at world level.<sup>148</sup> The Apostolic Letter, *Octogesimo Adveniens*, also deals with labour issues at international level, but John Paul omits it without giving any reason. The relationship between the employer and the worker is a day to day national issue. The employer looks after the daily needs of the worker. The two sign a contract which stipulates the terms of the specific work to be done, claims John Paul.<sup>149</sup> On the other hand, the indirect employer refers to factors, such as the national taxation imposed by the State, the Pacts on the exchange of goods signed by two or more nations on the world market. These factors have a negative impact on the relationship between the direct employer and the worker, as the former has to



exploit the latter, so as to attend to the taxes imposed on the factory from both the national and international levels. Indeed John Paul writes,

*The concept of indirect employer is applicable to every society and in the first place to the State. For it is the State that must conduct a just labour policy. However, it is common knowledge that in the present system of economic relations in the world there are numerous links between individual states, links that find expression, for instance, in the import and export process, that is to say, in the mutual exchange of economic goods, whether raw materials, semimanufactured goods, or finished industrial products. These links also create mutual dependence, and as a result it would be difficult to speak in the case of any state, even the most powerful, of complete self-sufficiency or autarky.<sup>150</sup>*

The interdependence of the nations – from the economic point of view – is, however, not without problems, claims the pope. He explains himself by saying,

*For instance the highly industrialized countries, and even the businesses that direct on a large scale the means of industrial production (the companies that are referred to as multinational or transnational), fix the highest possible prices for their products, while trying at the same time to fix the lowest possible prices for raw materials or semimanufactured goods. This is one of the causes of the ever increasing disproportion between national incomes. The gap between the richest countries and the poorest ones is not diminishing or being stabilized, but is increasing more and more to the detriment, obviously, of poor countries. Evidently this must have an effect on local labour policy and on the worker's situation in the economically disadvantaged societies. Finding himself in a system thus conditioned, the direct employer fixes working conditions below the objective requirements of the workers, especially if he himself wishes to obtain the highest possible profits from the business he runs, (or from the businesses which he runs, in the case of a situation of "socialized" ownership of the means of production).<sup>151</sup>*

Having thus explained the problems emerging from the economic interdependence of countries – which constitute the Indirect Employer – and the bad impact this network has on the workers who belong to a poor nation, John Paul suggests a solution. He holds that,

*It is easy to see that this framework of forms of dependence linked with the concept of the indirect employer is enormously extensive and complicated. It is determined in a sense by all the elements that are decisive for economic life within a given society and state, but by much wider links and forms of dependence. The attainment of the worker's cannot however be doomed to be merely a result of economic systems which on larger or smaller scale are guided chiefly by the criterion of maximum profit. On the contrary it is respect for objective rights of the worker – every kind of worker: manual or intellectual, industrial or agricultural, etc. – that must constitute the adequate and fundamental criterion for shaping the whole economy, both on the level of the individual society and state and within the whole of the world economic policy and of the international relationships that derive from it.<sup>152</sup>*

The Direct or the Indirect accumulation of profits at the expense of workers, or the workers' exploitation by national or international forces of production – be they capitalist or collectivist – is what I understand John Paul to be implicitly complaining about. It is at this point of his bitter complaint that John Paul should have strongly recommended strikes by trade unions – at national and international levels – as efficient means to combat the various forms of injustice imposed on the workers. Alas! He did not, as this recommendation would go against the tradition of his predecessors who discouraged strikes – at all costs – as they would severely inflict harm to the peace and economy of the country.

### *Concluding remarks*

The spirituality of subordination with which Pope John Paul II concludes his encyclical leaves a lot to be desired. He consoles the workers in their dehumanizing conditions of exploitation by recommending the spirituality of submissiveness. The workers are to carry their crosses in quiet perseverance – like Jesus – whenever they encounter any form of problem at the workplace, for in doing so they share the privilege of redeeming the world with Jesus. Indeed the supreme pontiff holds that,

*Sweat and toil, which work necessarily involves in the present condition of the human race, present the Christian and everyone who is called with the possibility of sharing lovingly in the work which Christ came to do. This work of salvation came about through suffering and death on a cross. By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ crucified for us, man in a way collaborates with the son of God for the redemption of humanity. He shows himself a*

*true disciple of Christ by carrying his cross in his turn every day in the activity that he is called to perform.*<sup>153</sup>

Does John Paul mean that the redemption which Christ brought about for humanity was incomplete? If Christ's redemption was complete, why does it have to be complemented by the contemporary worker's plight? It is not my intention to be involved in soteriological arguments at the moment: my deepest concern is that if workers are subjected to conditions of cruel exploitation – by their employers – then those workers are in desperate need of the means to liberate themselves. And the spiritual means which will constantly keep them fighting for that liberation is the spirituality of protest. The foundation of that spirituality of protest is found in the sermon of Christ who said, "If your brother sins against you, do approach him, and tell him about your complaint ... And if he does not listen to you and the Church, then treat him like a heathen (gentile)" (Mt. 18: 15-20). I am aware of the ecclesiological context or boundaries of the text: It deals with the question of the correction of faults which is supposed to be practised by members of a Jewish Christian Church. If a member at fault disregards the correction of the others, he/she should be treated as a heathen. The heathens were foreigners who were ill-behaved, unkempt, and immoral. Describing them better is John McKenzie who says that,

*They were denied credit for any sound moral instincts and no vice was beneath them. In this way they stood in contrast to the people of the revealed Law.*<sup>154</sup>

My proposal is to extend the ecclesiological context of the text exegetically discussed by McKenzie above. The purpose of the extension is to show that it is not Christians who support the worker in their campaigns to attain their fundamental rights. The Church, according to my proposal will consist of all people of God – be they believers or not – who strongly believe in the recognition and the respect of the fundamental rights of all people. In our days this culture of respecting the basic rights of all people happens to be the most popular common ground joining both believers and atheists. Bernard Haring concurs by maintaining that,

*In humanity today there is a growth of moral sensitivity, as in the rejection of slavery, colonialism and racial discrimination and the affirmation of freedom, freedom of conscience, and of religious liberty. This growth is classically expressed by the declaration of the United Nations on basic rights.*<sup>155</sup>

Haring wants to make it explicitly clear that atheists are also among the people who embrace the culture of the respect of the human rights of other people. He writes,

*There are atheists who most emphatically, in word and deed, acknowledge that they cannot truthfully affirm their own dignity and freedom unless they are committed to promote the dignity of all. On this ground their moral conduct can be far superior to both the principles and conduct of many South African Calvinists who justify with religious ideologies, racial segregation, refusal of the most basic civil rights, and all kinds of injustice as, for instance, the payment to black workers of salaries far lower than those paid to whites.*<sup>156</sup>

Within this new and larger context of the Church, the heathens will be those people who still show through one form of oppression or the other that they are quite opposed to the respect of the fundamental rights of other people. Haring makes an example of the transgression of human rights by the Calvinists of South Africa in the apartheid period. The question is, has the situation changed? Who benefits from the new dispensation? These questions will surely be answered in the next chapter. Suffice it at the moment to say that representatives of those who respect the rights of other people, and the representatives of those opposed to the respect of the same rights are present on either side of the divide; meaning that they can be found among Christians, and they can be found also among atheists.<sup>157</sup>

The spirituality which I am proposing will make sense to the majority of workers – be they Christian or atheists – who believe in the culture of the practice of the respect for human rights, because the very content of this spirituality will be dealing explicitly with the respect of those rights from the theological point of view. I'm aware that *Laborem Exercens* deals very broadly with the question of work as a human right to be respected,<sup>158</sup> but John Paul's discussion falls short of the drastic steps which the workers should take if those rights are violated.

The spirituality proposed will openly encourage the workers to treat cruel entrepreneurs like heathens. This concretely means that drastic measures – most particularly, in the form of strikes – will be adopted against any avaricious management, whenever the latter fails dismally to heed the voice of peaceful negotiation. What the workers will be doing here is actually what the Catholic Church has been teaching for centuries, namely that drastic steps are absolutely valid – as a means of self-defence – in the event of the total failure of peaceful settlements.<sup>159</sup>

Thus, just as the New Testament period's church, discussed by McKenzie above, took drastic steps – in the form of an excommunication – against a believer who refused to be corrected, in the same way very severe measures should be taken against an entrepreneur who does not want to listen to the word of a peaceful negotiation. Treating him/her like a heathen is only symbolic of the drastic steps which should be taken – by the workers – against him/her whenever amicable discussions fail.

Having thus finished the first part of this chapter which consists of an analytical presentation of *Rerum Novarum* and all other encyclicals which were written with the specific purpose of commemorating its various anniversaries, my next point – in the second part of this chapter – is to focus on a comparative study of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church and the Theology of Liberation.

## **Part 2: A Comparative Study of the Theology of Liberation and the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church**

The comparative study in question consists of similarities and differences between the Social Teachings of the Church, on the one hand, and the Theology of Liberation, on the other.

### **SIMILARITIES**

#### **Revelation**

The two camps, namely, the Social Teaching of the Church, and the Theology of Liberation claim to draw their inspiration from the divine revelation as articulated by the scriptures. In other words the scriptures – in the form of both the Old and the New Testaments – are the most essential parts of both the Social Teachings of the Church and the Theology of Liberation. Pope John Paul II's encyclical with the title, *Laborem Exercens* translated as *On Human Work*, is one of the numerous examples through which one can demonstrate how an encyclical draws inspiration from the scriptures. In this encyclical, John Paul II bases his theology of human work on the book of Genesis. The pope interprets the words, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it," (Genesis 1: 28), as follows,

*Even though these words do not refer directly and explicitly to work, beyond any doubt they indirectly indicate it as an activity for man to carry it out in the world. Indeed they show its deepest essence. Man is the image of God partly through the mandate received from his creator to subdue, to dominate, the earth. In carrying out this mandate, man, every human being, reflects the very action of the creator of the universe.<sup>160</sup>*

The pope continues to explain that human beings have over the centuries – through the help of technology – succeeded to dominate the earth for their benefit. And this has taken place through the advancement of agriculture, the domesticating of animals and extraction of natural resources primarily for the noble purposes of obtaining food, clothing and many other necessities.<sup>161</sup>

The Theology of Liberation also has, as its primary source, the word of God. This point is jointly clarified by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff who provide us with a list of biblical books – in both the Old and New Testaments – in order to prove that the bible does serve as one of the major sources of the Theology of Liberation.<sup>162</sup> Of course this does not necessarily mean that the scriptures serve as a point of departure for this theology: the point of departure for the Theology of Liberation is the reflection on the situation of oppression and poverty suffered by many citizens of the continent of Latin America, and the commitment of the theologians – and other sympathizers – to liberate the poor from the wrath of this injustice.<sup>163</sup> Within this context the scriptures are consulted for enlightenment about which way God wants us to solve the poor's problems.<sup>164</sup> Gutierrez also cites lots of scriptures to prove that God has been intervening – in history – in order to attend to the cries of the poor.<sup>165</sup> Thus, through the scriptures, God shows himself as a God who is interested in the liberation of the poor. Gutierrez continues – below, under the subsection, *Church History*, with this idea of a God who intervenes in history in order to save the poor.

### **Church History**

Both camps, namely, the Theology of Liberation and the Social Teaching of the Church, claim to draw part of their wisdom from the history or the tradition of the church. Thomas Massaro is a scholar – in the United States of America – in the area of the Social Teaching of the Church. He holds that,

*Most of the encyclicals contain numerous references to earlier theologians and other church figures who wrote and preached about justice and related social issues. Several of the most influential figures in this regard lived during the earlier centuries of the Church. Collectively they are referred to as the "Fathers of the Church." From the Latin root for "father" we derive the name "Patristic," which describes the era in which they lived. Among major Patristic figures are Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, and Jerome.<sup>166</sup>*

It is the wisdom and the writings of these Fathers of the Church, continues Massaro, which has enriched the Social Teachings of the Church in matters of justice. Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff – on behalf of the Theology of Liberation

– apologise for neglecting the relevant wealth contained in the theology of the Fathers of the Church. Indeed they jointly write,

*With respect to incorporating overlooked but fruitful strains that can enrich and challenge us today, liberation theology maintains a stance of retrieval. Thus, from the patristic theology of the second century to the ninth century, we can reincorporate its deeply unitary sense of the history of salvation, its feeling for the social demands of the gospel, its perception of the prophetic dimension of the mission of the church, its sensitivity to the poor.*<sup>167</sup>

The apology of the Theology of Liberation – as expressed by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff – is very significant. The Theology of Liberation will surely grow tremendously if it is determined to correct its faults, and if it is determined to learn and see value in the opinion of others, as it does above. No theology is perfect, as every theology is created by human beings who have shortcomings, failures, and various limitations, like all others. This universal fact of shortcomings and limitations of an academic discipline – acknowledged by the Theology of Liberation above – applies also to western church history about which Gutierrez complains as follows,

*The history of Christianity has also been written by white, western, bourgeois hands. We must recover the memory of the “scourged Christs of the Indies,” of the victims of this world. That memory lives on in the elements of our culture, in popular religion, in resistance to ecclesiastical high-handedness. It is the memory that Christ is present in all who are hungry, thirsty or humiliated. (Mt. 25)*<sup>168</sup>

What Gutierrez probably means here is that the white, western, and bourgeois authors of our Church history were very much selective in their academic treatment of the sources, for fear of embarrassing their audiences about the cruel conquest and victimization of the Indies by their western forefathers. As a result, very little is in the records of history regarding this ruthless colonialism. Gutierrez further challenges the Theology of Liberation to trace and retrieve this precious history as elements of this history are still available in Third World cultures and indigenous religions. In the process of doing so, continues Gutierrez, the Theology of Liberation will discover that God did have moments of intervention on behalf of the poor, through prophetic figures, and through theologies born of the struggles of the poor, but that intervention was not recorded by the white man.<sup>169</sup> Is the white man determined to apologise? Is he determined to acknowledge the shortcomings reflected in his poor version of church history by retrieving the sensitive and embarrassing material omitted during the process of recording? My opinion is that the more the two camps, namely, the Theology of Liberation and

Western scholarship, are open to one another's constructive criticism, the more they are going to enrich one another academically, for the good of the whole Church. I look forward to the day when they can show – by jointly writing a book on Theology of the Fathers of the Church – that they are truly reconciled.

### **Social Analysis as Priority**

Common between the two camps, namely, the Theology of Liberation and the Social Teachings of the Church is also the prioritization of the analysis of their respective social contexts. In other words, the representatives of each camp consider it very essential to analyse properly the socio-political and economic situation within which they want to do their respective projects. Each pope has tried very hard to analyse the socio-political and economic situation of the period of his pontificate prior to applying the Social Teachings of the Church to that same context. An example can be taken from any of the encyclicals to clarify my point. I have singled out Pope John XXIII, not because of any special qualities he had – compared to the other popes – no, but just as an example of how the different popes took profound interest in the proper examination of the socio-political and economic situation of the period of their respective pontificates. John writes,

*Among citizens of the same political community there is a marked degree of economic and social inequality. The main reason for this is the fact that they are living and working in different areas, some of which are more economically developed than others. Where this situation obtains, justice and equity demand that public authority tries to eliminate or reduce such imbalances. It should ensure that the less developed areas receive such essential services as their circumstances require, in order to bring the standard of living into line with the national average. Furthermore, a suitable economic policy must be devised which will take into account the supply of labour, the drift of population, wages, taxes, credit, and the investing of money, especially in expanding industries. In short it should be a policy designed to promote useful employment, enterprising initiative, and the exploitation of national resources.<sup>170</sup>*

John divides his analysis, above, into four components: First, he points out the social and economic discrepancies which exist in society: Secondly, he gives what he thinks are the reasons for those economic imbalances and social discrepancies. Thirdly, he suggests that a suitable policy be designed – obviously by the State – for the proper elimination of the social and economic imbalances in question. Fourthly I note that his analysis had national boundaries, meaning that it was an analysis based on the economic and social life of an average Western country. At international level his analysis is as follows:



*Probably the most difficult problem today concerns the relationship between political communities that are economically advanced and those in the process of development. Whereas the standard of living is high in the former, the latter are subject to extreme poverty. The solidarity which binds all men together as members of the same family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary rights. The nations of the world are more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist.<sup>171</sup>*

As he did in the case of the analysis at national level, John follows almost the same procedure – at international level – of beginning with the identification of the problem. This time the real insurmountable problem is the vast economic imbalance between the western countries and the Third World countries, which leaves the former very wealthy at the expense of the latter. So huge and overwhelming is this socio-economic discrepancy that the pope sees no other solution except to leave it at the mercy of the charity or solidarity of the West to solve it. Some western nations have responded positively to John's call for solidarity,<sup>172</sup> but the question is, is solidarity or charity the way to solve a socio-economic problem? Surely, nobody is forced to be charitable, neither is an economically advanced nation obliged to be in solidarity with an economically weaker nation. I think the solution lies in the respect of the socio-economic and political rights of a nation. Let us discuss that into some detail in the next chapter of my thesis. Suffice it at the moment to say that the question of the fundamental economic rights of a nation is too precious to be left at the mercy of charity, for no one is bound to be charitable, neither has any nation the obligation to be in economic solidarity with the other(s).

The Theologians of Liberation have a similar approach: They prioritize the analysis of the historical circumstances surrounding the lives of the poor prior to their theological contribution.<sup>173</sup> In other words, it belongs to the essence of the Theology of Liberation to understand and to examine the oppressive socio-political and economic conditions under which the poor live before the actual (theological) contribution towards their liberation starts. As a result, Leonardo Boff and his brother, Clodovis Boff, jointly concur with Gustavo Gutierrez that theology comes second to the primary and the most important task of understanding and analysing the unjust social conditions under which the poor live.<sup>174</sup> It is actually these unfortunate circumstances which motivate theologians – and other sympathizers – to commit themselves to make a substantial contribution towards the liberation of the poor. And intensifying this critical

examination of the oppressive conditions – from the statistical point of view – which debase the lives of the poor is Robert McAfee Brown who says,

*In Brazil the top 2% of landowners control 60% of arable land, while 70% of rural house holders are landless or nearly so. In Colombia the top 4% of land owners control 60% of the arable land, while 66% of the rural households are landless or nearly so. In El Salvador the top 1% of landowners controls 41% of the arable land, while 60% of the rural householders are landless or nearly so. In Guatemala the top 1% of landowners controls 34% of the arable land, while 85% of rural householders are landless or nearly so.<sup>175</sup>*

No one can wish away the crises of economic poverty which the Theology of Liberation is trying to solve within the context of Latin America; not even the rivals of this theology such as Cardinal Trujillo who – with the help of Pope John Paul at the Puebla Latin American Bishops Conference of 1979<sup>176</sup> – wanted to annihilate the whole program of the Theology of Liberation.<sup>177</sup> This conference – indirectly influenced by liberation theology – felt obliged to focus and to acknowledge the fact of economic injustice which agonised the lives of the poor in Latin America. They described the fact of this poverty as follows:

*This situation of pervasive extreme poverty takes place on very concrete faces in real life. In these faces we ought to recognize the suffering creatures of Christ the Lord, who questions and challenges us. They include:*

- *The faces of **young children** struck down by poverty before they are born, the chances of self-development blocked by irresponsible mental and physical deficiencies; and of the **vagrant children** in our cities who are so often exploited, products of poverty and the moral disorganization of the family;*
- *The faces of **young people**, who are disoriented because they cannot find their places in society, and who are frustrated, particularly in marginal rural and urban areas, by the lack of opportunity to obtain training and work;*
- *The faces of indigenous peoples, and frequently of the Afro-Americans as well; living marginalized lives in inhuman situations, they can be considered the poorest of the poor;*

- *The faces of the peasants; as a social group, they are in exile everywhere on our continent, deprived of land, caught in a situation of internal and external dependence, and subjected to a system of commercialization that exploits them;*
- *The faces of labourers, who are frequently ill-paid and who have difficulty in organizing themselves and defending their rights;*
- *The faces of the underemployed and the unemployed, who are dismissed because of the harsh exigencies of economic crises, and often because of development- models that subject workers and their families to cold economic calculations;*
- *The faces of marginalized and overcrowded urban dwellers, whose lack of materiel goods is matched by the ostentatious display of wealth by other segments of society;*
- *The faces of old people who are growing more numerous every day, and frequently marginalized in a progress-oriented society that totally disregards people not engaged in production.*<sup>178</sup>

This impressive analysis of the situation of the poor people – with their different faces – is an implicit recognition of the value and the validity of the Theology of Liberation from the part of its foes. I am not yet dealing with the differences between the Theology of Liberation and its rivals – be they local or external – but the fact that these enemies can, like the theologians of liberation, take deep interest in the lives of the poor, it means that they do recognise the merits of liberation theology. And, it is because of this essential common ground of taking deep interest in the understanding and the analysis of the lives of the poor that I can foresee room for the termination of unnecessary antagonism between Liberation Theology and all its rivals, be they at national or at international level. Pluralism – which always allows each party to differ from the other(s) without any factionalism – is highly recommended for a healthy theological relationship of the various groups in the Church. For a deeper understanding of the idea of pluralism, see chapter Two of my thesis

### *Structural Injustice*

Closely related to the question of the importance of the analysis of the socio-political and economic context shared by the two camps is the essential point of Justice, which – to a very large extent – entails the recognition and the respect of the workers' rights,<sup>179</sup> and all other people in society whose rights are constantly violated. Making a list of these other groups of people whose rights are also violated is Pope Paul VI who reports that,

*Among victims of situations of injustice – unfortunately no new phenomenon – must be placed those who are discriminated against, in law or in fact, on account of their race, origin, colour, culture, sex or religion.*<sup>180</sup>

The pope makes special mention of the handicapped, the old, and the emigrant workers, among victims of the unjust structures, and he challenges various States to address this problem very seriously.<sup>181</sup>

The Theology of Liberation also considers poverty to be the result of an oppressive system or structure, and that structure is a creation by people in society who benefit from it. The Boff brothers explain poverty from the point of view of what they term **dialectical explanation**: they jointly write,

*The dialectical explanation: poverty as oppression. This sees poverty as the product of the economic organization of society itself, which exploits some – the workers – and excludes others from the production process – the unemployed the underemployed, and those marginalised in one way or the other. In his encyclical, **Laborem Exercens**, (chap. 3), Pope John Paul II defines the root of this situation as the supremacy of capital – enjoyed by the few – over labour – practised by the many.*<sup>182</sup>

The position of the Boffs only explains – in Marxist terms<sup>183</sup> – the structural injustice shared by the Social Teachings of the Church on the one hand, and the Theology of Liberation on the other. The society to which the Boffs refer, above, are the few entrepreneurs – implicitly mentioned by John Paul in the same quoted statement – who, within the capitalist structure, enjoy lots of profits at the expense of the labourers. In other words, the labourers are underpaid and overworked so that the entrepreneurs may acquire lots of capital and profits. For the same purpose the other labourers are retrenched. Thus, the structural injustice fought by both the Social Teachings of the Church and the Theology of Liberation is that which is ruthlessly orchestrated by capitalism. In other words, capitalism is an evil structure utterly denounced by both camps, namely, the Social Teachings of the Church,<sup>184</sup> and the Theology of Liberation,<sup>185</sup> and it will

need to be transformed or eradicated very rapidly, so as to be replaced by socio-economic and political structures which reflect the question of Justice in its totality.<sup>186</sup> How each camp fights capitalism, will be part of the discussion under the subtitle, *differences*, conducted below.

The other similarities between the two camps are closely linked to their differences. As a result it is extremely difficult to isolate the former from the latter. The discussion under the subtitle, ***Differences***, below, will clarify my point.

### *Differences*

#### **Authorship of Literature**

At first glance, one may be tempted to think that an encyclical is a one man's show, meaning that it was composed and written by the pope alone. A closer look at some of the encyclicals reveals that at times the pope may not be the only compiler, even though he signed alone. Indeed Roger Charles claims that,

*The decision to write an encyclical is the personal one of each pope, and its contents are for him to decide in the light of the tradition and of the current situation as he understands it. If he is expert in the matters in question there is less need for consultation on questions of substance; where he is not such an expert, he will be very reliant on his advisers, though, as in civil government, he takes responsibility for what is issued in his name after such consultation.*<sup>187</sup>

Thus, it is only when the pope does not have expertise in the subject he is dealing with that his encyclical becomes a community product which is going to be signed only by him in spite of its communitarian characteristics.

