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SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

A CHRISTOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR A CONTEXTUAL LIBERATION THEOLOGY
IN EGYPT;

A COMPRATIVE STUDY BETWEEN THE CHRISTOLOGY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER
AND THE CHRISTOLOGY OF JUSTAVO GUTIERREZ

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&

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Only the suffering God can help.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

(1906-1945)

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

The church is not only a spiritual community where believers worship God, find support, listen to Christian teachings, and celebrate the sacraments. She is the body of Jesus Christ: His way of life manifested by His incarnation should be her standard. Those responsible for leading the church evaluate regularly whether the church is on the right way or has gone astray.

In 1968, there was a theological revolution; the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America inaugurated what is known as “Liberation Theology.” After their gathering in Colombia, the bishops condemned two things. First, they condemned the long history of the alliance of the church with the ruling power. Second, they condemned these governments themselves as they were the cause of the poverty of people; this was termed “Institutional Violence”.¹ Liberation Theology focuses on the prophetic voice of the church in the world, which starts by evaluating the context of the church in the light of the word of God. This evaluation, then, helps the church to defend rights of the poor against the structural evil, which comes from corrupted systems, institutions, and governments. This kind of theology emphasizes praxis; the mission of the church is not to proclaim the gospel only, but to fight against all oppressive systems as well.

I am arguing that the status quo in Egypt is not far from the circumstances of Latin America leading to the initiation of Liberation Theology. For more than six decades, the sequence of Egyptian governments ruled with discriminatory policies exacerbating poverty and oppressing the minorities; this situation enabled the rich to control the economic situation for their own profits. The Egyptian Church, on the other hand, used to respond to such problems in two ways. First, the church struggled to defend her rights fighting the discrimination against Christians, infringing on the citizenship rights of Christians, building and restructuring churches, etc. Second, the church tried to help the poor, mainly the Christians, through social works projects, what we call in Egypt: “*Ikhwat El-Rab*,” namely the “brothers of the Lord.” However, social work projects, done by the church, do not manage to solve these problems throughout Egypt. In addition, the church is not

¹ Stanly J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20TH Century Theology; God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Illinois: Intersivity Press, 1992), 210.

responsible for defending rights of the Christians only, but Muslims and Atheists as well. In reality, the political situation is not better than the economic situation.

I do not claim that my research is the first initiative in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Egypt to institute a liberation theology. There were many initiatives. However, these initiatives produced social services, not social actions. For instance, Samuel Habib² distinguishes between social action and social service, saying, “The latter is a service which helps people to be better, while the former is the attempt to solve problems from their roots or their sources.”³ In social services, churches and organizations help people to overcome their poverty through products, services, money ...etc. While in social actions, the church could help people critiquing the root of the problems, as corruption, dictatorship, or oppressive systems. In doing so, the church would have the encouragement to criticize the governments for the sake of the poor and the oppressed minorities.

Samuel Habib had a prophetic consciousness; he was aware of the problems of his context and what the church was doing toward it. He describes the reality of the Egyptian context at his time, saying:

The Egyptian Church, for a long time, devoted her attention to worship and celebrate sacraments, while she neglected the painful reality of a huge number of people ... our contemporary world, although we live in the 20th century, is submitted to military regimes and dictatorial governments ... Many of people today are suffering injustice, which affects their humanity.⁴

However, this analysis did not produce social actions, because Habib’s call was for social services. The role of the church, according to his liberation theology, centered mainly on pastoral activities. It was “... a call to the church to adopt relevant activities to help the oppressed, who are in need, and the poor, so as to insist them to be independent, and able to face their problems ... [for him, it] is a call for a pastoral care and a ministry that starts from voices of the poor.”⁵ Although, there

² *Samuel Habib* (1928-1997), was an evangelical Presbyterian pastor. He believed in the role of the church in developing her society through social services, so he established CEOSS. “El-Sera El-Zatia Samuel Habib - Autobiography of Samuel Habib,” in *Maharat El-Nagah – Skills of Success*, available at: http://www.nlp5.com/authorinf.aspx?Author_id=360; site accessed on Dec. 30, 2017. I choose the example of Samuel Habib, as he was a pioneer in helping the Egyptian Church to adopt social services beside the spiritual activities. Habib wrote many books about the role of the church in her society through social services, as: Samuel Habib, *Al-Kanisa we El-Tannia – The Church and Social Development*. Cairo: Dar El-Thaqafa, 1993. In addition, the contemporary figures follow his steps focusing on social services.

³ Samuel Habib, *Lahout El-Tahrier – Theology of Liberation* (Cairo: Dar El-Thaqafa, 1994), 33.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

is a feature for social action in this call, it did mean social service. At this time, the church's programmatic adoption of social services was a revolution; some refused seeing it as against the spiritual message of the church. I maintain that Habib wrote about liberation theology to enhance the responsibility of the church towards social services. In general, Habib's call led the church to adopt and focus on social services. At the same time, Habib instituted CEOSS⁶ – The Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services.

1.2. Research Question

Habib's initiative and others' initiatives had/have an impact on the Egyptian society through the social services. However, problems in the Egyptian context increase rapidly. Rights of Christians as a minority are violated while Islamic extremist ideology spreads. In addition, after two revolutions (2011, 2013), the gap between the rich and the poor widened. Economic reforms, supposedly to benefit the poor, resulted in huge, ineffective projects. Some political parties are struggling with marginalization, while problems of education, health, unemployment ...etc., are escalating. Social services offered by the Egyptian church cannot solve these problems at all. Therefore, I want to investigate – whether liberation theology, which is social action, could help the Egyptian Church to protest against all kinds of oppressive systems, institutions, and governments. Could “A Contextual Liberation Theology” release the prophetic voice of the Church in Egypt?

1.3. Research Methods

This research aims to present a contextual Christological foundation for a liberation theology in Egypt. For this purpose, I will explore the Christology of both Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) and Gustavo Gutiérrez (1928-). Bonhoeffer struggled against the Nazi oppression of minorities politically and the Holocaust of the Jewish people. Bonhoeffer's Christology focused on the entire life of Jesus Christ, His teachings, his death, and His resurrection as a one process for the salvation of humanity. For Bonhoeffer, salvation aims to release the humanity of people as well as their

⁶ Samuel Habib has established CEOSS in 1960. His aim was to make CEOSS as a center for his social services, like educating adults, programs for health care ...etc. Samuel Habib, *Tarek El-Tahadi – The Road of Challenge* (Cairo: Dar El-Thaqafa, 1999), 117-118.

spirits. I will investigate whether Bonhoeffer's Christology could help the Church in Egypt to adopt "A Contextual Liberation Theology," to defend rights of those politically oppressed.

Gutiérrez, on the other hand, cares mainly for the poor. He believes that God saves the human being in his wholeness. For him, salvation is a comprehensive work for souls and bodies. His starting question is: how to present the word of God in a context full of oppressions? Also, I will investigate whether Gutiérrez' Christology could assist the Egyptian Church in her responsibility towards the poor; to do so in an effective way, not only as a social service, but as social actions as well.

1.4. Research Sources

This research is a theoretical research. I will depend mainly on the primary resources of these two theologians – Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Gustavo Gutiérrez. Every one of them presented his theological thoughts in books and articles. In addition, I will consult secondary resources, which deal with explaining their theologies. Also, I will use some other resources when it is needed in arguments.

1.5. Research Context

As it is obvious in the title, my research is concerning the Egyptian context. I will describe the Egyptian context briefly as the following. According to Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, the population in Egypt is more than 96 million persons. The unemployment rate is about 11.9%.⁷ The rate of the population living under the poverty line is 27%.⁸ The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistic, in their last statistic, refused to publish the number of the

⁷ Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, "Ehsaa Misr 2017 – The Population Statistic for 2017," available at: <http://www.capmas.gov.eg/>; site accessed on Dec. 29, 2017.

⁸ Medhat Wahba, "El- Ehsaa – The Statistic," in *Youm7 Magazine*, available at: <http://www.youm7.com/story/2016/7/26/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AD%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%A1-27-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D9%84%D8%A7-%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AA%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9/2816823>; site accessed on Dec. 29, 2017.

Christian population in Egypt, which is blatant discrimination against this minority.⁹ The Egyptian context must focus on the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. I believe that the church is responsible to witness to her context.

However, it is important to highlight the big differences between the Church in Latin America at the time of the inaugurating of Liberation Theology and the Egyptian Church right now. While the institution of the former was involved in political compromising and defending the corruption, the institution of the later, of course, is not responsible for injustice and oppression. Nevertheless, the Egyptian Church is keeping silent concerning the problems of the poor and the oppressed. While people of the former make up the majority of the population, people of the later have been a minority with these problems for more than ten centuries. These differences, along with other contextual problem, represent obstacles, as I will explore in chapter five, for the Egyptian Church to adopt and inaugurate a liberation theology in Egypt.

For a deep understanding for the Egyptian Church, it is important to indicate that she consists of three major denominations; the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Protestant Church, and the Catholic Church. The majority of the Christian population is Orthodox, the Protestant Church comes in the second level, and finally the Catholic Church.

1.6. Research Scope and Limitation

My research scope will be on the theological thought, which will be limited by the theologies of both Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Gustavo Gutiérrez, and mainly by their Christologies. My aim is to present a balanced Christology to the Egyptian Church, which may help her to adopt a contextual liberation theology. Again, the Egyptian Christology is salvific, its main concern is to release spirits from the bondage of sin, and then social services come later. I, here, choose a Lutheran theologian and a Roman-Catholic one for this mission as their Christologies are relevant for the three denominations of the Egyptian Church. Both of the two theologians build the balance

⁹ Salah Laban and Rana Abd El-Sadek, “Lemaza Lam Toelain El-Hokoma aen Te’dad El-Akbat fi Misr fi El-Ehsaa El-Akheir? – Why did not the Egyptian government announce about the Number of the Egyptian Christians in the Last Statistic?” in *El-Tahreir Magazine*, available at: <https://www.tahrirnews.com/posts/842091/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D9%86%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%A8-%D8%AC%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84>; site accessed on Dec. 29, 2017.

between the liberating Christology and the salvific Christology on the oneness of the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as a complete process for saving the human beings both spiritually and physically, as it will be shown in chapters two and three. None of the three denomination objects, in principle, to focus on Jesus as a liberator; but the churches' objection will be on the consequences of adopting a liberating Christology according to these two theologians. Both of them argue for the responsibility of the church to defend rights of the poor and the oppressed through involvement in socio-political actions, as it will be shown in chapters four and five. Through my investigation in this paper, my goal is that the Egyptian Church could read and understand the work of God in saving the human beings as a comprehensive work, namely, to liberate them both spiritually and physically.

1.7. Research Plan

In chapter one, *Introduction*, I present briefly the problem, which is concerning the role of the Egyptian church towards her contextual problems, like poverty and rights of the oppressed minorities. I, then, explore an initiative, done by the Egyptian theologian – Habib, towards these problems. Here, I argue whether this initiative, and others, were/are social services or social actions. In addition, I present the introductory matters of the paper – such as methodology, sources, scopes, and plan.

In chapter two, *The Christology of Bonhoeffer*, I am going to explore a brief biography for Bonhoeffer, his Christological approach, the main features of his Christology, and the Christological images in his thought; namely, who is Jesus in the thought of Bonhoeffer? In addition, how could these Christological features and images affect his understanding for the meaning of salvation? Do we find a comprehensive understanding for God's work in Jesus Christ? Or, it is oriented to save souls only? I, then, will conclude with an evaluation and a summary for Bonhoeffer's thought, according to what is presented in this chapter.

Chapter three, *The Christology of Gutiérrez*, explores a brief biography for Gutierrez, his Christological approach, and the Christological images in his thought. As a liberationist theologian, how does he understand salvation as a comprehensive work of Jesus Christ; namely – whether salvation is for liberating the poor from social, economic, and political oppressors only, or from the sin, which is the spiritual oppressor? Likewise, how does he understand the balance

between the liberating salvation and the salvific salvation? I, then, will conclude with an evaluation and a summary for Gutierrez' thought, according to what is presented in this chapter.

In chapter four, *Jesus as Liberator*, I will explore how Bonhoeffer and Gutiérrez see Jesus as a liberator, and how His action as a liberator is part of His salvific action. What is the main purpose of Christ, to institute the church or to institute the kingdom of God through the church? I will discuss the relationships between Christian faith, human praxis, politics, spirituality, Utopia, and eschatology.

In chapter five, *Conclusion; A Contextual Liberating Christological Ecclesiology*, I am going to explore obstacles of instituting a liberation theology in Egypt. Then, I will investigate how the Egyptian church could learn from the Christologies of both Bonhoeffer and Gutierrez to institute a liberating worship, evangelism, and socio-political action in Egypt. Finally, I will present a vision for how to do theology properly, and how could the Egyptian Church do so.

Chapter Two

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

2.1.Introduction

2.1.1. Prologue

In this chapter, I will explore Bonhoeffer's Christology, which is the foundation and background of his theology and his life. Bonhoeffer did not support the political oppressed minorities through his writings only, but through involving with them practically as well, and for that, he lost his life. I will start by presenting some information about the biggest events in his life. Then, I am going to discuss his Christological approach. According to my understanding of Bonhoeffer's writings, he presents his Christology through a historical approach. In the second part of this chapter, I will explore the features of Bonhoeffer's Christology.

Although he refused to submit Christology to Soteriology, Bonhoeffer believes that the work of Jesus Christ provides a better understanding of Christology. As the understanding of the work of Jesus Christ is always affected by the understanding of the nature of the original sin, I will present the meaning of the original sin in Bonhoeffer's thought, along with the work of Jesus Christ. Finally, I will present an analysis and critique for Bonhoeffer's Christology to show whether it presents a balanced understanding between a salvific Christology and a liberating Christology.

2.1.2. Bonhoeffer's Biography

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran theologian, was born to a professor of psychiatry and neurology father, in Breslau, Germany in 1906. His mother was a historian, managing a household of eight children and worked hard in homeschooling them. When he was seventeen, he started at the University of Tübingen. There, he gave great attention to the history of religion and philosophy. In 1924, he attended the University of Berlin to study theology. At the beginning, he was influenced by his liberal teachers; then he attended lectures from Karl Barth, whose theology was persuasive for him. His favorite subject there was systematic theology. He began his dissertation,

Sanctorum Communio, when he was nineteen. He finished his study for the theology degree in 1927. In 1928, he was ordained as a vicar to a German congregation in Barcelona for one year. Back to Berlin, he worked on his postdoctoral dissertation, *Act and being*, which he completed after studying for one year at Union Theological Seminary in New York as an exchange student. He, then, worked in the Theological faculty of Berlin as assistant lecturer in 1931.¹⁰

Affected by Barth, Bonhoeffer asserts the distinguishing of theology from other fields, like philosophy, ethics ...etc. In addition, the starting point for him was the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Although he used to read the newspaper, he gave no less concern for the political issues at the beginning. He gave most of his concentration for theology, especially “Crisis Theology.” Back to Germany in 1931, he began to teach in the faculty and to preach in the church, becoming involved in society. A new attitude towards ecumenical movement appeared in his life as he worked as a secretary for the ecumenical movement in addition to his work as a teacher and as a preacher. When Hitler became the leader of the government in 1933, Bonhoeffer reached crossroads in his life; he started to think about the relationship between Academic discussion and action. In his lectures and sermons, he presents the Christian ethics towards the social political situation, and he warned the Germans from slipping into glorifying and worshiping the leader, Hitler. Against the Nationalistic German Christian movement, he, with other young reformers – the Confessing Church, refused Hitler’s persecution of the Jews. He afterwards got involved in the resistance movement against Nazism and Anti-Semitism. He was arrested by the Gestapo in April 1943. Before and while being a prisoner, he wrote some books and letters. After accusing him to be involved in a plot to overthrow Hitler, Bonhoeffer was executed on April 9, 1945.¹¹

2.1.3. Bonhoeffer’s Christological Approach

Bonhoeffer’s theology, in general, is Christomonism, he says, “Only scholarship that knows itself to be within the realm of Christian church could agree here that Christology is the center of the realm of scholarship itself.”¹² Moreover, his Christology is centered around the historicity of Jesus

¹⁰ Eberhard Bethge (Ed.), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer A Biography; Theologian, Christian, Man of his Time* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 3, 45, 46, 51, 52, 55, 66, 69, 77, 97, 123, 125.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 127, 135, 173, 257, 258, 795, 799.

¹² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Lectures on Christology,” in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 261- 313, 263.

Christ. For him, “The theological question, by nature, can only be asked of Christ in his whole being. It is a Christ of history. The whole Christ, whom we ask, and who answers ... The personal ontological structure of the whole, historical Christ is the subject matter of Christology.”¹³ Through the historicity of Jesus Christ, Bonhoeffer understands the relationship between God and the world, the church and the world, the church and the government ...etc. Nevertheless, it does not mean that Bonhoeffer is not interested in the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. He knows the eternal God only in the divine-human being of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ “... in his timeless eternity is not God. Jesus Christ in his humanity, limited in time, is not Jesus Christ. Instead, in the human being Jesus Christ, God is God. Only in Jesus Christ is God present.”¹⁴ Also, it does not mean that the incarnation is necessary for the being of God to be the Son, but it reflects the inevitability of the revelation of God for the human beings to enable them to know God in Himself.

Bonhoeffer approaches the Christology from the historicity of Jesus Christ. However, when he uses the Theological term “historical Jesus,” it does not mean that he follows the liberal theology in the distinction between “the historical Jesus,” and “the Christ of faith.” Because of the Enlightenment rationalism, both English Deists and the German Enlightenment theologians refused the classical Christology. They saw that – there is a difference between the real Jesus of history and the New Testament interpretation for his importance. Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) developed that thesis. He saw that the historical Jesus, who lies behind the text of the NT, was a religious figure, just a simple teacher of morality. The Early Church Fathers misrepresented him considering him as the Christ of faith.¹⁵ This quest developed more through the Christian liberal tradition. Bonhoeffer refused any kind of such discrepancy, considering it a heresy. He states, “All liberal theology must be understood in the context of a docetic Christology.”¹⁶ For Bonhoeffer, the historical Jesus is the Christ of Faith; He is the divine-human person *per se*.

Historicity regarding Jesus Christ has a distinctive understanding in Bonhoeffer’s Christology. It starts by his understanding for the meaning of history. For him, “History in its essence is to be interpreted ontologically ... History is the place of decision, nothing else. Decision

¹³ Ibid., 271.

¹⁴ Ibid., 273.

¹⁵ Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, the Fifth Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 299-300.

¹⁶ Bonhoeffer, “Lectures on Christology,” 293.

in its most inward sense is possible only as a decision for or against God. This decision is executed in facing Christ.”¹⁷ In Jesus Christ, human beings oppose the true Logos, in whom they face the death, because of their sins, and life, because of His salvific work. However, God’s revelation in Jesus Christ has three forms – Word, sacraments, and church-community. These forms are totally God’s revelation. For Bonhoeffer, form, in general, “... means unity, multiplicity within the finite boundary. Form is never only finite; form is infinite, because it transcends the sum of all boundaries.”¹⁸ These forms are not just symbols, they reveal God in as much as He wants. Historicity, therefore, is the ways or forms in which God reveals himself in Jesus Christ.