The story is slightly different in the case of the Theology of Liberation which is totally communal in character in the sense that it is created and produced by a community of Christians which is divided into three groups: The first group consists of theologians, the second consists of bishops, priests and all pastoral workers, and the last group consists of laypeople in basic Christian communities. It is Leonardo Boff and his brother, Clodovis Boff who jointly hold that,

*Liberation Theology could be compared to a tree. Those who see only professional theologians at work in it see only the branches of the tree. They fail to see the trunk which is the thinking of the priests and other pastoral ministers, let alone the roots beneath the soil that hold the whole tree – trunk and branches – in place. The roots are the living and thinking – though submerged and*

*anonymous – going on in tens of thousands of base communities living out their faith and thinking it in a liberating key.<sup>188</sup>*

The tree discussed by the Boff brothers is symbolic of the spirit of interdependence which should prevail in the three groups as they work together. Just as no part of the tree is insignificant for the growth of the whole tree, in the same way all three groups are essential for the growth of the Theology of Liberation. My humble opinion is that those who mistakenly think that professional theologians are the only spokespersons of the Theology of Liberation are not completely mistaken as the book which was written by the three groups is signed only by the professional theologian. And if there are queries about the book, those queries are directed to the author of the book, not to the three groups discussed by the Boff brothers above. I suggest they find a way of convincing their readers that the volume written is not the product of an individual: it is the product of the community. Failure to do so will expose it to the speculation that it is purely an individual's product, despite the emphasis – by the Boffs – that it is communitarian.

### **Methodological Differences**

The methods used by the two camps are definitely different. The Social Teachings of the Church uses the deductive method, while the Theology of Liberation employs the inductive method. (For a deeper study of these two methods, see chapter 2 of my thesis). The starting point of the deductive method would be the exegetical consultation of the scriptures on the subject under study. Let us take the example of Justice. From the scriptures, the method proceeds to what Church has been teaching – through the magisterium and certain theologians – on the subject of Justice, from the second century to date. The role of the grassroots level of the Church is to listen unquestionably to the teaching that is being imparted, as the presumption is that the grassroots level is ignorant of the subject under study. The inadequacy of this method was revealed in 1968, when the grassroots level of the church – in almost every European country – fearlessly protested against the papal teaching called *Humanae Vitae* which prohibited artificial contraception. The people's protest shook and shocked the Vatican who all along never consulted the grassroots level prior to the promulgation of its legislation. And defending the papacy is the theologian, Bernard Haring who thinks that,

*No one should be shocked about the difficulties in the Church on this point. It is a search for truth imposed by profound and shaking changes in human history and in the face of an unprecedented impact on the whole of humankind. If there is dissent on some limited details of the doctrine, one*

*must not overlook the broad consent on most basic values and principles.*<sup>189</sup>

Thus, Haring consoles those in the Church who are shocked by the disobedience to the papacy by saying the act of dissent expressed is very trivial – as it focuses on a few minor details – compared to the overwhelming acceptance of the document by the majority of Church members. If this act of dissent is trivial why is it shocking? Why did it shake the Vatican? The point here is not how many millions of the church members agreed with the papacy, the point is that the disagreement of the ‘minority’ was very loud and clear. And that explains why this ‘trivial’ act of disobedience shocked the hierarchy and the ‘majority.’ High time – in the process of the search for the truth mentioned by Haring above – the leadership of the church changed to the inductive method, which will profitably help it to seriously consult the grassroots level of the church prior to the promulgation of any legislation of the Church.

The Theology of Liberation uses the inductive method. It is a method which is done in consultation with the people at grassroots level. The concrete life experiences of these people serve as a point of departure of the inductive method. The Theology of liberation makes use of the inductive method to analyse the concrete conditions of poverty under which the people live. After studying these abject conditions of poverty – with the poor – theologians, pastoral workers and several other sympathizers of the poor, make a serious commitment to liberate the masses of the poor from all forms of injustice. The point of the serious commitment to the process of the liberation of the poor is further elaborated by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff who jointly maintain that,

*Before we can do theology we have to “do” liberation. The first step for liberation theology is pre-theological. It is a matter of living the commitment of faith: in our case, to participate on some way in the process of liberation, to be committed to the oppressed.*<sup>190</sup>

The commitment to the process of the liberation of the poor arises as a direct result of the analysis of the situation of poverty carried out by means of the inductive method. In other words, the inductive method has the implicit function of intensifying the commitment to the cause of the poor because of its very nature of regularly bringing together the poor, the theologians, and all other sympathizers for a common concern. Nobody within this method is considered to be a tabula rasa: for everybody, poor and rich alike, contributes in accordance with their talents and their experiences on such serious questions as oppression and justice.

### **The Implementation of Justice**

I have already mentioned above that the two camps, namely, the Theology of Liberation and the Social teaching of the Church believe strongly, that the eradication of evil structures will bring about justice and peace at national and international levels of society. There is, however, a very big difference in the manner both parties wish this transformation of these evil structures to be brought about. Let me first discuss the *modus operandi* of the Theology of Liberation. While it condemns capitalism in the strongest terms possible – as an evil structure which prevents the implementation of Justice – the Theology of Liberation does not denounce the Marxist version of socialism. On the contrary, it values socialism very profoundly.<sup>191</sup> Explaining socialism in simple terms is an exponent of the Theology of Liberation – Juan Luis Segundo – who says,

*By “socialism” I do not mean a complete long term project—hence one that is endowed with a particular ideology or philosophy. I simply mean a political regime in which the ownership of the means of production is taken away from individuals and taken to higher institutions whose main aim is the common good.*<sup>192</sup>

The transfer of the means of production from private hands into State control serves as a way through which the socialist system prevents individual entrepreneurs from exploiting the workers. This socialist system is also meant to be of economic benefit to the populace, as a whole, as it aims at the eradication of class distinctions in society. As a result, Gustavo Gutierrez – and many other theologians and Latin American Christian leaders – want adopt and adapt it to the Latin American socio-political and economic situation.<sup>193</sup> The exponents of the Theology of Liberation also find the Marxist tools of analysis very helpful in acquiring a deeper knowledge about the oppressive conditions under which the poor live. Indeed Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff write,

*To put it in more specific terms, liberation theology freely borrows from Marxism certain “methodological pointers” that have proved fruitful in understanding the world of the oppressed, such as:*

- *the importance of economic factors;*
- *attention to the class struggle;*
- *the mystifying power of ideologies, including the religious ones.*<sup>194</sup>

Thus, Liberation Theology finds the Marxist vision to be helpful for two reasons, namely, it aims at bringing about justice through the eradication of capitalism, it



also helps – by means of its tools of analysis – the proponents of the Theology of Liberation to have a deeper understanding of the socio-political and economic injustice under which the poor live, and the way through which they can help the poor to liberate themselves from these evil structures that seriously impede the advent of Justice. Highlighting the importance of this future Justice from the scriptural point of view is Jon Sobrino – another Latin American proponent of Liberation Theology – who claims that,

*When he [Jesus] approaches the poor, the oppressed, the sinner, he does not simply offer consolation; he offers justice. In other words, he does not propose to leave people as they are and simply console them in their plight; he proposes to re-create their present situation and thus do justice to them. This is the quintessence of Jesus understanding of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>195</sup>*

Offering people what they need most, offering the poor the most relevant solution, namely, justice, is what I understand Jesus – according to the interpretation of Sobrino – to be doing. Surely, he could offer eloquent words of wisdom or consolation, but within the context of the socio-political and economic injustice inflicted on the poor, these words would be devoid of any relevant help. For Jesus, social justice – which is an essential component of the Kingdom of Heaven – is the only solution through which the plight of the poor can be properly addressed.

Sobrino holds that the social justice offered by Jesus to the poor was meant to do away with the discriminatory class distinctions to which the poor have been subjected for a long time. He writes,

*But when Jesus addresses himself to oppressed persons the fact is that he is not simply addressing wretched individuals who stand in need of justice. Historically speaking these individuals are in a state of misery because they have been ostracised by society and are deprived of status. In approaching these individuals Jesus is not only doing them justice, but also clearing away the barriers of class that have made them not only individuals in misery but persons ostracised by society. The justice of Jesus then points to some new form of social co-existence where class differences have been abolished, at least in principle.<sup>196</sup>*

The idea of justice proposed by Jesus, continues Sobrino – if it is well implemented – will certainly restore the poor back the social status which they enjoyed before society reduced them into the miserable creatures which they are

at the present moment. Unfortunately, the justice offered by Jesus to the poor is not without problems of conflict, for its implementation will be opposed by the social class which benefits economically from the exploitation of the poor. Indeed Sobrino maintains that,

*The realization of justice must necessarily entail a fight against injustice, for injustice will simply not disappear because one has a positive intention to establish justice as Jesus did. Not only the avoidance of evil, but also the fight against evil is part of morality by virtue of its historical nature. Bringing about the kingdom is up bound with fighting against injustice.*<sup>197</sup>

Sobrino's biblical foundation of the idea of Justice would have been much stronger had he backed it up with relevant scriptural texts. Devoid of these appropriate biblical texts, his synoptical theology of justice can easily be thwarted by the enemies of the Theology of Liberation. But, on the whole, I found his synoptical idea of Justice to be contributing quite substantially towards the deepening of the concept of justice as articulated by the Theology of Liberation.

The Marxist tools of analysis – as discussed above – also made a remarkable contribution towards the broadening of the idea of Justice as espoused by the Theology of Liberation. In short, underlying the Theology of Liberation is the synoptical concept of Justice coupled with the Marxist version of socialism. Both provide us with a broader and analytical understanding of the kind of justice which – if properly implemented – can bring along economic prosperity to the populace, more especially the poor. That type of justice is both biblical and Marxist in orientation.

Proponents of the Social Teachings of the Church – namely, the popes – differ quite considerably from those of the Theology of Liberation in the area of the implementation of the question of justice. Unlike their counterparts – who condemn only capitalism – the popes denounce both capitalism and socialism.<sup>198</sup> Unfortunately, unlike the exponents of the Theology of Liberation – who recommend socialism for the attainment of justice – the popes recommend no new socio-economic and political system which will lead the populace to the achievement of social justice. Concurring with me is Donald Dorr who – with specific reference to Pope John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* as an example – says,

*Pope John Paul's reservations about the capitalist order are at least as serious as those of Pope Pius XI in Quadragesimo Anno. The overall impression given by his approach is that he does not see it as part of his task to favour one of the existing systems over another, but rather to show where the different systems have gone wrong in relation to the values that ought to be promoted by an adequate socio-political order.(e.g. LE 8, 13-9).*

*He does not do this in a moralising way but by reference to the structural inadequacies of each system, understood in the light of their historical development. The presupposition of Laborem Exercens is that there may be a variety of different ways in which a structurally just society could take shape. The social teaching of the church, according to this view, provides some basic principles by which any given society could be evaluated, but it does not opt for any socio-economic order as the correct one (see LE 11, 13, 14).<sup>199</sup>*

Pope John Paul II's contribution to the social teaching of the Church – as understood by Dorr, above – is certainly incomplete and inadequate. After critically studying the existing social structures, he finds them to be faulty, but he offers no alternatives in spite of his rich knowledge about the multiple ways through which a just structure should take shape. Offering none of these multiple ways of improving the quality of structural justice leaves the populace – especially the poor – with no choice but to continue suffering the pains of various forms of injustice.

The neutral stance of Pope John Paul II is nothing new in the history of the social teaching of the church: His predecessors did the same: In their serious search for justice they condemned both socialism and capitalism in the strongest terms possible, but unlike their counterparts, namely, the exponents of the Theology of Liberation, they never proposed a just socio-political and economic structure which would liberate the masses of the Latin American poor – and the poor of the whole world – from the unjust social structures which kept on enslaving them. This neutral stance of the church has been condemned and dismissed by scholars who hold that non-involvement only perpetuates the injustice of the ruling party.<sup>200</sup> Within the context of our discussion this means that capitalist countries of the West will continue unabated to exploit the Third World if the Social Teaching of the Church maintains its quasi-neutral stance on capitalism, which at times is notoriously called the church's "third way" because of its inability or unwillingness to suggest an alternative to the capitalism it claims to condemn. Juan Luis Segundo is also not happy with this "third way" of the Social Teaching of the Church. He strongly maintains that,

*All this time, however, the "social doctrine of the Church" had also been evolving, and its "third way" cast had become more clear-cut. For a time its moral pronouncements against specific evils of capitalism combined with its total condemnation of socialism had concealed its third way character. Since it never attacked the basic principle of the capitalist system – i.e. the private ownership of the means of production and the law of supply and*

*demand as the basic rule of economic game – the Church’s social doctrine has been viewed as capitalistic itself.*<sup>201</sup>

Thus, Segundo argues that the Church cannot be complacent with its third way because, while this third way totally condemns socialism, it does tend to be in harmony with capitalism’s principle of the private ownership of the national means of production which is economically detrimental to the life of the poor. Neither is the third way opposed to the capitalist principle of supply and demand which forces the worker to sell his/her labour on the market.

According to my interpretation of Segundo, the discussion which follows below is completely private, as it is basically a debate, not on theology, but on the ideological affiliation of the two camps, namely the Social Teachings of the Church, on the one hand, and the Theology of Liberation, on the other. The Vatican is implicitly forcing Latin America to belong to the third way ideology. The Latin American Church refuses. The refusal marks the beginning of a very tense ideological period between the two, for – under normal circumstances – no group may impose its ideological vision on the other: This kind of imposition is called oppression for it is a gross violation of socio-political and economic rights.<sup>202</sup> The Church may never violate such rights. On the contrary, as their champion,<sup>203</sup> it should sincerely respect them. Let us study the tense ideological period of the Church in Latin America. (The definition of ideology which I follow is in chapter 2 of my dissertation).

### ***The Tense Ideological Period***

The tension is between the two camps under study, namely, the Social Teachings of the Church, on the one hand, and the Theology of Liberation, on the other. Several accusations – which are the cause of this tension – are levelled against the latter by the former. The main accusation – of Rome or the Vatican (is symbolic of the agents of the Social Teachings of the Church, namely the pope and his councillors, because that is where they stay) – is the accommodation of the Marxist tools of analysis by the Theology of Liberation, into its program. Almost every pope – in the history of the Social Teachings of the Church – condemned the Marxist version of socialism in the strongest possible terms. Indeed Gregory Baum sums up those papal condemnations as follows:

*We recall at this point that papal teaching has, over the years, condemned socialism many times. Even during the great depression of the 1930s Pope Pius XI not only condemned the communism of Russia, but also the democratic socialism of the European social-democratic parties. It was only in 1971 that the Church’s official teaching changed its attitude towards Socialism. In **Octogesima Adveniens** Pope Paul VI recognised that many*

*Catholics had become socialists, that they had done this as a result of their Christian faith, and by doing it they saw themselves as joining the movement of history.*<sup>204</sup>

That many Catholics during the period of the pontificate of Pope Paul VI became socialists – as Baum observed – is absolutely true:<sup>205</sup> but, to say that – during the same period – the official teaching of the Church changed its attitude towards Socialism, as Baum holds, is not true: If this were true, Pope Paul VI, would not have attacked the Marxist ideology as he does in the same document (see paragraphs 26, 31-34) which is cited by Baum above. The pope is analytically attacking Marxism – by means of the paragraphs cited above – with the specific intention of discouraging Catholics from becoming Marxists. Secondly, if Rome changed its attitude toward the Marxist version of socialism – in the 1970s, as Baum claims – we would have none of the elements of the unfortunate tension I'm just about to discuss below between the Theology of Liberation and the Social Teachings of the Church. The former values most of the Marxist interpretation of socialism – but not its atheism – as it appears to militate against the exploitative tendencies of capitalism. Arthur F. McGovern puts the case of the Theology of Liberation as follows:

*One reason liberation theologians opt for socialism stands out above all others: their abhorrence of the prevailing capitalist system. If, as many liberation theologians stress, capitalism cannot be reformed to meet the basic needs of the poor, or to give them true participation in society, then socialism would seem to be the only real option.*<sup>206</sup>

Since papal tradition repeatedly denounced the Marxist version of Socialism, over the centuries, it was inevitable that the same tradition would totally dismiss the accommodation of socialism from the programs of the Theology of Liberation. And for the total annihilation of the Theology of Liberation – on account of its use of the Marxist tools of analysis – the Vatican made use of the services of a Latin American staunch rival of the Theology of Liberation, namely, Bishop Alfonso Lopez Trujillo of Bogota in Colombia.<sup>207</sup> In 1972, Trujillo became secretary general of CELAM (a Spanish abbreviation of the phrase **The General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America**).<sup>208</sup> Trujillo utilized his new position to eradicate the existence of the Theology of Liberation. Indeed Francois Houtart claims,

*The year 1972 when Cardinal Lopez Trujillo was elected secretary general of CELAM, can be seen as a watershed: it was then that the activities of CELAM started in this field. The first step was, in 1973, a meeting in Bogota about the theme of liberation. The idea that obtained at the time was that there are two concepts of liberation, one that is spiritual and of Latin American origin, and the other stressing politics, and coming from Europe.*

*The review **Terra Nueva** founded in Bogota, specialized in refuting the theology of liberation. The first strategy was at the intellectual and strictly theological levels.*<sup>209</sup>

In his fierce campaign against the spread of Liberation Theology, Trujillo was helped by Roger Vekemans – a Belgian Jesuit who was the editor and sponsor of the review, *Terra Nueva* – to look for international support.<sup>210</sup> Trujillo did manage to obtain some international intellectual help in the form of German theologians,<sup>211</sup> and the international community of European theologians which got together in Rome to assess the Theology of Liberation.<sup>212</sup> Trujillo further succeeded in his vicious attack of the grassroots level of the Theology of Liberation, by ruthlessly sabotaging the financial help offered by the international organizations – including the World Council of Churches – who were deeply interested in the spiritual and the material growth of the Basic Christian Communities served by the theologians of liberation.<sup>213</sup>

In 1979 Pope John Paul II attended the tenth anniversary of the Medellin Episcopal Conference which was held at Puebla in Mexico. On this occasion Trujillo highly expected the pope to bring the process of the annihilation of the Theology of Liberation – which he (Trujillo) had started – to completion. Thanks to the presence of the members of the Brazilian Bishops Conference – the majority of whom are staunch supporters of the Theology of Liberation – that completion never materialized.<sup>214</sup> However, the presence of the Brazilian cardinals and bishops did not prevent the pope from condemning the Theology of Liberation implicitly. For example he did say that,

*Christ is the Son of the living God, the Messiah; but misreading can obscure his divinity, project him as a political activist involved in a class struggle, a revolutionary. The conception of Christ as a political figure, a subversive from Nazareth, does not tally with the Church's catechesis.*<sup>215</sup>

Furthermore, on the same occasion the pope claimed,

*Alien ideologies are not needed to justify Christian liberation. At the heart of the Christian message is the inspiration for justice and peace. Standing aside from opposing systems, the Church teaches that it is not through violence and the power plays of politics that one comes to a better future, but through the truth about human beings.*<sup>216</sup>

It is not my intention to comment on issues raised by Pope John Paul in the two statements above, mine was to show that at Puebla he did have time to condemn Liberation Theology for using the Marxist tools of analysis. Ideas such as the class struggle, revolutionary – which John Paul uses in the first statement above – do

belong to the Marxist vocabulary.<sup>217</sup> And the alien ideology he refers to, in the second statement, is certainly the Marxist ideology which the exponents utilize in order to deepen their understanding of the circumstances of poverty under which the poor live.<sup>218</sup> My point is that even if he did not secure the public support of the pope in his campaign to annihilate the Theology of Liberation – because of the presence of the influential Brazilian bishops – Trujillo still felt motivated to continue with this campaign, due to the implicit condemnation which John Paul directed to the Theologians of Liberation. And resulting from this campaign was the gradual support which he acquired from CELAM. And following on the steps of John Paul in the area of the condemnation of Marxism, Trujillo – at the eighteenth assembly of CELAM – spoke against the theologians of liberation as follows,

*The problem is not that they speak loudly when talking about the poor, but they make an ideological use of a Marxist instrument of analysis... and this is in contradiction with the magisterium of the Church.*<sup>219</sup>

In this fight against the Theology of Liberation, Trujillo wanted to be joined by CELAM, so that the world may believe that CELAM – which is higher in authority than the Brazilian Bishops Conference – is totally opposed to the Theology of Liberation. In the same speech he further challenged CELAM by saying,

*Could CELAM remain silent when ... one knows to what extent the church structure is endangered by the indiscriminate use – I would even say the ascientific use – of an analysis that is 150 years old and is presented by some persons today as a novelty.*<sup>220</sup>

Eventually, CELAM joined Trujillo in the fight against the agents of the Theology of Liberation whom he claimed were using the Marxist instruments ascientifically, and that was dangerous for the church. Houtart is studying the investigations of CELAM concerning the alleged indiscriminate use of the Marxists instruments by the Theology of Liberation. He maintains that,

*According to CELAM the analysis necessarily originates in and leads to the philosophy. Then CELAM stresses the atheistic character – thus contradictory to faith – of that same philosophy. In such a logic, social analysis can only bring about the destruction of religion. It is therefore necessary to oppose it forcefully.*<sup>221</sup>

What is clearly evident at this stage is that Marxism is the major problem of Trujillo and CELAM, and this problem is not new in the history of the Social Teachings of the Church. Almost every pope has been fiercely fighting the Marxist ideology, mainly because of its atheistic inclinations. The investigation into the attack of the Theology of Liberation by Trujillo and CELAM clearly indicates that

Marxism – even now in the twentieth century – is still one of the major problems of the Vatican. As a result, the Vatican cannot understand how the Theology of Liberation accommodates an atheistic philosophy into its programs. According to the Vatican the accommodation of one part of Marxism, necessarily leads to the accommodation of the whole philosophy of Marxism, which is very dangerous to the faith, in the sense that a Christian may lose his/her faith if he/she is – at the same time – a Marxist. Trujillo and CELAM jointly concur with the Vatican. Their argumentation is almost identical with that of the Vatican.

Apparently, Trujillo – helped by CELAM – put up a successful fight against the Theology of Liberation. As a result, in 1984, on the occasion of being raised to the position of cardinal, Trujillo was congratulated by Pope John Paul II as follows:

*His contribution to study and clarification of theology, especially the so-called theology of liberation has been and remains an eminent service to the church.*<sup>222</sup>

The congratulatory words of the pope obviously signalled the presence of a strong sense of prejudice of the highest echelons of authority in the Church. The Theology of Liberation has no choice but to continue explaining itself, by meeting all the challenges it encounters, until its uniqueness – like the uniqueness of all other theologies – is recognized and respected by the whole Church, including the Vatican.

## **The Vatican's Contradictory Positions in 1984 and in 1986**

On the 3 September 1984, and on the 5 April 1986, the Vatican issued two documents which are considered to be the official standpoint of the Catholic Church on the Theology of Liberation.<sup>223</sup> Both are written and signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger – head of the Congregation of Doctrine and Faith – and approved by Pope John Paul II.<sup>224</sup> The first one – titled “Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation,”<sup>225</sup>—mainly consists of a scathing attack on the Theology of Liberation. Robert McAfee Brown summarizes it as follows:

- 1. Liberation theologians localize evil principally or uniquely in bad social, political or economic structures (IV, 15)*
- 2. Some liberation theologians demand first of all a radical revolution in social relations and criticise the search for personal perfection (IV, 15)*
- 3. Some liberation theologians claim that the necessary struggle for human justice and freedom in the economic and political sense constitutes the whole essence of salvation (VI, 4)*



4. *Some liberation theologians rely on concepts uncritically borrowed from Marxist ideology and [have] recourse to theses of a biblical hermeneutic marked by rationalism (VI, 10)*
5. *Liberation theologians fail to realize that a critical consciousness has to accompany the use of any working hypotheses (VII, 13)*
6. *The theory of class struggle as the fundamental law of history has been accepted by these theologies of liberation as a principle. According to this conception, the class struggle is the driving force of history (IX, 2, 3,)*
7. *Some go so far as identify God with history (IX, 4)*
8. *The new hermeneutic inherent in the theologies of liberation leads to an essentially political reading of the scriptures. Thus a major importance is given to the exodus event in as much as it is liberation from political servitude (X, 5)*
9. *Liberation theologians harbour the fatal illusion that these new structures will of themselves give birth to a new person (XI, 9)*
10. *Finally, a list is compiled of further essential aspects which the theologies of liberation especially tend to understand or eliminate, namely: the transcendence and the gratuity of liberation in Jesus Christ, true God and true man; the sovereignty of grace; and the true nature of the means of salvation, especially of the church and the sacraments. One should also keep in mind the true meaning of ethics, in which the distinction between good and evil is not relativized, the real meaning of sin, the necessity for conversion and the universality of the law of fraternal love (XI, 17).<sup>226</sup>*

The second document – entitled “Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation” – served as the Vatican means of self-criticism or self-correction of the 1984 document, as summarized above. In other words, the Vatican used the 1986 document as a means to address the allegations it levelled against the theologians of liberation in 1984. Robert McAfee Brown sums up the content of the 1986 instruction as follows:

1. *Salvation must be integral – that is involving the whole person, body and soul. The Beatitudes are proposed as a way to keep the grace of divine life and temporal good together, as well as uniting evangelization and the promotion of justice – a consistent liberation theme.*
2. *The document lays great stress on concern for the poor, although (in a deliberate effort to undercut the Puebla phrase “a preferential option for the poor”) an awkward phrase, “a love of preference for the poor” is*

*occasionally substituted. A warning is issued against reductive sociological and ideological categories that would make the “option for the poor” (the phrase returns unchallenged) a “partisan challenge and a source of conflict.” This reductionist critique frequently used against liberation theology, has no detectable dwelling place in the life and work of living, breathing liberation theologians.*

3. *The base communities receive support provided they really live in union with the local Church and the universal church – an admirable statement of the intention of Leonardo Boff and his friends.*
4. *Theologians are admonished to be careful to interpret the experience from which they begin in the light of the experience of the Church – almost an echo of Gustavo’s definition of theology as a critical reflection on praxis in the light of the Word of God.*
5. *Church teaching on matters relating to action develops in accordance with the changing circumstances of history, there can be no closed system since contingent judgements will always be involved. Critical reflection of praxis would be another way of making the point.*
6. *After appearing to give primacy to the conversion of the heart as a basis for social change, the document asserts that this perspective in no way eliminates the need for unjust structures to be changed. A few sentences later the point is even more explicit: it is therefore necessary to work simultaneously for the conversion of hearts and for the improvement of structures – as tidy a summary as one could desire of a basic liberation recognition that sin has both individual and social dimensions.*
7. *There is a fresh repudiation of a class-struggle theory as an alleged law of history, since action sanctioned by the church is not the struggle of one class against another in order to eliminate the foe. Liberation in the spirit of the Gospel is therefore incompatible with hatred of others... and this includes hatred of one’s enemies. Gustavo could hardly have said it better; his treatment of class struggle specifies that the task is not to eliminate the foe but to get rid of the social stratification that make struggle necessary. He goes further, recalling that the gospel message is to love, not to hate, enemies.<sup>227</sup>*

Thus, the tension caused in the Catholic Church by the 1984 document – although the presumption is that none of the theologians of liberation identified with its content<sup>228</sup> – was remarkably eased by the 1986 document. If the highest echelons of church leadership are capable of public self-criticism and self-correction – as Pope John Paul and Cardinal Ratzinger have jointly shown by means of this 1986 instruction – then the future of all forms of contextual theology is certainly bright.