Bonhoeffer refuses to submit Christology to soteriology. Namely, he refuses to know who is Jesus Christ through his work. He asserts that, first; the work of Jesus Christ on the cross is opened for many interpretations. Second, the being of Jesus is not to be grasped; Jesus Christ is a divine-human person. The only way, therefore, is that Jesus Christ reveals himself.¹⁹ He confirms that, “Only through Christ’s own revelation do I have opened to me his person and his work.”²⁰

Here, it seems that the historicity of Jesus Christ, for Bonhoeffer, has different aspects. First, it contains the being and the work of Jesus Christ, which He reveals both. Second, the historicity is not limited to the time of incarnation only, but until now as well, as Jesus is still revealing Himself to man in different forms. Third, the historicity of Jesus Christ through revelation is not a mere material for knowing about Jesus Christ, but it has its sacred and mystery, which is revealed only in piety. Finally, the historicity of Jesus Christ always is characterized by two movements, the humility and the exaltation.

2.2.Features of Bonhoeffer’s Christology

2.2.1. From Above

The historicity of Jesus Christ for Bonhoeffer does not start “from below;” it starts “from above,” from the eternal Logos. Bonhoeffer considers this reality as a fact, which is not in need of proof.

¹⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Concerning the Christian Idea of God,” in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 135-142, 140.

¹⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “The Nature of the Church,” in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 171-209, 184.

¹⁹ Bonhoeffer, “Lectures on Christology,” 269-270.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

He writes, “The fact that the Logos become a flesh, a human being, is the prerequisite, not the proof.”²¹ In the encounter with human beings, Jesus Christ announced and proved that he is the life, the Truth, the Alpha, the Omega ...etc.²² It means that as Jesus Christ transcends us, He is the only one who can answer our questions about His being. “Because there can be no authority for our human Logos to cast doubt on the Truth of his Logos. Jesus’s own witness to himself then and now, stands on its own and substantiates itself.”²³

For Bonhoeffer, Jesus Christ is the Word, who encounters us with Truth. This Truth is not abstract truth nor timeless truth. The Truth of the Logos of Jesus Christ is binding and limited to His being, the divine-human being. This being, freely chose/chooses to reveal Himself to human beings. Also, He chose/chooses to allow the humankind to hear to His Truth. In doing so, Jesus Christ satisfies the Father, as He achieves the will of God, which is to be *for* the humankind.²⁴ Jesus Christ, therefore, is from above as His being is *the* Truth that presents and reveals God to us. In addition, Jesus Christ is from above as He is not restricted to His incarnational time. He is still revealing Himself to people “in the word of the church,” or “as the word of the church.” Namely, Jesus reveals Himself through worship or through evangelism. In both, Jesus Christ is not a mere power or effect, but He is, Himself, the center of worship and evangelism.²⁵

2.2.2. Immanent in Time and Place

Bonhoeffer asserts that the Word of God became a flesh revealing the very inner being of God in certain time and place. However, this revelation is not restrained by that time and that place. The revelation of God, according to Bonhoeffer, takes place in new form, which is the sacrament. He says, “Christ is wholly Word, and the sacrament is wholly Word.”²⁶ The immanence of Jesus Christ, through the sacraments, is a revealing presence of Jesus Christ, because a sacrament proclaims the gospel. Of course, Jesus Christ and the sacrament are not identical, as they are ontologically different. But, through the sacrament, God is revealing Himself in Jesus Christ. In

²¹ Ibid., 263.

²² Ibid., 264.

²³ Ibid., 265.

²⁴ Ibid., 276.

²⁵ Ibid., 277.

²⁶ Ibid.

addition, the sacrament presents Christ's presence as it has the promise of forgiveness of the sins for the believers.²⁷

Again, Bonhoeffer depicts the distinction between Jesus Christ and the sacrament. While sacrament is the bodily form of the Word, it "... exists only through the Word, but only as a word, as a Word in bodily form."²⁸ The sacrament is not equal to Jesus Christ as a counterpart. It represents and presents Jesus Christ because the Word of Jesus Christ is working in and through the sacrament. However, as God speaks to the human beings through the Logos as they have logos, God uses the sacrament to speak to humankind as it has something in common. "The sacrament in the form of nature engages human beings in their nature."²⁹ God encounters human beings in Jesus Christ through the materiality of the created world, in which God uses our limitation for including us in His unlimited grace. In addition, we encounter Jesus Christ as a forgiving and judging Christ in His Logos and in the sacrament. In both cases, He is creator and creation. In and as a Word, He is the Logos of God, in whom God created everything. In and as a sacrament, He creates us anew, that we become new creation. At the same time, He shares our nature as a creature.³⁰

2.2.3. Expanded Presence

The historical Jesus, for Bonhoeffer, is immanent in place and time through the sacraments within the church. However, He is immanent in the world through his church. It is His expanded presence. During His incarnational time, Jesus called people for the kingdom of God. After Ascension, the church, as Christ's body, became responsible for calling people to the kingdom. "Christ is the church-community by virtue of his being pro-me ... the church community, between his ascension and his second coming, is the form he takes."³¹ The historical Jesus, thus, is present in the world as a church-community.

Bonhoeffer explains the relationship between Jesus Christ and the church saying, "Word exists as the word of God's church-community, that is – it exists in time and space ... Church-

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 280-281.

³¹ Ibid., 281.

community is word of God in so far as word of God is God's revelation."³² The ontological distinction is standing between Jesus Christ and the church. He is the divine-human being, whereas she is a human community adopted by him in his grace. At the same time, Jesus Christ makes the church His body, His form, namely the being that proclaims and reveals God to the world. "The concept of the body as applied to the church-community is not a functional concept referring to the members but is instead a concept of the way in which the Christ exists who is present exalted, and humiliated."³³ The church, therefore, is the expanded revealing word, that presents God in the same way as Jesus Christ did/does. In his being, we saw/see the humiliated and exalted divine-human being. The church-community, therefore, ought to follow Jesus' example, who lived among sinners, and gave his life instead of them. In doing so, he instituted the meaning of exaltation.

2.2.4. The Mystery of Jesus Christ

Bonhoeffer's approach in studying Christology comes from great humility. It appears from his presuppositions and the questions that follow. For Bonhoeffer, the historical Jesus transcends the human beings. His being is a mystery. The proper question, therefore, is: Who are you? He argued that the question of "who," is the question about transcendence. The question of "how," is the question of empirical, which is not proper for the being of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer describes the question of "who," by saying that it is "... the question asked by horrified, dethroned human reasons, and also the question of faith."³⁴

Liberal theology tried to submit Christology to rationality. Ritschl, for example, refused the classic Christology, which affirms that Christ is realized in two natures, divine nature and human nature. For Ritschl, it is not a scientific claim, and that Jesus' disciples ascribed divinity to Jesus Christ because of his effect on them.³⁵ Bonhoeffer refuses these claims and Ritschl's methodology. For Bonhoeffer, the encounter between Jesus Christ's Logos and our logos is the starting point for studying Christology. When the historical Jesus appears, He sets himself up "...

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 264.

³⁵ Grenz and Olson, *20TH Century Theology*, 56-57.

as a judge over the human logos and says ... I am the death of the human logos ... Here all that remains is the question: who are you?"³⁶

In addition, the knowledge of Christ and His being, for Bonhoeffer, is not empirical. It is a knowledge about the unfathomable person. The church, therefore, is the place where people can find answers about Jesus Christ, and their questions should start from humility. Even theologians and church teachers should start by silence and not explaining, at that very time, Jesus is proclaimed.³⁷ The mystery of Jesus Christ transcends our understanding. If He does not reveal Himself, it is impossible to know Him, or to know God consequently.

2.2.5. States of the Christology

Bonhoeffer follows Luther in expressing the oneness of the being of the historical Jesus in two states: humiliation and exaltation. The benefit of this doctrine is to present the historical Jesus and the redeemer Christ together without any separation. On the other hand, it express the nature of the incarnation. The historical Jesus is not in process towards his humanity. Namely, the exalted raised Christ is the one who is humiliated.³⁸

When Jesus became a human being, He owned divine attributes, but He decided freely not to exercise these divine attributes while he was living on earth.³⁹ But, thinking in such way leads to the separation between the human nature and the divine nature, especially with the disputation of Kenoticists and Crypticists.⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer asserted again that we should not start from the question how. Any attempt to study the relation between the humanity and the divinity of Jesus Christ is to define these two natures abstractly, away from the reality of the historical Jesus. The

³⁶ Bonhoeffer, "Lectures on Christology," 264.

³⁷ Ibid., 262.

³⁸ Ibid., 301.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 302-303. The Cryptics are the theologians who insisted on the unity of the God-human person, no division between the humiliated one and the exalted one. Therefore, the one who must suffer would be, at the same time, the one who would not have had to suffer. They had been criticized that – according to their thought, Jesus did not really die. Kenotics, on the other hand, are the theologians who insisted that Christ really died. He did not exercise his divine attributes during His life on earth. Kenotics found in Phil. 2 their support. However, Cryptics and Kenotics eventually agreed that Christ exercised His divine attributes when He wanted to do so. Ibid., 302.

study, therefore, should start with the fact that Jesus Christ is totally God.⁴¹ And, we do not know God, or have a real relationship before Jesus Christ.

Humiliation, for Bonhoeffer, is that the God-human being has taken on a flesh, which is related to the fall of Adam. He chose to take on himself the burden of sin and death. In doing so, He appeared in our broken image, not God's image, but without sin.⁴² He was in the likeness of flesh (Rom. 8: 3), which He cast when he was exalted. The aim of humiliation is to condemn the sin of all human beings in His flesh. At the same time, He was without sin.⁴³ These two assertions cannot be synthesized; they should remain without any balance. He took on himself our sin and He is without sin.⁴⁴ In doing so, "God glorifies himself in the human. This is the ultimate mystery of the Trinity."⁴⁵ God, in his love, is *for* humanity in His humiliation and exaltation.

People used to ascribe humiliation to the humanity and exaltation to the divinity. However, in Jesus Christ's being, we meet one being, not two separated natures. Bonhoeffer asserts that, "To be humiliated does not mean to be more human and less God, and to be exalted does not mean to be more God and less human. Both in being humiliated and in being exalted, Jesus remains wholly human and wholly God."⁴⁶

2.3. The work of Christ

As it is shown above, Bonhoeffer refused to define Jesus Christ through His work, because He transcends our logos; human beings can only ask him about himself and how he reveals himself. However, Bonhoeffer believes that, "It would be wrong to conclude that person and work should be considered separately."⁴⁷ The work of Jesus Christ, therefore, reflects other Christological aspects. But, through the Christian tradition, the work of Jesus Christ has been interpreted in different ways with different theories and atonement images. One of the reasons for having these different interpretations is the understanding of the nature of sin, especially the Original Sin. It is

⁴¹ Ibid., 303-304.

⁴² Ibid., 309.

⁴³ Ibid., 309.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 310.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 308.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 308.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 271.

important, therefore, to explore how Bonhoeffer considers the Original Sin, then to explore how he understands the work of Jesus Christ.

2.3.1. The Original Sin

How does Bonhoeffer explain the fall of the first Adam? He says, “The center has been intruded upon, the boundary has been transgressed. Now humankind stands in the middle, with no limit. Standing in the middle means living from its own resources and no longer from the center.”⁴⁸ God is the center, the creator of everything. Man, as part of the created world, essentially depends on God. Man, therefore, has boundaries, which show the ontological difference between him and the creator. These boundaries confirm that God is the center. When the first Adam decided to know good and evil, he transgressed his boundaries, he refused God as a center, and he wanted to be the source of himself. Bonhoeffer adds, “Having no limits means alone.”⁴⁹ The first human being, the first Adam, wanted to be alone without relationships, and away of God. Bonhoeffer confirms, “To be in the center and to be alone means to be sicut deus [*as God*].”⁵⁰ This is the original sin, which is the source of all sins. The human beings want to be gods without the real God.

Bonhoeffer explains the method of the fall in the Original Sin. He sees that the human being had to submit his obedience to the object of this obedience, which is God. But, realizing their freedom, they used it against their creatureliness. In their creatureliness, they could have used their obedience freely to obey God. After the fall, the freedom of the first Adam came against their creatureliness.⁵¹ Bonhoeffer confirms that, “The word disobedience fails to describe the situation adequately. It is rebellion.”⁵² This is the rebellion against God, in which the first Adam set himself over against God.

In addition, Bonhoeffer asserts that sin should not be understood as just an act, which is the act of disobedience or the act of rebellion. But, it should be understood as being; it includes the whole being of the person. If sin was just an act, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ becomes

⁴⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Creation and Fall,” in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 210-260, 251.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 254.

redundant. When Jesus died on the cross, He demonstrated that the whole of human nature is in need of salvation.⁵³ If sin is just an act, human beings could just do/present another good act, which will remove their sin. But, sin included the whole being that every act became stigmatized by sin. Salvation, therefore, must be alien, from outside of the human beings.

2.3.2. Images of Atonement

The work of Jesus Christ, as a savior, includes all aspects of the Original Sin, as well as all subsequent sins. Bonhoeffer presents the features of Jesus' work at least in three aspects: Christ as a Reconciler, Christ as a Vicarious Representative, and Christ as a Church-community.

2.3.2.1. Christ As A Reconciler

How does Bonhoeffer interpret "God is love?" He sees that love is the essence of God. No one can know the love of God without God's revelation of Himself. Jesus is the only definition for love. This definition relates to His being, not because of his work or his pains on the cross. However, this love is not theoretical; it is embodied in a historical being. This historical being reveals the essence of God.⁵⁴ When Bonhoeffer thinks about the relationship between God and the world, he sees only the being of Jesus Christ. He is the reconciler between these two contested parties. In Christ's reality, God reveals His mystery and His being. In His history, people realize the deep gap, which separate them from God.⁵⁵

In His love, "God becomes human, a real human being. While we exert ourselves to grow beyond our humanity, to leave the human behind us, God becomes human; and we must recognize that God wills that we be real human beings."⁵⁶ Here, human beings could be reconciled with lost humanity in *the* real humanity of Jesus Christ. The humanity of the historical human being became the aim, which all human beings should seek through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, by the Holy Spirit. In His humanity, we realize that the real human being can live with God. He is our

⁵³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Act and Being," in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 92-109, 97.

⁵⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Trans. by Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Scott (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 247-249.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

reconciliation.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Spiritual reformation, for Bonhoeffer, is not about disciplines which help any believer to conform to the image of the Christ. Reformation takes place only in the process of seeking the humanity of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, the historical being.⁵⁸ Bonhoeffer asserts that, “In Christ, the form of humanity was created anew.”⁵⁹

In what seems to be a turn towards Semi-Pelagianism when Bonhoeffer writes, “To be a human being, it is a precondition for justifying by grace of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁰ However, Bonhoeffer considers that when God became a human being, He included the whole of humanity in Himself. In Jesus’ humanity, people became ready to be justified by the being and work of Jesus Christ on the cross.⁶¹ Bonhoeffer distinguishes between Penultimate and Ultimate in justification. The Penultimate is characterized by sin and denial, in which the human being is proud of his humanity and trust in his goodness. The Ultimate, on the other hand, is the word of justification by God’s grace in Jesus Christ. Both the Penultimate and the Ultimate stand against each other. For Bonhoeffer, the solution is only in Jesus Christ, the divine-human person. In His incarnation, He took the “likeness of flesh” on Himself. In His death, He condemned that flesh, and the whole human beings. In His resurrection, He presents a new hope in a new world for the human beings. The unifying of incarnation, death, and resurrection in one person leads to the encounter between Penultimate and Ultimate. The sinful person could find a word of justification in the being and work of Jesus Christ.⁶²

2.3.2.2. Christ As A Vicarious Representative

Bonhoeffer asserts that the sin of human beings is not just an act; it includes the whole being. And, while the first Adam tried to use his freedom, he used it against his creatureliness. The final result is that all human beings, in the first Adam, cannot help themselves. They are in need for alien help to save them. Jesus Christ is the vicarious representative who took the responsibility of saving a sinful world. “One stands for all; Christ is the vicarious representative of humanity.”⁶³

⁵⁷ Ibid., 32-35.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 94.

⁶¹ Ibid., 93.

⁶² Ibid., 81, 87, 91.

⁶³ Bonhoeffer, “The Nature of the Church,” 187.

Bonhoeffer says, “He stands in my place, where I should be standing. He stands there because I cannot.”⁶⁴ He took the place of criminals and sinners to let them to get free.

Jesus Christ is a vicarious representative through sharing our humanity as he took the “likeness of flesh,” which is characterized by the vulnerability to temptation, the self-will, and all mortifying aspects of humanity, but without sin. Jesus’ humanity is the true human flesh. As a human being, He was subject to the condemnation of the human being. In so doing, the God-human could save all the human beings.⁶⁵

For Bonhoeffer, the vicarious representative work of Jesus Christ took place in four steps. First, God incarnated in a human being. In His humanity, all human beings are judged. As a human being, Christ stands against their rebellion, and stands for them at the same time. Second, Christ submitted Himself to the Law and He fulfilled. In the first Adam, humanity knew the isolation of individuality, which produced the wrath of God, at the condemnation of the Law. Christ, fulfilling the Law and satisfying God, acts as the new humanity. Third, Jesus died on the cross to take upon himself the wrath of God as a sacrifice. He carried all the sins of the human beings. The humankind has judged and died in Him. Fourth, Christ is risen, humanity is justified in Him As a vicarious representative. In His death and resurrection, Jesus transferred the body of Adam to the body of the risen Christ. Humanity in Jesus Christ became righteous.⁶⁶

2.3.2.3. Christ As A Church-Community

Community is a third image to describe the work of Jesus Christ as a savior. In this image, Christ restores the human beings from their sin, which has been described as individuality and being alone from God and from others.⁶⁷ Human beings, in the first Adam, turned away from God, the center, to make their individuals the center. “Christ is the new humanity. Christ is simultaneously the foundation and the beginner and fulfiller of the church ... The church-community is Christ; Christ is church-community.”⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer, then, asserts, “To be in Christ is to be in church.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Bonhoeffer, “Lectures on Christology,” 282.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 309-310.

⁶⁶ Bonhoeffer, “The Nature of the Church,” 188-189.

⁶⁷ Bonhoeffer, “Act and Being,” 94.

⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer, “The Nature of the Church,” 190.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

Church-community is the restoration of the first lost community. In this community, God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, who gathers all humanity in Himself to be a community instead of individuality.

Bonhoeffer confirms that the church-community is grounded on the new humanity of Jesus Christ after His vicarious work, consequently, “Christ is himself the church-community ... Christ is the Lord of the church-community; ... [and] Christ is the brother in the church-community.”⁷⁰ As a brother, Jesus Christ institutes the priesthood of all believers. Any believer in the church can take the responsibilities of the priest’s office to serve the others. And, others depend on that one. It does not mean the superiority of the priest; it institutes the dependence on each other.⁷¹ However, every member in the church-community can become Christ for the other.⁷²

All these features and characterizations of the church-community come “from above,” that is the head of the church; the Christ. However, Bonhoeffer refers also to the other aspect, which is humanity. He says, “Christian community is not an ideal; second, Christian community is a spiritual and not emotional reality.”⁷³ The church-community consists of human beings, who are sinners and justified at the same time.⁷⁴ They are not ideal, and sometimes, they turn away from the head, the Christ, to take their own decisions. Still, church-community is a spiritual community. Faith relates them together in Jesus Christ; it is not just an emotional reality, which declines with the vanishing of a situation. Church-community is characterized by preaching and proclaiming the word of God.⁷⁵

2.4. Conclusion; Analysis and Evaluation

2.4.1. The Historicity As An Approach

Bonhoeffer adopts the historicity as an approach to explore his understanding of Christology. It helps in presenting the fact of the existence of the being of Jesus Christ, who is a divine-human

⁷⁰ Ibid., 193.

⁷¹ Ibid., 200.

⁷² Ibid., 204.

⁷³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Life Together,” in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 514-561, 521.

⁷⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Sanctorum Communio,” in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 18-56, 53.

⁷⁵ Bonhoeffer, “The Nature of the Church,” 197.

person. Nevertheless, it reflects his refusal for natural theology to be a way of revealing God. This reflects the impact of Barth on Bonhoeffer; Barth rejected natural theology by emphasizing the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

This historicity, as an approach to Christology, enhances and supports Liberation Theology. It shows God's care for the history of the world, that He became a human being within their history. It reflects that God's eternity does not oppose or contradict the world's history. On the contrary, the world's history is part of God's eternity. Moreover, while some soteriological theologies, as the Eastern theologies, are oriented to the deification of human salvation, the historicity of Jesus asserts true humanity as a way towards the Risen Christ. The call of the church, therefore, should not be for saving souls only, rather the whole being. It is the biblical view for the Eschatology as well. Eschatology is not for souls only, it is "... *a new heaven and a new earth* ..." (Rev. 21: 1). This is the recreated creation in the glorified humanity of the Risen Christ.

2.4.2. Bonhoeffer's Christology

Bonhoeffer's Christology is characterized by transcendence and immanence. It is transcendent since it starts "from above." This appears in his Christological questions. These questions confirm that Jesus Christ is not a mere person, whose history could be submitted to empirical quest. In the church, Jesus could be asked about Himself, and He is the only person who could answer questions about His being. On the other hand, Jesus is immanent with the humans; He is with us, and *pro nobis*. He took on our humanity in its whole meaning without sin. He lived our life and went through our temptations, struggles, and needs. He is present through other forms to enhance and support the human beings' life.

In addition, Bonhoeffer's Christology is balanced between spirituality and materiality. The dualism of spirit-matter is not in his Christology; Jesus Christ became a human being to save humanity. On the cross, He saves the whole human being. The presence of Jesus Christ characterizes the church's sacraments and does not eliminate or abolish the materiality of the elements. The church, as a form of revelation, starts from the head, who is Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit; she includes all saved humans as members. On the other hand, this balance appears

in the meaning of the work of Jesus Christ. On the cross, Jesus released the human beings from their sins, the rebellion against God, towards a church-community.

It seems that Bonhoeffer's Christology is influenced by Karl Barth. In the doctrine of revelation, Barth asserts that God reveals Himself in different ways, through the *revealed* Word, who is Jesus Christ, the *written* word, which is the Bible, and in the *revealing* word, which is preaching God's word and celebrating the sacraments.⁷⁶ Bonhoeffer, thus, combines a strong emphasis on revelation and Christology. It appears in the high emphasis of the equality of revelation in the Word, sacraments, and church-community. All of these three ways are forms of the Christ.

2.4.3. Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology

The church-community, according to Bonhoeffer's thought, is well structured. It has been grounded Christologically and Pneumatologically; Jesus instituted her on His death and His resurrection. The church took her place in history with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' work guarantees her the classical marks of the church, which are One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. To be grounded on the Holy Spirit guarantees her a dynamic life and leaves her without any kind of hierarchy. It means that the Holy Spirit bestows gifts on the church, which help in building Christ's body and assists in her ministry. On the other hand, instituting the church Christologically only leads the church to a hierarchical structure. Bonhoeffer avoids the church's hierarchy through the grounding on the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of all believers, the brotherhood of Jesus within the church.

The church-community is an extension for Jesus' incarnation. Bonhoeffer writes, "Church-community is the Word of God, insofar as the Word of God is God's revelation."⁷⁷ Although Bonhoeffer indicates the church is not ideal, yet these features make her absolute. As it shown above, Christ is the head of the body and he is every member of this community. When he adds to these features the work of the Holy Spirit, the church-community looks to be absolute. It does not contradict the way in which the church is grounded and instituted to avoid hierarchy; but it

⁷⁶ Richard J. Plantinga, Thomas R. Thompson, and Matthew D. Lundberg, *An Introduction to Christian Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 57.

⁷⁷ Bonhoeffer, "Lectures on Christology," 281.

gives her features of absoluteness. According to my understanding, what is preventing the church from being considered absolute is the concept of ‘mission.’ The church is the community, which is instituted Christologically and Pneumatologically. God is revealing Himself within her through the sacraments and preaching. This community is in a mission towards the world.

As Bonhoeffer’s understanding of sin is individual, and his understanding of salvation is collective in the church community, it leads to two results. First, the church-community is responsible for proclaiming God’s Word to the world and ministering to it. This community becomes the center in the world, where God reveals himself. And, this community became responsible about the world for liberating actions. Second, it seems to limit the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit within the church-community. When the church-community is described as a form of Christ in revealing God, and that to be in Christ is to be in church, it leads to limit the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit within the church. For me, the church is bearer of the revelation, which gives Christ and Spirit the freedom to work in the world in different ways, which are consistent with the nature of God, who is infinite.

2.5.Summary

The aim of this chapter is to explore the balance between the salvific Christology and the liberating Christology in Bonhoeffer’s thought. This balance appears in different issues. First, it appears in the Christological approach, which is historical. Bonhoeffer does not use a metaphysical, soteriological, or any other approach for his Christology. The historicity of Jesus Christ emphasizes the value of the humanity, and indicates the comprehensive salvation for the whole human being, soul and body. Second, Jesus as a reconciler presents this balance as well. The reconciliation with God did not/does not occur outside the being of Jesus Christ. In Christ’s being, God reconciled the world to Himself. In this being, God reveals Himself to the humankind, and contacts them in their nature through the humanity of Jesus Christ. In the humanity of Jesus Christ, we realize our true humanity, and that the humanity does not contradict the divinity. Third, Jesus as a vicarious representative confirms that humanity is worthy. On one hand, the being of Jesus Christ represents God to humankind, and presents the humankind to God. In such relationship, human beings realize the way to God through the humanity of Jesus Christ, which gathers and represents them all. On the other hand, God achieves His work in salvation through the being of a

divine-human person. In His humanity, all human beings come to receive the divine work. Fourth, the balance between salvific Christology and liberating Christology appears in the church-community. God does not save us from sin to gather us only in the eternity, but He calls us to a community as well. In this community, God reveals Himself, through Jesus Christ, to the men and women. This community emphasizes God's care for the humanity. On one hand, He has a relationship with them in their whole beings, souls and bodies. On the other hand, He sends this community to reveal Him to the other human beings. In general, Bonhoeffer's Christology presents God's comprehensive salvation for the spirit and the body of the human being.

Chapter Three

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ

3.1.Introduction

3.1.1. Prologue

In this chapter, I will explore the Christology of Gutierrez. He considers Christology as the heart of any theological study. Although liberation theology is one of the theologies which come from below, in this context, Christology remains the center of such studies. Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection are the main guide of the theology of liberation. For my understanding, Gutierrez, through a historical approach, presents Christ in different ways with different images. In all of them, Jesus' being and His work reflect the involvement of God in the world, especially among the poor and the oppressed.

Gutierrez does not adopt liberation theology as a mere case to defend. He comes from the bottom of the problem. He was born into a poor family in Peru living a hard childhood. The first part of this chapter, therefore, will contain a brief introduction to his life, then his Christological approach. Finally, I will present an analysis and evaluation to show whether Gutierrez' Christology presents a balance between a salvific and a liberating Christology.

3.1.2. Gutiérrez' Biography

Gustavo Gutiérrez, the father of liberation theology, was born on June 8, 1928, in Lima, Peru, to a loving poor family. In his childhood, he experienced genuine poverty like many Peruvian children. In addition, he suffered sickness; Osteomyelitis forced him to be in bed for more than six years, until he became eighteen. This kind of life helped him in knowing what pain is. But, on the other hand, it assisted him to be a good reader and to have close friends. With his friends, he discussed the Christian faith and the political situation of Peru, and how does it lead to a physical, psychological, and spiritual suffering for people.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ James B. Nickoloff, "Introduction," in *Gustavo Gutiérrez; Essential Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 1-22, 2.

At San Marcos University in Lima, he studied medicine to become a psychiatrist, but his first degree was a Bachelor of Science in medicine and literature. From 1951 to 1955, he studied philosophy and psychology at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. There, he wrote his master thesis on “The Psychic Conflict in Freud.” In the Catholic University of Lyons, he studied theology from 1955-1959. From this University, he received his doctorate in 1985. During this period of his life, he studied at the Gregorian University in Rome, the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands, and the University of Tubingen.⁷⁹

In 1959, he was ordained as a Dominican priest. Also, he worked as a teacher in the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, and as an advisor to the National Union of Catholic Students. In his lectures, he used to challenge his students by posing the discussion of the human existence and the place of God in their world. When he attended the fourth session of the Second Vatican Council as an assistant to his bishop, he paid a great attention to the discussion about ecclesial and sociopolitical topics in Latin America. Through both the theological discussions in the university and the discussion of Vatican II, he could interpret the appearance of the movements “*Movimiento Popular*,” as “irruption of the Poor.” These movements were considered, later, as the sociopolitical context of the theology of liberation in Latin America. Gutierrez was one of the few who paved the way for the Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopacy held in Medellin, Colombia in 1968. This became the significant event in the history of the theology of liberation.⁸⁰ In 1971, Gutierrez published his first book *A Theology of Liberation*, which is considered as the foundational text of liberation theology.⁸¹ In general, Gutierrez’ contributions, through his writings and his lectures, enriches the field of liberation theology all over the world.

Jorge E. Castillo Guerra describes the context of Gutierrez in Peru, saying, “He lived and worked in Peru for eight years. His stay coincided with the war between government armed forces and guerrilla⁸² movements.”⁸³ He continues to explain the hardships of people there, “It was a time

⁷⁹ Harry J. Huebner, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics; History, Movements, People* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012), 462.

⁸⁰ Nickoloff, “Introduction,” 5.

⁸¹ Huebner, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 465.

⁸² Guerrilla is a “type of warfare fought by irregulars in fast-moving, small-scale actions against orthodox military and police forces.” Robert Brown Asprey, “Guerrilla warfare, Military Tactics,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/guerrilla-warfare>; site accessed on Apr. 24, 2018.

⁸³ Jorge E. Castillo Guerra, “Gustavo Gutiérrez: A Public Pastoral Theologian in Peru,” in *Swedish Missiological Themes* 98, 4 (2010): 479-495, 484.

of violent confrontation between military forces, in which civilians were suspected of collaboration with either government or guerrilla groups. The civil war left a record of 70,000 deaths and disappearances.”⁸⁴ In such context, Gutierrez, as a pastor and a theologian, faced the dilemma of presenting the word of God to a hopeless, oppressed, poor people.

3.1.3. Gutiérrez’ Christological Approach

For Gutierrez, “The great hermeneutical principle of the faith, and hence the basis and foundation of all theological reasoning, is Jesus Christ ... For Jesus is the irruption into history of the one by whom everything was made and everything was saved.”⁸⁵ Christology, for Gutierrez, is the center of his theology, and he approached his Christology through the historicity of Jesus Christ. For him, history is “... the locus of our encounter with the father of Jesus Christ ... where God reveals himself and where we proclaim him.”⁸⁶ This encounter always takes place through Jesus Christ, whom Gutierrez calls “The Lord of history.”⁸⁷ In Christ, God reveals Himself through the whole history; it is the “history of salvation.”⁸⁸ Gutierrez confirms, “The redemptive work [of Jesus Christ] embraces all the dimension of existence and brings them to their fullness.”⁸⁹ Thus, the salvific works of God in the Old Testament find their meaning and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Gutierrez refuses the attitude that divides history into one profane and another sacred, namely the history of the world and the history of God with His people, in which God reveals His love in different ways in Christ.⁹⁰ He insists, “The fundamental affirmation is clear: there is only one history – a ‘Christo-finalized’ history.”⁹¹ The revelation of God through that history is

⁸⁴ Ibid. *Shining Path*, the Peruvian revolutionary organization, used the tactics of Guerrilla to achieve their goals. They claimed that they work on “empowering the native population at the expense of Peru’s traditional Spanish-speaking elite.” This organization was found in 1970, but the first act of violence occurred in 1980, near Ayacucho. “It gained control of poor rural and urban districts in central and southern Peru by violence and intimidation.” Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Shining Path; Peruvian Revolutionary Organization,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shining-Path>; site accessed on Apr. 24, 2018.

⁸⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of The Poor in History*, Trans., by Robert R. Barr (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 61.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁸⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation; History, Politics and Salvation*, Trans., and Ed., by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, Fourth impression (London: SCM Press LTD, 1979), 153.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

characterized by being gradual.⁹² God used many ways to reveal Himself to the world until the fulfillment of time came when God revealed Himself from within Himself in Jesus Christ.

The historical reading for Christology brings the old covenant and the new covenant together. In the old covenant, God says to His people: “I shall be your God, and you shall be my people.” In this covenant, God committed Himself to liberate His people. On the other hand, God’s people had to bear witness to him to all nations.⁹³ In the old covenant, God graciously gave them and achieved great promises. However, the story of the Old Testament shows the commitment of God towards His people, while they were unfaithful. In Jesus Christ, the new covenant, God became the Father of all nations. He is the achievement of the old covenant. What God’s people failed in, He fulfilled in Himself.⁹⁴ The old covenant, therefore, is not separated from the history of Jesus Christ; rather, it finds fulfillment in Him.

Through the historicity of Jesus Christ, Gutierrez confirms a different understanding for Eschatology. Eschatology is not only there and not yet; it is present in Christ here and now as well. “Its presence is an intrahistorical reality.”⁹⁵ The presence of Eschatology is related to Jesus Christ as the Lord of all history, whose incarnation brings the past and the future together. In Jesus Christ, the past finds its meaning, and the future loses its ambiguity. Gutierrez confirms, “The coming of the kingdom and the expectations of the Parousia are also necessary and inevitably historical, temporal, earthly, social, and material realities.”⁹⁶ Eschatology, therefore, cannot be restricted by a metaphysical future; it is present in the power of the presence of Jesus Christ.

3.2. The Person and the Work of Christ

From a perspective of liberation theology, Gutierrez has a distinctive understanding for “sin.” This understanding illuminates his understanding of the work of Christ in salvation. The nature of sin always defines the essence of salvation. Therefore, I will first explore the meaning of sin in Gutierrez’ thought.

⁹² Ibid., 161.

⁹³ Gutiérrez, *The Power of The Poor*, 9.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁵ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, fourth Impression, 167.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

3.2.1. The Concept of Sin

For Gutierrez, sin, "... the breach of friendship with God and others – is a human, social, and historical reality which originates in a socially and historically situated freedom."⁹⁷ In the traditional theology, sin always relates mainly to the attitude of man, for example, self-center or arrogance. For Gutierrez, the focus is on the motif and the consequence simultaneously. Sin is a historical reality, namely action, which is against the relationship with God and others. However, it is not only individual; it is collective as well. It could be a general behavior in the society, which calls a "sinful situation," that is characterized by the absence of peace, equality, which comes from the rejection of God and his peace.⁹⁸

Gutierrez confirms that sin "... can't be encountered in itself, but only in concrete instances, in particular alienations."⁹⁹ As it is a historical action, it is in need of a reaction, which restores the situation to its original state. Gutierrez believes that it happens when human beings involve in a "radical liberation." This "radical liberation" implies a "political liberation," which leads to social and economic liberation.¹⁰⁰

But, how could societies start a "radical liberation?" For Gutierrez, it is not a revolution or a movement; it is a gift. Through His death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ gives humanity this gift. He redeems the humankind from their alienation and separation from God and others.¹⁰¹ Gutierrez calls this gift "the gift of filiation." This gift restores the brotherhood and sisterhood of men and women.¹⁰² Gutierrez emphasizes the direction of the gift of filiation; it is directed towards the nature and the goal of the gift, which is communion with God. It is a freedom *from* sin, which is oppression and poverty, *for* a communion with God and others. It is the same direction of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, which is a freedom *from* sin *for* a communion with the Father.¹⁰³

The gift of filiation implies liberation actions by human beings against all kinds of oppression. However, it is not confusion between the role of the humankind and the role of God

⁹⁷ Ibid., 172.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 109.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 175-176.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 176.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Gutiérrez, *The Power of The Poor*, 63.

¹⁰³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Path of Liberation," in *Gustavo Gutiérrez; Essential Writings*, Ed. by James B. Nickoloff (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 211-235, 233.

in their salvation. “Sin is a radical evil; it can be conquered only by the grace of God and the radical liberation which the Lord bestows. This grace of God is present in every act of authentic human love.”¹⁰⁴ God’s grace initiates and leads the human beings in the liberating actions, through political processes for justice, equality, and peace.

3.2.2. Images of the Christology

3.2.2.1. Christ as the Lord of the History

Christ is the Lord of the history because everything started in Him in creation, and in salvation, everything has been redeemed. Gutierrez confirms that, “Creation and salvation ... have, in the first place a Christological sense: all things have been created in Christ, all things have been saved in him.”¹⁰⁵ God’s liberating events, which are between creation and salvation, are in Christ as well, as God did everything through him. This includes past, present and future. Gutierrez asserts that, “God’s singular plan [is] to recapitulate all things in Christ.”¹⁰⁶ As it is shown above, Gutierrez refused the idea of dividing history into sacred and profane. It is only one history. This history reveals God’s love, in Jesus Christ, through historical events.

In Jesus Christ, God does not only lead the history, but he became a history as well. God revealed his love in different ways; then, in the fullness of time, He pitches his tent in the midst of the history. Through a historical being and a historical work, He announced the good news, that is – Himself; namely, God became with us. On the other hand, His coming guarantees that He is to come; He stands at the future of human beings’ history.¹⁰⁷

As Jesus Christ is the Lord of the history and as He is incarnated in this history, the question about the nature of salvation – whether it is eschatological or temporal – becomes senseless. Jesus’ incarnation in history abolishes the distinction between soul and matter; the soul does not transcend matter. On the other hand, in his life, Jesus did not spiritualize the eschatological promises; rather he fulfilled them and gives hope toward the total reconciliation. The relationship between

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth Impression, 158.