The Theology of Liberation is a contextual theology, like every other. As a result it will make sense – first and foremost – to its cultural, socio-economic and political audience. The cultural, economic, political and social limitations of a contextual theology are articulated by the Afro-American theologians in chapter two of my thesis; the same limitations are well expressed by Bishop Tutu and in chapter three of the same thesis. And contributing quite substantially to this discussion is also Gerald O’Collins – professor of Christology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome – who claims that,

*It would be an impossible dream to write a Christology that might be equally valid for all human experiences, world cultures and geographical regions. I have never, for instance, lived in a country where ground fighting was taking place. I do not belong to a Third World nation which had to struggle for its independence from some colonial government. The limits of my lived experience inevitably condition my vision of Christ’s identity and functions.<sup>229</sup>*

Reflected in the New Testament, O’Collins continues, is a variety of cultural ways through which its authors and its people express their experiences of Christ. He writes,

*For all their “one faith” in their “one Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph.4:5), the inspired authors produced many titles for Christ and different modes of reflecting on his person and work... This pluralism of Christological approaches was not only brought by various religious and cultural causes, but was also undoubtedly motivated also undoubtedly motivated by the desire to proclaim Christ more effectively to different communities. Likewise today we should expect distinct Christologies to emerge from and for the various cultural, political and economic areas of the world.<sup>230</sup>*

Christology is a form of theology which – as O’Collins discusses it above – focuses mainly on the person and the work of Christ. O’Collins discovers that the biblical authors he is dealing with, are as culturally limited as he is. As a result, their theologies or christologies are not identical, exactly because even though they believe in the same Lord, Jesus Christ, nevertheless each culture has got its own meaningful mode or title through which it expresses its faith in Jesus. O’Collins further challenges contemporary scholars to create theologies or Christologies that would be meaningful to the political, the cultural, the economic and the social contexts of various nations of the contemporary world, and this is precisely

what the Latin American scholars – through the creation of the Theology of Liberation – have done.

### **Theological Implications of the 1986 Vatican Document**

For me the 1986 document implies that the Vatican has eventually accepted that we cannot theologize in the same way, precisely because the political, the cultural, the economic and the social circumstances under which we live are remarkably diverse, as O'Collins strongly holds above. Liberation Theology has served as a positive response to the socio-political and economic oppression of the poor of Latin America. How does one convince those masses of poor people that God loves them? Liberation theology tries hard to respond to such difficult questions, and the Vatican should never discourage such a noble attempt. Liberation theology tries very hard – from the faith point of view – to attend to the context of the economic exploitation and political oppression of the poor.<sup>231</sup>

The endless fight between the Theology of Liberation and the Vatican can surely disappear if the latter seriously makes an effort to respect the former's project of contextualization. The ceaseless squabble between the two camps is caused by the Vatican's tendency to universalize its limited understanding of Marxism. In other words, the Vatican has the inclination of imposing its prejudiced understanding of the Marxist version of Socialism on the Theology of Liberation. The Vatican has been fighting Marxism for many centuries.<sup>232</sup> But this does not mean that the Vatican should impose its limited or prejudiced understanding of Marxism on the Theology of Liberation. A contextualized understanding has got cultural limitations, because it is meant to be culturally relevant or meaningful to a particular cultural group of people. Therefore the Vatican's contextualized or prejudiced conception of Marxism should not be imposed on the Latin American context. If the Vatican paid critical attention to the critical way through which the theologians of liberation have been using the Marxist tools of interpretation, the war between the two camps would have been averted. Yes, communism or Marxism-Leninism did much to contribute toward the prejudice of the Vatican against Marxism, because of their respective elements of atheism and nefarious actions against humanity in various parts of the world.<sup>233</sup> But these are mere forms or distortions of Marxism, for the founder of Marxism, namely, Karl Marx, was a humanist who wanted the economic rights of the populace – especially those of the workers – to be respected. It is indeed Juan Luis Segundo who defends the Marxism of Karl Marx which was attacked by the 1984 Vatican document which alleged that, characterizing Marxism, is not only the question of atheism, but also the denial of the human person, his liberty and his rights.<sup>234</sup> Segundo responds to this allegation or prejudice of the Vatican's highest authorities by strongly holding that,

*No one even with a little historical education can ignore that Marxism (good or bad, right or wrong) was born precisely for the purpose of struggling against that denial. After speaking of the divergences that separate Marxists on the previous point (atheism), one should speak of the unanimous convergence of those who hold (as central to the system) the denial of that denial – the affirmation of people as members of society which destroys their alienation and returns to them their liberty and rights.*<sup>235</sup>

Karl Marx may not have achieved his goals of radically transforming a capitalist society into a classless one, but his name enters the annals of history as one who championed the cause of the oppressed: that is what Segundo is trying to put across in the foregoing statement. And counted among people of the world who have a deep respect for Karl Marx are the theologians of liberation. Karl Marx has helped these theologians – by means of his tools of analysis – to deepen their understanding of the oppressive circumstances to which the poor of Latin America, and those of the whole world, are subjected. The process of the contextualization of theology in Latin America includes – to a very large extent – the use of Marxist instruments of analysis. It would therefore be advisable for the Vatican to understand and accept the contextualization of theology as articulated by the theologians of liberation. The Vatican must overcome its hatred for Marxism,<sup>236</sup> lest it imposes the same hatred on Latin Americans, the majority of whom are gradually seeing the value of Marxism.<sup>237</sup> Once this hatred is overcome, then it will be a lot easier for the two parties to engage in the process of the mutual acceptance of each other's approach of contextualization. No method of contextualization would be deemed superior or inferior to the other. Joseph Comblin fiercely fights the imposition of one contextual theology over the other as follows:

*We ought to give up the idea of trying to fashion a theology that will survive us. Instead we must try to further its disappearance on the scene at the same moment that we disappear. Our theology should not weigh down on the generations that come after us. We must try to leave the ground clear when we ourselves depart. What we need now is a highly provisional theology fashioned to meet a particular situation.*<sup>238</sup>

The position of Comblin is too radical. He says that our theology should be provisional in orientation, meaning that even if it can be relevant or meaningful for our situation, it must not, however, be imposed on the subsequent generation which may find it obsolete. As a result, the theology of a generation must be totally obliterated – toward the end time of that particular generation – so as to give way to the theology of the new generation. My approach is slightly different

from that of Comblin. On the one hand, I agree with him when he says that no generation should impose its theology on the other, because the generation on the receiving side might find the inherited theology out of date, and therefore burdensome. On the other, I think the generation on the receiving side has a lot to learn from past generations. The problems and solutions of past generations, surely serve to inspire the present generation to identify its own problems and to solve them in its own way, as did generations of previous historical epochs.

The process of the identification of the problems of a generation and the unique way through that particular generation solves those problems – within the program of contextualization – might give wrong implications to the system of contextualization: the system of contextualization might be misinterpreted as a closed system, which is supposed to be relevant only to the people of that particular context. The process of contextualization is not a closed system. On the contrary, it has got criteria – subject to national and international constructive criticism and further development – which are employed to determine the real nature of a contextualized theology.<sup>239</sup> In other words, while it (contextualization) insists on the relevance of the message for its audience, it is also open to the critique of the international expertise, without which it will be lacking quite considerably in the process of growth and enrichment. It is at this stage that the Vatican is supposed to step in, in order to offer its official critique of the Theology of Liberation. It is exactly at this stage that the theologians of liberation are supposed to critique the Vatican's whimsical criticism of the Theology of Liberation, until some mutual and scholarly understanding on the subject of the Theology is professionally reached.

### **Papal Decisiveness as Crucial for the Future of Liberation Theology**

However, the recognition of the Theology of Liberation – by the Vatican – as one of the most successful ways of the contextualization of theology within the Latin American situation, will not take place overnight. It will certainly take a while because of the presence of strong elements of intransigence prevalent in the Church. On this point McGovern reports,

*The most heartening document for liberation theologians during this period came in the form of a letter (April 9, 1986) from John Paul II to the bishops of Brazil. The pope praised the bishops and their collaborators for their solidarity with the people of Brazil, and he commended them for not hesitating to defend with courage the just and noble cause of human rights and to support courageous reforms to better distribute wealth, land, education, health, housing. Most importantly he affirms: "We are convinced, we and you, that the theology of liberation is not only opportune, but useful and necessary."<sup>240</sup>*

The Brazilian Episcopate must have been surprised and excited to receive words of encouragement and praise, for their active involvement in matters of human rights and for their powerful support of the Theology of Liberation from Pope John Paul II, who earlier on had been conspiring with Cardinal Trujillo for the total annihilation of the same theology.<sup>241</sup> Had these words of encouragement been given also to the Episcopate of Peru, and to all other Latin American Episcopates, the theologians of liberation would have considered that gesture as symbolic of the conversion of heart from the part of the pope. McGovern further recounts some events of the 1988 papal visits of Peru as follows,

*In extremely sharp language the pope spoke of the obstinate persistence of doctrinal and methodological views that sow seeds of confusion among the faithful and attack the unity of the Church. He mentioned in particular views that talk of permanent class struggle and he called upon the bishops to denounce these deviations and errors, and to take whatever measures necessary to correct them and make sure that the directions contained in the 1984 and 1986 Vatican Instructions are observed. The pope's comments seemed clearly directed against Gutierrez, for he represents the voice of liberation theology in Peru.*<sup>242</sup>

Thus, it is extremely difficult to know the Post-1986 official position of the Church in connection with the Theology of Liberation: For while the Vatican values the necessity and the usefulness of the Theology of Liberation in Brazil, the same Vatican condemns this theology in the strongest terms possible in Peru. McGovern further reports that it is not the pope who wrote those words of condemnation: they were actually compiled in Peru by two influential archrivals of Gustavo Gutierrez, namely, Bishop Ricardo of Callao (a Diocese of Peru), and the papal nuncio of Peru, who both viciously detest Gutierrez's use of Marxism in his theological literature.<sup>243</sup> That the pope publicly pronounced those words of condemnation – compiled by those two influential archrivals of Gutierrez – when nobody belonging to the Catholic Church dares force a pope to do so, gives us a clue of the standpoint of the Vatican in connection with the Theology of Liberation in the Post-1986 period.

To make matters even more complex and sad, a new pile of Vatican condemnations and warnings – which reflect a total contradiction of the letter Pope John Paul II in 1986 – were levelled at some of the members of the Brazilian Episcopate who are staunch supporters of the Theology of Liberation. Indeed McGovern relates,

*New conflicts emerged in Brazil as well. In 1988 the Vatican attempted to silence one of the leading supporters of liberation theology, Dom*

*Casaldaliga of Sao Feilx in the Brazilian Amazon, and “warning letters” were apparently sent also to eight other progressive Brazilian bishops.*<sup>244</sup>

So long as there is no mutual respect in the area of the respect for one another’s effort of contextualization of theology, the war between the Vatican and the Theology of Liberation will continue unabated. In other words, so long as the Vatican is not yet determined to accept the theologians of liberation as spiritually mature Christians who are capable of theologizing meaningfully within the socio-political and economic context of injustice, there will be endless condemnations levelled at the Theologians of Liberation and, at those who support it. It is really unfortunate that the Vatican does not see that the war it wages against the Theology of Liberation is really outdated, for Marxism – whose tools of analysis are utilised by liberation theologians – does not pose any danger to the Christian Faith.<sup>245</sup> The collaboration of Christians and Marxists – in the area of uprooting social injustice – exists not only in Latin America, but in several parts of the Third World.<sup>246</sup> Christians in those areas have worked hand in glove with Marxists – to liberate the poor from all forms of injustice – without losing their faith.<sup>247</sup>

## **Word of Hope**

I conclude this chapter with some hope that my humble research will bring the two camps together for a professional discussion which is going to lead to the mutual acceptance of one another’s theological expertise, for the sake of the health and the dignity of the Church.

I am aware that it was highly expected that I discuss the case of the liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff who, in the 1980s was silenced by the Vatican because of his theological opinions. I did not discuss that case because of fear of being silenced. Secondly, the tense atmosphere which exists between the Vatican and the Latin American theologians of liberation does not encourage me to go deeper than I did above. In other words, deepening the discussion would only intensify the Vatican’s attack on Latin America, and on everybody else who sincerely supports the Theology of Liberation. The Lord will hopefully send a powerful prophet who will liberate me and every other person who does not theologize comfortably because of the Vatican’s threatening ways of dealing with opposing opinions.

In the meantime let us pray that the Theology of Liberation be finally recognized – by the Vatican – as a very good example of doing a contextualized theology for an oppressed populace, for this is one of the most concrete ways the Church can contribute toward their liberation from all forms of injustice. The Vatican finally recognized that it was not the sun moving around the earth but the other way



round, as Galileo Galilei held.<sup>248</sup> In the same way, the Vatican, convinced by a Galileo of our days, will eventually recognize that the Theology of Liberation is actually a creation of God through which He wishes to manifest his mighty works to countries of the Third World.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Revised Edition, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2005. p.510

<sup>2</sup> Charles, R. *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus, vol. 1*, Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. pp. 5-6

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. xiii

<sup>4</sup> See *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2003. This volume – and many others dealing with the social teaching of the Catholic Church – contains encyclicals like *Pacem in Terris*, *Populorum Progressus*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptor Hominis*, and *Dives in Misericordia* which implicitly discuss the plight of the workers. It is because of this implicit discussion on the problem of the workers that I have excluded them from this Chapter: this chapter is based on the explicit discussion of the encyclicals which deal directly with the difficulties encountered by workers, first, at factory-floor level, and at the level of society as a whole.

<sup>5</sup> Charles, R. *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Anno, vol. 2*, Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. p.13

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p.13

<sup>7</sup> Pope Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum," *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shanon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2003. p.38

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- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.vi
- <sup>9</sup> Simpson, D. P. *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, Cassell Ltd, London:1984. pp.396 and 517
- <sup>10</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Op. Cit.* p.14
- <sup>11</sup> See Roger Charles, *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: the Catholic Tradition From Genesis to Centesimus Annus, vol. 2*, Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. p.5
- <sup>12</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Op Cit.* p.15
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp.16-17
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid. pp.20-21
- <sup>16</sup> Mich, Marvin L. Krier, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements*, Twenty-Third Publication, Mystic, CT: 2003. p.24
- <sup>17</sup> "The Prophetic Value of *Rerum Novarum*," *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2004. p.149
- <sup>18</sup> Dorr, D. *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 1998. p.27
- <sup>19</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Op. Cit.* p.20
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. pp.22-23
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.29
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp.30-31 and pp.32-37
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid. pp.34-35
- <sup>24</sup> Donald Dorr, *Op. Cit.* p.31
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid. p.32
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.32
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.33
- <sup>28</sup> Roger Charles, *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus, vol. 2*, Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. p.13
- <sup>29</sup> DeBerri, Edward P. et al. *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1992. p.6
- <sup>30</sup> Roger Charles, *Op. Cit.* p.63
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.53
- <sup>32</sup> Pope Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno," *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2003. pp.66-67
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid. 68
- <sup>34</sup> See Rodger Charles, *Op. Cit.* p.79
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.57
- <sup>36</sup> Donald Dorr, *Op. Cit.* p.76.
- <sup>37</sup> Pope XI, *Op. Cit.* p.65
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.65
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid. p.60
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.61
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.77
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid. p.73
- <sup>43</sup> Donald Dorr, *Op. Cit.* p.76
- <sup>44</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Op. Cit.* p.64
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.65
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid. p.63. On this, and on many other pages of his encyclical, Pius XI clearly gives the names of the structures he is discussing.
- <sup>47</sup> "Liberalism in South Africa " *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, eds. James Leatt, Theo Kneifel, and Klaus Nurnberger, David Philip, Cape Town: 1986. p.52
- <sup>48</sup> Donald Dorr, *Op. Cit.* p.103
- <sup>49</sup> Roger Charles, *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Teaching from Genesis to Centesimus Annus, vol. 2*, Gracewing Fowler Write Books, Herefordshire: 1998. p.138
- <sup>50</sup> Albert Gauche, "The World of Worker-Priests Origins," *Priest in Working-Class Blue: History of the Worker-Priests: (1943-1954)* , ed. Oscar L. Arnal, Paulist Press, New York: 1986. p.58
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid. pp. 58-59
- <sup>52</sup> Joseph Robert, "The World of Worker-Priest Reflection," *Priests in Working-Class Blue: History of the Worker-Priests: (1943-1954)* , ed. Oscar L. Arnal, Paulist Press, New York: 1986. p.126

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.p126

<sup>54</sup> A Worker Seminarian, "The World of Worker-Priest Naturalization," *Priests in Working-Class Blue: History of the Worker-Priests (1943-1954)* ed. Oscar L. Arnal, Paulist Press, New York: 1986. p.86

<sup>55</sup> See Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, paragraphs 3 and 12 , See also Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, paragraphs 112 and 113

<sup>56</sup> Andre Depierre, "The World of Worker-Priest Conflict," *Priests in Working-Class Blue: The History of the Worker-Priests (1943 1954)* ed. Oscar L. Arnal, Paulist Press, New York: 1986. p.149

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p.149

<sup>58</sup> Pope John XXIII, "Mater et Magistra," *Catholic Social Thought*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York:2003.p.127 See also Edward DeBerri et al. *Op. Cit.* p. 54. See also Marvin Krier Mich, *Op. Cit.*, p.93

<sup>59</sup> Pope John XXIII, "Mater et Magistra," *Catholic Social Thought*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2003. p. 84

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p.91

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.p.91

<sup>62</sup> Paragraphs, 68-103 of the encyclical contain John XXIII's teaching on the rights of the workers. Unfortunately, none of these paragraphs recommend any drastic measure which the workers should take if they are victimized by the avarice of the capitalists.

<sup>63</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Op. Cit.* p.114. See Pope John XXIII, *Op. Cit.* 158

<sup>64</sup> Pope John, *Op. Cit.* p.91

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p.93

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p.95

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p.92

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. pp.95-96

<sup>69</sup> Donald Dorr, *Op. Cit.* p.125

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p.125

<sup>71</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Op. Cit.* p.105

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p.110

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p.117

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p.117

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p.118

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p.119

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.119

<sup>78</sup> See Hans Kung, *Does God Exist?* William Collins and Sons, London: 1978. p.229

<sup>79</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Op. Cit.* p.120

<sup>80</sup> Edward P. DeBerri et. al. *Catholic Social Teaching*, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 2003. p.3

<sup>81</sup> See Pope John XXIII, *Op. Cit.* p.125

<sup>82</sup> See "The Church Today, paragraph 79," *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Abbott Gallagher, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1967. p.293. In this context, I am writing about John XXIII as convenor and precursor of the Second Vatican Council which – basing itself on the longstanding Catholic tradition of self-defence – continued, through paragraph 79 of the document, "The Church today," to recognise, in the present age, the validity of the wars waged for purposes of self-defence as opposed to those fought for the purpose of the nation's self-aggrandisement and aggression. Modern missiles, utilized for the purpose of self-defence and deterrence – in spite of their exorbitant prices – are not to be considered as a threat, but a means of deterrence and defence of the lives and properties of the populace.

<sup>83</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Op. Cit.* p.117 On this page John is bitterly complaining about the nations' mistrust of one another after the Second World War, which mistrust resulted in the annual update of expensive of atomic missiles for purposes of deterrence.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p.122

<sup>85</sup> McBrien, R. *Catholicism*, Geoffrey Chapman, London:1981.p.660

<sup>86</sup> Marvin, L. K. M. *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements*, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, CT: 2003. p.178

- <sup>87</sup> Charles, R. *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus*, vol.II, Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire, 1998. p.244. See also Edward P. DeBerri et al. *Catholic Social Teaching*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York:1992. pp.73-74. See also Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: p.205. See also Pope Paul VI, "Octogesima Adveniens," *Catholic Social Thought*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 2003. p.265. See also "Octogesima Adveniens" *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds. Michael Walsh and Brien Davies, London: 1984. p.165
- <sup>88</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1998. p.205
- <sup>89</sup> See Roger Charles, *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus Vol 2*, Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. p.244
- <sup>90</sup> Pope Paul VI, "Octogesima Adveniens," *Catholic Social Thought*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2003. pp.265-266
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid. p.266
- <sup>92</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1998. p.218. See also Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements*, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, CT:2003. p.180
- <sup>93</sup> Ibid. p.180
- <sup>94</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1998. p.218. See also Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements*, Twenty-Third Publications: 2003. p.180
- <sup>95</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Op. Cit.* p.276
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid. pp.274-275
- <sup>97</sup> See Albert Gauche, "The World of Worker-Priest Origins," *Priests in Working-Class Blue: The History of Worker-Priests (1943—1954)*, ed. Oscar L. Arnal, Paulist Press, New York: 1986. p.58
- <sup>98</sup> See Andre Depierre, "World of Worker-Priest Conflict," *Priests in Working-Class Blue: History of the Worker-Priests (1943—1954)*, ed. Oscar L. Arnal, Paulist Press, New York: 1986. p.143
- <sup>99</sup> Joseph Robert, "The World of Worker-Priest Reflection," *Priests in Working-Class Blue: History of the Worker-Priests (1943—1954)* ed. Oscar L. Arnal, Paulist Press, New York: 1986. p.126
- <sup>100</sup> See Roger Charles, *Christian Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus*, vol.2, Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. pp.270-271
- <sup>101</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2005. p.56
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid. p.56
- <sup>103</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Op. Cit.* p.285
- <sup>104</sup> Teofilo Cabestrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People: Testimonies of Faith from Nicaragua*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1984. p.3
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid. pp.84-85
- <sup>106</sup> See J. Leatt, et al. *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town:1986. p.208
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid. p.208. See also Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1987. p.40
- <sup>108</sup> "The Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World, paragraph 79," *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Abbott Gallagher, Geoffrey Chapman London: 1966. pp.291-293
- <sup>109</sup> See Hans Kung, *Does God Exist?* William and Sons Co., London: 1980. p.244
- <sup>110</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Op. Cit.* p.282
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid. p.282
- <sup>112</sup> See Gregory Baum, *The Priority of Labour*, Paulist Press, New York: 1982. p.24 and p.45
- <sup>113</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Op. Cit.* p.65
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.65
- <sup>115</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Op. Cit.* pp.269-272
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid. p.270
- <sup>117</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Op. Cit.* pp.32-33
- <sup>118</sup> See Pope Pius XI, *Op. Cit.* p. 65
- <sup>119</sup> Donald Dorr, *Op. Cit.* pp.222-223
- <sup>120</sup> Pope Paul, *Op. Cit.* pp.265-266; p.271; p.275 and p.277. On these pages, the pope denounces liberalist capitalism.
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid. pp.278-279
- <sup>122</sup> Ibid. p.279
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid. p.279

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- <sup>124</sup> Ibid. pp.284-285
- <sup>125</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Op. Cit.* p.281
- <sup>126</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Op. Cit.* p.217
- <sup>127</sup> See Pope Paul VI, "Octogesima Adveniens," *Catholic Social Thought*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2003. pp.274 and 277
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid. p.285. The last sentence of my paragraph constitutes a broader interpretation of the pope's phrase which reads: "The bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything which divides them." The word 'faithful' in the phrase, refers to Christians of various denominations; but I have broadened up the word to the meaning, 'All People of God, be they Christians or non-Christians,' because the project of justice requires the contribution of all people of God – including the Marxists – in order to have superb results.
- <sup>129</sup> Ibid. p.284
- <sup>130</sup> Ibid. p.281
- <sup>131</sup> Ibid. p.272
- <sup>132</sup> Ibid. p.272
- <sup>133</sup> See Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, London: 1966. p.428. See also James Leatt et al, *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town: 1986. p.209
- <sup>134</sup> Ibid. p.13
- <sup>135</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1998. p.288; See also Edward P. DeBerri et al, *Catholic Social Teaching*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1992. p.84. *Catholic Social Thought*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2003. p.350. See also *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds. Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, Collins Liturgical Publications, London: 2001. p.271.
- <sup>136</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Laborem Exercens: On Human Work," *Catholic Social Thought*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2003. p.353
- <sup>137</sup> Ibid. p.353
- <sup>138</sup> Ibid. p.353
- <sup>139</sup> Ibid. pp.353-354
- <sup>140</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1998. p.288
- <sup>141</sup> The reader may verify this point by critically examining the relevant themes in the encyclicals dealing with human work, that is, from the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) to the encyclical, *Laborem Exercens* (1981)
- <sup>142</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Op. Cit.* p.358
- <sup>143</sup> Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, The Continuum International Group, London: 2009. p.145
- <sup>144</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Op. Cit.* p.357
- <sup>145</sup> Ibid. p.366
- <sup>146</sup> Ibid. p.372
- <sup>147</sup> Ibid. pp.372-373
- <sup>148</sup> Ibid. p.354
- <sup>149</sup> See *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds. Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, Collins Liturgical Publications, London: 1984. p.296
- <sup>150</sup> Ibid. p.296
- <sup>151</sup> Ibid. p.297
- <sup>152</sup> Ibid. p.297
- <sup>153</sup> Ibid. pp.309-310
- <sup>154</sup> McKenzie, J. L. *Dictionary of the Bible*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York: 1965. p.303
- <sup>155</sup> Haring, B. *Free and Faithful in Christ*, St. Paul Publications, Middlegreen, Slough: 1979. pp.371-372
- <sup>156</sup> Ibid. p.371
- <sup>157</sup> Ibid. p.372 and p.374
- <sup>158</sup> See Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, *Op. Cit.* p.295
- <sup>159</sup> "Gaudium et Spes" paragraph 79, *Vatican Council II*, ed. Austin Flannery, Dominican Publications, Dublin: 1996. p.266
- <sup>160</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Laborem Exercens," *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2010. p.382

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- <sup>161</sup> Ibid. p.383
- <sup>162</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1987. pp. 34-35
- <sup>163</sup> This point is being discussed under the subheading, *Definition* of chapter one of my thesis
- <sup>164</sup> See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. Cit.* p.32. See also Raul Vidales, "Methodological Issues in Liberation Theology," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1976. pp.44-45
- <sup>165</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1988 (revised version). pp. 107-109
- <sup>166</sup> Massaro, T. *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, Sheed and Ward Book, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, Maryland: 2000. pp.96-97
- <sup>167</sup> Ibid. p.96
- <sup>168</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, "Two Theological Perspectives: Liberation Theology and Progressivist Theology," *The Eruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology*, eds. Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 1988. p. 248
- <sup>169</sup> Ibid. pp.248-249
- <sup>170</sup> Pope John XXIII, "Mater et Magistra," paragraph 150, *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds. Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, Collins Liturgical Publications, London: 1984. p.27
- <sup>171</sup> Ibid. p.28
- <sup>172</sup> Ibid. p.29
- <sup>173</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, SCM Press, London: 1975. pp.1-7; See also Leonardo Boff, "The Originality of the Theology of Liberation," *The Future of Liberation Theology*, eds. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1989. pp. 40-45, see also Luis G del Valle, "Theological Outlook Starting from Concrete Events," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, SCM Press, London: 1975. pp. 86-88. See also Hugo Assmann, "The Power of Christ in History: Conflicting Christologies and Discernment," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, SCM Press, London: 1975. pp. 133-134. See also Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, London: 1987. pp. 1-7
- <sup>174</sup> Ibid. p.23. See *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1996. p.32
- <sup>175</sup> Brown, R, *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p.52
- <sup>176</sup> See Arthur McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics: Toward an Assessment*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p.14
- <sup>177</sup> Ibid. p.12 and p.14
- <sup>178</sup> Ibid. pp. 53-54
- <sup>179</sup> See for example, Pope John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens*, paragraph 16, *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds. Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, Collins Liturgical Publications, London:1984. p.295. see also Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, London: 1987. p.5
- <sup>180</sup> Pope Paul VI, "Octagesimo Adveniens" paragraph 16 *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds. Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, Collins Liturgical Publications, London: 1984. p.173
- <sup>181</sup> Ibid. pp. 172-173
- <sup>182</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. Cit.* pp.26-27
- <sup>183</sup> See James Leatt et al, *Contending Ideologies in South AFRI*
- <sup>184</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1983. pp.86-87. I have chosen Pius XI to be spokesperson of the other pontiffs, because I have found him to be the most direct in the language he uses to condemn capitalism. He just calls a spade a spade. Yes, he does not beat about the bush.
- <sup>185</sup> See Juan Luis Segundo, "Capitalism Versus Socialism: Crux Theologica," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, SCM Press, London: 1975. p.257. On this page Segundo opts for 'the Left' namely, Socialism, which – compared to Capitalism – has proved to be sensitive to the needs of the poor.

- <sup>186</sup> For example, see Pope Paul VI, "Octogesima Adveniens," paragraphs 45-45.1, *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds. Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, Collins Liturgical Publications, London: 1984. p.183. See also Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. Cit.* p.27
- <sup>187</sup> See Roger Charles, *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus, Vol, 2*, Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. pp.13-14
- <sup>188</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, London: 1987. p.12
- <sup>189</sup> Haring, B. *Free and Faithful in Christ, vol. 2*, St. Paul Publications, Slough, Middlegreen: 1979. p.530
- <sup>190</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1987. p.22
- <sup>191</sup> See Juan Carlos Scannone, "Theology, Popular Culture and Discernment," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, SCM Press, London: 1975. p.221; see also Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1971. p.56: See also Arthur F. McGovern, "Dependency Theory, Marxist Analysis, and Liberation Theology," *The Future of Liberation Theology*, eds Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1989. p.272
- <sup>192</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "Capitalism versus Socialism: Crux Theologica," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, SCM Press, London: 1975. p.249
- <sup>193</sup> See Roger Charles, *Op. Cit.* p.246
- <sup>194</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, London: 1987. p.28
- <sup>195</sup> Sobrino, J. *Christology at Crossroads: A Latin American View*, SCM Press, London: 1978. p.120
- <sup>196</sup> *Ibid.* p.120
- <sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* p.125
- <sup>198</sup> For example, See Pope John Paul II's "Laborem Exercens," paragraphs 14.3—14.6, *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds. Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, Collins Liturgical Publications, London: 1984. pp.293-294
- <sup>199</sup> Dorr, D. *Op. Cit.* p.290
- <sup>200</sup> See James Leatt, et al, *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town: 1986. p.282
- <sup>201</sup> Segundo, J. *Liberation of Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2002. p.93
- <sup>202</sup> *The African Bishops on Human Rights*, eds. Stanislaus Muyebe and Alex Muyebe, Pauklines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2002. pp.242-243
- <sup>203</sup> See John Kusumalayam, *Human Rights: Individual or/and Group Rights?* The Bombay St. Paul Society, Mumbai: 2008
- <sup>204</sup> Baum, G. *Priority of Labour*, Paulist Press, New York: 1982. p. 81
- <sup>205</sup> See Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1998. p.217
- <sup>206</sup> McGovern, A. F. *Liberation Theology and its Critics*, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p.178
- <sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* p.12 See also Philip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: The Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond*, I. B. Tauris et Co. Ltd Publishers, London: 1987. p.98
- <sup>208</sup> Philip Berryman, *Op. Cit.* p.98, See also Arthur F. McGovern, *Op. Cit.* p.12, See also Francois Houtart, "Theoretical and Institutional Bases of the Opposition to Liberation Theology," *The Future of Liberation Theology*, eds. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1989. p.264
- <sup>209</sup> Francois Houtart, "Theoretical and Institutional Bases of the Opposition to Liberation Theology," *The Future of Liberation Theology*, eds. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: pp.267-268
- <sup>210</sup> Arthur F. McGovern, *Op. Cit.* p.12. See also Philip Berryman, *Op. Cit.* p. 98
- <sup>211</sup> Francois Houtart, *Op. Cit.* p.268
- <sup>212</sup> Arthur F. McGovern, *Op. Cit.* p.50
- <sup>213</sup> Francois Houtart, *Op. Cit.* p.269
- <sup>214</sup> *Ibid.* p.268

- <sup>215</sup> See Roger Charles, *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: the Catholic Teaching from Genesis to Centesimus Annus, vol.2*, Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. p.272
- <sup>216</sup> Ibid. p.273
- <sup>217</sup> Ibid. p.247
- <sup>218</sup> Francois Houtart, *Op. Cit.* pp.264-265
- <sup>219</sup> Ibid. p.264
- <sup>220</sup> Ibid. p.264
- <sup>221</sup> Ibid. p.265
- <sup>222</sup> Ibid. p.269
- <sup>223</sup> See Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p.15
- <sup>224</sup> See Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1990.p. 142
- <sup>225</sup> Ibid. p.142. see also Arthur F McGovern, *Op. Cit.* p.16
- <sup>226</sup> Ibid. p.144
- <sup>227</sup> Ibid. p.147
- <sup>228</sup> See Juan Luis Segundo, *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and A Warning to the Whole Church*, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1985. pp.9-10
- <sup>229</sup> O'Collins, G. *Interpreting Jesus*, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1983. p.31
- <sup>230</sup> Ibid. p.31
- <sup>231</sup> See Roger Charles, *Christian Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus*, Fowler Wright Books, Herefordshire: 1998. p.246
- <sup>232</sup> See Gregory Baum, *Priority of Labour*, Paulist Press, New York: 1982. p.81
- <sup>233</sup> See "Quadragesimo Anno" *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, eds. Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, Collins Liturgical Publications, London: 1984. p.8. See also Edward P. DeBerri et al. *Catholic Social Teaching*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York:1985. p.51
- <sup>234</sup> See Juan Luis Segundo, *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and A Warning To The Whole Church*, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1985. p.100
- <sup>235</sup> Ibid. p.100
- <sup>236</sup> Ibid. p.100
- <sup>237</sup> See Roger Charles, *Op. Cit.* p.247
- <sup>238</sup> Comblin, J. "What Sort of Service Might Theology Render," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, SCM Press, London: 1975. p.69
- <sup>239</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, London: 1987. p.89
- <sup>240</sup> See Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p.18
- <sup>241</sup> See Philip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: The Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond*, I. B. Taurus and Co Ltd. Publishers, London: 1987. p.98. See also Francois Houtart, "Theoretical and Institutional Bases of the Opposition to Liberation Theology," *The Future of Liberation Theology*, eds. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1989. p.269
- <sup>242</sup> See Arthur F. McGovern, *Op. Cit.* p.19
- <sup>243</sup> Ibid. p.19
- <sup>244</sup> Ibid. p.19
- <sup>245</sup> See Joseph Robert, "The World of Worker-Priest Reflection," *Priests in Working-Class Blue: The History of the Worker-Priests (1943 1954)* ed. Oscar L. Arnal, Paulist Press New York: 1986. p.126
- <sup>246</sup> See Gregory Baum, *Priority of Labour*, Paulist Press, New York: 1982. p.81 see also Donald Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1982. p.217
- <sup>247</sup> See Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 2002. p.132. See also Roger Charles, *Op. Cit.* p.247. See also Teofilo Cabastrero, *Ministers of God, Ministers of the People*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1983. pp.84-85. See also Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. Cit.* pp.74 and 80.
- <sup>248</sup> Agostoni, T. *Every Citizen,s Handbook*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 1997. p.95



## Chapter 5

### *The Application of the Theology of Liberation to the South African Situation*

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part One is subdivided into four components, namely, the Analysis of the Socio-Economic and Political Situation in South Africa, the Importance of the Church's Intensification of the Struggle for Justice in the post-1994 historical period of South Africa, the Importance of the Small Christian Communities, and the need to incorporate the veneration of African ancestors into the spirituality of the Theology of Liberation. The Second Part consists of the implementation of the Theology of Liberation into the South African Socio-Political and Economic Crisis. The process of implementation will be similar to that suggested by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff in Chapter One of my thesis. This means that the first level of the implementation will be guided by the question, ***Why are the poor of South Africa poor?*** At this level a concerted effort will be made to continue with the analysis of the socio-political and economic situation in South Africa in such a way that we shall eventually understand the reason why – even after the eradication of apartheid in 1994 – the poor are still poor. The second level of the implementation of the Theology of Liberation will be guided by the question, ***What does God say about the poverty of the poor of South Africa?*** At this level the Boffs suggest that we critically and prayerfully study the scriptures so as to understand God's opinion about poverty. The third level of the implantation of the Theology of Liberation will be guided by the question, ***How do we implement God's ideas on poverty in South Africa?*** At this level concrete peaceful actions are supposed to be suggested to liberate the poor from all forms of injustice in such a way that those suggesting them will strongly feel that this is the way God instructs us to act in our situation.

### **PART ONE**

#### ***(A) A Brief Analysis of the Post-1994 Socio-Economic and Political Situation in South Africa.***

The 27<sup>th</sup> day of April in 1994 saw the first democratic elections in South Africa, and this significantly marked the total eradication of the apartheid regime and all its manifestations.<sup>1</sup> Describing this period briefly is Villa-Vicencio who says,

*Things have since changed... In South Africa a democratically elected government of national unity, under the presidency of Nelson Mandela is governing the country. Yet many out of whose oppression liberation theologies were born, are still oppressed. They remain without houses. They are still denied educational and health resources. Massive unemployment rages on. Grinding poverty, exploitation and unnecessary deaths are daily realities. Yet despite the marked lack of clear winners in these negotiated revolutions, changes experienced in Latin America and South Africa are indeed momentous.<sup>2</sup>*

Villa-Vicencio continues his discussion by mentioning the various Christian reactions which emerged from the stark realities of grinding poverty, the massive exploitation, and the unnecessary (infant?) mortalities experienced during the period of the newly democratic government in South Africa, indeed he writes,

*Some Christians who were hitherto part of the revolutionary struggle have joined government. Others have chosen to leave politics to the politicians. Still others have refused to concede the extent of the acknowledged changes, standing aloof from politics of negotiation. They have resisted engagement in the frustrating complexities of political transition.*<sup>3</sup>

Villa-Vicencio is seemingly regretting the premature departure of many Christians from the struggle against injustice in South Africa. I interpret him to be saying that Christians were supposed to continue with the struggle up until it became crystal clear that the economic needs of the poor would be looked after by the new dispensation. Studying the economic problems of this period even deeper is Norman Makgetla, who is a South African economist lecturing at the University of the Witwatersrand. He focuses mainly on the problem of unemployment as follows,

*Between 1995 and 2000, unemployment officially climbed from 16% to 30, 5%. Figures of early 2003 put the figure at 31%. These figures do not include workers too discouraged to seek work. If they were included the unemployment rate would be 40%. Unemployment in South Africa is extraordinarily high by world standards. According to the World Bank, in the early 2000s the unemployment in the middle-income countries as a group averaged well under 10% (World Bank).*<sup>4</sup>

High percentages of unemployment, such as those discussed by Makgetla, do inevitably lead to the grinding poverty mentioned by Villa-Vicencio above. And studying this unfortunate reality of poverty within the post 1994 period of the South African history is David Everatt, who is another South African scholar in the area of economics. He writes,

*In South Africa one in ten Africans are malnourished. One in four Africans is stunted. Just less than half of the population (45 per cent) lives on less than US\$2 a day. Lines dividing the poor from the non-poor give different results depending on where they are drawn, but most suggest that 45-55 per cent of all South Africans live in conditions of poverty – some 18-24 million people.*<sup>5</sup>

Everatt is also of the opinion that unemployment is the main reason for the existence of poverty in the new democratic dispensation of South Africa. Indeed he argues that,

*In 1999 there was an estimated 26. 3 million in South Africa who were aged between 15 and 65 – the cohort considered to be economically active in any population. Applying the expanded definition of*

*unemployment, South Africa's rate of unemployment was 26 per cent. This was far higher for African females (52 per cent) than any other group. Comparing unemployment data from 1996-1999 the rate of unemployment increased from 34 per cent. Furthermore while the actual number of people employed during this time grew from 9.1 million-10.0 million (an increase of 14 per cent) the number of unemployed people grew by 26 per cent, from 4.7 million to 5.9 million. In 1999, 22 per cent of households reported that members were hungry due to lack of money to buy food...Looked at from another angle, 38 per cent of African households in 1999 contained no employed people – up from 32 per cent in 1996.<sup>6</sup>*

Everatt's statistical information is certainly depressing to any concerned South African, be they black or white. Of course he tries to give a balanced picture in the sense that he is not only dealing with the statistics of unemployment, he is also giving the employment statistics, meaning that the new government is doing something – although very little – to solve the unemployment problem. On the whole, the most depressing information about the statistical research is the fact that the new dispensation, like the old, still favours the economic wellbeing of whites, at the expense of a very large majority of blacks who voted the present regime into power: it is indeed Everatt himself who holds that,

*61 per cent of Africans were poor in 1996 compared with just 1 per cent of whites.<sup>7</sup>*

The figures in the foregoing statement clearly show that to a very large extent, the economic beneficiaries of the new dispensation are whites. Unfortunately, the year 1997 saw no substantial economic improvements. As a result, Everatt asserts that,

*A 1997 report found out that a third of the children aged below five lived in the poorest households. Some 60 per cent of the South African children live in the poorest 40 per cent of households (measured by income); three quarters of all children living in poverty can be found in rural areas; and 97 per cent of them are African. Worryingly, all indicators, with the exception of health indicators, suggest that child poverty is on the increase in South Africa.<sup>8</sup>*

Everatt is certainly not a prophet of doom to foresee that the poverty of the African children – during the period of South Africa's new democratic dispensation – was on the rise. What seriously aggravated this unfortunate status of African children's poverty was the unnecessary purchase of expensive submarines and warplanes. Terry Crawford-Browne implicitly concurs: He strongly argues that the purchase of these astronomically costly military equipments was completely unnecessary, because South Africa did not have any foreign military threat to worry about during this period. The real threat to the new South African government, continues Crawford-Browne, is the poverty of the

multitudes of South Africans who voted the new regime into power.<sup>9</sup> He further states that,

*A public opinion survey by Lawrence Schlemmer in July 2002 for the Helen Suzman foundation found that 62% of the ANC voters wanted the arms deal cancelled, 29% wanted it cut, and only 12% supported it.*<sup>10</sup>

Thus, according to the statistics given above a very large majority of ANC members were totally opposed to the idea of the arms deal. In addition to this statistical information, the new South African government was sternly cautioned by the International Offers Negotiating Team's affordability desk about the depreciation the South African currency would suffer and about many other dangers involved in the process of the arms deal. In particular, continues Crawford-Brown, the cabinet was repeatedly advised that signing the contracts serve as an impediment to prevent it (cabinet) from financing important local priorities such as housing, education, health, and welfare, because the contracts in question demand a lot of funding.<sup>11</sup> In December 1999, in spite of the warnings and advice it received, the South African Cabinet stubbornly authorised the Minister of Finance to sign contracts with Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United States of America. Crawford-Browne further observed that,

*Within two years of signature the costs had escalated from R30 billion to R52.3 billion. Given the volatility of foreign exchange markets and the rand's propensity to depreciate, the government can have little of the final financial liability to which it has committed South Africa. On the projections of rand/dollar exchange rates by the government's own consultants, the rand liability could reach R158 billion by 2010 and R370 billion by 2019, when the final payments are due.*<sup>12</sup>

It appears to be very clear – from the figures given above and from the professional advices ignored – that it was never the intention of the new government of South Africa to eradicate the poverty of the countless people of South Africa. The billions of rand which the new dispensation spent unnecessarily on highly expensive arms could have been used to create jobs for the multitudes of poor African adults whose statistics are provided by Makgetla and Everatt above. Lots of proper nutrition, bursaries and scholarships could have been given to children whose parents cannot afford the usually astronomical costs of tertiary education. In short, the new government highly betrayed the poor who thought that the quality of their economic life would be substantially improved by the cabinet of the post-1994 period.

To crown the cup of sorrow, the majority of Africans are still landless. About 87% of their agricultural land was snatched away from them by whites who were authorised to do so, by the apartheid legislation called the Land Act of 1913.<sup>13</sup> Focusing on the direct consequences of this deprivation is Ruth Hall – a South African scholar in economics – who recently claims that,

*70% of rural people live below the poverty line, among them nearly a million farm workers and their dependents, plus a third of South Africa's population crowded into less than 13% of the land, in former 'homelands',<sup>14</sup>*

Following Hall's research, it is obviously imperative that the post-1994 regime should urgently take drastic measures to eradicate the conditions of abject poverty suffered by the rural people of Africa. And the only radical way of solving this problem is to give the African people the land annexed from them in 1913. Unfortunately the present regime cannot do this, because in 1996 it naively allowed the white farmers and industrialists to insert a property clause in the new constitution, which will enable them to retain the agricultural land they conquered from the blacks in 1913. Some analysts rightly observe that,

*In effect colonial land theft is now preserved by constitutional sanction.<sup>15</sup>*

As long as that property clause exists in the constitution no agricultural land will be restored back to the black people who are the rightful owners, not even the 30% promised to the poor and the landless by the RDP in 1996,<sup>16</sup> because whites have been given constitutional rights by the present dispensation to own this valuable agricultural property. Not even the 'willing-seller/willing-buyer' system – introduced by the same dispensation – can help blacks repossess their constitutionally confiscated land. The willing-seller in this context is the white farmer, and the willing-buyer is the landless black farmer who will receive a loan from the government if he/she has no financial means to buy the farm. This system goes at a snail's pace, as it is at the mercy of white farmers, the majority of whom are not willing to sell their farms as these farms serve as an economic means of living. Thus, the property clause of 1996 – in preventing any form of successful negotiation – is a serious act of undermining the equality of all people before the law.<sup>17</sup> Why the new democratic government should be constitutionally prejudiced against blacks – who voted it into power – in favour of whites in matters of land distribution, I will never understand. And why blacks should buy their own land – seized from them by means of conquest – will endlessly baffle me. Equally perturbed is Mr. Silumnko Sibondana, a community leader at Engcobo in the former Transkei homeland. He is being interviewed by Gcobani Vika, who is a PhD student at the University of Cape Town, and he shares his frustrations on the Land crisis as follows,

*Authentic development takes place when people are able to determine what their needs are and decide on how those needs should be met. ... Nothing much is happening in the countryside where there is endemic poverty and starvation. I can understand why many people are losing their patience with this new government in terms of development and service delivery in the rural areas. ... Unfortunately this world favours a chosen few.<sup>18</sup>*

Similar sentiments of frustration are expressed by researcher, Chris de Wet who claims that,

*Many poor people in South Africa feel that the struggle, the election, and the new government have left them no better off, that Mandela is too worried about 'keeping whites happy', and that the government is not paying enough attention to its real constituency but is more concerned with staying on the gravy train. Bureaucratic delays, perceptions that the Department of Land Affairs is run by whites, and frustrations with land access and tenure suggest that there may be stronger feelings around the land issue than was previously thought.<sup>19</sup>*

Vika concludes his discussion by assessing the respective feelings of frustration expressed above as follows,

*These two comments suggest that the barometer for measuring the success of the present government is not only its creation of a constitution that received international acclaim, nor in advancing the culture of reconciliation at the expense of the vast section of the South African population. Rather, it seems to me, its challenge rests entirely in its ability and its competencies to establish, develop and implement viable policies and strategies in the realm of land reform that will enable the vast majority of Black South Africans to control their destiny.<sup>20</sup>*

I interpret Vika to be saying that so long as there is no competence from the part of the government to amend policies, on land distribution, which presently favour the economic wellbeing of whites at the expense of black people – who constitute, by far, the majority of South African citizens – then the problems of poverty and starvation will continue unabated to pester the black people of this country.

What I have been doing above was to analyse the socio-political and economic crisis facing the poor of South Africa in the new political dispensation. According to the scholars cited above the poverty of the poor of the democratic South Africa is caused by high levels of unemployment, the diabolical abuse of billions of rand by the new government, and the ruthless maintenance of the apartheid Land Act of 1913 – by the present government – which severely prevents the restoration of 87% of agricultural land to its original owners, namely the black people of South Africa.