¹⁰⁶ Gutiérrez, “The Path of Liberation,” 226.

¹⁰⁷ Gutiérrez, *The Power of The Poor*, 13.

eschatological and temporal is not contradictory. Eschatology, in Jesus Christ, reforms the temporal. The world, thus, moves towards the future of a complete fulfillment.¹⁰⁸

Along the history, God bestows on His people the opportunity to celebrate his liberating actions. In the Old Testament, the lamb of the Passover was a memory of Going out of Egypt. On the other hand, it was a symbol for the real lamb, Jesus Christ. Instituting the Eucharist, Jesus brings that celebration from shadow to fulfillment in Himself. Jesus' community celebrates the Eucharist as a thanksgiving for the salvific work of Jesus Christ. However, it is a memory of the liberating deeds of God in Jesus Christ through the history. It is a witness of the revealed love of God through the history. Finally, the Eucharist is the event that links the past with the future through hope and trust in the Spirit.¹⁰⁹

3.2.2.2. Christ as a Reconciler

According to Gutierrez, relationship with God cannot take place outside of human history. This required the existence of God in the human history; and that man could have the ability to encounter God directly. This synthesis occurs only in the being of Jesus Christ. He is the God-Man. In Christ, human beings encounter God face to face. In Christ, humankind experiences 'union with the Lord.'¹¹⁰ In Christ's being, reconciliation starts. He is the only way for a real relationship between God and man, as He presents God to man, and represents human beings without sin to God.

For Gutierrez, sin consists of selfishness and refusing the love of God and the neighbor. It is the source of poverty, injustice, and oppression. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus frees human beings from their sins. It is a freedom for loving God and neighbor. Gutierrez follows Bonhoeffer in his understanding of freedom. It is not something for human beings in themselves. Freedom is found in relationship to others. It is a relationship between two persons. To be free, therefore, is to be in a relationship. Christ's freedom, through his work, is the starting point towards overcoming sin, going out of oneself to love others. It is the source of liberation from selfishness

¹⁰⁸ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth Impression, 166-167.

¹⁰⁹ Gutiérrez, *The Power of The Poor*, 16.

¹¹⁰ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth Impression, 206-207.

toward communion with God and with other men.¹¹¹ The work of Christ in reconciliation, therefore, is a "... transition from sin to grace, from death to life, from injustice to justice, from subhuman to the human. Christ introduces us by the gift of His Spirit into communion with God and with all men."¹¹² Christ's reconciliation, thus, is a comprehensive radical solution for sin in its both dimensions, individual and collective.

Through his work as a reconciler, Jesus Christ institutes the community of God, the church. Church as Community is central for Gutierrez, he writes, "Faith comes alive in the dynamism of the good news that reveals us as children of the Father and sisters and brothers of one another, and creates a community, a church, the visible sign to others of liberation in Christ."¹¹³ The church, therefore, is the center of liberating acts in the world. As God's love is practical in Jesus Christ, the church has to take it seriously, to serve others, to help people to have societies without oppression.

For Gutierrez, the work of Christ in liberating humankind has three levels. First, it is liberating individuals from sin. This is the lack of love which results in all kinds of injustice and oppression. Second, it is a freedom for the humankind, which Jesus enables them to live in a community with him. Third, it is a fellowship of all human beings. This is the impact of the practical life of the members of Christ's community in their societies.¹¹⁴ The community of Christ has the responsibility of helping others to liberate them from sin, and to help them to have peace, away from all kinds of need.

3.2.2.3.Christ as the Messiah

In his relationship with his people, God made a covenant. The aim and ultimate promise of this covenant is the sonship of all humankind. It has come to be fulfilled only in Jesus Christ. He is the only one who fulfilled the Father's promises. In Jesus Christ, the Father adopted us through Jesus'

¹¹¹ Ibid., 35-36.

¹¹² Ibid., 176.

¹¹³ Gutiérrez, *The Power of The Poor*, 67.

¹¹⁴ Gutiérrez, "The Path of Liberation," 223.

death and resurrection.¹¹⁵ Jesus is the Messiah of God who proclaims God's reign on his community, and who brings God's kingdom to be true in His being.¹¹⁶

Gutierrez then links the nature of the messianic promises and the coming of Jesus Christ. The reign of peace is the event, which indicates the coming of the Messiah. However, this peace requires justice, punishment of the oppressor as well as equality. In general, the messianic promises refer to the coming of the kingdom of God.¹¹⁷ The coming of Jesus is the fulfillment of the messianic promises. He proclaimed the kingdom of God, the reign of God through establishing God's community. This is the fatherhood of God for all human beings. In this community, they are brothers and sisters for one another.¹¹⁸ It is the peace, which God promised to give in the messianic promises.

Being the Messiah of God, Jesus gives the history its meaning. The deep meaning of the history finds itself in the relation between the promises and the fulfillment. It is not a relation between things or concepts; rather it is a relationship between persons. In the new covenant, who is Jesus Christ himself, Jesus said about Himself that He is the Truth, which means that He is the fulfillment of the Father's promises. In doing so, Jesus announced that God is faithful; He is the Truth. On the other hand, Jesus proved that the history is coherent and consistent. Jesus, through being the Messiah who fulfilled Father's promises, does not only link the past with the present, but links the present with the eschatological future as well. Jesus announced that he is the only way to the Father. It is another meaning for being the Truth. Jesus is the Truth as he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last word, the alpha and the Omega.¹¹⁹ In addition, "Jesus is the Truth, but a Truth that sets us free."¹²⁰ He is not a mere word to proclaim God's love; He is the Word who proclaims and achieves the love of God in the lives of people. He is the person who frees people to live with God in His kingdom.

Jesus is the reigning Messiah pointing to the glory of God. He was born among the poor and lived with them to inaugurate God's kingdom. However, he did not do so as an earthly king.

¹¹⁵ Gutiérrez, *The Power of The Poor*, 59.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹⁹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Truth and Theology," in *Gustavo Gutiérrez; Essential Writings*, Ed. by James B. Nickoloff (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 53-60, 54-55.

¹²⁰ Gutiérrez, "The Path of Liberation," 211.

In his incarnation, He was the hidden God, who adopted and was involved in the problems of the poor and the oppressed. As the hidden God, Jesus presented the Messiah who suffers and dies for the glory of God in the life of the oppressed. Gutierrez calls that “the messianic inversion” which starts with incarnation among the poor, adopting their case, and defending it until the death.¹²¹

3.2.2.4. Christ as a Poor Man

As sin produces poverty through oppression, injustice, and inequality, Jesus identifies Himself with the poor to liberate them. This identification finds its source in ‘Matthew. 25: 31-34.’ Gutierrez shows how the poor in Latin America express the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In becoming a human being, the son of God became poor, poor like the poor, whom are preferred by God in His grace. When God in Jesus Christ “pitched his tent in our midst,” (John. 1: 14), He became poor.¹²²

Gutierrez quotes from the “Puebla document”¹²³ to reflect on the nature of Jesus’ mission. According to Puebla, “The poor are the first ones to whom Jesus’ mission is directed (Luke 4: 18-21) ... The evangelization of the poor is the supreme sign and proof of his mission (Luke. 7: 21-23).”¹²⁴ Jesus devoted his life to liberate the poor, through teaching them and revealing to them and others (Jesus was not against the rich) principles of the good news of the kingdom of God. In addition, Gutierrez indicates that the poor became the messengers for the good news of Jesus.¹²⁵ Moreover, Gutierrez sees that, “Jesus’ death is the consequence of his struggle for justice, his proclamation of the kingdom, and his identification with the poor.”¹²⁶

Gutierrez writes, “Only from the viewpoint of the poor are we going to understand the radical nature of Christ’s liberation.”¹²⁷ Does it mean that Christ’s message is a call for poverty? Gutierrez presents the meaning of poverty in the Bible. It has three meanings. First, it is a

¹²¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “The God Who Comes,” in *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, Ed. by James B. Nickoloff (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 127-143, 142.

¹²² Gutiérrez, *The Power of The Poor*, 142.

¹²³ This document has been prepared by the Secretariat of the Latin American Episcopal Conference held in Puebla, Mexico, in October 1978. Gutierrez’ opinions were regarded as significant critiques. *Ibid.*, 111.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

“scandalous condition.” It is the state of need and lacking something. Also, it refers to the weak persons or the frail ones. God created the human beings to be honored. He created them in His image and His likeness. The will of God for humankind is to dominate the earth, which means man had to transform the nature. In doing so, they enter into relationships with others without exploitation or oppression. In addition, man is the sacrament of God. It means that meeting God takes place in encounters with man.¹²⁸

Second, Poverty is a “spiritual childhood.” It is a positive meaning for the word poverty. It refers to the state of welcoming God and the readiness to be used by God. It is the state of humiliation. In the Old Testament, people expecting God’s salvation through the Messiah, are called “poor.” It is the spiritual case that preconditions approaching God. In the New Testament, the poor in the Beatitudes are people who spiritually depend on God totally. It is the presupposed case to receive the word of God.¹²⁹

Third, poverty is a commitment of solidarity and protest. In his teachings, Jesus blesses the spiritual meaning of poverty overcoming its negative, realistic meaning. He blesses the poor who are open for God to work through them for the coming of God’s kingdom. The spiritual poor people work for liberating others from their oppressors toward a real humanity. They are approaching God in serving others.¹³⁰ Christ, therefore, is poor to release the poor from their poverty to a full humanity in the kingdom of God.

3.2.2.5.Christ as a Man of Politics

Did Jesus have political attitudes during His bodily existence on earth? Some maintain that Jesus’ proclamation concerned the spiritual realm totally; to free spirits from the domination of sin toward the kingdom of God. For Gutierrez, Jesus Christ is a historical person with a complete humanity. Being a human person entails a relationship with the political life of his time as it is one of the aspects of the context of every life.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth Impression, 291-295.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 296-297.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 299.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 225-226.

Gutierrez presents three aspects to show the interaction of Jesus with the political life of His time. First, it is the complex relationship between Jesus and the Zealots. The Zealot movement was one of the important religious groups in Israel. Their theology was built on a radical resistance to the Roman occupied. They loved the Law as Jewish nationalists expecting the coming of God's kingdom. Gutierrez quotes from Cullmann that some of Jesus' disciples were actively Zealots and/or sympathetic to their perspective. For sure, Simon the Zealot was a member of that sect. Probably, Judas Iscariot, Peter, and sons of Zebedee were affected by Zealot's thoughts.¹³² On the other hand, Gutierrez presents similarities between Jesus' teachings and the theology of the Zealots in some points. In Jesus' teaching about the coming of the kingdom of God and His role in that coming, Jesus stating that "violent men are sizing the kingdom of God." Thus, in radical zeal, Jesus purified the Temple from the merchants.¹³³

Gutierrez emphasizes the difference between Jesus and the Zealots, thus keeping Jesus distinctive from them. Jesus' mission was universal; it was not/is not related only to one nation. For instance, while they rejected Samaritans and pagans, He accepted and proclaimed the good news for them. Jesus taught his followers about spiritual freedom from the Law, whereas Zealots were literal defenders of it. What is important, the kingdom of God for Jesus is a gift; while for Zealots, it is a fruit of their efforts, a perspective which Jesus refused.¹³⁴

Second, Gutierrez focuses on Jesus' attitude towards the leaders of Jewish people. He criticized different groups in different situations. He called Herod: "the fox." He challenged the religious beliefs of the Sadducees, who were almost controlling the great Sanhedrin and who were sure that Jesus threatened their official position. Jesus also criticized the Pharisees. Although Pharisees were severe in teaching the Law, they accepted the co-existence with the Romans. When He showed the real face of them publically, they considered Jesus as a dangerous traitor.¹³⁵

Third, Jesus died at the hands of the political authorities. On His cross, they put a title to show the cause of His crucifixion; it referred to political guilt. The phrase, "King of the Jews", for Cullmann, indicates that the Romans considered Jesus as one of the Zealots. On the other hand, the claim of being Messiah and King of the Jews was a source of worry and skepticism for the

¹³² Ibid., 227.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 227-228.

Romans. After a religious trial, which became a political trial, the final decision fell upon Pontius Pilate, who was the representative of the Roman State. His decision focused on keeping the peace as an exercise of political power.¹³⁶

However, Gutierrez confirms that, “If we wished to discover in Jesus the least characteristic of a contemporary political militant, we would misrepresent his life and witness.”¹³⁷ Jesus did not devote part of His time to interact with the political affairs. However, He did not separate Himself from his context. Gutierrez agrees with Cullmann that the interaction of Jesus with politics was for the sake of the coming of God’s kingdom.¹³⁸

3.3. Conclusion; Analysis and Evaluation

3.3.1. The Historicity as an Approach

Gutierrez approaches Christology through a historical approach. It helps in showing the immanence of God through Jesus Christ in the world. Gutierrez starts from creation and how God reveals His love in liberating acts through Jesus Christ. In addition, the historical approach refutes the dualism between spirit and matter. God, in the incarnated Christ, is working in and through matter for the coming of His kingdom. Also, the historicity of Jesus helps in presenting a consistent history. It is the link between the past and the eschatological future. What came before Jesus was an introduction and preparation for his coming. Jesus’ presence is the coming of God’s kingdom and what is going to come is the consummation of the coming of the kingdom of God.

Nevertheless, using a historical approach for Christology, within the frame of liberation theology, distracts from the work of Christ in salvation. It totally excludes the metaphysics. There is no discussion about human nature, for example, how has it been affected by sin and how does Christ through his work save it. Through Gutierrez’ writings, there is no explanation for the Original Sin nor how it is transmitted from one generation to another. According to him, sin is a historical, social reality, which comes from a selfish attitude of the oppressors. The historical work of Christ, therefore, aims to liberate people from their poverty and from their oppressors.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 229.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 226.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 229.

The historical approach for a liberating Christology concretizes the meaning of the kingdom of God. God's kingdom is the coming of the reign of God, which is characterized by harmonized communities, full of love, and free of poverty or oppression. Nevertheless, it limits the concept of the kingdom of God in the social realm. The definition of the eternal life, which is the coming of the reign of God, according to John 17: 3, is that – “*And this is the eternal life that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*” This means that the poor could live in God's kingdom, through knowing and believing in Jesus Christ during their struggle for freedom. In Liberation Theology, God's kingdom relates to societies without oppression, exploitation, or injustice.

3.3.2. Gutiérrez' Christology

The Christology of Gutierrez is characterized by a variety of images for describing the being and the work of Jesus Christ. It helps in presenting the different ways in which God in Jesus Christ is involved in the contexts of the poor and oppressed. These images are historical which confirm that Jesus is still in action liberating people for a better life. However, this Christology aims at the oppressed and the poor to reveal the Fatherhood of God to them through liberating them. But, what about the rich who are not oppressors? The Bible mentions many rich men who were God's men, for example: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, etc. Also, what does this Christology present for the mentally handicapped? How does Christ save them accordingly? This is the problem of a contextual Christology.

The Christology of Gutierrez is weak Pneumatologically. The role of the Holy Spirit disappears in the different images of the being and the work of Jesus Christ. According to the gospels, the Spirit leads Jesus through His whole life. Highlighting this would have added a deep understanding for the work of Jesus in liberating the oppressed after His ascension until His second coming. The Bible confirms that the Holy Spirit is “*the Spirit of Christ,*” (Rom. 8: 9). The Spirit is agent in creation as well as in salvation; He/She is the Spirit of life. The Spirit is the source of every act of love, beauty and good. The Spirit is the divine presence in the world after the ascension of Christ until the Parousia.

Gutierrez presents Jesus as a man of politics according to a comprehensive understanding of Jesus' mission. He does not remake Jesus into a violent revolutionary. This supports his argument for involvement in politics for the sake of changing the corrupted structures and regimes. However, Gutierrez confirms that the interaction of Jesus with politics was only for the sake of the coming of God's kingdom.

Liberation Theology is a contextual theology "from below." Gutierrez presents mainly historical Christological images "from below." For instance, highlighting Christ as the poor person and the political man as the Messiah. As I mentioned before, it helps in showing the involvement of God, through Jesus Christ, in the problems of the world. However, it neglects giving enough space for Christ in His eternity. There are few indications that, for example, God created creation in Christ and that Christ is the incarnated Word in the history. To state that the incarnation of Jesus Christ abolishes the dualism of spirit-matter, it also abolishes the dualism of the metaphysical and historical as well. In Jesus Christ, God became history.

3.3.3. Gutiérrez' Ecclesiology

Gutierrez' Ecclesiology is balanced between the divine role and the human role. Jesus instituted the community of the church through His death and His resurrection. On the other hand, members of the church have the responsibility of proclaiming God's love through liberating actions. The church is a mission, a practical mission, in which the church liberates the oppressed from poverty and injustice. The marks of the church, therefore, are not One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic – according to the traditional confessions; rather, it is a church in action, presenting real praxis.

In the community of Jesus Christ, according to liberation theology, it seems that the emphasis is on praxis. In their communion, they encounter the love of God; they are encouraged to liberate others and establish societies without institutional sin: oppression, injustice, and exploitation. In the traditional theology, worship comes first, then writing theology. Theology, thus, is a reflection of what is happening in worship. Nevertheless, "The theology of liberation ... is a reflection from a point of departure in the concrete historical praxis of human beings ... [it] is a second act."¹³⁹ However, the emphasis on praxis is a mark of a true relationship with God and

¹³⁹ Gutiérrez, *The Power of The Poor*, 61.

others. It is the fruits of a right worship, which exhort the believers to love God and neighbor in a practical way. Writing theology, thus, is a reflection of that practical life.

The institution of the church, in Gutierrez' thought, is Christological. There is no indication for a Pneumatological institution. However, it does not lead to a hierarchical church, because the emphasis always is on the mission of the church in proclaiming God's love through liberating works. The aim is to love God through and in the neighbor.

3.4. Summary

The aim of this chapter is to explore whether the Christology of Gutierrez is balanced between salvific Christology and liberating Christology. It seems that the focus is on the liberating Christology. However, the background and the foundation of the liberation is the salvific Christology. In Gutierrez' Christology, Jesus is not just a revolutionary nor the leader of a revolutionary movement. Jesus Christ is the God-man incarnated in history to institute God's Kingdom. In all of the Christological images presented above, Christ is a liberator on the foundation of His salvific work on the cross and His resurrection. Before the incarnation, Christ is the liberator building on the foundation of creation and the Exodus: these find their meaning and fulfillment in the salvific work of Jesus. In addition, the final aim of the liberating actions is proclaiming God's love, which is revealed in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

One may say that Gutierrez replaced the focus on worship, which is a grateful-response for Christ's work on the cross by praxis. It appears that Gutierrez mainly cares for the liberating acts; however, these liberating works start from within a communion of love. In Jesus' community, the saved ones come together because of the salvific work of Jesus Christ. This is the gift of filiation, which liberates them from selfishness towards loving God and others. This community celebrates the Eucharist, the memory of the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which includes every liberating work. The Eucharist produces love to others and longs to serve them practically. Finally, the coming of the kingdom of God relates to the reign of God through communities without sin; which means communities characterized by love of God. In God's kingdom, people love as God loves; that He incarnates Himself in Jesus Christ to save and to liberate humankind.