Obviously in the face of the stark realities of poverty in South Africa – researched by the four scholars above – the poor of South Africa are certainly in need of a real Theology of Liberation which will not only sympathise with them in their plight, but one which – from the point of view of faith – will concretely help them to liberate themselves from the socio-political and economic poverty inflicted on them.

The Theology of Liberation is church property.<sup>21</sup> This means that it is a theology which cannot do without the Church. As a result the Theology of Liberation cannot shoulder the task of liberating the poor from all oppressive structures without help of the church. And that explains why – in the next subsection – I focus on the role the Church should play in the post-1994 historical context of South Africa.

### *The Urgent Need to Intensify the Church's Protest against Injustice After 1994*

In South Africa the poor are already marching the streets in protest against the democratic government's poor service delivery.<sup>22</sup> But not many poor people may not understand how those marches are supposed to be part and parcel of their faith, because of the fact that the Church's protests against the socio-political and economic injustices inflicted on the poor – in the post 1994 period – are not as visible as they used to be in the period prior to 1994.<sup>23</sup> As a study of the total liberation of the poor from all forms of injustice – conducted from the point of view of faith – the Theology of Liberation carries the responsibility of helping the poor to understand that it is constitutive of their Christian faith to fight and eradicate all forms of structural injustice.<sup>24</sup> In this task the Theology of Liberation needs the leadership of the Church, which used to lead the marches against apartheid prior to 1994. The Theology of Liberation needs to remind the clergy that its involvement is still crucial because the poor are still jobless, landless and homeless in the country of their forefathers and foremothers. Writing in 1995, soon after the dawn of the new democratic dispensation in South Africa is Khoza Mgojo – a South African clergyman – who says,

*There is a debate today about whether the church should continue or discontinue its prophetic role of social criticism; whether it should not rather concentrate on its pastoral, caring, affirming, and non-critical role. This seems however to be a false question rooted in a dualistic scheme of theological reflection. The task of the church is bound up in its being. The church should be prophetic and pastoral simultaneously.*<sup>25</sup>

Mgojo further explains both the prophetic and the pastoral functions of the church by contending that,

*To be prophetic in the context I have sketched means that we as the church must continue to decry the practices of big business without and dominant forces within nation-states. The church must continue to oppose historical injustices in the forms of capitalist exploitation, alienation, sexism and racism. We must not abandon the trenches too quickly. In this region we must continue close ranks and lock horns with the enemy of humanity and God. But the prophetic dimension must be complemented by pastoral concern for the sheer enormity of human suffering in our region and the world over. We need to care for people, nursing wounds of the oppressed and bleeding people.*<sup>26</sup>

Mgojo is implicitly discussing two periods of the history of the church in South Africa, namely, the period prior to 1972 when the church was still largely a-political, mainly attending to its worship services, and its pastoral work which consisted of visiting the sick,

the prisoners, and the supplying of chaplaincies to various groups within and without the church, on the one hand, and the period after 1972, more especially the period 1976—1994,<sup>27</sup> which saw the prophetic involvement of the church – spearheaded by the South African Council of Churches – in matters of socio-political and economic justice, on the other.<sup>28</sup> The debate he is referring to, partly holds that the church must withdraw from the prophetic role it played – and resume its former a-political role – because of the democratic dispensation the country achieved in 1994. Mgojo disagrees. He suggests the amalgamation of the two tasks on which the debate focuses, more especially because one of them, namely the prophetic task, is not yet finished up until the poor have a taste of its economic fruits. Brigalia Hlophe Bam, the secretary general of the South African Council of Churches concurs. She also writes in 1995, and on behalf of the church in South Africa, as she strongly maintains that,

*We are at the same time mindful that we have an opportunity to share in the reconstruction of the nation. To turn away from this opportunity is surely to deny the call of the gospel to feed the hungry, minister to the poor, and heal those who cry out for the liberating power of Christ. We must be part of the nation-building process. We pray for the wisdom to know when to be prophetic in our critique of the state – recognizing that at times the most loyal service we can offer the state is critique and resistance. We pray too for the courage to soil our hands in building the nation, by supporting programmes of renewal – even when these programmes are not all that we might hope for. We need to learn what it means theologically and in praxis to address the problems of political economy, education, housing, health care and a host of related problems. We dare not sit on the sideline and point a finger. We are invited to play the game. If we do not, others will play it for us.<sup>29</sup>*

According to Hlophe Bam, quite a lot of work awaits the church in the new democratic dispensation. That work is mainly about nation building. Not only is the church to make a prophetic or constructive criticism, as it did in the past, but the church will have to give critical and theological support to the noble government programmes such as housing, education, health care, and others, among which we can add employment, land distribution, and rural improvement of roads and sewage system, as all these projects are meant to uplift the lives of the poor. My understanding of the theological support to which she refers partly means that the church should emphatically teach that human beings fully deserve those government programmes because they (human beings) are made in the image of God. My further understanding of Hlophe Bam is that she is also warning the church that if it fails to lend prophetic support to the new government, others – who use corrupt and fraudulent means – might step in to derail those good government projects in order to enrich their individual lives, at the economic disadvantage of the poor. Gustavo Gutierrez also feels the need for a church which – from the viewpoint of faith – will adequately address the fundamental rights of the poor. Indeed he strongly maintains that,

*We are called to build the church from below, from the poor up, from the exploited classes, the marginalized ethnic groups, the despised cultures. This*



*is what we call the project of a popular church, a church that, under the influence of the Spirit, arises from within the masses.*<sup>30</sup>

My interpretation of Gutierrez is that it is this church built from among the poor, which will eradicate the evils such as the economic exploitation of the poor, on the one hand, and the racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination, on the other. Gutierrez believes that – given the opportunity it deserves – this kind of church can radically change the discriminatory image of the currently ruling church. Indeed he contends that,

*Evangelization, the proclamation of the gospel, will be genuinely liberating when the poor themselves become its messengers. That is when we shall see the preaching of the gospel become a stumbling block and a scandal. For then we shall have a gospel that is no longer “presentable” in society. It will not sound nice and it will not smell good. The Lord who scarcely looks like a human being at all (cf. the songs of the Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah) will speak to us then, and only at the sound of his voice will we recognize Him as our liberator. The voice will convoke the ek-klesia, the assembly of those “called apart” in a new and different way.*<sup>31</sup>

I interpret Gutierrez to be dealing with the details of his vision of the church built from below. It will be a church which will have the poor themselves as its leadership. And preached by the poor, the gospel will downrightly condemn injustice, while at the same time, it promotes the ultimate unity of the members of the new classless church. Preached in this fashion, the gospel will unfortunately or fortunately, estrange the dominating class of oppressors who are used to a presentation which never tempers with their oppressive and exploitative tendencies.

Gutierrez’s idea of the church built from the level of the poor only reminds us that the struggle for the total liberation of the poor will be successful if it is led by the poor themselves, for they are the ones who feel the agony of oppression and exploitation more than anybody else. The Theology of Liberation will therefore pride itself of having achieved its intended goals if the poor become the leaders of the struggle under study. In South Africa, I strongly hold that the process of accelerating the leadership role of the poor in the struggle against injustice should consist first and foremost, in the recognition and the respect of the poor’s indigenous way of worshipping, which specifically refers to their cultural veneration of their ancestors. The Theology of Liberation will certainly be popular and relevant to the poor of South Africa if, by way of speeding up the interest of the poor in the liberation process – from the point of view of faith discussed by Mgojo, Hlophe Bam, and Gutierrez above – it critically incorporates the veneration of African ancestors. And since this critical incorporation of the veneration of African ancestors will take place in the Small Christian Communities – which are part and parcel of the Church – it is absolutely important to explain their nature.

**The Basic Christian Communities (in Africa called the Small Christian Communities)**

One of the things we need to understand and critique is the question of the Basic Christian Communities which form an integral part of the Theology of Liberation. Their role is so essential within the creation of the Theology of Liberation to the extent that one may say that it is absolutely impossible to be involved in the programmes of this theology without them. Dawson – a British scholar – concurs by arguing that,

*Although it can be said that the majority of its theological and its socio-political critique was in place prior to the mid-1970s, it was only via its engagement with the nascent movement that Latin American Liberation Theology was fully enabled to root itself within the lived experiences of the masses at the base. Without this praxiological grounding, liberation theology would neither have been able to articulate the sufferings of the poor, nor been allowed to claim the representative status upon which so much of its credibility continues to rest.<sup>32</sup>*

Following Dawson it would not be far from the truth to say that no liberation theology can exist without the Basic Christian Community as its pastoral base. Every kind of the Theology of Liberation has got to have as its starting point the oppressive experience, as expressed and shared by the poor within a Basic Christian Community. Of course, there are poor people who are not members of a Basic Christian Community. Their experience of structural oppression is also valid as a basis of the Theology of Liberation.

In South Africa the idea of these Basic Christian Communities was imported from Brazil via Zambia in 1989. In Zambia, and in most of East African states they were given the name Small Christian Communities (SCCs) which South Africa inherited. The Right Rev, Fritz Lobinger – the former bishop of Aliwal North – was instrumental in establishing the SCCs within the Catholic Church in South Africa. Six years later Lobinger tried to have an assessment of the Small Christian Communities in South Africa, and he reported that,

*Many parishes have reported that the majority of the SCCs find it difficult to keep up weekly meetings. Their members cannot maintain the rhythm of the regular weekly Gospel-sharing meetings throughout the year. After some time the attendance drops and in some instances the meetings cease to be held until they are revived because of some parish event.<sup>33</sup>*

Thus, Lobinger found out that the majority of parishes were not enthusiastic about the idea of establishing SCCs as a result the attendance of the meetings became very poor. He seems to have a way of tolerating the poor attendance of the meetings of the SCCs. He maintains that,

*This does not mean that people dislike the SCCs, on the contrary, they find them effective and supportive, but in some places the members cannot just sustain the spiritual energy required for two church meetings weekly throughout the year; one on Sunday during the Eucharistic celebration and the other during the week in the neighbourhood for the bible sharing. For quite a number of SCC*

*members there is even a third meeting: the sodality, choir, or other church activity.*<sup>34</sup>

Lobinger needs to explain how people feel the effective support of a literally dying organization. It is dying because people don't see the value of attending its meetings. How do they feel its support when – as a sign of their dislike – they walk so far away from it? In short, if they like the SCCs – in addition to the sodality and Eucharistic meetings – they would set aside a special time for the SCCs meetings. People brave a terribly cold night to go and watch a soccer match every Wednesday of the Winter season in South Africa. They see value in these matches, and that explains why even a terrible weather does not prevent them from going to these meetings. If there is value in the SCCs people would flock to its meetings in countless numbers.

Bishop Michael Wuestenberg is the successor of Bishop Lobinger in the diocese of Aliwal North. He seems to have a similar experience to that of his predecessor with regard to the question of the SCCs in South Africa. He claims that,

*There are still many parishes in South Africa without SCCs and even where they exist, not every Catholic takes part in them. The official policy is to have SCCs in most areas, but in practice they seem to be an option. Priests and other animators have to use programmes and make a lot of effort to convince people of the value of the SCCs and to encourage them adopt this way of being Church. It is not that people do not like this idea but, they just have to adjust to it. In many parishes, the SCCs are only confined to certain areas or villages and even then, not all members attend the meetings.*<sup>35</sup>

But, why are South Africans resisting this idea of SCCs? Why do so many parishes in South Africa dislike the idea of SCCs? Bishop Wuestenberg, like his predecessor, thinks that South Africans do like the idea of SCCs. But if that is the case, why that which is supposed to be the policy of the Church, namely, the implementation of the SCCs in South Africa ends up being reduced – by the grassroots level of the church in South Africa – to an option? Surely, a policy is commonly understood to be obligatory. How does one force this idea down the throats of those numerous South African Catholics who don't want it? No, no force should be applied. Instead, South African church authorities need to go back to the people and ask why the idea of SCCs was not ideal. In the meantime my speculation is that when the SCCs were introduced into the South African Catholic Church, one of their revolutionary aims, namely, to fight against all forms of injustice inflicted on the lives of the poor, was omitted. Yes, originally – in the 1950s – when Cardinal Angelo Rossi establishes them in Brazil, the SCCs' main function was to hold priestless liturgical services, because of the shortage of priests at that time.<sup>36</sup> But after 1975 – soon after their national conference which was organized by the bishops of Brazil – the SCCs in Brazil took a different shape which had an indelible impact on the whole Latin American continent. And the shape was that of helping the poor to liberate themselves from every facet of oppression and exploitation.<sup>37</sup> No wonder Gottfried Deelen – a missionary scholar in Brazil – strongly maintains that,

*The first stage of the BCC's action in society is the battle against poverty. People leave individualism behind and commit themselves as a group, because their lives or very survival is at stake. The BCC focuses on the interest of the people, so that a collective commitment becomes possible.*<sup>38</sup>

Deelen is discussing this new shape of the SCCs which took place from 1975. Deelen calls them BCCs – which mean Basic Christian Communities – because that is their original name which South African Church authorities changed to SCCs. It was this important shape of the late 1970s which was hidden from the South Africans. Had this shape been included among the imports of the 1980s, perhaps it was going to divide the Catholic Church in South Africa into two conflicting camps, namely, the Whites and the Blacks. The latter would surely have been fascinated by the Brazilian shape and immediately adopted it, as it seemed very relevant for the liberation of black folks from apartheid at that time. But perhaps the church authorities would have been severely persecuted by the apartheid government, had the 1975 Brazilian SCC idea been successfully imported. The Church in Burundi was tortured for allowing its SCCs to function in a manner similar to the 1975 Brazilian SCCs. Indeed George Kwame Kumi writes,

*For instance, when the BECs (Inama-Sahwanya) of Burundi extended their activities beyond prayer and evangelization into socio-political action, the politicians felt their power threatened so they attacked the church by defaming the bishops, expelling the missionaries and ordering the confinement of all church activities to Sunday.*<sup>39</sup>

If the church authorities in South Africa hid the 1975 purpose of the existence of the SCCs – as lived by the poor of Brazil – for fear of being persecuted as the Burundi church personnel was, then I understand, and I sympathize, for not everybody is called to martyrdom. But it is exactly at this point that the grassroots level of the church should have been consulted on this matter. This consultation would have resulted in an overwhelming support of the idea of the SCCs by the majority of black Catholics who would have passed the idea to members of the other denominations, because during that period, namely, the 1980s, the struggle for the total elimination of apartheid was already being waged at an ecumenical level.<sup>40</sup> The SCCs were going to serve as additional think tanks of the struggle. In short, I am saying that the idea of the SCCs – especially the Brazilian model of 1975 – will be welcome in any Third World country if it addresses the priorities of the populace. Bishop Julio X. Labayen of the Philippines concurs: in his definition of the BCCs he says,

*By Basic Christian Communities is meant small local groups of Christians who meet to pray and sing, reflect on the word of God, occasionally to celebrate the sacraments and to help one another solve the problems they face in life. Today such Christians are mostly poor people living in city slums and rural areas of the so-called "Third World". They are not only poor materially, but they are abused and denied their due recognition of human dignity. Basic Christian*

*Communities aim to promote participation of their members in the totality of life activities, on the basis of their common baptism and human equality.*<sup>41</sup>

The first sentences of Labayen's definition of the BCCs reflect the first period, namely, the 1950s when the BCCs were established for liturgical purposes. The latter sentences – which start with the description of the social status the members of the BCCs – reflect the period from 1975 when the BCCs fully adopted, as their primary responsibility, the task of fiercely fighting for the fundamental rights of the poor. During this period the Bishops Conference of Brazil saw the need to intensify the moral and physical support of the BCCs. And emphasizing the importance of the supportive role the bishops, priests, religious and other professional people are supposed to play for the successful existence of the BCCs is Bishop Ottavio Dotti of Brazil who said,

*The bishops, priests, together with the religious, may be able to contribute special light, but they are not the only source of light: nor are they the sole organizers of the enterprise of the caminada. Rather they walk with the lay people, searching, moving forward, sometimes backward, listening to one another and to the Spirit in their midst, trying to find out together what should be the life and shape of the church today.*<sup>42</sup>

Thus, according to Bishop Dotti the mutual support between the poor and the professionals is crucial for the successful growth of the SCCs which in the contexts of Brazil and the Philippines are known as BCCs. And the word, *caminada* translated as “walking (together)” is symbolic of the importance of the unity which is supposed to strongly hold the two groups together. But somebody has to lead the walk: the walk is led by the poor themselves, continues the bishop, and is supported by the professionals. Indeed he claims,

*The people organize themselves and the church supports them morally and in any way it can.*<sup>43</sup>

In the context of the statement cited above the word *church* refers to the leadership of the church. Using the word *church* in the same way is Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador who – also recommending the full support of the BCCs – strongly holds that,

*The church has to be at the service of its own people by accompanying and giving them support in the various movements of their journey: No less can the church shirk the task of defending the weak and those in real need, whatever the nature of the groups or individuals who support just causes.*<sup>44</sup>

My interpretation of the archbishop is that the church leadership is supposed to support all individuals and all groups – be they Christian or not – who radically fight for a just society. And inviting the whole church to be in constant dialogue with the BCCs, so that eventually everybody sees the value of what they are trying to achieve is Bishop Labayen who holds that,

*If I speak of hunger and its solution, it will not be with same urgency and priority as the person who goes hungry everyday. I may even suggest that a committee be formed to study the roots of hunger first, and then on the basis of the research, how to attack and resolve the problem. In the meantime thousands of people will have died of hunger. If we don't interact closely with the poor, we are liable to remain trapped in our middle class self-interest and rationalizations. If we don't have the BCCs in which the poor can articulate their point of view, we simply will not know how the poor look at reality nor what their aspirations are, then we will fail to be, in a real sense, church to poor. Only, if we adopt the viewpoint of the poor, the exploited, the repressed and oppressed masses, shall we then avoid genuine Marxist criticism: that religion is merely a legitimization of our avarice and selfish interest.<sup>45</sup>*

According to Bishop Labayen the BCCs serve as forums or platforms where the poor can articulate their socio-economic and political difficulties. Labayen, therefore, encourages wealthy and middle-class members of the church to frequent the BCCs – even to become members, if possible – so as to listen to the story of the poor. In so doing they might find themselves motivated by their faith to liberate the poor from all forms of oppression, thereby even concretely convincing the Marxist onlookers that religion can be utilized to transform the lives of the most impoverished of the populace.

John Guiney is a Jesuit missionary priest in Tanzania. He focuses on the comparative study of the Brazilian BCCs and the East African SCCs. He finds the former to be flourishing while the latter is gradually dwindling. The reason he repeatedly gives is that the BCCs were born as a response to the urgent needs of the people, and that explains why they are booming. In the case of the SCCs of East Africa, the urgent needs of the people were disregarded, and they (SCCs) eventually deteriorated into bible-sharing or prayer-groups which have absolutely nothing to do with life as it's lived around them. Indeed he writes,

*What is central to the progress of BCCs in Latin America is that, in contrast to the SCCs in Eastern Africa, the former did not emerge from documents, but, rather, they had their beginnings in pastoral practice. They emerged from three convergent lines of actions, based on the felt needs of the people in the community, and in order to serve those real needs.<sup>46</sup>*

Thus, according to Guiney the SCCs of Eastern Africa will be as successful as the BCCs of Latin America only if they address the urgent needs of the African people, most especially the marginalized. So important is this question of addressing the pressing needs that Guiney even reiterates it – in a different way – for the relevance and the future survival of the SCCs. He says,

*It is important to note that a significant point of contrast between SCCs and BCCs is the manner in which the SCCs and the BCCs were started. SCCs started from above, from guideline – documents and plans for pastoral planning. BCCs started from below, from the grassroots of pastoral practice, taking into account of, and in order to cater for, the local people felt needs and concerns. This is an important point for the setting up or restarting of SCCs in Africa, to bear in mind that it is crucial for people's felt needs to be taken onto account, as appropriate context for starting and fostering SCCs.<sup>47</sup>*

Thus, according to Guiney and Labayen, the BCCs of Latin America were established mainly to attend to the major social problems of the poor. If this major function of the BCCs can be extended to the African Continent as a whole, a lot of poor people can begin to value them highly and to fight for their sustenance. And this does not rule out the importance of the bible or Gospel-sharing as discussed by Wuesteberg above. The bible or Gospel-sharing is of vital importance if it seriously helps the people to solve their problems, more especially the cultural and the socio-economic and political difficulties which they encounter on a regular basis. Joseph Healy agrees. He has been a Maryknoll missionary in Tanzania from 1968, and he strongly believes that,

*... SCCs require help/encouragement/animation to move from insulated prayer groups to faith-sharing reflecting communities that relate the bible to daily life, connect faith to concrete lived experience and integrate culture and liberation.*

*Just as we need an appropriate technology for socio-economic development in Africa, we also need an appropriate methodology for Bible Sharing and Bible Reflection in Africa. This means evolving a method of reflection in an African context. Such an inculturated model would bring together culture (the customs and traditions of the people) and liberation (the struggles of the people). Bishop Christopher Mwoleka of Rulenge Diocese in Tanzania calls it "finding the bait." In Latin America the bait is justice and peace issues (oppression, violence, land reform, inadequate housing, etc.) which challenge the BCC members to search the Scriptures and find how the word of God can give light and guidance to their daily struggles and encourage them to transform the society. But how do we inculturate Bible Reflection in our African SCCs. What is the African bait to attract and to conscientize Christians? How do we integrate Scripture and life, life and Scripture? Answers can only come from the grassroots experience of the SCCs themselves.<sup>48</sup>*

The bait discussed by Bishop Mwoleka above is symbolic of the priorities of the populace I referred to earlier on. The same bait symbolises the daily needs of Africans, their cultural and their socio-political and economic demands mentioned by Healy in his research. There seems

to be similarities in the bait given to the poor of Latin America, as discussed by Bishop Mwoleka, on the one hand, and the bait which attracts the Africans, as presented by Healy, on the other. Both parties yearn for socio-political and economic liberation, to which Healy adds cultural liberation for Africans. Needless to say that the poor of South Africa have the same yearnings and this is what my thesis is all about. This bait – symbolised by these yearnings – is what the SCCs have got to address from the point of view of the scriptures.

In short Mwoleka and Healy – in agreement with the findings of Labayen and Guiney – also feel strongly that the SCCs of Africa will be certainly powerful if – like their Latin American counterparts – they attend to the urgent needs of the people.

Having explained the importance of the SCCs I now propose the veneration of African ancestors as one of the most essential matters to be critically discussed and accepted by the SCCs. The majority of African people love their ancestors very passionately. The Theology of Liberation will therefore be wise to include in the prayer sessions and critical discussions of its SCCs this indigenous cultural value of Africa. I argue, below, that all urgent needs of the poor of South Africa – most especially the need to be liberated from all forms of injustice – will be successfully attended to if the veneration of African ancestors is one of the priorities of the Theology of Liberation. This means that the poor will surely take the responsibility of leading the struggle for their own liberation – as intended by the Theology of Liberation – if this theology recognizes and respects their beloved ancestors. The importance of the veneration of African ancestors is the focus of my next discussion.