Chapter Four

CHRIST AS A LIBERATOR

4.1. An Introduction

Through a historical approach, Dietrich Bonhoeffer explores his Christology. For him, the divine-human person, Jesus Christ, revealed God, and He mediates the relationship between God and the world, as He is the *Reconciler*. Also, God, in Jesus Christ as a *Vicarious Representative*, is realized in His weakness. Namely, the humiliation of Jesus Christ is the way to the transcendent. Finally, God, in Jesus Christ as a *Church-Community*, is always immanent. He is immanent after Jesus' ascension through the church, who is Christ's body. Since she is Christ's form, as Bonhoeffer describes her, the church must behave like Him. She has the responsibility of proclaiming God's word, which implies defending rights of the oppressed. This motivated Bonhoeffer's involvement in socio-political actions to defend rights of Jewish people against the Nazis; this commitment cost him his life.

Exhorting the church to socio-political involvement requires a consistent theology. Therefore, it is important to explore how Bonhoeffer understands the church's relationships with the state, her mission, and her being. Here, some questions appear. For example, what is the relation between the church and the state? Is it the responsibility of the church or the state to defend rights of the oppressed? Does liberating people from their oppressor always lead them to Christ? And, how could we understand the being of the Church if the answer is no? How could believers act and behave as members in the Church?

From the Liberation Theology perspective, Gutierrez writes his Christology using a historical approach as well. As a Latin American theologian, Gutierrez' Christology addresses Christ as a liberator to defend rights of the poor and the oppressed in his context. However, the liberator Christ is not a socio-political figure; He is the divine-human person, whose work in saving the sinful world reflects different aspects of His being. First, Jesus Christ is the *Lord of the History*. Everything started in Him, was redeemed by Him, and everything is going to be recapitulated in Him for the glory of the Father. Second, He is the *Reconciler*, who saves human beings from their sins. His salvation frees them from sin and selfishness for a community, which is the church. Third,

He was incarnated as a *Poor Man*, involved in their miserable life; He died to free them from both sin and poverty. Fourth, in His ministry and death, Jesus proved that He is the *Messiah*; He is the only one who can bring the kingdom of God. Finally, during His life, He involved in politics as a *Man of Politics*, since He had/has a real humanity to bring about the kingdom of God. He did all this without committing sin, but in the midst of it all, He did not try to be a political leader. In general, He uses His community, the church, for proclaiming God's reign in the world. For Gutierrez, the only way to proclaim God's love and His word to the oppressed is through praxis, which is a socio-political action to liberate them according to God's will in Jesus Christ.

However, Gutierrez, in using a liberating methodology, has been subject to many critiques concerning his understanding of the work of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, I will try to explore whether his balanced Christology is coherent with his understanding for the role of the church in the world. Some questions may help in this exploration. For instance, what is God's ultimate aim: the church or His kingdom? Does God use non-believing people to achieve His will? How could the church achieve a balance between socio-political actions and evangelism? Does Gutierrez' theology aim at an earthly Utopia?

Both in chapters two and three, I explored, in general, the balance between the salvific Christology and the liberating Christology according to both Bonhoeffer and Gutierrez. In this chapter, however, I will explore whether the human activity or praxis could help preparing the way for the coming of the kingdom of God according to both mentioned theologians. I will start this chapter first by clarifying the relationship between faith and the human works in salvation and the value of human works in the coming of the Kingdom of God. Next, I will explore how both mentioned theologians consider the relationships between the church and the world, politics, state, etc., according to the posed questions shown above.

4.2.Faith and Praxis

Throughout the history of the Christian theology, there has been a debate concerning the role of faith and human works in salvation. St. Paul confirms that salvation takes place through faith by

¹⁴⁰ Robert McAfee Brown, "Spirituality and liberation: the case for Gustavo Gutiérrez," in *Worship* 58, no. 5 (1984): 395-404, 396-397.

grace only (Eph. 2: 8). This theology covers all the Pauline letters. St. James writes, then, about the importance of human works, that “*faith without works is dead,*” (Jam 2:26). Through the latter view, the church soon faced the misunderstanding of salvation by works. Augustine, as a leader of the church in the fifth century, refuted Pelagianism, confirming that there is no place for human works in justifying sinners and that salvation is only from the grace of God. Also, during the middle ages, the Roman Catholic Church developed the doctrine of merits, which led to indulgences. Martin Luther, studying Romans, discovered “justification by faith.” Since then, “justification by faith” became normative through the principle “*Sola Fide.*” However, God produces, through faith, good works in the lives of believers. It is the journey of justification and sanctification.

In addition, Braaten confirms that salvation has three facets. First, a yearning for a supernatural life beyond this life, which will never end. Second, the moral facet, in which the believer ought to reflect his faith morally. Third, the form of the concrete action, that believers use social reform and educational enlightenment to change the consequences of sin.¹⁴¹ These facets, however, imply two dimensions; the inward change (faith), in which the person gets free of sin, and the outward change (praxis), which comes from the inward change, and aims to reflect Christ in helping others. Therefore, how do both Bonhoeffer and Gutierrez see the role of human works in the coming of the kingdom of God?

4.2.1. Bonhoeffer’s Understanding of Reality

To consider a believer in his relationship with God and with others is to face Bonhoeffer’s understanding of reality, which is the relationship between God and the world. As mentioned in chapter two, Bonhoeffer’s theology is Christomonism. Chapman confirms that, “Bonhoeffer began from the premise that reality is both Christologically defined and ethically extended.”¹⁴² He continues quoting from Bonhoeffer, “Nothing can be known either of God or man until God has become man in Jesus Christ.”¹⁴³ Consequently, the believer, who is in Christ, has to have the same relationship. He cannot have relationship with God without having impact on the world. Faith,

¹⁴¹ Carl E. Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*, Second Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 96.

¹⁴² G. Clarke Chapman, Jr., “Bonhoeffer: Resource for Liberation Theology,” In *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 36, no. 4 (1981): 225-242, 225.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 225. The citation in the text is taken from: Bonhoeffer, “Lectures on Christology,” 306.

therefore, cannot be limited within the person or within the church. In such way, the believer institutes the deep meaning of his personality. Green, reflecting on Bonhoeffer's thoughts, starts from God to people. "God's being is not transcendent isolation and absence ... if it is so, it follows that human existence is also fundamentally relational."¹⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer, thus, follows St. James in emphasizing the importance of the human works as evidences for a true faith in Jesus Christ.

Green refers to Bonhoeffer's theology of person, saying, "The person is a socio-ethical, historical being whose identity is formed in such ethical encounters with others ... the other is the *You* whom *I* meet in the ethical encounter."¹⁴⁵ No one, consequently, can live alone or could claim that his personality is individualistic. The daily encounter with the *You*, according to Bonhoeffer, institutes the *I*. On the other hand, these encounters with others entail conflicts, however, those conflicts are not sin. Sin comes from the will of the *I* to control or dominate the *You*, namely use the other person. Freedom, therefore, ought not to be understood individually; rather, it is the right encounter with the other. The best example of freedom comes from God, whose freedom in Jesus Christ is *for* the humankind.¹⁴⁶ In Christ, the person institutes and develops his personality through encountering the others without sin, since his aim is to serve them.

For an accurate understanding of the relationship between faith and the human works according to Bonhoeffer, we should consider his understanding of Penultimate and Ultimate presented in chapter two. Julio de Santa Ana indicates that, according to Bonhoeffer, "If the ultimate is the full reality of grace in Jesus Christ, the penultimate lies in preparing the road to grace ... If the ultimate is their justification, the penultimate must be that their condition should be truly human."¹⁴⁷ Again, both Penultimate and Ultimate are in Christ; however, Penultimate refers to the work of Christ through the believers in preparing the road for grace. Here, believers have the responsibility of being obedient. Christ can use them for preparing the road for the others to become members in God's kingdom.

However, does this mean that all the human works will lead people to Christ? Alternatively, should the church practice only the human works that lead to Christ? The answer is: "No!"

¹⁴⁴ Clifford Green, "Human Sociality and Christian Community," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Ed., John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 113-133, 114-115.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 115-117.

¹⁴⁷ Julio de Santa Ana, "The Influence of Bonhoeffer on the Theology of Liberation," in *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1976): 188-197, 193.

Bonhoeffer refuses the one-sided salvation, where salvation cares only for liberating from sin to prepare the individuals for the eternal life.¹⁴⁸ Here, Bonhoeffer emphasizes a more comprehensive understanding of salvation: a better life for people, without sin or oppression. He indicates the example of Jesus Christ, who suffered for the others. In doing so, the Christian is in Christ, and Christ is working through him.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, we must reiterate that liberating people for a better life does not mean that they are already saved, as mentioned before: it is preparing the hearts and making them ready to believe in Jesus Christ.

4.2.2. Gutierrez' Understanding of Praxis

Liberation theology has always been accused of being confusing concerning the differences between human works and faith in justification. That is why it is important to emphasize that Gutierrez' salvific Christology is the source for a Christology of liberation. Gutierrez does not try to find a place for the human works in salvation as does fellow theologian, Juan Luis Segundo. The latter criticizes Luther that, "By removing the notion of merit from the doctrine of justification, [he] removed the possibility of connecting human action in history with God's action in Christ."¹⁵⁰ Segundo admits that the doctrine of merit was corrupted; nevertheless, it gave a space for human works.¹⁵¹ Kelly refutes this supposition, because if there is any kind of confusion between Law and Gospel, Liberation Theology removes the unconditional nature of the gospel. The emphasis will be upon human works in salvation instead of grace.¹⁵² This supposition ignores the deep impact and effects of sin; that any human achievement is marked by sin. Finally, any kind of synergism abolishes the nature of grace. If human beings can do anything for saving themselves, grace is not grace anymore. Segundo, therefore, has to find a place for human works after the justification, and not before.

Another way to turn the question of the relationship between faith and works in salvation is to look at the one who is involved in good works without faith. Brown presents seven critiques

¹⁴⁸ Andreas Pangritz, "Who is Jesus Christ, for Us, Today?" in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Ed., John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 134-153, 149.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Robert A. Kelly, "Liberation Ethics: a Lutheran Approach to the Need for Liberation," in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 12, no. 4 (1985): 232-237, 233.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 236.

¹⁵² Ibid., 233.

against Gutierrez' theology; one of them is "... reducing everything to praxis as the sole criterion of faith."¹⁵³ This critique could be considered true if Gutierrez' theology has not a salvific Christological basis. For Gutierrez, the value of praxis, as it is shown in chapter three, comes from the gift of affiliation. This gift is based on the work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection.

Gutierrez affirms that Salvation is "... totally and freely given by God."¹⁵⁴ He states that, "To struggle against misery and exploitation and to build a just society is already to be part of the saving action ... All this means that building the temporal city is not simply a stage of 'humanization' or 'pre-evangelization'."¹⁵⁵ For him, "It is to become part of a saving process, which embraces the whole of man and all human history."¹⁵⁶ A clear indication of how God honors human works comes through how He uses them in the process of saving others. We can see it happens all from the beginning in instituting salvation and bringing God's kingdom. God's own agent and subject of doing so is the divine-human person, Jesus Christ. When God wants to save his people from sin, He is as well using preachers to proclaim God's love. Saving people is a process by which God uses humans as He sees fit. But, does it mean that all people, whom are served by the church's socio-political action, will become believers? As Gutierrez considers the socio-political action as part of a saving process, it means that we should not ask who is going to be a believer after such action. Human works are fruits of the work of the Spirit in us; our aim, therefore, should be for obedience.

4.3.Faith and Politics

Some will object to the view that the church shall be exhorted to defend rights of the poor, which entails involvement in socio-political actions. They may argue that, according to Ephesians. 2: 8, "*faith is a gift from God;*" the role of the church is only to pray for the coming of the kingdom (Matthew 6: 10). They may quote Jesus Himself saying, "*My kingdom is not of this world,*" (John 18:36). Others may object claiming that involvement in socio-political actions entails working with unbelieving people: does God, then, use unbelieving people for bringing in His Kingdom?

¹⁵³ Brown, "Spirituality and Liberation," 397.

¹⁵⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth impression, 159

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 159-160.

4.3.1. Politics as a Means

Braaten agrees with the first objection: “Liberation theology takes most of its images of salvation from the experience of Israel in history, revolving around Exodus and Exile.”¹⁵⁷ He adds to this critique, “The Liberation model of salvation, so popular in psychologically and politically oriented schools of thought, is totally silent about the deep themes we find in classical theology of atonement.”¹⁵⁸ For Gutierrez, politics is a means, not a purpose or an aim in itself. Namely, when it is needed, believers have to participate in politics for liberating the poor and the oppressed. As is shown in chapter three, Jesus involved himself in politics; this served His mission, the coming of the kingdom of God. Noble sees that, “Jesus’ life and death reveal the possibility for the world of a just society.”¹⁵⁹ Such just societies, sometimes, require being involved in politics. Also, the classic theology of atonement focuses on liberating people from their sins and ignores the societal dimensions of God’s comprehensive salvation in Jesus Christ.

LeMasters objects to involvement in politics, as he sees, “The best accomplishments of political liberation are markedly corrupted by sin.”¹⁶⁰ The church should be aware of her purpose of involvement in a socio-political action; it is not for dominating the situation, or a kind of theocratic governing. It is for proclaiming God’s love in a certain context full of oppressions. Of course, God’s kingdom is not an earthly kingdom; it is God’s reign, which implies a life characterized by freedom from sin and oppression. On the other hand, it is important to distinguish between involvement in politics to help oneself and involvement in politics to help others. This first statement could be considered as merit to gain salvation, a position which Gutierrez refuses to acknowledge. This second statement results in a new creation in the believer because of the grace of God in Christ.

However, does God use unbelieving people for bringing in His Kingdom? Gutierrez refers to the first generation who adopted liberation theology and are involved in socio-political actions as a Christian generation. He describes them this way: “In many areas of their life they are without

¹⁵⁷ Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*, 100.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁵⁹ Tim Noble, “An Introduction to the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez,” in *Communio viatorum* 43, no. 1 (2001): 8-27, 14.

¹⁶⁰ Philip LeMasters, “Christian Social Ethics and Gutiérrez’ The God of Life,” in *Encounter* 54, no. 3 (1993): 233-247, 240.

a theological and a spiritual tradition. They are creating their own.”¹⁶¹ Gutierrez exhorts the believers to adopt and experience a different kind of spirituality. Traditionally, Christians know the spirituality of “contemplative life;” now they are to experience the spirituality of liberation.¹⁶² Lewis considers these attitudes as influences of Karl Rahner on Gutierrez, particularly the notion of the ‘anonymous Christ.’¹⁶³ It has the impact that these people are Christians as they follow the principles and example of Christ without knowing His name. But, does it mean that everyone involving in liberation action is a Christian? According to Gutierrez, and on the basis shown here, the answer is “yes!” For me, I have a different view built on two different reasons. First, we cannot limit God’s work to the frame of Christianity only; God is Almighty, and His wisdom above us (Rom. 11: 33-36). Second, throughout the Bible, there are examples for unbelieving people whom were used by God for achieving His will without knowing Him, for example Cyrus (Isa. 45: 1-5).

4.3.2. Politics as Ethics in Christ

Bonhoeffer, as I mentioned above, did not address the relationship between faith and politics from a perspective of Liberation Theology. However, his writings inspire liberation theologians to solve the problem of Liberation Theology. Julio de Santa Ana argues that Bonhoeffer’s theology helped in solving the problem of the relationship between faith and ideologies. There was an attitude, which finds its basis in the incarnation of Jesus, toward compromising the status quo for the sake of change. This attitude is called “ideologies of change.” Namely, the view that the church should not involve in politics; her main task is prayer leading to involvement in some social activities to solve problems of the poor or the oppressed. Another attitude, based on the event of the cross, advocates for radical change; i. e., revolution against the state. At that time, there was no ideology based on resurrection. The solution for this problem came through Bonhoeffer’s Christological ethics. Bonhoeffer brings forward the view that both compromise and radicalism are not acceptable. The only solution is in Jesus Christ, because in Christ the Ultimate and Penultimate meet. In His incarnation, we learn of the love of God for His creation. The judgement upon all human beings appears in Jesus’ crucifixion. Through the resurrection, we learn of God’s will for

¹⁶¹ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth impression, 136.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Thomas A Lewis, “Actions as the Ties that Bind: Love, Praxis and Community in the Thought of Gustavo Gutiérrez,” in *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33, no 3 (2005): 539-567, 554.

a new world. These three great events are all gathered in one person, and should not be separated. The solution is to consider both Penultimate, which is preparing the road for the grace; and Ultimate, which is the justification of the individual by the grace of God only. And both of them, Penultimate and Ultimate, are in Christ.¹⁶⁴ Briefly, involvement in a socio-political action is a matter of preparing the road for the coming of God's kingdom as it belongs to the Penultimate.

Bonhoeffer never confused involvement in politics and the role of the church in praying for the coming of God's kingdom. For him, involvement in politics is a matter of following the example of Jesus in loving others. Kelly confirms that, "For Bonhoeffer, following Christ along the way of the cross required no less of the church than embracing God's own vulnerability in caring for those whom vicious political leaders had made an object for contempt."¹⁶⁵ Of course, Jesus Christ was not a political leader, who revolted against the oppressors. However, His life exemplified defending the rights of the oppressed without involvement in violence. Regarding the relationship between pacifism and liberation theology, the pacifist theologian John Howard Yoder states, "The commitment of Jesus to the cause of the poor was not marginal nor derivative, but constitutive of his ministry."¹⁶⁶ But, he warns against falling into the trap of violence, saying that, "The more clearly one brings into focus the notion of a morally justified armed insurrection, the more it becomes clear that Jesus was tempted by such an option and rejected it."¹⁶⁷ He continues to explain that, "From the testing in the desert, just after his baptism, to the testing in the garden, just before he was taken captive, the role of zealot liberator was the alternative with which Jesus had to struggle."¹⁶⁸ Clearly, he emphasizes that, "Jesus as unique bearer of the divine image cannot but be a liberator, since Yahweh is a liberator. Yet, in our conformity to that image, we shall be mistaken if we assume that freedom can be the product of coercion."¹⁶⁹ One of the reasons for involvement in violence is the desire of achieving quick results. Yoder warns against such attitudes stating, "We shall proclaim God's freedom as imminent and incipient, as present in Jesus and in

¹⁶⁴ De Santa Ana, "The Influence of Bonhoeffer," 192-193.