### *The Importance of Liberation Theology's Respect for African Ancestors*

The veneration of African ancestors – on which I am about to focus – is part of African Theology. I wish to include the veneration of the ancestors of Africa into the study of the relevance of the Theology of Liberation. The Theology of Liberation will be acceptable to an overwhelming majority of poor people in South Africa, if it includes in its spirituality, the veneration of African ancestors. So strong is the link between the Africans and their ancestors, so intimate is this link that no serious scholarly study on African traditional religions and cultures is possible without its proper recognition. Among the many scholars who duly respect the intimacy that exists between the Africans and their ancestors, is Diane Stinton – a Canadian scholar who lectures at the University of Nairobi. She observes that,

*The vital role of the ancestors in traditional African thought lies beyond dispute, with clear attestation in literature on African religions and on African Christianity. Among the primary sources in this study, Benezet Bujo asserts that the notion of communion with the dead is central to the worldview of African peoples, citing evidence from funeral rites, initiation rites, hunting ceremonies, and other rituals among the Bahema of Congo.<sup>49</sup>*



Another African scholar – in addition to Bujo – who fascinates Stinton in the area of the African veneration of ancestors is Jean Marc Ela of Cameroon who maintains that,

*In many traditional societies, the cult of the dead is perhaps that aspect of culture to which the African is most attached – the heritage clung to above all else. Indeed the cult of the ancestors is so widespread throughout Africa that it is impossible to avoid the questions this practice raises for Christian life and reflection.*<sup>50</sup>

What I learn from the research of three scholars, namely, Stinton, Bujo, and Ela, is that what unites Africans of different languages and cultures is this intimate relationship which exists between each African nation and its ancestors. This is the most essential aspect of any African culture. In other words, the Africans jealously claim that they inherited their customs, their cultures and every other traditional value from their respective ancestors. The Theology of Liberation must not be infatuated by the temptations which led the missionaries to despise the African cultures and beliefs as superstitions. John Ngubane's research reveals some of these unfortunate missionary judgements on African culture in South Africa. He writes,

*When missionaries came to preach the gospel in Africa, they brought along a whole range of Western values. They appeared determined to instil these Western values and a distaste especially for traditional religious values and African culture, which were considered inferior and primitive.*<sup>51</sup>

Ngubane continues to say that although they welcomed Christianity into their lives, many Africans did not, however, part ways with their traditional African religion and cultures. The practice of these valuable African ways of life was done underground, because of the European missionaries' disapproval. Ngubane puts it as follows,

*A growing number of Africans embraced Christianity. But this did not mean full loyalties and fellowship with the Church, for Africans as a whole were not convinced about the inferiority of their religious and cultural values. Therefore the majority of African Christians remained only partially converted according to the expectations of the missionaries. They were attached to their traditional and cultural values, and therefore did not always pursue their new faith within the bounds of missionary orthodoxy.*<sup>52</sup>

Ngubane is thus, assuring us of the strong and emotional ties the Africans have about their traditional religion and cultural values. As a result they get deeply hurt when missionaries looked down on these aboriginal values, and they showed their indignation by paying lip service to the Christianity which the missionaries preached to them. What this implies is that the Theology of Liberation will be welcome by the majority of the

poor and oppressed of South Africa – and of Africa as a whole – if it duly respects their indigenous religion and cultures, most especially the veneration of the ancestors which serves as both foundation and pillars of these traditional values.<sup>53</sup> Ngubane further noticed that the clash between the African traditional religion and Christianity is on-going and might not come to the desired end, as the former continues to resist the latter's downgrading attitudes which manifest themselves from one generation to another.<sup>54</sup> Laurenti Magesa – a Tanzanian African Theologian – angrily concurs. He maintains that,

*Christian opposition to African Religion is often a child of stereotyping, whereby complex African spiritual perceptions and longings are compared to Christian rational dogmatic formulations. But such stereotypes often pay scant attention to questions that lie at the heart of the African person's life. Thus, overall hostility violates the integrity of the Africans' humanity and alienates them from themselves. The estrangement expresses itself in two ways. On the one hand, there is the phenomenon of double religious consciousness or spiritual schizophrenia among the majority of African Christians, who are unable to integrate Christian dogmatic demands into their African spirituality. On the other hand, there is the mushrooming of breakaway sects, churches, and movements generally clustered under African Initiated, Pentecostal, and Prosperity Gospel churches. Paradoxically, both phenomena show that Africans do not in principle reject faith in Christ, only certain expressions of it foreign to their experience of God.<sup>55</sup>*

According to Magesa the African inability to harmonise African spirituality with western dogmatic demands has led to the Africans' decision to break away from the mainline churches, to form different sects. The same inability, continues Magesa, has led to the practice of a disharmony – or a schizophrenic relationship – between African traditional religion and Western dogmatic teachings. A good example of this schizophrenia is indirectly given by Festo Mkenda – a Tanzanian Jesuit priest – who makes a comparative study of western Christian values with African traditional values. Among many questions, he asks,

*Or what does it mean to view one's good relatives who have gone on to the afterlife as pitiable souls perpetually in need of the prayers of the living, rather than as good ancestors on whose intervention the living can depend? ... Clearly, most Africans have found it difficult to reconcile themselves with the radical divide between the living and the dead that Christianity introduces into their worldview even as it confirms their robust indigenous faith in the afterlife.<sup>56</sup>*

I understand Mkenda to be saying that long before the arrival of western Christian missionaries on the African continent, Africans already had a very strong faith in the

afterlife which they expressed through their intimate relationship with their ancestors. The Christian confirmed this African faith through a dogmatic teaching on Purgatory, which is a transitory stage to heaven where the souls of the dead are languishing in fire for the venial sins they committed before departing from the earth.<sup>57</sup> Obviously the dogmatic teaching was confusing to many African minds, who never thought that they had the obligation to prayerfully pity the ancestors who were languishing in the fires of purgatory. I would suggest no domination of one religion by the other, but some kind of dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion, which eventually will result in some kind of synthesis of the two teachings, rather than leave the African in a state of religious schizophrenia, as is the case at the present moment. Furthermore, I would suggest a dialogue of this nature between the exponents of the Theology of Liberation and the proponents of the veneration of African ancestors, if the former wishes to be of relevance to the poor and oppressed of South Africa and the rest of the continent.

And in the attempt to explain their functions is John Mbiti who gives the ancestors the name, intermediaries. He writes,

*The idea of intermediaries fits well with the African view of the universe, which holds that the invisible world is in some ways higher than that of man, but God is higher still. In order to reach God effectively it may be useful to approach Him by first approaching those who are lower than he is but higher than the ordinary person.*<sup>58</sup>

I understand Mbiti to be saying that there is in a way some hierarchical relationship uniting God, the ancestors, and the human beings that are not yet dead. At the top of this hierarchical structure is God who is in control of the whole universe. A little lower than God are the ancestors who serve as intermediaries between God and the living. Humanity or the living, are right at the bottom of the hierarchical structure. They offer their prayers, not so much to the ancestors, but to God who acts through the instrumentality of the ancestors to approve and bless the various projects of humanity.

The living-dead is another name which Mbiti gives to the ancestors. He actually has problems with the terms, 'ancestors' or 'ancestral spirits' and that explains why he would rather call them the living-dead.<sup>59</sup> The reason why he is opposed to the usage of the term 'ancestor' is not clear. However, he concurs with Ezekiel Gwembe, Eugene Lapointe, and Buti Tlhagale – who are Southern African scholars – that the reality of the African dead who are mediators between God and the spirits, on the one hand, and the living, who are still in the physical world, on the other, does exist and that it is central to an African family.<sup>60</sup> Indeed he goes into a detailed description of this mediation as follows:

They are the 'spirits' with which African peoples are most concerned: it is through the living-dead that the spirit world becomes personal to men. They are still part of their human families, and people have personal memories of them... They return to their human families from time to time and they share meals with them,

however symbolically. They know and have interest in what is going on in the family. When they appear, which is generally to the oldest members of the household they are recognized by name as ‘so and so’; they enquire about family affairs, and may even warn of impending danger or rebuke those who have failed to follow their special instructions. They are the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities. Offence in these matters is ultimately an offence against the forebearers who, in that capacity, act as the invisible police of the families and communities. Because they are still ‘people’, the living-dead are therefore the closest link between men and God: they know the needs of men, and they have ‘recently’ here with men, and at the same time they have full access to the channels of communicating with God directly, or according to some societies, indirectly through their forebearers.<sup>61</sup>

What Mbiti is telling us above is that – in accordance with the African traditional thought patterns – the ancestors are not dead: On the contrary they are alive and they are with God in a manner the living cannot understand. As a result they are actively involved in the affairs of the living, and they are custodians of the traditions, ethics and activities of the living. They are protectors or police of families, and as such they are called upon when disaster tragically strikes a family or the nation. The disaster in question may range from sexual infertility, incurable diseases, to death through lightning or a road accident which strikes the family or nation at very short intervals. And because they are family, they have to be invited when minor or major decisions are about to be carried out by the family. They do take offence – although very seldom – when their blessing is excluded in family matters of major decisions. For example they once protested when a family released its son to go and study for the priesthood, without their blessing. As a result the son never continued with his studies – for the period of two years – up until proper negotiations between the family and the ancestors took place. The blessing was finally granted. The young man went back to the seminary to complete his studies. Today he is the happiest priest the world has ever seen. A few African nuns – who are very much happy with their religious life – have recounted personal stories of the same nature. The message of these personal stores is that ancestors are family – they are still members of the families of the living. As a result they cannot be by-passed when major decisions in the families are about to be taken. Gwembe clarifies this point by providing us with a famous example which exists in the lives of many African nations. He observes that,

*Also marriage cannot be done without the presence and the approval of the ancestors. The bride cannot be handed over without informing the ancestors nor can she join the family of the bridegroom without the ancestors of the bridegroom having been informed about her presence and the intention of the “foreigner” in the house.<sup>62</sup>*

My understanding of Gwembe’s observation above is that marriage is one of the major decisions an African family can arrive at. This decision therefore needs the blessing of the ancestors before it can be translated into action. And just as they cannot be by-passed within the context of marriage – because they are family and custodians of customs,

ethics, and traditions of the family – in the same way they cannot be excluded in any other major decision or activity of the family. Neither can they be excluded in major activities of the whole nation, Mbiti reminds us above.

The adoption of the Latin American version of the Theology of Liberation – which I propose – will certainly be a major decision for the poor of South Africa, whose poverty has been meticulously analysed by the scholars above. Another group of scholars cited above observe the importance of the of ancestor veneration in every part of the African continent. It is totally needless that a very large majority of the poor of South Africa also value the veneration of its ancestors very highly. The practical expression of the Theology of Liberation will be as successful as its theoretical expression – which I admired above – if this theology is determined to recognize and to respect the veneration of the ancestors, as jealously upheld and defended by the poor of South Africa, and those of the rest of the African continent. What this recognition partly means is that the poor of South Africa will be allowed – in the prayer sessions of the Basic Christian communities which take place on a regular basis – to include the invocation of the ancestors. In other words, the veneration of the ancestors – by the poor – has to constitute an integral or essential part of the spirituality of the Theology of Liberation, if this theology means to be relevant for South Africa. Allowing the poor to pray in their own indigenous way, allowing them to contribute culturally to the prayer life of the Theology of Liberation will actually accelerate the process – highly intended by this theology – of including them in the leadership of the struggle for their total liberation. Of course, the other sessions of the Basic Christian Communities will, among other things, focus on the critical examination of the ancestor veneration, so that elements – within the veneration process – which militate against the struggle for liberation should be clinically studied and transformed.

### *The Relevance of African Atonement Sacrifices in the Liberation Struggle*

The difference between the two sacrifices is already being discussed by Buti Tlhagale who argues that,

*The sacrifice to the ancestors could be looked at as sacrifice not in its true proper sense but in a metaphorical sense. In other words, sacrifice in this context, is prayer for a special request (health, well-being, peace, reconciliation, favour, etc). The sacrifice in its true sense would then be reserved for the redemptive work of Christ. This would be the sacrifice made for the propitiation of sin. The sacrifice of Christ is made for the forgiveness of the sins committed by humankind. The sacrifice to ancestors is not made for the forgiveness of sins of humankind. It is essentially a kinship affair – no more no less. The sacrifice of Christ takes place on a universal plane, affecting humankind.*

*Another distinct feature of the sacrifice of the Cross and of the Mass is that it is offered for the living and the dead. The sacrifice of the ancestors is intended for the ancestors and not God. (Some people may want to argue differently).<sup>63</sup>*

Tlhagale does not explain why we should understand the sacrifice to the African ancestors in a metaphorical sense. Furthermore, I find close similarities in what he thinks are differences between the two sacrifices, namely the sacrifice of Christ and the African sacrifice: According to Tlhagale the sacrifice of Christ brought about the redemption of humankind while the African sacrifice brings about health, peace, well-being and reconciliation to an African family. The redemption of humankind achieved through the sacrifice of Christ does not exclude the gifts of peace, reconciliation, favour, well-being, and health attained through the African sacrifice. In other words, the two sacrifices share the same achievements, in spite of the fact that the one focuses on a large crowd of people, while the other focuses on a very small number of people, namely an African family. Another similar feature between the two sacrifices is the question of the forgiveness of sins. Tlhagale holds that the sacrifice of Christ is made for the forgiveness of the sins of humankind, while the sacrifice of the ancestors is not made for the sins of humankind: it is a family affair. If Tlhagale means that African sacrifices were utilized for the forgiveness of family sins only, I agree with him. African sacrifices achieved the forgiveness of the ancestors whenever a member or members of the family misbehaved, and the Africans have been carrying out with these sacrifices even long before the arrival of Christianity on the African continent. The results of the two sacrifices, namely the sacrifice of Christ and the African sacrifice, are qualitatively the same even though the former deals with a bigger number of penitents than that of the latter. How do we reconcile the two sacrifices? Which one is inferior to the other? Laurenti Magesa is indirectly answering the question. He writes,

*It can be said that God is the final recipient of all sacrifices in African Religion. Although in certain cases, particularly in the case of expiation of a major wrong-doing or for the purpose of averting a major affliction, sacrifice is made directly to God, more often sacrifices are offered to specific spirits. But in so far as these may be regarded as hypostases, representations, or refractions of God ... we can say that a sacrifice to any of them is a sacrifice also to God.<sup>64</sup>*

I would like to transfer the question of the equality of all sacrifices out of the African context and place it within the context of a comparative study of the sacrifice of Christ and the African sacrifice. Magesa argues that the ultimate recipient of all African sacrifices is God. The transfer of this argument implies that the recipient of all African sacrifices – especially expiatory sacrifices which are often offered for the forgiveness of family sins – and the recipient of the sacrifice of Christ, is God. Which of the two pleases Him most? Which criteria do we utilise to determine the most pleasing sacrifice? These questions do indicate that the debate between African expiatory sacrifices, and the sacrifice of Christ, is not going to be easy granted that God has been working through

both sacrifices to reconcile African families, on the one hand, and humanity as a whole, on the other. On the question of the equality of the two sacrifices, Tlhagale retorts,

*The sacrifice of the Cross is intended for all including the ancestors. They too are in need of salvation. We therefore need to be careful that we do not elevate the sacrifice of the ancestors onto a universal plane. But in as much as we invoke the saints, it is not a contradiction of our faith to invoke the ancestors. They too have a special place in the scheme of things. For too long we have kept them out of the Church of God. The word “Madlozi/Badimo” does not appear anywhere in our liturgical texts and yet they are celebrated in almost all African families. It is time we lift the banning order and welcome them openly into the Christian family of the living and the dead.<sup>65</sup>*

Thus, Tlhagale resolves the question of which of the two sacrifices is greater than the other: For him the sacrifice of Christ – because of its redemptive purpose – is greater than the African sacrifices offered to the ancestors. The problem may have been solved for some African Christians, while it remains unsolved for other Africans who may ask why God considers Hebrew sacrifices to be more redemptive than the African ones. Suffice it for now to say that Tlhagale’s solution satisfies only a section of the Africans while it leaves the others asking why God would be happier with the sacrifice of Christ when African sacrifices had the same power of reconciling family feuds, or squabbles between the living and the dead. The Theology of Liberation will certainly have to address such debates, so as to unite all the poor of South Africa – Christians and traditional hardliners alike – against oppressive forces who may use the ‘divide and rule’ tactics to keep them asunder with the ultimate purpose of derailing the achievement of their liberation. Tlhagale concludes his discussion with the description of an African ritual, which may further help an interested observer to understand why the poor venerate their ancestors so passionately. He contends that,

*The ritual of making an offering to the ancestors as far as we can ascertain, is a worthy candidate for baptism in the Catholic Church. This ritual has survived cultural change. It is therefore not a figment of our imagination. It is practised by each and every household. It is rich in symbolism. It is at the heart of an African religious experience. It represents communion with the world of the Spirits. It symbolic encounter with the living-dead. It brings the participants closer to God. It is a celebration of what people remember about the subject in question, about the family, about the ancestors of the family. It is an occasion of exchanging stories. The narrative keeps the family alive. The celebration is akin to the celebration of the sacramental memorial of the Paschal*

*event. It opens a radical opening to and a deep appreciation of the memorial of Christ. It is an occasion of pouring out feelings of sadness or joy. You can mourn or cry publicly or scream for joy. It is an occasion for renewing the bonds of friendship and community. It is a feast where the meal is shared, thus enforcing the feelings of togetherness.<sup>66</sup>*

To summarise Tlhagale's findings, the responsibility of the ritual is two-fold: The first responsibility is vertical in the sense that it strengthens the bond between the family and God; also between the same family and its ancestors. Secondly, the ritual attains the second responsibility – which is horizontal – by uniting family members among themselves, and by strengthening bonds of friendship between themselves and the surrounding community. Eugene Lapointe's research studies may be limited – in the sense that he deals only with the Basotho – nevertheless, I find him to be concurring with Tlhagale, when he contends that,

*Let us also emphasize that a sesotho sacrifice is always a feast or a public celebration, not only for the family concerned but also for the whole village and all who may come uninvited. No one is excluded, not even a passerby. At first the latter approaches with some diffidence but at the end all participants mix happily together. It is a time to sympathise or to rejoice with the family in its sorrow or in its joy, an occasion of renewing relationships, or reuniting the community – a beautiful lesson for our Christian liturgical celebrations. The sacrifices create and maintain a relationship, a vertical one with the ancestors, but also a horizontal one with the family the village and the neighbours.<sup>67</sup>*

The vertical and horizontal purposes of an African sacrifice – as articulated respectively by Tlhagale and Lapointe above – should motivate the Theology of Liberation to accommodate the veneration of African ancestors into its program of liberation. If sacrifices offered to ancestors can create and strengthen bonds of unity, not only between an African family and God, or an African family and the ancestors, on the one hand, but also between an African family and the whole neighbouring village, on the other, then the ancestors' veneration can easily serve as fertile soil on which to plant the seed of the liberation of the poor of South Africa, for it is the intention of the Theology of Liberation to unite the poor against any structure that deprives them of their fundamental rights. Following the findings of the two scholars above the blessing of the African ancestors which we invite by means of invocation and proper sacrifices will add more power of the unity of the poor against any evil structure that militates against their total liberation. And although Charles Nyamiti, a Tanzanian African theologian, does not mention the role of the surrounding neighbours in the sacrifice offered by an African family – as Tlhagale



and Lapointe do – he does nevertheless maintain that the results of the sacrifice offered by the family to the ancestors are often good. Indeed he claims that,

*The ancestor is believed to possess a right (or title) to regular sacred communication with his earthly kin through frequent prayers and ritual donations (= oblations). Such communication is intended to be an expression of love, thanksgiving, petition, and homage to the ancestor. The latter is expected to respond favourably to the prayers and ritual offerings by bestowing material and spiritual goods to his kin on earth, as a sign of his gratitude, love, faithfulness and respect towards them.*<sup>68</sup>

For too long the African ancestors have been kept out of the Church of God, complains Tlhagale, it is high time we lifted the banning, so as to welcome them openly into the Christian family of the living and the dead, more especially because God, according to Tlhagale and fellow scholars, has been uniting humanity through the instrumentality of the ancestors. Similarly, one can say that for too long we have excluded the blessing of the African ancestors from matters of the struggle against socio-political and economic injustice. To date no indigenous African invokes them against injustice. Have we joined forces with those who dismiss our contact with them as immoral, superstitions and punishable, and encourage us rather, to invoke the western ancestors, because the Church recognizes them as saints?<sup>69</sup> The scholars cited above have implicitly assured us that long before the arrival of western missionaries on the shores of the African continent, God was already blessing and forgiving African families through the instrumentality of the ancestors.<sup>70</sup> And if God has been doing so much good among Africans through the mediation of our ancestors, why should we relegate them to the background? If African ancestors can successfully ask God to bless and forgive their descendants – as various scholars attest, above – can't the same ancestors beg God to grant true liberation to the poor of South Africa? We pinned our hopes too much on the democratic dispensation, to the oblivion of the ancestors. Yes, let us unban them. Let us re-welcome them into the struggle against poverty, unemployment, squalor, bucket sewage system, studying under trees, corruption, for these – in addition to socio-political and economic problems analysed by scholars above – are inflicted on the lives of the poor of our time.

### *(B) African Ancestors as Pioneers of the Liberation Struggle*

The African ancestors I have been introducing to the Theology of Liberation are not newcomers in the field of the struggle against injustice. They are actually pioneers of this struggle which Lebamang Sebidi – a South African scholar – in 1984 passionately analysed as follows,

*The struggle that this paper is focusing on has now entered into its three hundred and thirty second year – 1652-1984. It has*

*been a long and arduous conflict. And far from being a merely exciting academic head-trip, or a fitting topic for some highfalutin'(sic) cerebral palaver, this protracted struggle, in all its stark reality and immediacy, has already claimed thousands of human lives, especially black human lives. The sixty-seven that were left stone dead at the 1960 Sharpeville massacre (Gerhard 1979 :238) were but a long echo of the 1921 Bulhoek slaughter, where a hundred and sixty-three black Israelites were gratuitously mown down by the sputtering rifle and the machine power of the South African police and defence force unit (Roux 1948: 136-7). This struggle has always been dead serious.<sup>71</sup>*

Following from the research conducted by Sebidi, the ancestors venerated by the poor of South Africa are not people who are ignorant of the struggle against injustice, neither are they people who never waged any wars against colonial forces: On the contrary, the two battles, fought by the Khoisan against the colonizers, on the one hand,<sup>72</sup> and the Isandlwana (1878) and the Bambata (1906) battles, on the other<sup>73</sup> – in addition to the massacres of Bulhoek and Sharpeville – are but a few instances among many,<sup>74</sup> which demonstrate how actively involved our ancestors were in the valiant defence of their patria and their fundamental rights.

Thus far the discussion on the veneration of the African ancestors has not come across elements within it that militate against the liberation of the poor from every facet of injustice. On the contrary, the veneration of African ancestors can be likened to fertile soil on which the seeds of authentic and total liberation will sprout and flourish, because the Theology of Liberation – like the veneration of the African ancestors – aims, first, at the (horizontal) unification of the poor among themselves, and, secondly, at the (vertical) the unity of the poor with God, as explained most especially by Tlhagale and Lapointe above. Pablo Richard, a Latin American liberation theologian, concurs indirectly. He starts his argument by including indigenous religions under what for him constitutes the religious awareness or the religious alternative of the poor. Indeed he writes,

*The religious awareness of the people is a combination of many things: popular religiosity, indigenous religions, Afro-American religions, animistic traditions, magic... The religious world of the people is an ocean too vast for anthropologists, sociologists, and theologians to plumb. For us it bears two important characteristics: it is an alternative religious awareness and in a certain sense it is an awareness informed by the gospel and asserting the gospel.<sup>75</sup>*

Richard further recommends a very intimate relationship between the Theology of Liberation and the popular religions of the indigenous people for the latter are the poor's alternative worship structures, compared to Christianity which tends to have dominating

tendencies. The second reason why Richard recommends a warm relationship between popular religions and the Theology of Liberation is that he finds the former to be asserting gospel values, despite the fact that they do differ from Christianity. Richard strongly cautions the Theology of Liberation that if it looks down upon the cultural religions of the poor it might deteriorate into some remote discipline which has nothing to do with the liberation of the poor. Indeed he strongly holds that,

*Liberation Theology can have power and future if it succeeds in taking root in this alternative and evangelical religious awareness of the people. If it fails to take root here, liberation theology will be another elitist, intellectualist, and sterile theology. Only through the religious awareness of the people can we come historically to the God of the poor and discover the power of God's liberating presence and word. Liberation Theology has its historical roots in popular culture and religion. It will never become a popular alternative to the religious system of domination, it will never have evangelizing power if it gives up its roots in popular religious awareness... Liberation Theology maintains faith and religion, faith and culture, faith and people. This is the necessary condition for it to develop, keep its identity, and have a future.<sup>76</sup>*

Thus, for Richard it is vitally important for the Theology of Liberation to recognize and respect the indigenous religions of the poor for this is the only way this theology can gain popularity and overwhelming acceptance among the poor, and that is also the only way the future and the identity of this theology can be perpetually maintained and guaranteed. Popular religion, to interpret Richard further, has been a means in history, through which God has been keeping contact with the indigenous people. Applied to the situation in South Africa, the argument of Richard means that the Theology of Liberation will have to recognize and respect the veneration of the African ancestors – as discussed above – if it honestly means to be of perpetual relevance to the poor of South Africa. Failure to include the veneration of African ancestors in the liberation programs, conducted by the Theology of Liberation, will certainly lead to this theology's sterility and unpopularity among the poor whose passionate love and respect for their ancestors is absolutely inextinguishable.

## **Part Two**

### **Socio-Political and Economic Difficulties Encountered in the Implementation Process**

It is now 2004, and the Latin American Theology of Liberation – which was born in the early 1970s – has not yet liberated any compensinos from every form of unjust structures inflicting the pain of oppression on them. Neither have I learned of any compensino – empowered by the Theology of Liberation – who led all others in the struggle against the evil socio-

economic and political powers that militate against their total liberation. Gustavo Gutierrez states it very clearly that it is one of the major tasks of the Theology of Liberation to help the poor to lead their own struggle against all forms of injustice, and that Liberation Theology will not have finished its primary duty if the poor are not yet in control of their own destiny.<sup>77</sup> It is now 2013, and the poor of Latin America are not yet in control of the destiny to total liberation. Gustavo Gutierrez – in the 1990s – does not deny. He writes,

*First, we need to remind ourselves that poverty has increased dramatically. The gap between the rich and the poor nations is today wider than two decades ago. The same is the case within each Latin American country.*<sup>78</sup>

I interpret Gutierrez to be saying that – two decades after the founding of the Theology of Liberation – the economic situation in Latin America and in the whole world moved from bad to worse. Within the context on Latin America this partly implies that the Theology of Liberation failed to help the poor arrive at the intended liberation. If the Theology of Liberation failed to help the poor of Latin America to achieve their desired liberation, what makes me think that the poor of South Africa will welcome it? If I told them that this theology was founded in the 1970s<sup>79</sup> with the specific aim of liberating the poor in Latin America from every facet of injustice, and that even now – after more than two decades of existence<sup>80</sup> – the Theology of Liberation still has not attained the intended goal, would they really buy into this kind of theology? Valpy Fitzgerald's observation of the Latin American socio-political and economic situation in the late 1990s might be helpful to our discussion. He notes that,

*In the late 1990s, although economic conditions in Latin America are not better than before, there has been a major change since the 1970s and 1980s in the sense that democracy and human rights are now better established throughout the continent.*<sup>81</sup>

What Fitzgerald means is that Latin America has been enjoying political democracy from the 1970s, but that democracy has been of no economic benefit to the poor, the majority of whom are still destitute and illiterate, without access to safe sanitation and safe water.<sup>82</sup> Fitzgerald further claims that some of the Latin American countries achieved their democracy through the influence of the Theology of Liberation.<sup>83</sup> But is this the kind of democracy which I should sell to the poor of South Africa? A democracy which leaves them poorer, destitute, illiterate, and with no ownership or control of the means of production? Will the poor of South Africa buy into this kind of democracy? Charles Villa-Vicencio – a South African theologian of liberation – is asking himself similar questions: He writes,

*Is liberation theology indeed a vehicle for liberating the poor not only when liberation is on the distant horizon but also when it is within grasp? Can liberation theology be more than a theology of resistance? In what follows I argue that it can.*<sup>84</sup>

Obviously what Villa-Vicencio says is that the Theology of Liberation will have to be more than a protest discipline, in order to prove its validity and relevance to the poor of the post-1994 period in South Africa. Before I allow him to explain himself into some detail, I just want to be faithful to the method of the Theology of Liberation,<sup>85</sup> by trying to analyse briefly the Post-1994 socio-political and economic conditions to which the poor of South are currently subjected. The analysis of the socio-political and economic problems of the poor of South Africa – after 1994 – is also meant to convince my audience that South Africa is indeed in need of a liberating – not a limping – Theology of Liberation.

### *The Details of the Relevance of Liberation Theology for the Poor of South Africa*

Having demonstrated the importance of including the veneration of African ancestors into the spirituality of the Theology of Liberation, I now discuss the way through which this theology can contribute substantially, towards the liberation of the poor from the abject conditions of poverty statistically analysed by scholars above. The approach I utilise is that which Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff jointly suggest should be followed whenever the poor intend eradicating the poverty which humiliates their lives. Their approach consists of three steps to which they attach the term ‘mediations.’ (I have discussed the details of these mediations in chapter 1 of my thesis). They call the first step the socio-analytical mediation, which investigates the root causes of poverty. In other words, this mediation tries to find out why the poor are poor.

The second step of analysis, the Boffs discuss, is called the Hermeneutical mediation, which makes use of the scriptures in order to look for God’s solution. In other words, this mediation makes use of the bible so as to understand what God is commanding the poor to do in order to liberate themselves from the agony of injustice imposed on them. Leonardo and Clodovis further hold that the third step of their approach is called the practical mediation, and it deals into some detail with the practical ways through which God’s solution – obtained from the second mediation – can be applied in that particular context, as contexts always differ from one another. I’m now trying to apply the approach of the Boffs, step by step, to the context of the poor of South Africa.

Under the socio-analytical mediation I am discussing the question of poverty as statistically analysed by the South African scholars cited above. Unemployment and landlessness appear to be the main causes of poverty in South Africa in the post 1994 political dispensation. One of the scholars, namely David Everatt, even concludes that the escalating levels of poverty among black children, especially those in the rural areas, are going to remain an insurmountable problem for a number of years to come. My interpretation of this scholar – and many other scholars dealing with the problem of poverty in South Africa – is that the poverty of the majority of black children will never come to the desired end, so long as capitalism is the economic system upheld and promoted by the ruling party. It is an economic system which benefits a few entrepreneurs – who alone possess the country’s means of production – at the expense of the large majority of workers who have to be underpaid and overworked for the entrepreneurs to gain colossal amounts of profits.<sup>86</sup> For the same purpose

of acquiring maximum profits for a few entrepreneurs, the system retrenches lots of workers, and will continue to retrench many more.<sup>87</sup> And that explains why the economist cited above can easily predict that the poverty of black children will still continue unabated for a number of years to come. What he actually means is that the parents of these children will be retrenched so that the capitalists can gain their profits. The retrenchment in question does not apply to rural workers only, but to urban workers as well. Capitalism operates in the same way in the farming areas of South Africa. As a result, many farm workers – having first lost their land through the Land Act of 1913, as discussed above – will lose their jobs and be subsequently evicted from the farms.<sup>88</sup> Thus, capitalism – an economic ideology which inevitably results in very high levels of unemployment and landlessness – is the main cause of the poverty of many South African blacks. The Theology of Liberation plans to fight capitalism as it is an economic system which clearly militates against the economic liberation of the poor in every Third World country.<sup>89</sup> In the context of Latin America this theology rightly observes that,

*There must be something wrong with a system that allows the majority of people to live in squalor and poverty while a small minority enjoys all the luxuries of the modern world. As a recent liberation theologian in the Orbis series argues, because economic inequality exists in a world in which there is hunger and poverty, “The logic of capitalism clearly collides with the biblical logic of the majorities ... The values, assumptions, and workings of the capitalist system are so hostile to biblical values that capitalism must be judged a fatally flawed system.”<sup>90</sup>*

Thus, the Theology of Liberation dismisses capitalism as totally opposed to the biblical view of poverty, according to which poverty is diabolically evil.<sup>91</sup> The Theology of Liberation is cited above to say that capitalism is fatally flawed, and it is because of its inability to solve the problem of hunger and poverty discussed in the same statement. Capitalism – wherever practised – will inevitably bring about the terrible results of a wide gap of income between the rich and the poor, as the latter do not have academic qualifications required to compete with the former on the labour market.<sup>92</sup> Capitalists further bribe governments in order to deprive the poor of the economic assets they are supposed to utilise in order to survive the scourge of exploitation inflicted on their lives by the rich.<sup>93</sup> Within the context of Latin America, the results of this ruthless economic deprivation are recounted by Robert McAfee Brown as follows:

*In Brazil the top 2% of land owners control 60% of arable land, while 70% of rural householders are landless or nearly so. In Colombia the top 4% of land owners control 60% of arable land, while 66% of rural households are landless or nearly so. In El Salvador the top 1% of land owners controls 41% of arable land, while 60% of rural households are landless or nearly so. In Guatamala the top 1% of land owners controls 34% of arable land, while 85% of rural householders are landless or nearly so.<sup>94</sup>*

It is the nature of statistics such as displayed by Brown above that motivate the Theology of Liberation to denounce capitalism as ruthless and fatally flawed. The insensitivity of capitalism to the economic needs of the poor contributed towards the unanimous decision – from the part of Latin American theologians of liberation – that it should, with immediate effect, be replaced by socialism, as socialism radically promotes the national ownership and control of the means of production.<sup>95</sup> Sigmund is aware of the exploitative tendencies of capitalism, but he does not see socialism as the only solution to the economic exploitation of the poor. As a result, he firmly maintains that,

*Instead of directing their wrath at capitalism, the liberation theologians should – and now are beginning to – direct more attention to promoting a more participatory democracy that will work to restrain the excesses to economic power, whether capitalist or socialist. They should work to expose the behind-the-scenes manipulation and corruption that characterize both capitalist and socialist governments, and to assure that the voice of the poor is heard – in the press, in the media, and in the halls of governments – rather than simply writing off all existing capitalist systems as structures of sin.<sup>96</sup>*

Sigmund seems to be valuing both capitalism and socialism, but he cautions that both should be strictly monitored because of negative features inherent in them. Charles Villa-Vicencio, a South African theologian of liberation, seemingly shares and broadens Sigmund's dilemma – within the South African situation – as to which of the two economic systems would concretely liberate the poor of South Africa. He expresses the framework within which he argues his point as follows:

1. *The failure of the economic and political structures of Eastern Europe.*
2. *The collapse of a widespread belief in utopian socialist ideals in the Third World countries.*
3. *The failure of the Western-based capitalism to meet the needs of the poor.*
4. *A new-found appreciation that even under the most adverse conditions, the poor rise in rebellion in demand of their rights.<sup>97</sup>*

Having thus clarified the context within which he wants to argue, Villa-Vicencio then proceeds with his analysis as follows:

*The shift in South Africa – from a doctrinaire Marxist-Leninist type socialism, often promoted by the trade unions, the South African Communist Party and some other liberation movements prior to 1990, to a more pragmatic demand for a market economy that addresses the needs of the poor – took place precisely within the ambits of compromise and make-shift adjustments. There is more at stake in the South African struggle for economic justice than a carefully balanced 'third option' economy. With sufficient political incentive the partial victories gained by workers in recent years could mark the beginning of a historic compromise between the dispossessed, workers,*

*bankers, business and government. There is at the same time a growing realization by all concerned that the solutions to the economic woe of the population are likely to be worked out within a market economy – a market economy within which the rights of the workers are protected and advanced. This, needless to say, involves a major structural undertaking. The ‘nuts and bolts’ of an appropriate economy cannot be debated here. It is not likely to be Marxist, socialist, or capitalist in any ‘pure’ essence – raising the question how useful the continual employment of these categories are in contemporary debate. It is not the task of theology to provide the detail of economic practice, although certain theological observations are appropriate.<sup>98</sup>*

What Villa-Vicencio proposes here is a very complicated mixed economy whose ingredients are partly Marxist, socialist, and capitalist. He claims not to be able to provide the details of the mixture. But he does hint – about three times – that some form of capitalism (which at times is termed market economy, because of the central role played by the market in that economic system), will be the dominating ingredient.

In order that an economic vision of the magnitude articulated by Villa-Vicencio above, should be understandable and acceptable – to the poor – it will have to base itself on the socio-economic rights of the poor. In other words, the socioeconomic rights of the poor – not only the employed poor but the unemployed poor as well – will have to form an essential part of the economic vision suggested by Villa-Vicencio. And indeed, the Rauol Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law maintains that,

*The right to live a dignified life can never be attained unless all basic necessities of life – work, food, housing, health care, education, and culture – are adequately and equitably available to everyone. Based squarely on this fundamental principle of the global human rights system, international human rights law has established individual and group rights relating to the civil, cultural, economic, political and social spheres.<sup>99</sup>*

I interpret the institute to be saying that it is imperative for all people to respect one another's rights as enumerated in the quoted statement. Most importantly it is the primary responsibility of various governments to see to it that these important rights are recognized and respected. It will therefore be the responsibility of the Theology of Liberation to challenge governments to supply the enforcement mechanisms through which these rights can be implemented and respected.

The second mediation of the method of the Theology of Liberation – according to the Boff brothers – deals with the prayerful study of the scriptures with the specific purpose of finding out what solution God is commanding us to apply to the problem of the exploitation and the oppression of the poor. To respect the African context – and to make the project of liberation successful in Africa – the prayerful study will have to be combined with the invocation of the African ancestors in the Small Basic Communities. And granted the power which atonement sacrifices to ancestors have in uniting an individual family with God, on the one hand, and in



uniting the same family with the rest of the community, on the other, all families will have to take turns – at their homes, as usual – to offer such sacrifices so as to strengthen the alliance between God and the whole community against the exploitation and the oppression of the poor. The atonement sacrifices are offered specifically to apologize for the exclusion of ancestors whenever we wanted to improve the quality of the socio-economic lives of the poor. After praying with and through the African ancestors – at the Basic Christian Communities and at our homes – we then proceed to the Practical Mediation.

At the Practical Mediation, continue Leonardo and Clodovis, we carry out the command we acquired from God through our meditative reading of the scriptures, on the one hand, and through our invocation and atonement sacrifices to the African ancestors, on the other. God commands us to liberate the poor by making them conscious of their socio-economic rights which the South African Human Rights Commission enumerates as follows:

- *Right to education*
- *Right to food*
- *Right to health*
- *Right to land*
- *Right to water*
- *Environmental Rights*
- *Right to social security*
- *Right to housing*<sup>100</sup>

The South African Human Rights Commission further informs us that it is the obligation of the Government to protect, to promote and to have each right recognized and respected.<sup>101</sup> The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law concurs, but it quickly adds that in general many government leaders do neglect the obligation to enforce the recognition and the respect of the socio-economic rights in their respective countries.<sup>102</sup> And resulting from this unfortunate neglect is the fact that,

*Despite significant progress since the establishment of the United Nations in addressing the problems of human deprivation, well over one billion people live in circumstances of extreme poverty, homelessness, hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, illiteracy and chronic ill-health. More than 1.5 billion people lack access to clean drinking-water and sanitation, some 500 million children don't have access even to primary education; and more than one billion adults cannot read and write. This massive marginalization, in spite of continued global economic growth, raises serious questions, not only of development, but also of basic human rights.*<sup>103</sup>

The statistical information provided above reflects the ruthless results of the economic exploitation of the Third World countries by the capitalist countries of the West. The political leadership in the Third World collaborates with the western countries in the merciless economic exploitation of the populace which results in high levels of poverty, landlessness, unemployment, illiteracy, and chronic-illnesses reflected in the statement.<sup>104</sup> South Africa was still enjoying its democratic infancy – in 1996 – when the statistic information above was issued. It would therefore be unfair to accuse our new democracy of having been part of the horrible picture provided by the statistics above. Our new democratic dispensation – in South Africa – is almost twenty years of age. Is the leadership of this new dispensation determined to protect the poor from the economic exploitation already suffered by the poor of other Third World countries at the hands of the western countries? I doubt. Among other things, look at the billions of rand which were wasted – by the South African political leadership – on the purchase of expensive warplanes and submarines manufactured by the West, when no country in the world intended waging any war against South Africa. That amount of money alone – which is more than R158 billion<sup>105</sup> – could have solved lots of the poor's economic problems. Instead of attending to the economic needs of the poor that money is utilized to make the rich – in South Africa and in the western countries – richer, at the economic disadvantage of the poor, who are terribly exploited in the process. And that proves the point that our leadership is just as negligent as the leadership of other Third world countries.

The failure – from the part of the political leadership – to restore the agricultural land to its rightful owners, namely, the blacks and the Khoisan, is another point which proves the government's neglect of the enforcement of the respect of the poor's human rights in South Africa. Nobody understands why – according to the policy of the present dispensation – blacks and Khoisan should buy land which was snatched away from them at gunpoint by whites. All these important points mean that the poor are not going to be given their rights on a silver platter: They will have to create means to acquire them peacefully, for a violent revolution might lead to a scandalous massacre – of more than 800,000 – similar to that of Rwanda.<sup>106</sup> What does the Theology of Liberation advise them to do?

Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff jointly foresee success in the area of the restoration of the agricultural land to its rightful owners, if the following steps are taken:

- *Stressing the value of worker unity and organization: unions, cooperatives, or other movements;*
- *Publicizing the need for agrarian reform to be brought about by those who work the land;*
- *Making a choice of particular banners under which to fight, linking with other forces, forecasting consequences, possible allocation of tasks, etc.*<sup>107</sup>

I totally agree with Leonardo and Clodovis that the workers' unity is crucial for the attainment of the restoration of the agricultural land to its rightful owners, but I think that not

only should workers be united among themselves, in the form of unions, cooperatives and other movements: they should also forge some unity between themselves – as an organized labour force – and the other masses of deprived poor, some of whom have been dismissed from work. This unity should be extended also to the intellectuals who are deeply interested in the economic liberation of the poor. These interested intellectuals will then make use of their academic skills to draft the necessary agrarian reform together with the banners under which to protest. In other words, the strategies employed should not accommodate the organized labour only, but all other deprived and interested intellectuals. Motlhabi gives us an example of nonviolent strategies – he claims are not his own in their original form<sup>108</sup> – which can be jointly used by all sectors of the populace. He divides them into three categories, namely, nonviolent protest and persuasion, non-cooperation and nonviolent intervention.<sup>109</sup> He continues his discussion by explaining that,

*The first includes pilgrimages, marches, picketing, vigils, ‘haunting’ officials, public meetings, issuing and distributing protest literature, renouncing honours, protest emigration, humorous pranks. The second: various types of non-cooperation (e.g. social boycotts), economic boycotts (e.g. consumers’ boycotts, traders’ boycotts, rent refusal, and international trade boycott of government employment, boycott of elections, administrative noncooperation, civil disobedience and mutiny). The third includes sit-ins, fasts, reverse strikes, nonviolent obstructions, nonviolent invasion and parallel government.*<sup>110</sup>

Up to the poor – helped by the proponents of the Theology of Liberation and all other academics interested – to decide which of the nonviolent strategies proposed by Motlhabi is going to be of immediate help in the struggle. Mine was going to be simpler. I was going to suggest the suspension of all kinds of work – except that which is being done by electricians, the police, doctors, nurses, prison warders, soldiers, and funeral undertakers – for at least three months. How vehicles of those who are bound to continue working during the suspension – and how vehicles of those who want to attend funeral services – should get fuel, will be arranged by the leadership of the strike. And what do the strikers eat during that period? The World Council of Churches was once ripped apart by the question of donating money to the South African liberation movements, and that money was going to be used specifically for the purchase of arms.<sup>111</sup> I do hope that this time the World Council of Churches will feel the need to be united to the poor of South Africa by partly donating some money to the Churches of South Africa, more especially if they learn that, that money is ultimately for the cause of the total liberation of the poor from the economic injustice and from every other structural injustice debasing their lives.

Of course, on many banners of the strike the African words, “Motho ke motho ka batho,”<sup>112</sup> and in this context they mean: “you are who you are today because of the support of other people” will be written. In order that they may understand that these words are directed to them, on the other banners the words, “You are parliamentarians because of the vote of the people,” will be written. All these words are meant to send the message to our parliamentarians that they have been voted into power in order to serve the needs of the

people, especially the poor who do not have the financial means to defend themselves against the conditions of abject poverty they are subjected to, by the present regime.

With God and the African ancestors on its side, the Theology of Liberation will certainly be adopted by the poor of South Africa who will use it as a tool of faith, which will enable them to liberate themselves from all structures – be they local or international – which oppress and exploit them.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion is divided into two parts. The first part deals with three of its components, namely, its methodology, its contextual nature, which make the Theology of Liberation relevant for South Africa. The second part focuses on the concrete steps to be taken in South Africa, for its content to be more available, more especially to the poor masses who are its primary audience.

### ***The Relevance of the Theology of Liberation***

The relevance of the Theology of Liberation for South Africa can be located, first and foremost in its nature as a new methodology of doing theology. To be more specific, it is the inductive method of this theology which has – to a very large extent – taught me how to do theology in a meaningful way. The nature of the inductive method is such that it forces a theologian to do theology in consultation with the people. No proponent of the Theology of Liberation can do this theology in isolation from the poor people who are its ultimate audience. And before he/she ever gives any input on the subject of discussion he/she must first find out and consider seriously the ideas the audience has about the subject to be taught. If for example, he wants to teach about God, sin, oppression, liberation, he/she must first investigate the understanding of the people on any of these subjects, before he adds his/her own. This method is totally different from the Western deductive one which, to a considerable extent is oppressive in the sense that its proponents force western principles and canons down the throats of their Third World audience without the latter's opinion on the forced subject. If it says Marxism, or polygamy or ancestor veneration is wrong, nobody is given a chance to dispute that. The inductive method is bound to make the Theology of Liberation relevant for centuries to come for people naturally want be consulted before any opinion is turned into some obligatory legislation.

### **The Contextual Nature of the Theology of Liberation**

Another factor which I think is going to make the Theology of Liberation relevant for Africa is its contextual nature. The Theology of Liberation is seriously contextual.<sup>113</sup> What this seriousness implies is that its content will slightly differ once it is allowed – by its professional proponents – to be controlled by the poor. The poor inevitably constitute the major part of the context within which the Theology of Liberation is studied. And the majority of the poor may have been denied the exposure to the tertiary level of education,<sup>114</sup> but they have got their own way of communicating with the divine, they have got their unique way of praying.<sup>115</sup> And this uniqueness is inevitably going to change the original shape – as designed by the professional agents – of the Theology of Liberation. The same change will take place once the Theology of Liberation makes its inroads into the lives of the poor who live beyond the perimeters of Latin America. Once the Theology of liberation finds

its foothold among the poor of these other Third World countries, it will slightly change its original shape. It is the new contexts which will force it to change its original format. Of course, there will be similarities – in spite of the variety of contexts – because the poor of the whole world happen to have a common enemy, namely injustice, which manifests itself through various ways. Albert Nolan – a South African liberation theologian – interestingly reports that even the terminology used in these various Third World contexts will be almost identical because of the common enemy the poor are fighting. Indeed he writes,

*What we are witnessing in the world today, then, is that people who live in similar circumstances of poverty, exploitation, and oppression, whether it be in Soweto, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Rio de Janeiro, Manilla or Harlem, New York, are developing much the same ideas about their poverty and about what they need to do... There is a growing body of common words that are used throughout the world by oppressed peoples; for example: oppression, liberation, struggle, revolution, class, proletariat, people's power, socialism and so forth.<sup>116</sup>*

Thus, Nolan helps us to understand that in spite of the uniqueness of the contexts in which the poor live, there will be similarities emerging from the same contexts because of the common enemy of the poor, namely injustice which expresses itself through various evil structures. For the successful eradication of this enemy – with the active involvement of the poor – the professional proponents of the Theology of Liberation will have to critically accept the uniqueness of the poor's indigenous way of praying which is part of the content of popular religion. The major part of popular religion in South Africa – and the rest of Africa South Saharan Africa – is veneration of ancestors.<sup>117</sup> If the professional leadership of the Theology of Liberation is critically determined to be led by the poor in the struggle – which struggle cannot afford to exclude the veneration of African ancestors – then there is a bright future for the Theology of Liberation in South Africa and in the rest of the African continent.

### *Concrete Steps Considered for the Bright Future of Liberation Theology in South Africa*

#### **Paulo Freire's Educational Method**

Finally, I propose the method of Paulo Freire as an effective method which will enable both professional theologians and the poor to act as students and teachers of one another. The mutual respect emerging out of this dialogue will serve to do away with the tendency – especially from the part of the professional scholar, be he/she theologian or social scientist – to look down upon the socio-political and religious knowledge of the poor. None of the two parties is a tabula rasa. None is infallible. As a result, they both need each other's help. Albert Nolan studies the ways through which the respective roles of the two camps can complement each other. He says,

*Perhaps the best way to understand what is happening here is to make use of a distinction that has been made by a Filipino liberation theologian, Carlos Abesamis. He distinguishes between the **technician** and the **theologian**. The technician is the one who has skills, the techniques, and the academic education. He or she has studied the bible, knows Hebrew and Greek, is acquainted with modern biblical scholarship or is an expert in the various theologies and doctrinal announcements of the Church. The theologian, on the other hand, reflects on Christian praxis and re-reads the bible and makes use*

*of the technician. Of course sometimes the theologian will be himself or herself a technician and hopefully the technician will also do theology, but the point is that any Christian can be a theologian and makes use of the technicians.*<sup>118</sup>

Thus, Nolan tries – with the help of Abesamis – to emphasize the contribution of both scholars and the poor in the process of creating a meaningful Theology of Liberation for the ultimate liberation of the poor. It is, however, possible to misunderstand Nolan to be saying that the technician is the most important of the two, because the theologian needs his/her skills in order to come to the correct understanding of the scriptures. Nolan quickly responds to the misunderstanding by maintaining that biblical scholars in the North and South America claim to have been enlightened by the exegesis emerging from the perspective of the poor. Indeed he asserts that,

*They are now fully aware not only that every text has an historical context, but also that it has a social and a political context and that it all makes much more sense when approached from the point of view of the oppressed. The bible is being rediscovered as fundamentally the book of the oppressed for the oppressed. The God of the Bible by revealing and sending his/her Son to liberate the oppressed, is being rediscovered as the ultimate saviour and liberator of the human race.*<sup>119</sup>

Nolan is thus trying to strike a balance between the two camps – namely the poor and the professional theologians – by explicitly discussing the enormous impact which the poor’s interpretation of the scriptures has had on the world famous biblical scholars. The sense of humility which I learn from the professional scholars discussed above certainly reminds us that it is this kind of humility which is required – from all exponents of the Theology of Liberation, be they professional or illiterate – for the successful accommodation of the veneration of African ancestors into the programs of the Theology of Liberation. It is indeed this kind of humility which will enable the two camps to learn from one another because – using the pedagogical language of Paulo Freire – they are both teachers and students of one another.