¹⁶⁵ Geoffrey B. Kelly, "Prayer and Action for Justice: Bonhoeffer's Spirituality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Ed., John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 246-268, 262.

¹⁶⁶ John Howard Yoder, *The War of the Lamb: The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking*, Ed. Glen H. Stassen, Mark Thiessen Nation, and Matt Hamsher (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 171.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 171.

ourselves and in the victims of our world. We shall provide no timetables for its final victory.”¹⁷⁰ For him, “Crucifixion and diaspora, not conquest and revenge, are thus the shape of the liberty through which Jesus’s victory frees humankind.”¹⁷¹ This means that liberating people is a long process, which could be achieved by God’s methods, in Christ. The church has, by this reason, to be aware of both her duties and the methods for achieving them.

Bonhoeffer himself is a good example of the church which knows her duties. Green refers to Bonhoeffer’s reason for involvement in politics as ‘deputyship.’ For Bonhoeffer, it is the “... responsible action on behalf of others, particularly, action which takes responsibility for the communities to which we belong.”¹⁷² Theologically, “The paradigm of such vicarious responsible action for others is the incarnation, cross, and resurrection of Christ, in whom God acts in freedom and love for the sake of all humanity.”¹⁷³ Bonhoeffer, therefore, acted on behalf of his people as he realized that he is not only responsible for himself, but for his community as well.

4.4.Church and the World

Both Bonhoeffer and Gutierrez present the fact that the church is the community of God’s people, where God is revealed in Jesus Christ through His word and the sacraments. At the same time, there is God’s kingdom. Which one of them does God aim to emphasize? Which one of them should serve the other? Also, what is the relation between the church and the state? Which one of them is responsible for defending the rights of the poor and the oppressed? And, if the church is going to take the responsibility of defending rights of the poor, “... does such a ‘defense of life,’ particularly the life of the poor, open the way to the politicization or secularization of the church?”¹⁷⁴ as James B. Nickoloff asks.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 172.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Green, “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” 128.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ James B. Nickoloff, “Church of the Poor: The Ecclesiology of Gustavo Gutierrez,” in *Theological Studies*, Vol. 54, no 3 (1993): 512-524, 518.

4.4.1. A Comprehensive Salvation

It is important to indicate that the church and God's kingdom are not two separate entities; yet, they are not identical. However, the starting point for understanding the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God is the work of Jesus Christ in salvation, which is comprehensive in its scope and facets. In its scope, it is for the whole creation of God, and in its facets, it includes the physical and spiritual aspects. In the structure of salvation, according to Gutierrez, instituting the church comes first. The work of Jesus Christ frees the human beings from their sins (first level) to a community which is the church (second level). The church, through socio-political actions by the power of God, institutes the fellowship of all humanity (third level).¹⁷⁵ Thus, God, in Jesus Christ, proclaims his reign over human beings on all three levels. This is the kingdom of God as "... the central focus of the Lord's message, a kingdom of life, love, truth, peace, justice, and freedom."¹⁷⁶ It does not mean that the church is not important or just a tool; she is the body of Christ. Moreover, this distinction shows the responsibility of the church toward the kingdom of God. The church, for Gutierrez, is to neither separate itself from the larger world nor to be engaged in Christianizing it.

One may think that it is the responsibility of the state to defend the rights of the poor while the responsibility of the church is in spiritual matters. It is true that the state is responsible for defending rights of the oppressed, but what if the regime of the state is corrupted? On the other hand, if the church sees that her mission is only to proclaim God's salvation in Jesus Christ, she has to realize that, "Salvation is the most inclusive term for what the Bible declares God to have accomplished for the world through the person of Jesus Christ."¹⁷⁷ Jesus Christ does not give life only to human souls; He gives life to the whole of being human. The church, therefore, in defending the rights of the poor is living out her purpose. It may lead her to lose her peace with the state, but the church's real peace comes from her Head, the Christ (John 14: 27).

Nickoloff criticizes Gutierrez, since he is looking upon liberation theology as the gate of politicization or secularization of the church. This criticism supposes that the church will be a social institution to take care only for defending the human rights. Joyce Murray confirms that,

¹⁷⁵ Gutiérrez, "The Path of Liberation," 233.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 220.

¹⁷⁷ Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*, 93.

“Gutierrez does not reduce salvation to historical liberation. He interprets salvation ultimately as a communion with God and one another in history and beyond it.”¹⁷⁸ In helping people, especially the poor and the oppressed, the church proclaims God’s comprehensive love to them. This attracts them to forgiveness for their sins and then a communion with God and others. Moreover, Gutierrez confirms that, “If the church is really present in the world, it cannot but reflect on its own life the events disturbing the world.”¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, Noble confirms that, according to Gutierrez, “The liberation which Christ brings is not something without historical and political consequences.”¹⁸⁰ God’s salvation produces love in the believers’ lives, which is the basis of any socio-political action. The paradigm of the church, according to Gutierrez, is a church guided by God’s love, which helps her in self-examination all the time; to keep herself away from practicing any activity which is not according to God’s will for her mission.

4.4.2. The Church and the State

Julio de Santa Ana argues that Bonhoeffer helped Latin American Protestant theologians to overcome the problem of the dualism of the church/world relation; namely, for the church to exit its ghetto. Bonhoeffer highlights the danger of the process of secularization and the autonomy of the temporal world. Reality is no longer understood through the presence of God; and by this change, the world released itself from the control of dogma and religious institutions. Latin American Protestant theologians recognized that they had to shape their actions as a witness to Jesus Christ beyond the borders of the church. They realized that if the church remains in her isolation, the Christian faith would be an anachronism. God will not be relevant for people of the secular world.¹⁸¹ Opening her gates for the world does not mean that the church will conform to the world, but will present God’s word in a particular way.

Will this aspect tell us that the responsibilities of both the state and the church will be confused? Absolutely, No! Chapman confirms that, “Bonhoeffer’s Lutheran heritage was

¹⁷⁸ Joyce Murray, “Liberation for Communion in the Soteriology of Gustavo Gutiérrez,” in *Theological Studies* 59, no. 1 (1998): 51-59, 52.

¹⁷⁹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation; History, Politics and Salvation*, Trans., and Ed., by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, Twenty-Eighth Printing (New York: Orbis Books, 2017), 160-161.

¹⁸⁰ Noble, “An Introduction,” 12.

¹⁸¹ De Santa Ana, “The Influence of Bonhoeffer,” 189-190.

paramount. Both church and state are ordained by God, as the two aspects of his kingdom come to earth, and each to set boundaries to which the other is accountable.”¹⁸² The State should, therefore, not be considered as if it constantly is the symbol of evil or a very worldly regime, but rather one which is ordered by God. Nevertheless, in some countries, regimes may get corrupted because of the evil of the mandates. Here, there are three assertions according to Bonhoeffer. First, God works through the state for bringing His kingdom in the same way as He works through the church. We should be sure of this fact even with corrupted regimes, because our trust comes from God’s word. “*For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God,*” (Rom 13:1). But, corrupted regimes oppress people. Then, the role of the church is to proclaim God’s truth and His love. On the other hand, we trust in an Almighty God, who has a good will for our world. Second, the church ought not to be weak in the face of the state; she should proclaim the prophetic voice boldly. God’s will for this world is good all the time, and He supports us by the power of the Spirit. Third, according to Bonhoeffer’s thought, God’s kingdom is not limited to the church; it transcends her. The church is unique as she is Christ’s body; however, God’s reign is over the entire world.

How then should the church confront the state in defending the rights of the oppressed? Chapman explains how Bonhoeffer sees the church’s methodology for proclaiming the prophetic voice. Bonhoeffer maintained, against any revolutionary liberation theology, that there is no scriptural right for revolution against the state. And, if there is a need for using the social power, he relates such discussion to the church, not to the state. Namely, what does the church demand of the state? These demands are two-fold. First, as a negative duty, the church, through the office of preaching, must warn the state to keep its limits and must announce her rejection of any kind of dehumanizing social politics. Second, as a positive duty, Bonhoeffer exhorts that somehow this will help in building a new order without giving the control to the church so as to observe her limits. Bonhoeffer, then, added a third possibility in which the church not only helps the oppressed, but takes a step to face the state through a direct political action. He confirms that using this option must be in the light of the failure of the state to create law and order.¹⁸³

¹⁸² Chapman, “Bonhoeffer: Resource for liberation theology,” 228.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 228.

Considering these insights with his involvement in a political resistance, Bonhoeffer appears as to be a person who supports the politicization of the church. However, theologically, Bonhoeffer refused any political violence. He refused two extremist attitudes considering them as a “cheap grace.” First, the attitude of some people who justified violence to gain power for promoting a humanizing change for the sake of the poor. Second, the other extremist attitude in which other people thought that change should take place with as little risk as possible. For Bonhoeffer, Christians must live and behave through a “costly grace,” namely, grace as a living word giving a true forgiveness and freedom for the sinners.¹⁸⁴ Living according to the costly grace applies living in Christ under the guidance of the Spirit.

4.5.Spirituality and Politics

Both Bonhoeffer and Gutierrez state that salvation is ultimately and totally the work of Jesus Christ. Also, both of them strongly support liberating actions for the oppressed. However, does this mean that believers ought to be involved in politics to defend the rights of the poor as an essential part of their spirituality? Also, how could the church achieve the balance between evangelism and socio-political actions?

4.5.1. Responsibility as a Spirituality

The dualism of secular-spiritual always dominates those who are confused about the relation between the church and socio-political action; that spirituality for them may become like a kind of mysticism. However, spirituality, for Bonhoeffer, is not a life out of Jesus Christ. It is the disciplined life through God’s grace, which is a living word and costly.¹⁸⁵ This life is characterized by responsibility. Larry Rasmussen sees that understanding responsibility in Bonhoeffer’s ethics “... requires that we understand that for him the relationship with God is both ‘social,’ or ‘relational,’ and completely ‘this worldly’.”¹⁸⁶ Believers cannot do any actions, which could be considered spiritual, out of their relationship with God in Christ through helping others. Then,

¹⁸⁴ De Santa Ana, “The Influence of Bonhoeffer,” 195-196.

¹⁸⁵ Green, “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” 196.

¹⁸⁶ Larry Rasmussen, “The Ethics of Responsible Action,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Ed., John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 206-225, 218.

Rasmussen quotes from Bonhoeffer that, “The Thou of the other man is the divine Thou, so, the way to the other ... is also the way to the divine Thou, away of recognition or rejection. The character of a Thou is in fact the form in which the divine is experienced.”¹⁸⁷ Responsibility, on the other hand, has not the eschatological world as its aim, but rather a hope to change this world.

For Bonhoeffer, the only required matter for the Christian spirituality is to be Christo-centric. Kelly describes such Christo-centric spirituality as this: “Christ is as much the center of this discipline as he is the structure of all reality and the inspiration behind the responsible life of a Christian.”¹⁸⁸ The spiritual responsibility of the Christian is, according to Bonhoeffer, including two important things, prayer and action for defending rights of the oppressed.¹⁸⁹ Defending rights of the poor and oppressed, however, is not an aim in itself. It comes out of a deep relationship with God and obedience to the Spirit. This is the passivity of the Lutheran spirituality, which Luther calls “*Vita Passiva*.” Chapman confirms that, “Until near the end of his life, Bonhoeffer also accepted this cluster of passive virtue inherited through Lutheranism, he even “radicalized” them as the obligations of discipleship.”¹⁹⁰ The Christian call is not a call for political movement; it is a call for a true and free life in Christ. Bonhoeffer “... then states that the only ethical stance for a Christian is ‘obedient and responsible action in faith and in exclusive allegiance to God.’”¹⁹¹

Asking about a balance between involvement in a socio-political action and evangelism, for Bonhoeffer, is senseless. Both of them are a result of a life characterized by obedience, namely a life in Christ. When there was confusion, concerning attitudes over “praxis,” Latin American liberationists quoted from Bonhoeffer: “Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.”¹⁹² On the other hand, according to Bonhoeffer, both socio-political action and preaching God’s word are belonging to the Penultimate, as shown before. The ultimate, then, is the final justifying word of God through Christ. However, it is important to notice that we are

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 218. The citation in the text is taken from: Bonhoeffer, “Sanctorum Communio,” 28.

¹⁸⁸ Kelly, “Prayer and Action for Justice,” 251.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Chapman, “Bonhoeffer: Resource for liberation theology,” 232-233.

¹⁹¹ Green, “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” 127. The citation in the text is taken from: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Letters and Papers from Prison,” in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 761- 817, 764.

¹⁹² Chapman, “Bonhoeffer: Resource for liberation theology,” 231. The citation in the text is taken from: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Discipleship,” in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 455-513, 479.

justified by faith, which is a gift, by the word of God; nevertheless, a socio-political action for the oppressed is the message of God's love in a context full of oppression.

4.5.2. Encountering God in the Neighbor

Gutierrez exhorts believers to a "spirituality of liberation," as shown above. Noble explains these features of Gutierrez' understanding of such spirituality. He writes, "We encounter God in our commitment to our neighbor. It is interesting that it is within this context of the knowledge of God made manifest in the doing of justice and the recognition of Christ in our neighbor."¹⁹³ It does mean that socio-political action is the responsibility of the church as an institution only; it is a part of the spirituality of every believer. It is a part of knowing God. Moreover, Brown refers to three characteristics of Gutierrez' spirituality of liberation: "(1) It touches every dimension of life, (2) It is Christ-centered, and, (3) It is indicative in character, that is, it draws on the daily, concrete experience of its practitioners."¹⁹⁴ It is individual and collective at the same time. It is individual as it is a responsibility of every believer. It is, also, collective as every believer lives it with the community to help the oppressed to experience liberation.

Spirituality, in Gutierrez's thought, is related to the concept of "truth." Truth, in this sense, is not just a knowledge about God, but a life in God in the following of Christ. This life is characterized by doing action, which is not intended in itself, but it grows out from the life of faith. It is a commitment to imitate Christ, which leads to transformation. However, it does not find its sources from the human power, but it emerges from God's love.¹⁹⁵ Gutierrez writes, "A spirituality is a concrete manner, inspired by the Spirit, of living the Gospel; it is a definite way of living "before the Lord," in solidarity with all men, "with the Lord," and before men."¹⁹⁶ Gutierrez' understanding of spirituality is similar to that of Bonhoeffer. Both emphasize obedience for the work of God in the believer.

However, how can the church achieve the balance between involvement in liberating actions and evangelism? For Gutierrez, the separation between these two categories

¹⁹³ Noble, "An Introduction," 14.

¹⁹⁴ Brown, "Spirituality and liberation," 399.

¹⁹⁵ Noble, "An Introduction," 23.

¹⁹⁶ Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth Impression, 204.

misunderstands the nature of salvation. He distinguishes between them, but he does not separate them in the process of salvation. Gutierrez states that, “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, not all of salvation.”¹⁹⁷ He affirms that, “The very radicalness and totality of the salvific process require this relationship. Nothing escapes this process, nothing is outside the pale of the action of Christ and the gift of the Spirit.”¹⁹⁸ Like Bonhoeffer, Gutierrez considers socio-political actions as a means to prepare the road to the coming of God’s grace. It is not grace in itself, but God uses it in the process of salvation. On the other hand, it reflects the comprehensiveness of salvation, which includes the human beings in their wholeness. Finally, both evangelism and liberating actions, for Gutierrez, are inaugurated by Christ and are guided by the Spirit. Therefore, the balance between these two categories is the responsibility of God, who leads the church to achieve His good will.

4.6.Utopia and Eschatology

Gutierrez has been accused of “... speaking of a purely ‘temporal messianism,’ and confusing the kingdom of God with a secular ‘new society’.”¹⁹⁹ Objectors support their supposition through Gutierrez’ ideas of “Utopia.” On the other hand, Chapman sees that, “Bonhoeffer’s eschatology is weak.”²⁰⁰ Here, some questions appear, for example, does it mean that liberation theology is instituted on the account of eschatology? Are there any contradiction between eschatology and liberation? Does this also affect the balance between the liberating Christology and the salvific Christology? And, does defending the rights of the oppressed always lead to Christ? What if the answer is no?

4.6.1. Eschatology as God’s Reign

Some will claim that Bonhoeffer’s weak eschatology comes from his involvement in socio-political action to defend the rights of the Jews. The consequence of this view, however, means

¹⁹⁷ Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Twenty-Eighth Printing, 104.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Brown, “Spirituality and Liberation,” 397.

²⁰⁰ Chapman, “Bonhoeffer: Resource for liberation theology,” 238.

that liberating people for a better life in this world contradicts the emphasis on eschatology. As Bonhoeffer's theology is Christomonism, he understands both this life and the eschatology together in Christ. Huebner presents his understanding of the relationship between historical and eschatological in Bonhoeffer's thoughts as follow:

The relationship between penultimate to ultimate is both historical-eschatological relationship and also transcendental-ontological one. One might say that it involves both our actions as well as our being ... In other words, to understand Christian ethics properly, he believed that we must see ourselves as participating in something that is far bigger than we can grasp or even imagine. This is the case both in relation to what is to come (historical), as well as in relation to what is already really tacking place (being). To act and exist in Christ always involves much more than is immediately apparent. Thus he can say, "the past and the future of the whole of the life flow together in God's presence."²⁰¹

For Bonhoeffer, the Christian life is not characterized by the autonomy of historical and eschatological; rather, the Christological understanding gathers them together. In Christ, the believers prepare the way for the coming of the kingdom of God, which transcends their abilities and, sometimes, even their understanding. Being in Christ constitutes a life dominated by eschatology. In his application for the relation between Ultimate and Penultimate, Julio de Santa Ana confirms that, "The humanization which Christians seek is not based solely on the idea of human dignity, but on the demands of the love of Christ. This is what is involved in 'preparing the way.'"²⁰² In doing so, Christians prepare themselves as well for the eschatological 'not yet' life through a deep relationship with God. God's kingdom is not something other than the reign of God; it is His presence among His people in Jesus Christ. This presence brings a better life in this world, and exhorts believers for preparing for the consumption of the coming of God's kingdom. This does mean that there is not any contradiction between involvement in liberating actions and preparing the road for the coming of the kingdom.

Presupposing a dichotomy between a salvific Christology and liberating Christology always comes from a Gnosticism which affirms the dualism between matter and spirit. Salvific Christology, therefore, is relating to spirits and aims toward the eschatological life. A liberating Christology centers on the physical life of human beings and aims for a better life in this world. However, this dualistic autonomy ignores three things: the comprehensive nature of God's work in Jesus Christ, the oneness of the human being, and the relationship between the historical and

²⁰¹ Huebner, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 272. The citation in the text is taken from: Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 81.