### **Biblical Contribution**

I have already mentioned that the poor can be found these days all over the streets of South Africa, protesting against the present government’s inability to liberate them from poverty and injustice. (Sunday Argus, 25-Feb-2007), (Cape Times, 27-May-2008), (Cape Times, 01-June-2010), (Cape Argus, 30-Aug-2012), Sowetan, 07-June-2012), (Express, 23-Jan-2013), (New Age, 13 Mar-2013), (Star, 13-Mar-2013). Within this context, the primary task of the Theology of Liberation is to lend full support to the poor’s struggle against all manifestations of injustice. The starting point for the implementation of the Theology of Liberation is the Church. A very large number of the poor in South Africa are Christian and the majority value the bible.<sup>120</sup> The bible, thus, serves as common a ground between the poor and the Theology of Liberation. As a result, the Theology of Liberation will critically make use of the bible to intensify the struggle for the liberation of the poor. In other words, more fuel or multitudes of the poor will hopefully be added to the struggle if they learn – from the academics – that it is biblical to correct a brother/sister if you see him violating the fundamental rights of the poor, and that it is even more biblical to treat your brother/sister as a pagan – i.e. to take drastic steps against him/her – if he/she does not want to listen and repent from his/her oppressive

ways (Mt.18: 15-20).<sup>121</sup> The Theology of Liberation will have to convince the poor that the bible is not only about ‘turning the other cheek’ – which needs to be properly interpreted<sup>122</sup> – it is also about the love of neighbour which should be expressed, among other ways through the respect of the rights of the same neighbour.<sup>123</sup>

### **Mutual Respect between South African Elites and Poor**

With the same purpose of adding more fuel – and the number of Christian participants in the struggle for the liberation of the poor – the professional part of the Theology of Liberation will have to be determined to take interest in the sacrifices offered by families of the poor to African ancestors. We have learned above about both the vertical and the horizontal powers of these sacrifices. The vertical dimension of the sacrifice restores the intimate relationship between the African family and God. Of course the restoration of this relationship is mediated by the ancestors. The horizontal dimension of the sacrifice strengthens bonds of love and unity between the African family and the community, in the sense that every member of the community is invited to the sacrificial feast. The solidarity shown by the liberation scholars – through their active participation in these sacrifices – will surely convince the poor that they are fully accepted into the programs of the Theology of Liberation. Actions speak louder than words!!! Seeing these good deeds – from the part of the scholars – the poor have no choice but to accept the leadership of the struggle as they are expected to do so (by the scholars).

The solidarity of the academics – shown through their participation in the process the invocation of the ancestors – will surely strengthen bonds of trust between the two camps. Common sense teaches us that nothing positive can be achieved if the two camps do not trust each other.<sup>124</sup> Once the level of trust is heightened, any excellent vision or any good proposal – including the economic proposal of Villa-Vicencio discussed above – will certainly be considered worth implementing as a stepping-stone towards the total liberation of the poor.

### **The Establishment of Small Christian Communities**

Of course, the participation of academics in the poor’s invocation of African ancestors – as a meaningful sign of solidarity – should be critically discussed and planned at the meetings of the Small Christian Communities. This means that the formation of the Small Christian Communities – discussed by Dawson within the Brazilian context above, as Basic Christian Communities – is also important as a preparatory step for the successful implementation of the Theology of Liberation in South Africa. A Small Christian Community serves as a forum at which both the professional theologians and the poor interact in order to share their respective opinions and skills, prayerfully. With the help of the Lumko Pastoral Institute of South Africa<sup>125</sup> – which is famous for its competence in the field of establishing Small Christian Communities – the Theology of Liberation will have to evaluate the status of the Small Christian Communities in South Africa, with the specific aim of establishing them anew wherever difficulties were encountered in founding them. One can rightly call them power-houses of the Theology of Liberation because of this intimate interaction which they provide between the poor and the professional theologians.

## Academics to learn the Languages of the Poor

Of course, the level of intimacy and trust between the two camps, namely, the poor and the academics, won't reach the desired degree if there is no common language of communication uniting them. The poor in South Africa – and in all of Africa and the rest of the Third World – were over the centuries denied exposure to conventional means of acquiring education.<sup>126</sup> As a result they try in their own limited way to express themselves in a European language, but that is not enough within the context of a demanding study of the magnitude of the Theology of Liberation.<sup>127</sup> This theology just has to be expressed in a proper language, and that language is the language of the poor. One may say that learning the language of the poor is just too much for a non-African exponent of the Theology of Liberation. I agree, but at the same time the act of learning the language of the poor has to be considered as the privileged occasion during which the Theology of Liberation proves itself to be a theology of the poor, for the poor, by the poor.<sup>128</sup> This indeed is the privileged moment when the Theology of Liberation has to prove that it is a theological mouthpiece of the destitute. Yes, there will be translations into different languages for the international world to know and understand what the Theology of Liberation is all about, but the original language – giving birth to all these various translations – should be that of the poor. If the Theology of Liberation cannot be expressed by means of the language of the poor – if the Theology of Liberation expresses itself only by means of a language which is foreign to the poor – then it cannot claim to be a theology of the poor, for the poor, by the poor. If some European language is the only means of communication between the poor and the academics, then it will take quite a while before they internalize the content of the Theology of Liberation with confidence. And this inability of the Theology of Liberation to express itself through a language spoken by the poor will certainly lead to its demise. If the Theology of Liberation seriously wants the poor to lead the march – from the theological point of view – to the intended liberation, then it is obliged to speak the language of the poor.

## Academics' Translation Task also Crucial

Closely related to the question of learning the languages of the poor is another demanding task of translating relevant documents of the Church dealing with matters of justice. This task is also an important preparatory step to be taken for the successful implementation of the Theology of Liberation within the context of South Africa. This essential job should have been done long time ago – by the bishops and theologians – because some of these documents are getting very old. I am particularly referring to fundamental church documents such as the *Vatican II Documents (1965)*,<sup>129</sup> *the 1971 and the 1974 Synods of Bishops*,<sup>130</sup> *the 1966 World Council of Churches (WCC)*.<sup>131</sup> The poor surely needed documents of this nature in order to combat and destroy the sting and the stench of apartheid. Had the teaching staff of the church of this period 1966-1975 – most particularly, the bishops and the theologians – translated these and other relevant documents, and made them available to the poor and the youth for discussion in their various parishes, the church would have emerged as champion of the poor: This means that the poor and the youth would have learnt that the Catholic Church is totally opposed to structural injustice,<sup>132</sup> and that it teaches that it is absolutely legitimate for the populace to topple an unjust government.<sup>133</sup> This **invaluable** information, combined with European Churches' effort to assassinate Hitler,<sup>134</sup> and the WCC's attempt to subsidize the armed struggle of the poor of South Africa in the 1960s,<sup>135</sup> was going to serve the valid purpose of further proving to the militant youth of the time that Christianity is not only about the 'turning of the other cheek' (Mt. 18) – which, of course, should be given a proper interpretation<sup>136</sup> – but it is also about the legitimization of struggles



or wars waged for purposes of self-defence.<sup>137</sup> If the church failed dismally to avail such invaluable information at the opportune time, namely, during the apartheid period, what's the point of discussing it now? The information or teaching in question is totally opposed to any form of structural injustice. Apartheid is just one among the many forms of structural injustice. The post-1994 South Africa is also fraught with several forms of structural injustice, some of which are statistically discussed in main chapter 5 of my thesis. My contention is that those documents of the church are – and will be – valuable so long as injustice prevails. The same applies to the Theology of Liberation: its validity will certainly expire soon after every form of injustice – inflicted on the poor – is eradicated. And while this intended period has not yet arrived, the Theology of Liberation and the Church will have to combine efforts in search for quality ways through which they can help the poor achieve their total liberation. And this search will be successful if the two parties critically share each other's documentary information, be it ancient or contemporary.

In short, my conclusion has been mainly about the preparatory measures which are of paramount importance if the implementation of the Theology of Liberation is to be successful within the context of the post-1994 South Africa. The Theology of Liberation – be it of South or North American origin – is not a novelty in South Africa: It was a very powerful movement during the apartheid era. It is not my intention to give a detailed account of the merits of the Theology of Liberation prior to 1994. Others have done that already. Mine is to add to the little which has already been achieved – theologically – in the area of furthering the struggle for the total liberation of the poor from all structures of injustice in the post-1994 period. It is because of the existence of these unjust structures that the Theology of Liberation is still valid.

### ***Main Achievement of the Thesis***

I further conclude by repeating what I consider to be the main achievement of the thesis within the liberation struggle of the poor from all forms of injustice. The main achievement has been the incorporation of the veneration of the African ancestors within the programmes of the Theology of Liberation. The exponents of this theology in Latin America strongly believe that the process of the liberation of the poor can be highly successful if it is being led by the poor themselves, because the poor are the ones who feel more than anybody else the painful sting of economic exploitation and political oppression. In other words, it is the major aim of the Theology of Liberation to convert the poor into leaders of their own liberation. For this aim to be achieved within the context of South Africa – and the rest of the continent – it is of utmost importance that the Theology of Liberation recognises and respects the passionate love with which the poor venerate their ancestors. This passionate veneration of African ancestors is not limited to the poor only: On the contrary, it is highly valued by all indigenous Africans, regardless of their social status, throughout the continent. Thus, as a cultural value, the veneration of the ancestors possesses vital potentialities of uniting Africans of different nationalities – and different economic positions – against poverty, destitution, and all forms of injustice. Coming back to the poor, they are surely going to adopt the Theology of Liberation as an effective instrument through which they seek their socio-economic and political liberation, if they find this theology to be sincerely making efforts of fully integrating the veneration of their beloved ancestors into its programmes.

We have neglected our ancestors too long in matters of the struggle against injustice, as if they knew absolutely nothing about our political and economic difficulties. Yet they are the

ones from whom this beautiful land was snatched away at gunpoint. They have the first-hand experience of what it concretely means to be politically oppressed and to be economically exploited. Thus, just as we need to lift their banning orders in the area of liturgy, we also need to consider seriously the fact that we cannot do without them in the area of our urgent need to be liberated from all forms of injustice in the post-1994 South Africa. We are in dire need of their presence, their support and their prayers in our battles against injustice. The Theology of Liberation will be gladly welcome in South Africa – especially among the poor – if it concretely plans to accommodate the African ancestors in its liberation discussions and in the prayer-life of its programmes which are always conducted in the sessions of the Small Christian Communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Khoza Mgojo, "The Church in History: Struggle and Challenge," *Being the Church in South Africa Today*, eds. Barney Pityana and Charles Villa-Vicencio, South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg: 1995. p.5

<sup>2</sup> Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Op. Cit.* pp.153-154

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p.154

<sup>4</sup> Neva S. Makgetla, "The Post-apartheid Economy," *Review of African Political Economy*, 31 (March, 2004) pp. 264-265

<sup>5</sup> David Everatt, "The Politics of Poverty," *The Real State of the Nation South Africa after 1990*, eds. David Everatt and Vincent Maphai, Interfund, Johannesburg: 2003. pp.77-78

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p.78

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p.78

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p.79

<sup>9</sup> Terry Crawford-Browne, "The Arms Deal Scandal," *Review of African Political Economy*, 31 (March, 2004) p.328

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p.328

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p.331

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p.331

<sup>13</sup> Leon Louw and Frances Kendall, *The Solution*, Amagi Publications, Bisho: 1989. p.15

<sup>14</sup> Ruth Hall, "A Political Economy of Land Reform in South Africa," *Review of African Political Economy*, 31 (March, 2004) p.214

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p.214

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p.214

<sup>17</sup> "Bill of Rights (on Equality)" Constitution of South Africa, 1996, *Government Gazette*, vol. 378, No 17678 (December, 1996): pp.7-8

<sup>18</sup> See Gcobani G. M. Vika, "Land Reform and Development in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 110 (July 2001): p.54

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p.54

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* pp.54-55

<sup>21</sup> Luis del Valle, "Toward A Theological Outlook Starting from Concrete Events," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. R. Gibellini, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.98

<sup>22</sup> This kind of information is available in the media, for example, Sowetan (07-Jun-2012); Cape Times (30-July-2012); Cape Argus (30-August-2012) Express (23-January-2013); The Star (13-March-2013)

<sup>23</sup> Brigalia Hlophe Bam, "Foreword," *Being the Church in South Africa Today*, eds. Barney P. Pityana and Villa-Vicencio, South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg: 1995. p.xi

<sup>24</sup> Sobrino, J. *Christology at Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, SCM Press, London: 1978. p.125

<sup>25</sup> Khoza Mgojo, "The Church in History: Struggle and Challenge," *Being the Church in South Africa Today*. Eds. Barney P. Pityana and Charles Villa-Vicencio, South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg: 1995. p.10

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p.10

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p.4

<sup>28</sup> Brigalia Hlophe Bam, *Op. Cit.*, p.45

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* pp.xi-xii

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- <sup>30</sup> Gutierrez, G. *The Power of the Poor in History*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1983. p.22
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.22
- <sup>32</sup> Andrew Dawson, "The Origin and Character of the Base Ecclesial Community: A Brazilian Perspective," *Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2007. p.151
- <sup>33</sup> Fritz Lobinger, "Small Christian Community Clusters," *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*37, No.3 (June, 1995):p.187
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.151
- <sup>35</sup> Michael Wuestenberg, "A Comparison between the SCCs of Burkino Faso with those of South Africa," *AFER* 37, No. 3 (June,1995): p.181
- <sup>36</sup> Andrew Dawson, "The Origin and Character of the Base Ecclesial Community: A Brazilian Perspective," *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2007. p.141
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.150
- <sup>38</sup> See George Kwame Kumi, "Basic Ecclesial Communities as Communions," *African Ecclesial Review* 37, No. 3 (June,1995): p.174
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid. p.175
- <sup>40</sup> See "The Kairos Document, 1985" *Between Christ and Caesar*, ed. C. Villa-Vicencio, David Philip Cape Town: 1986. p.268. On this page an ecumenical group of theologians in South Africa claim responsibility for the contents of this document. I am just giving this group as an example of the way the churches were united against the apartheid evil during this period. It was therefore going to be easy to introduce the 1975 Brazilian model of SCCs to this united Christian group of South Africa
- <sup>41</sup> Julio X. Labayen, "Basic Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 30, No. 3, (June, 1988): pp. 135-136
- <sup>42</sup> See Julio X. Labayen, "Basic Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 30, No. 3, (June, 1988): p.139
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid. p.139
- <sup>44</sup> See Julio Labayen, *Op. Cit.* p.139
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.138
- <sup>46</sup> John Guiney, "Comparing BCCs in S. America and Africa," *African Ecclesial Review* 30 No. 3, (June,1988): p.169
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid. p.172
- <sup>48</sup> Joseph M. M. Healy, "The Need for An Effective Bible Reflection Method in SCCs of Africa," *African Ecclesial Review* 37, No. 3 (June, 1995); p.59
- <sup>49</sup> Stinton, D. *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*, Pauline Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2004. p.133
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid. p.133
- <sup>51</sup> John Ngubane, "Theological Roots of the African Independent Churches and their Challenge to Black Theology," *Institute for Contextual Theology*, eds F. Chikane and M. Tsele, David Philip Cape Town: 1984. p.77
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.77
- <sup>53</sup> See reference 105. I interpret the author here to be saying that underlying the disciplines on African Christianity or African traditional religion is the study of the ancestors of Africa. In other words, no African study on African Traditional Religion or African culture will make any sense if the African ancestors are not part of it.
- <sup>54</sup> John Ngubane, *Op. Cit.*, p.77
- <sup>55</sup> Laurenti Magesa, "On Speaking Terms: African Religion and Christianity in Dialogue," *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, Acton Publishers, Nairobi: 2011. p.33
- <sup>56</sup> Festo Mkenda, "Language, Politics, and Religious Dialogue: A Case of Kwiswahili in Eastern Africa," *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, Acton Publishers, Nairobi: 2011. p.44
- <sup>57</sup> Elmar Klinger, "Purgatory," *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner, Burns and Oates, London: 1975. pp. 1318-1320
- <sup>58</sup> Diane Stinton, *Op. Cit.*, p.132
- <sup>59</sup> Mbiti, J. S. *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heinemann Educational Publishers, Oxford: 1969. pp.83-84
- <sup>60</sup> See Ezekiel Gwembe, "Ancestors in African Culture," *The Church and African Culture*, ed. Mohlomi Makobane, Lumko, Germiston: 1995. pp.31-32. See also Eugene Lapointe, "Basotho's Ancestor Veneration and Christian Worship," *The Church and African Culture*, ed. Mohlomi Makobane, Lumko, Germiston: 1995. p.43. See also Buti Tlhagale, "Ancestors and the Paschal Mystery," *The Church and African Culture*, ed. Mohlomi Makobane, Lumko, Germiston: 1995. p.55. Each of these Southern African scholars emphasizes in his own way

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the centrality of the African ancestors – and their mediation – to an African family. And even though he uses a different terminology for the same reality, Mbiti does, however, agree with them.

<sup>61</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Op. Cit.*, p.82

<sup>62</sup> Ezekiel Gwembe, *Op. Cit.*, p.31

<sup>63</sup> Buti Tlhagale, *Op. Cit.* p.58

<sup>64</sup> Magesa, L. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi: 1997. p.184

<sup>65</sup> Buti Tlhagale, *Op. Cit.* p.58

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p.59

<sup>67</sup> Eugene Lapointe, *Op. Cit.*, p.43

<sup>68</sup> Nyamiti, C. *Studies in African Christian Theology, vol. 4 (Christ's Ancestral Mediation through the Church understood as a Family: An Essay on African Ecclesiology)* Catholic University of East Africa, Nairobi: 2010.

<sup>69</sup> See Walbert Buhlmann, *The Missions on Trial*, St. Paul Publications, Slough: 1978. pp. 39-40. See also Xolile Keteyi, *Inculturation as a Strategy for Liberation: A Challenge for South Africa*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg: 1998. p.23

<sup>70</sup> Gabriel Setiloane, "Where Are We in African Theology?" *African Theology en route*, eds. Sergio Torres and Koffi Appiah-Kubi, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1979. p.63

<sup>71</sup> Lebamang Sebidi, "Critical Analysis of the Dynamics of the Black Struggle in South Africa and its Implications for Black Theology," *Black Theology and the Black Struggle: Conference Report*, eds. M. Tsele and F. Chikane, *Institute of Contextual Theology*, and the Skotaville Publishers, Braamfontein: 1984. p.15

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* p.18

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p.21

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* p.20. Among those many examples of resistance, the hundred years war (1779-1879) waged by the Xhosas against the British forces, is worth mentioning because of its duration.

<sup>75</sup> Pablo Richard, "Liberation Theology: A Difficult but Possible Future," *The Future of Liberation Theology*, eds. Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Orbis Books Maryknoll, New York: 1989. p.503

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* pp.503-504

<sup>77</sup> Gutierrez, G. *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p.174

<sup>78</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, The Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1999. p.23

<sup>79</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p.xxvi

<sup>80</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, The Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1999. The publication year of this volume, namely 1999, clearly indicates that Liberation Theology – having been founded in the 1970s – was already more than two decades in existence when the same volume was completed.

<sup>81</sup> Valpy Fitzgerald, "The Economics of Liberation Theology," *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, The Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1999. p.232

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* p.232

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* pp.218 and 228

<sup>84</sup> Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Liberation and Reconstruction: the unfinished agenda," *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, The Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1999. p.154

<sup>85</sup> Bastiaan Wielenga, "Liberation Theology in Asia," *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, The Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1999. p.39

<sup>86</sup> Leatt, J. et al. *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town: 1986. pp.3 and 12

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* p.13

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* pp.38-39

<sup>89</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1987

<sup>90</sup> See Paul Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution*, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1990. p.184

<sup>91</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1973. p.165

<sup>92</sup> Nurnberger, K. *Socio-Economic Ideologies in a Christian Perspective*, The Lutheran Publishing House, Durban: 1979. p.21

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* p.21

<sup>94</sup> Brown, R. M. *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1990. p.52

<sup>95</sup> See Paul Sigmund *Op. Cit.* p.178

- <sup>96</sup> Ibid. p.185
- <sup>97</sup> Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Op. Cit.* p.193
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid. p.194
- <sup>99</sup> Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, *The United Nations Human Rights Fact Sheets, No. 1-25*, Raoul Institute, Lund: 1996. p.246
- <sup>100</sup> South African Human Rights Commission, *Socio-Economic Rights, Foundation for Human Rights*, Johannesburg: 1996. p.3
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid. p.23
- <sup>102</sup> Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights, *Op. Cit.* p.248
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid. p.248
- <sup>104</sup> Mugambi, J. K. N. *African Christian Theology – An Introduction*, East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi: 1989. p.35
- <sup>105</sup> See reference number 22, above.
- <sup>106</sup> See Elias Omondi Opongo, “Inventing Creative Approaches to Complex Systems of Injustice,” *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, ed Agbokhianmeghe E. Orobator, Acton Publishers, Nairobi:2011. p.75
- <sup>107</sup> Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Burns and Oates, Kent: 1987. p.42
- <sup>108</sup> Motlhabi, M. *Black Resistance to Apartheid*, Skotaville Publishers, Johannesburg: 1984. p.265
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid.p.265
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid. p.265
- <sup>111</sup> See John de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town: 1977. p.137. See also Villa-Vicencio, C. *Trapped in Apartheid*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1988. p.111
- <sup>112</sup> Shutte, A. *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg: 2001. p.25
- <sup>113</sup> See Hugo Assmann, “The Power of Christ in History: Conflicting Christologies and Discernment,” *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1977. pp.133-134
- <sup>114</sup> See Statistics of the illiterate poor at reference number 167
- <sup>115</sup> See Harvey Cox at reference number 44 of chapter 6 of my thesis. See also Pablo Richard in reference numbers 144 and 145 of the same chapter.
- <sup>116</sup> Nolan, A. And Broderick, R. *The Theology for Liberation in Southern Africa*, Order of Preachers, Hilton (South Africa), 1987, p.65
- <sup>117</sup> See reference number 34. Here African scholars present us with research results which clearly show the importance of the ancestors in the lives of the majority of Africans.
- <sup>118</sup> Albert Nolan and Richard Broderick, *Op. Cit.*, p.39
- <sup>119</sup> Ibid. p.39
- <sup>120</sup> Gerald West, “The Bible and Theology,” *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives*, eds. John de Gruchy and C. Villa-Vicencio, David Philip, Cape Town: 1994. pp. 16-17
- <sup>121</sup> John L. McKenzie, “The Gospel according to Matthew,” *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R. Brown et. al., Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1969. p.95. The violation of the rights of the poor – missing in the interpretation of McKenzie – is just my way of internalizing and contextualising the text for the situation in South Africa and the rest of the Third World.
- <sup>122</sup> See *Between Christ and Caesar*, ed. C. Villa-Vicencio, David Philip, Cape Town: 1986. p.259. On this page the Kairos Theologians of South African made a concerted attempt to interpret those catchy words of Christ correctly within the South African context.
- <sup>123</sup> Muyebe, A. And Muyebe, S. eds. *The African Bishops on Human Rights*, Pauline Publications Africa, Nairobi: 2001. p.13
- <sup>124</sup> See Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1976. p.104
- <sup>125</sup> The Catholic Directory of Southern Africa (2011-2012) contains details of the Lumko Pastoral Institute. See the very first two pages of the directory.
- <sup>126</sup> See Alexis Muyebe and Stanislaus Muyebe, *Op. Cit.*, p.71
- <sup>127</sup> See Pablo Richard
- <sup>128</sup> See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Op. Cit.*, p.12. On this page the Boff brothers emphasize the crucial participation of the poor in the process of the creation of the Theology of Liberation. They liken the whole Theology of Liberation to a tree. And the poor’s role is likened to the roots, which although they are hidden, nevertheless, they are the most essential part of the tree, as the other parts of the tree, viz., theologians and pastoral workers – who are likened respectively to the trunk and the leaves – cannot do without them.
- <sup>129</sup> See Walter Abbott, *The Document of Vatican II*, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1966. This highly official document of the Church was first published in 1966, as indicated.

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<sup>130</sup> "Justice in the World" is a Church document which the 1971 Synod of Bishops produced at the end of the same year, while "Evangelii Nuntiandi" is a Church document published by Pope Paul VI towards the end of 1974 in response to the Synod of Bishops which took place during the course of the same year.

<sup>131</sup> See John de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, David Philip, Cape Town: 1979. p.137

<sup>132</sup> "The Church Today," *Documents of Vatican II*, eds. Walter Abbott and Joseph Gallagher, Geoffrey Chapman, London: 1966. pp.286-287

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p.287

<sup>134</sup> See Desmond Tutu, "Freedom fighters or Terrorists," *Theology and Violence*, ed. C. Viila-Vicencio, Skotaville Publishers, Johannesburg: 1987. p.76

<sup>135</sup> See John de Gruchy, *Op. Cit.*, p.137

<sup>136</sup> See Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York: 1976. p.86. On this page Segundo, agrees with James Cone that 'turning the other cheek,' – like many other biblical texts – is not to be considered as a timeless or limitless phrase, given the fact that it militates against the whole tradition of wars of self-defence waged by Israel in the Old Testament. The historical context which led to the legitimization of this particular phrase needs to be investigated prior to its contemporary application.

<sup>137</sup> See Walter Abbott and Joseph Gallagher, *Op. Cit.* p.291

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