²⁰² De Santa Ana, "The Influence of Bonhoeffer," 194.

the eschatological life. What gathers all these things together is the being of Jesus Christ. In Him, we see the exalted and humiliated God simultaneously. For Bonhoeffer, talking about God's exaltation starts with speaking about His humiliation in Jesus Christ. In other words, God's transcendence is realized in His immanence. If someone wants to think about God, he has to consider his weakness: manager and His cross. In such humiliated events, God is recognized, and not in the abstract divine nature.²⁰³ Thus, there is not any autonomy between liberating Christology and salvific Christology.

4.6.2. A Christological Eschatology

Gutierrez' emphasis on a socio-political action for liberating people in this life is not against the eschatological life, as a better life in this world is evoked by the eschatological vision. Noble indicates that Gutierrez follows Moltmann in his understanding of eschatology, which emphasizes that, "Eschatological vision has meaning only when it seen in the context of the social realities of today's world."²⁰⁴ This relationship between eschatology and the present context find its basis in the earthly life of Jesus. As mentioned above, "Jesus' life and death reveal the possibility for the world of a just society."²⁰⁵ Jesus' salvation, on the other hand, gives freedom not only for the coming world after the grave or the Parousia, but also in this world. Therefore, there is no contradiction between seeking a better life in this world and preaching the eschatological promises to the people.

During his exploration of the relationship between eschatology and politics, Gutierrez discusses the project of "Utopia."²⁰⁶ Moreover, Gutierrez refuses the autonomy between the world and the church, because there is a "... fundamental (transcendental) unity of all humankind and all human action. There is one call only to salvation, for Christian and non-Christian."²⁰⁷ LeMasters criticizes this continuity between the world and the church as it "... threatens the unique identity and mission of the gathered community of faith."²⁰⁸ Of course, Gutierrez does not want to abolish

²⁰³ Pangritz, "Who is Jesus Christ, for Us, Today?" 139.

²⁰⁴ Noble, "An Introduction," 14.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth impression, 232-238.

²⁰⁷ Noble, "An Introduction," 12.

²⁰⁸ LeMasters, "Christian Social Ethics," 243.

the borders between the church and the world. Gutierrez asserts that the church is the community of Jesus Christ, who is saved by his work. However, this community is responsible for proclaiming God's love for all humans. The practical proclamation of God's love entails liberating actions, which help in making the world better. Moreover, Gutierrez understands the relationship between God and the world Christologically. Christ is the lord of the history. He is controlling everything for one aim, as everything started in Him, and He is going to recapitulate everything for the glory of the Father. The church, therefore, is God's mandate in the world to achieve His will.

In addition, thinking in such way leads to three assertions. First, defending rights of the poor and the oppressed does not mean more emphasis on a liberating Christology as opposed to a salvific Christology. Second, defending rights of the poor and the oppressed does not always lead people to believe in Christ. As it shown before, it is not the responsibility of the church; her mission is only to proclaim God's love for all people. And, it does not make of her an institution for human rights, nor does it mean that her proclamation is a call for an earthly Utopia. Third, as Gutierrez affirms that there is one call for all people, which is instituted by the work of Christ; and it means that even oppressors might be saved. Noble refers to the nature of the liberating call according to Gutierrez, it includes "... denunciation and annunciation – denunciation the situations of oppression and injustice and annunciation God's universal salvific love."²⁰⁹ Gutierrez emphasis on God's preference for the poor does not mean God's rejection for the other since God's love is a universal salvific love. This confirms that Gutierrez' Utopia is not just a secular 'new society.' Thoughts of earthly Utopia used to be based on a particular philosophy of ethics. However, Gutierrez' project is based on the work of Jesus Christ, which entails that there is a place even for the oppressors.

4.7.Summary

In this chapter, I tried to explore whether human works could help in preparing the road for the coming of the kingdom of God. As I examined the relationship of the human works with different issues according to the Christology of both Bonhoeffer and Gutierrez, it is important to highlight some assertions.

²⁰⁹ Noble, "An Introduction," 15.

First, salvation is totally God's work apart from human works. However, God uses human works as His tool in this world for bringing in His kingdom. While Bonhoeffer considers the human works of the believers as a preparation for the coming of God's kingdom, Gutierrez considers them as part of the process of saving the human beings. We, therefore, should be ready to be used by God.

Second, we should remember that, in our relationship with God, we do not own God; He owns us. He uses us in our freedom to achieve His good will. Involvement in socio-political action prepares the road for the coming of the kingdom. For Bonhoeffer, it is an ethic in Christ, defined as responsibility or deputyship. Gutierrez, on the other hand, considers involvement in a liberation action as a gift, which God uses to achieve His will through the believers. Moreover, Gutierrez considers those involved in liberation as believers exemplifying a special spirituality of liberation.

Third, the church and God's kingdom are not identical. It implicates that the church is working, by God's power, for preparing the road for a great being, which transcends her abilities. This does not mean that a kind of subordination for the church; she is Christ's body, who reveals Him to the world. Also, when the church realizes that the state is ordained by God, it helps her to work with the state for the sake of the poor and the oppressed. It does not lead to politicization or secularization of the church, since she devotes her efforts to defending rights of oppressed people, and not to dominate the political authorities.

Fourth, it is important to indicate two matters of the relationship of socio-political actions and spirituality. On the one hand, it is part of the spirituality of every believer, related to the experience of life in Christ. On the other hand, the church cannot consider involvement in socio-political action as just a part time activity; but it is essential in preparing the road for the coming of grace.

Fifth, socio-political actions, done by an obedient church, are thus informed and formed by the eschatological promises. Both of them are instituted on the work of Jesus Christ. Also, both of them reflect a salvific Christology and liberating Christology. The church should not only consider the socio-political actions as means to include people into the church. She has to think about how to listen to God's voice in proclaiming God's love, as He wants.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: A Contextual Liberating Christological Ecclesiology

5.1 An Introduction

In chapter two, I explored the Christology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, where we could see the features of a liberating Christology through a salvific Christology. In chapter three, I explored the Christology of Gustavo Gutierrez, who is writing mainly about the liberating Christology. His balance is shown in constituting his Christology upon a salvific Christology. I discussed, in chapter four, how the Christologies of both aforementioned theologians affect their understanding for contextual problems; concretely, how the church should behave as the body of Jesus Christ in defending rights of the poor and the oppressed. Precisely, I explored how human works help in preparing the road for the coming of the kingdom of God.

In addition, there are some differences between Bonhoeffer's theology and Gutierrez'. Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran theologian, is writing his theology in the frame of traditional theology, while Gutierrez, the Roman-Catholic theologian, is writing his theology through a new method, which is liberation theology. Here, I would like to highlight three main differences. First, while Bonhoeffer asserts the Special Revelation in Jesus Christ, Gutierrez includes both Natural Revelation and Special Revelation together as ways of revealing God for Himself. Though presenting God's works as liberating actions in the OT supports Gutierrez's argument, it could be misunderstood if it is not interpreted Christologically. Therefore, I prefer to follow Bonhoeffer, and of course Luther, Calvin, and Barth, in emphasizing the Special Revelation in Jesus Christ, as it is a revelation from within God, without recourse to a focus on Natural Revelation. Second, the church, according to Bonhoeffer, is a form of Christ. She is the presence of Christ Himself in the world; precisely, she is the extension of the incarnation. However, the church, for Gutierrez, is the communion of the believers, the body of Christ, who is in a mission in this world. For me, I prefer to follow Gutierrez here, as his understanding presents a balance between the divine aspect and the human aspect of the Church. This leads to the possibility of being led astray in some points in her life, and the continuous need for the Reformation. While Bonhoeffer's understanding for the church is absolute; her features are prone to be more divine, which makes both her thoughts and

her behaviors divine, without giving any space for Reformation. Third, sin, for Bonhoeffer, is inherited. His understanding of sin is classical; it affects the nature of the human being. God's work in salvation, therefore, saves humankind from the transgression and the rebellion against God. For Gutierrez, sin is more related to the context; it is a human, social, and historical reality. God's salvation, therefore, saves from selfishness, exploitation ...etc. For me, sin is a synthesis between these two understandings; it is inherited in the depth of the human beings, and it leads to consequences in the context. The work of God through the cross of Jesus Christ saves us from both the original sin and its consequences.

However, in this chapter, I will focus on the Egyptian Church. I wrote before that the Christology of the Egyptian Church is salvific. Therefore, I will first present some obstacles of the Egyptian Church in adopting a liberating Christology. According to my understanding, the most important obstacles for the Egyptian Church are the inherited mysticism tradition and the psychological problems of being a minority in Egypt. There is a prevailing, underlying "submission theology" caused by oppression as well as by theological struggles between different denominations or within the same denomination. I will reflect on features of a liberating Christology in the life of the Egyptian Church; namely, how worship, evangelism, and socio-political actions of the church should and can function. How could the life of the church, adopting a liberating Christology, interact with her contextual problems?

For my understanding, the life of the church is a serial of events. Event is the action which is based on the work of Jesus Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, and for the glory of the Father. Therefore, every one of worship, evangelism, and socio-political action, is an event, in which the church lives her being in Christ, showing the guidance of the Holy Spirit for achieving God's will. Understanding her life as events, on the one hand, the church avoids the confusing dualisms, like spiritual/material dualism, secular/eschatological dualism, divine/human dualism, etc. On the other hand, this understanding is a Trinitarian understanding for the life of the church, enabling her to deepen the meaning of communion between the members of the church, and between the church and Triune God. This, consequently, leads for a practical life *for* the world to make it better, as God is *for* us.

5.2 Obstacles against a Liberating Christology

5.2.1 A Christian Minority

Christians in Egypt are a minority in comparison to the Muslim majority as articulated in Chapter One. This situation affects the way which Muslims consider the reactions of Christians in defending their rights. Ephraim Zakhary, an Egyptian researcher, explains this relationship in his master thesis, in which he analyzes Muslim-Christian conflicts. He argues that there are some Egyptian Muslims who see that the current regime must face the issue of the rights of Egyptian Christians and cease from their marginalization; to do otherwise, leads to bad consequences.²¹⁰ However,

The majority of the Muslims are not happy to see the Christian community avoiding silence in order to be heard. Many Muslims do not want to change their views about Christians and recognize them as citizens. They always view them as second-class citizens; they treat them as strangers who do not really belong to the Egyptian community.²¹¹

The Egyptian Christians who face this attitude of rejection find it even more difficult to continue to defend not only Christians' rights, but rights of the oppressed and the poor, whether they are Muslims or Christians. Gutierrez, as it is shown in Chapter Three, presents Jesus as a man of politics. Jesus did not adopt politics as a way to achieve his mission, but by the cross; however, He did not neglect defending rights of the poor through expressing His views to the political figures of His time. Notice that Jesus and His followers were not the majority. Most of the time, He was followed by twelve disciples and some women, and sometimes, He was alone (John 18:12-19:16).

Being a minority affects the members of the minority group themselves psychologically, especially with a long history of oppression and marginalization. This situation leads them to the ghetto and thinking more in the eschatological promises instead of facing the problems of their context. We can find this in the lyrics of some of Egyptian spiritual songs. For example, there is a song says, "However, I am not belonging to this world; I am belonging to another world."²¹² Another song says, "Strange, I am stranger away from my home country, I am longing to my heavenly city."²¹³ Also, "I am stranger here, when the Savior comes back to take me to the

²¹⁰ Ephraim Yacoub Zakhary, *Conflicts Between Christians and Muslims in Egypt since 1980: Christian Perspective on Being a Minority in Egypt* (Stavanger: Master's Thesis, School of Mission and Theology, 2011), 75.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² "The world builds and cultivates," the song is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdJRC-I2dPg>; site accessed on Mar. 21, 2018.

²¹³ "Strange, I am stranger," the song is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dP0tdkRbv-k>; site accessed on Mar. 21, 2018.

heaven.”²¹⁴ All these songs deepen the alienation and withdrawing from the society. For example, Christians in Egypt suffer through the process of permits for building or restructuring churches; which may take three or four years to be issued from the authorities, Christians used to feel that their heavenly citizenship is more important, namely the alienation, and they have not to struggle to defend their rights. This affects their attitudes toward Parliamentary elections, presidential elections as well as to the whole political life. Instead of looking at these events as opportunities to change the Egyptian situation, a huge number of Christians neglect the elections because they live a state of alienation. In Chapter Four, we see both Bonhoeffer and Gutierrez affirming that eschatological promises are foundational to one’s contextual hopes. Being an earthly citizen does not contradict being a heavenly citizen; rather, the latter enhance the former. Again, in the incarnated Jesus Christ, dualisms of spirit/matter or secular/eschatological are abolished.

5.2.2 A Mystical Tradition

The Egyptian Church is rooted in the Eastern theology, in which the Christian life is aiming to the relationship with the Triune God through the Holy Spirit. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen explains the difference between the Eastern theology and the Western theology as follow:

According to Eastern theology, Latin traditions have been dominated by legal, juridical, and forensic categories. Eastern theology, on the contrary, understands the need of salvation in terms of deliverance from mortality and corruption. Union with God is the goal of the Christian life, even becoming “in-godded.” The underlying anthropology of the East, in contrast with that of the West, seems to deal less with guilt and more with looking upward, so to speak, to the image of God to be fulfilled in mortal human beings ... Basil attributes the experience of theosis (deification) to the Holy spirit, who “being God by nature ... deifies by grace those who still belong to a nature subject to change.”²¹⁵

The Protestant Churches, however, are also affected by Western theology. Missionaries coming to Egypt would inaugurate a one classroom school and a one-room hospital beside the new church as well as initiating social services. These initiatives grew later to be influential institutions in both education and health care. Both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches adopted the same attitudes towards social services. The context warranted need for such services because you cannot preach to a hungry, sick, or oppressed person. Nevertheless, these social services did not produce social

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 69.

action because of the impact of the Eastern theology, especially regarding the meaning of salvation. However, Bonhoeffer, in Chapter Two, depicts both the presence of Jesus and the result of His saving work as a Church-community. It is a responsibility towards her context. It is the same cause that motivates Bonhoeffer, as it is shown in Chapter Four, to become involved in socio-political actions to defend rights of the oppressed. *Theosis* ought not to be understood as a relationship with God without the human physical aspects. Rather, as Bonhoeffer explains, it deepens the value of humanity. According to him, *Theosis* means “Incarnational Humanism,” as it will be shown latter.

5.2.3 Submission Theology

Sometimes, a reaction towards violence and oppression is to be through submission and accepting the whole situation voluntarily instead of facing it through liberating action. The oppressed minorities in Egypt used to respond to their oppressors in such way as it has a theological basis. Ekram Lamy, on the one hand, explains that this theology starts from the belief in the absolute sovereignty of God; that He controls everything even the smallest details of the daily events. Nothing can take place without His allowance. Of course, they use selective texts from the religious books. God, consequently, knows and wills this kind of oppression. Oppressed people, therefore, cannot object to the will of God. Nevertheless, it is a distorted image of God. According to this ideology, God is the source of good and evil. And human beings are destined to their inevitable fate. Submission ideology, on the other hand, provides reasons for the oppressed people to avoid their responsibility of defending their rights against the oppressors. The only way, thus, is to pray to God to remove the oppressions, which are considered as punishment.²¹⁶ However, Gutierrez, in Chapter Three, presents Jesus as a Poor-Man, whose solidarity with the poor was not a mere sympathy with them, but was to defend their rights to the death.

One of the examples of results of submission ideology, according to my understanding, is the event of “The Night of Turning Back to God.” On Nov. 11, 2011, a huge number of the Egyptian Christians, from different denominations, came together to pray for God that He might send His peace upon them again. This event took place after a year full of oppression against Christians in different places all over Egypt; bombing churches and attacking some Christians in

²¹⁶ Ekram Lamy, “*Lahout wa Fekah El-Khenouaa (1) – The Theology of Submission (1)*,” Albawabh News Magazine, Apr. 11, 2017, available at: <http://www.albawabhnews.com/2473656>; Site accessed on Mar. 20, 2018.

‘Maspero’s Massacre.’²¹⁷ However, accepting submission theology always leads to more praying without a liberating action. It leads the oppressed to feel guilty as they think that God is angry with them; they accept the status quo without any objections. The church, instead, should adopt the Christological image *Messiah*, shown in Chapter Three, or the Christological image of *Vicarious Representative*, shown in Chapter Two. In both images, Jesus presents a true image of God to human beings through carrying their sufferings to present them to God. This did not happen through teachings; rather, it occurs through liberating actions, the cross and the Resurrection.

5.2.4 Theological Struggles

Lately, with the spread of social media, theological debates are a large part of conversations between Christians in Egypt. It happens on two levels: the level between denominations and within the same denomination. For the former, theological debates most often relate to Baptism and the Eucharist. Namely, whether Baptism saves persons according to Orthodox/Catholic view; or it is the way of integrating persons to Christ’ covenant according to Presbyterians; or it is the way of proclaiming one’s faith according to Baptists and Brethren. Also, whether Jesus is present in the Eucharist bodily according to the traditional Church, or it is a spiritual presence according to Presbyterians, or it is only remembrance according to the denominations that follow the Zwinglian theology. Such debates increased after the visit of Pope Francis to Egypt for an agreement on the Baptism between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The initiative was delayed after the Orthodox Church announced that they are studying the matter to make sure that it will not contradict their traditions.²¹⁸

An example of the theological debates within the same denomination comes from the Protestant denominations. The debate here relates to the theological attitudes of Fundamentalism, Conservatism and Liberalism. The disputes center on the ‘Inerrancy of the Bible,’ and whether its inspiration is literal, mechanical or dynamic. Also, whether the story of Adam and Eve is

²¹⁷ Nader Shoukry, “Alaaf El-Akbat Yakhtatimoun Salawatihem Bel-Moukatem Mn Agle Misr Wa Souria – Thousands of Coptics Finish their prayers in El Moukatam for Egypt and Syria,” Youm7 Magazine, Nov. 12, 2011, available at: <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=530698>; Site accessed on Mar. 20, 2018.

²¹⁸ “El-Anba Makarios Youlin Sabab Esrar Rafd El-Magmaa El-Moukadas Bel-Egmaa Li-Kaboul Mamoudiat El-Kathoulik – Bishop Makarios Announces the Cause of the unanimous insisting on Rejection of the Holy Council for accepting Catholic’s Baptism,” Speech is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAY_tsNBUGw; Site accessed on Mar. 20, 2018.

historical or symbolical; and whether hell is real or a psychological state. Church members will classify themselves as fundamental, conservative, or liberal.²¹⁹

In both cases, theological debates take the church away from her mission. It leads to the weakness of the church. How could the church think in the defending rights of the poor and the oppressed while they struggle over doctrines? Here, the Egyptian Church should learn from Jesus as a *Reconciler*, as it shown in both Chapters Two and Three. In Jesus Christ, human beings realize a loving God, not an angry God. In Jesus Christ, God sees justified humans, not sinners. In Jesus Christ, there is unity, not division. The Egyptian Church, therefore, should accept one another, as they are, leading to a diversity that God uses to connect different people in different ways.

5.3 Marks of a Liberating Christological Ecclesiology

In this section, I will present a contextual ecclesiology based on a liberating Christology. The focus will be on worship, evangelism, and socio-political action. Every one of these items should reflect the comprehensive salvation in Jesus Christ, shown in His entire life, His cross, and His resurrection. Also, every one of these items would exclude the dualism of matter-spirit and the dualism of secular-eschatological.

5.3.1 Worship

The event of worship is the response of gratitude for God's work through Jesus Christ. In this event, believers present themselves to God, as He gave Himself to them in Jesus Christ. Worship is a reflection for church's theology, which is the interaction between the scripture and the context; namely, speech about God in a certain context, addressing contextual problems, and using contextual tools. Finally, the event of worship is the event of announcing the responsibility of believers to proclaim God's practical love for neighbor. In such event, with these attitudes, the

²¹⁹ The most famous Facebook pages for such debates are: "*Masehyate Al-Ktab Al-Mokadas wa El-Fekre El-Librali – The Christianity of the Bible and the Liberal Thought*," Facebook Group, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/720120131463399/>; and: *Ibrahimia-Magazine*," Facebook Page, available at: https://www.facebook.com/Ibrahimia-Magazine-%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%88-%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-1763963473826472/?hc_ref=ARSDGYcGLgDnk3xrkwczXI_H4bfEu2tz4CNXCI0BNNcOz-uPkcdyEjg7JTIpuCOrr3Q&fref=gs&dti=720120131463399&hc_location=group

church imitates the liberating Christ, who lived, during His incarnation, by serving others by the Spirit for the glory of the Father. For Bonhoeffer, responsibility in Jesus' life reflects the inner tension between obedience and freedom. As the obedient one, He completely followed the Law for doing His Father's will. As the free one, He confirms that He has the same will with the Father. Therefore, He did everything joyfully.²²⁰ If the Egyptian Church believes that worship institutes obedience and freedom; worship, then implies responsibility. This responsibility, shown in Chapter Four, represents the bridge between faith and context. Also, responsibility expresses itself in praxis, which God uses for preparing the way for His kingdom.

The event of worship is the event of proclaiming the holiness of the church, which she receives from Jesus Christ, in serving the sinful oppressed world. Gutierrez confirms that, "By preaching the Gospel message, by its sacraments, and by the charity of its members, the church proclaims and shelters the gift of the Kingdom of God in the heart of human history."²²¹ He adds, "The Christian community professes a 'faith which works through charity.' It is (at least ought to be) real charity-in-action and commitment to the service of men."²²² The mystical tradition makes believers to think that worship is an individualistic event, in which everyone is in an individual relationship with God. However, the event of worship, according to the liberating Christology, is a deep relationship with God and with the world together. As Bonhoeffer indicates, in Chapter Four, there should not be one of them without the other. The event of worship should be the source and support of the Church's prophetic voice, which entails socio-political actions.

In the event of worship, the Triune God proclaims the eschatological promises to the church that she can live according to them. The eschatological promises, thus, form believers' contextual hopes. It is totally different from worship as the time of bandaging the wounds of the minority through eschatological promises; this leads to more isolation and hatred for the oppressor. Bonhoeffer emphasizes that such attitudes lead to a Christian radicalism. "Radicalism always arises from a conscious or unconscious hatred of what exists. Christian radicalism, whether it would flee the world or improve it, comes from the hatred of creation."²²³ Namely, it is important for the church to examine her attitude towards the world. Bonhoeffer refers to both as radical

²²⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 204-205.

²²¹ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth impression, 11.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 89.

actions, isolation from the world or trying to change it. But, both of them are refused, as their source is hatred. Changing the oppressing contexts must emerge from God's love, which is proclaimed in the eschatological promises. In addition, the event of worship is the event of discovering the power of God within us (2 Corinthians 4: 7). Worship, therefore, is the event of realizing that one is sent by God to oppressed people, as a *Poor Christ* among the poor, the *reconciler Christ* between God and the sinners, and the *liberating Christ* among the oppressed. It is the event by which the Spirit leads the church for the glory of the Father and the Son. The Spirit leads the church into a deeper knowledge of God. However, this knowledge, as Gutierrez explains in Chapter three, is not theoretical. Explaining the relationship between Yahweh and His people in the Old Testament, Gutierrez confirms that, "To know Yahweh, which in Biblical language is equivalent to saying to love Yahweh, is to establish just relationship among men, it is to recognize the rights of the poor."²²⁴

The word of God has a centrality in the event of worship. It is the revelation of God's Truth. However, the church should be obedient to the Spirit to present the Christ of the Bible, who is, simultaneously, both the *salvific Christ* and the *liberating Christ*. It implies the emphasizing on the social actions and the social services as two facets of God's work through Jesus Christ. Here, the concept of "responsibility" should be presented as a genuine part of the spirituality of the believer, as it shown in Chapter Four with the discussion of the "spirituality of liberation."

However, how could we think about the mystical thought, which dominates the Egyptian worship? I think that the Egyptian Church should adopt Bonhoeffer's understanding for the concept *theosis*. Jens Zimmermann argues that Bonhoeffer transcends his Protestant culture and the Lutheran theology to deepen his theology in the patristic heritage through, what Zimmermann calls, "Incarnational Humanism." In the patristic theology, *theosis*, divinization, or deification is a way of understanding salvation, as Athanasius said, "God became a human being, so that human beings might become gods." This understanding could be described as a Christ-centered realism, as Jesus Christ, through incarnation, mediates the relationship between God and the world.²²⁵ Arnold von Harnack, whom most of the Protestant theologians followed, refused such understanding. He taught that the Church Fathers Hellenized the biblical message of salvation.

²²⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Fourth Impression, 195.

²²⁵ Jens Zimmermann, "Bonhoeffer's Incarnational Humanism," in *Theologica Wratislaviensis* T. 11 (2016): 73-86, 73.

Namely, they were influenced by the pagan desire for immortality of the soul. Harnack interpreted *theosis* in a cognitive conviction; that in Christ, believers are continuously in God's love. However, this understanding missed the patristic aim, which is the transformation of the human beings into the image of Christ to participate in God. This would include physical and moral transformation.²²⁶

Moreover, the biblical teaching in the OT confirms that humankind was created in the image of God. Paul, in the NT, asserts that Jesus Christ is the true image of God. God's purpose in creating humankind is to become the likeness of the relationship between Christ and God. God, through Christ's incarnation, His death, and His resurrection, aims for the divinization of our humanity; to be a Christian is to be fully human in the image of Christ. This understanding, according to Zimmerman, avoids dualisms of spirit/mater or soul/body, and it could help in providing clarity as humanity is reconciled to God by Christ.²²⁷

Finally, features of this understanding are expanded in Bonhoeffer's theology. First, Bonhoeffer asserts the idea of recapitulation when he writes, "In Jesus Christ, in the one who became human, was crucified, and rose from the dead, humanity has been renewed. What happened in Christ, happened to everyone, because he was *the* human being [par excellence]. The new human being is created."²²⁸ Second, to be a Christian means to participate in the new humanity, Bonhoeffer writes, "Christian life means being human (*Menschsein*) in the power of Christ's becoming human, being judged, and pardoned in the power of the cross, living a new life in the power of the resurrection."²²⁹ Third, Christian ethics, for Bonhoeffer, come from being saved on the image of Christ by participation in Him. Bonhoeffer writes, "Formation occurs only by being drawn into the form of Jesus Christ, by being conformed to the unique form of the one who became human, was crucified, and is risen. This [happens] ... as the form of Jesus Christ himself so works on us that it molds us, conforming our form to Christ's own."²³⁰ In general, *theosis*, divinization, or deification for Bonhoeffer is a matter of humanization as Jesus Christ incarnated, crucified, and rose again from the dead. He mediates the relationship between God and the world.

²²⁶ Ibid., 79-80.

²²⁷ Ibid., 81.

²²⁸ Ibid., 81. The citation in the text is taken from: Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 38.

²²⁹ Ibid. The citation in the text is taken from: Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 93.

²³⁰ Ibid., 82. The citation in the text is taken from: Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 40.

Therefore, the more worship deepens in a relationship with God, the more the value of humanity increases.

5.3.2 Evangelism

While serving God as a pastor, I observed two extremes in the ministry of evangelism. The first, I call “evangelism by terrorism.” Evangelists of this type speak about human sin which separates them from God making them His enemies. God solves the problem by sending His Son who died on the cross for their sins. The individual has two choices; whether to choose Jesus as Savior or to reject Him; rejection results in bad consequences. Jesus, in His second coming, will no longer be compassionate; He will send all who have rejected Him to hell. Describing hell and the eternal sufferings dominates such evangelism (Matthew 13: 42, Mark 9:42-49). Evangelists place one’s responsibility about his eternal life on himself if he does not take the decision of following Jesus.

This type of evangelism has many problems. First, the focus always is on the emotional decision based on fear of the eternal fire. Second, it depicts that Jesus’ work presents only the possibility of salvation with human decision representing the actuality of salvation. However, in ‘2 Corinthians 5: 19,’ Paul writes, “*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*” This means that human beings are already reconciled to God in Jesus Christ. The work of Jesus presents the possibility and the actuality of salvation; one must only believe live out this reality, Third, this type of evangelism eliminates other facets of a comprehensive salvation, e. g., saving people from their oppressors. In his understanding for the relationship between Penultimate and Ultimate, shown in Chapters Two and Four, Bonhoeffer states, “Being human may—with all necessary reservation—be addressed as Penultimate to justification by grace. Only the human being can be justified, simply because only the one who is justified becomes a ‘human being.’”²³¹ Finally and the most important, Jesus did not use this approach in His evangelism. He presented the good news of the coming of the kingdom of God by exhorting people to repent. Nevertheless, Jesus mainly taught his disciples about hell, not the general audiences.

The other extreme is based on “Health and Wealth Theology.” Evangelists explain how God created this creation and how the sin of man was destructive. Jesus’ salvation, therefore, save

²³¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 94.

people for a better life in this world. Sin, thus, is the cause of all daily problems and sufferings. The individual has to abandon his sin so that Jesus can bless him; but if he does not, he will suffer for his whole life. This kind of evangelism has many problems as well. Firstly, it presents a distorted understanding for salvation. Salvation, according to this type, is not a real relationship with God; it is a way of solving the individual's problems. The aim always is life without needs. However, the Bible presents many of God's people who lived in poverty; Jesus Himself was poor, He even "... *has nowhere to lay His head,*" (Luke 9: 58). Secondly, this salvation focuses on the earthy life on the account of the eschatological life. It contradicts the comprehensive understanding of salvation, which emphasizes a relationship with God in this life as well as in eternity. Finally, this kind of evangelism emphasizes on the individual aspect of salvation in contradiction to a corporate image. In Chapters Two and Three, we see the church as a community of believers which is the fruit of God's work in saving people from their sin. Gutierrez confirms that, "To proclaim the gospel is to call human beings together as a church."²³² This church has a mission which is 'solidarity with the poor,' according to Gutierrez. He states, "Christian poverty has meaning only as a commitment of solidarity with the poor, with those who suffer misery and injustice."²³³

In addition, the Egyptian Church experiences the debate over the struggle of evangelism and social services: which one of them is the responsibility of the church. The church could realize her role in both, as they are two aspects of the work of Jesus Christ in salvation. However, a message of comprehensive salvation requires the prophetic role of the church. The good news of evangelism would emphasize social services as well as social action; this has been discussed in Chapter Four concerning the role of socio-political actions in paving the road for the coming of God's kingdom. Moreover, Gutierrez confirms that, "The prophetic task of the Church is both constructive and critical and is exercised in the midst of a process of change."²³⁴ Applying this to the Egyptian Church constructively, the church presents God's word and shares creatively in society to assist in making it better through social services. She must proclaim her rejection of any kind of oppression through her words and actions.

²³² Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Liberating Mission of the Church," in *Gustavo Gutiérrez; Essential Writings*, Ed., by James B. Nickoloff (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 259-269, 261.

²³³ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, fourth impression, 300.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

Evangelism is not the process which the church used to include people for her community only. It is the mission of the church to the world in its different conditions. The church should think in the divine mandate for her to prepare people for salvation, as it is shown in Chapter Four, and to proclaim the reign of God on the world through Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer writes, “Grace must finally clear and smooth its own way; it is alone must again and again make the impossible possible. But all this does not release us from preparing the way for the coming of the grace.”²³⁵ In such an environment, Gutierrez asks about how to present the word of God in a context full of poverty and oppression. It implies the need for widening the concept of evangelism to include social action, which requires a comprehensive understanding for the life and the teaching of Jesus. ‘Matthew 7: 21-23; 25: 31-46,’ emphasize living according to God’s will, which is going beyond a limited understanding for preaching. It includes actions to make the world better. It does not contradict the fact that salvation is totally God’s work in Jesus Christ and that He is the only person who can bring the kingdom of God. However, incarnation affirms that God decided to work through the human beings, and together with them (2 Corinthians 6: 1, Acts 15: 28) as it is shown in the discussion of the relationship between faith and praxis in Chapter Four. In such understanding, evangelism presents the attributes of both the reconciler and the liberator Christ.

5.3.3 Socio-political Action

The Egyptian Church keeps herself away of the politics because of the common saying “Politics is a dirty game.” Politics has a dark side in every time and everywhere. Of course, the church must not be involved in corruption, but must proclaim the prophetic voice as well. Jesus was aware of what was happening around Him. As it is shown in Chapter Three, he involved Himself in politics inasmuch to serve the coming of God’s kingdom. The call for socio-political action, therefore, aims to proclaim the prophetic voice, which may help in defending rights of the poor and the oppressed. On the other hand, “The church of Jesus Christ is the place in the world where the reign of Jesus Christ over the whole world is to be demonstrated and proclaimed ... [her] existence is already always something that reaches far beyond it.”²³⁶ Jesus commissions her to be “*salt of the*

²³⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 96.

²³⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Christ, Reality, and Good. Christ, Church, and World,” in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 594-612, 605.

earth [and] light of the world ...” (Matthew 5: 13-14). From this perspective in Bonhoeffer’s thought, as shown in Chapter Four, the Egyptian Church has authority over the Egyptian state; but this can be practiced only through the ministry; the same as Jesus Christ’s way. He practiced His lordship through washing the feet (John 13: 5). For Bonhoeffer, the authority of the church on the state comes through the word of God, he writes, “God’s word has power also over the state ... its sword is the word and the prayer.”²³⁷

Socio-political action, for me, is an event in which believers, based in Christology, are obedient to the guidance of the Spirit to proclaim God’s love and to work on liberating people for a better life. Bonhoeffer confirms that, “We are made preparers of Christ’s way because, and really *only* because, Christ comes of Christ’s own will, strength, and love; because Christ wills to overcome all obstacles, and can, even the greatest; and because Christ alone prepares the way of Christ’s coming.”²³⁸ It means that the church will not involve in politics to gain benefits for herself, but for her Lord. The church ought not to have a political party; she can do so in two ways. On the individual level, Christians in Egypt should participate in good political parties. They have to overcome psychological attitudes of being a minority. Gutierrez reflects on the situation of the poor in Latin American, saying, “The poor are given a concrete opportunity to share in the task of the church and to work with commitment for the transformation of the world.”²³⁹ They were an object and subject, they were in need for a help to be free from their oppressors, and they themselves worked to help others. The Egyptian Church, as a minority, should live the same experience. Theologically, Christians are supported by power from God’s Spirit to achieve His will in the world. On the institutional level, the church must be bold in proclaiming the prophetic voice without compromising. Also, prophetic voice does not mean supporting revolution against the regime. According to Bonhoeffer, as shown in Chapter Four, both the ideologies of compromise and radicalism are rejected. But, it does mean helping the regime to see the status quo through the eyes of the church, who is God’s beating heart in the world. According to Yoder, the church must defend rights of the poor and oppressed through strategies of nonviolence.

The event of socio-political action represents a deep understanding of a comprehensive salvation. This comprehensive view of salvation means defending rights of all Egyptians, not only

²³⁷ Bonhoeffer, “The Nature of the Church,” 209.

²³⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 101.

²³⁹ Gutiérrez, “The Liberating Mission of the Church,” 266.

for Christians. However, it does not mean that the church will be a social institution for human rights. The essential ontological distinction between church and state must be clear all the time. But, it does not mean to be isolated from her context. In addition, the aim is to be subject to God's will to work through the church, whether it leads to new converts or not. In Chapter Four, Gutierrez emphasizes that socio-political actions represent encounter with the God in the neighbor. He confirms that it is "... a life according to the Spirit, a wayfaring that embraces all aspects of life and is done in community."²⁴⁰ Jesus used to proclaim the Truth and served all even if it led people to abandon Him. He said to His disciples: "*You do not want to go away also, do you?*" (John 6:67). The church must always proclaim God's love in Jesus Christ.

We, in the Egyptian Church, must confess that the church compromises on many issues with the state; for example, the church's silence on the attack of some men of El-Azhar El-Sharif on Christian doctrine as well as with offensive teachings in the curricula of the students in the primary level. The compromise may come from the desire of the church to have peace or getting some rights. However, "the best way to achieve ... [the] divestment of power is precisely by resolutely casting our lot with the oppressed and the exploited in the struggle for a more just society."²⁴¹ Gutierrez affirms that, "The groups that control economic and political power will not forgive the church for this."²⁴² In this point, the Egyptian Church could realize that she is on her right way, following her Master. Bonhoeffer concurs with that: "In the conflict with the enemy of the gospel, the Christians weapons, however, are faith and love, which are purified in suffering."²⁴³

5.4 Summary

How to do theology properly is an important question in the dynamics of daily life. Does it mean that we should change our theology to fit the changes of life? Absolutely, NO! But, we should come to a new understanding for the meaning of the mission of the church in her changeable context. This new understanding is in need for a new articulation for the same Christian faith. This

²⁴⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Free to Love," in *Gustavo Gutiérrez; Essential Writings*, Ed., by James B. Nickoloff (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 159-162, 159.

²⁴¹ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, fourth impression, 266.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Christ and Peace," in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, Eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 352-356, 355.

new articulation should consider, according to my understanding, two aspects, which are context and mystery.

First, the word “theology,” as we know, means a speech about God. This speech does not ignore the context of the audience. Therefore, we could say that theology is a contextual speech about God. Theology, thus, ought to present sensible answers for the meaning of the Christian faith. Namely, how does God intervene in people’s sufferings, their questions, their expectations of Him, etc. Also, theology should present a clear understanding for the role of the church towards the problems of her context.

Second, theology, as the New Testament, has a liturgical nature, namely, it is instituted and developed in worship and evangelism. It means that theology is not just logical articulations to interact with the problems of the church’s context. Theology is the articulation of God’s mission, which is given to the church. Bonhoeffer, as shown in Chapter Two, asserts that knowing who Jesus Christ is occurs only in the church during prayer. Gutierrez, in Chapter Three, confirms that theology is a second task after practical worship. Therefore, theology, as a reflection for God’s mission, which the church receives in worship, always has its mystery. However, mystery does not mean ambiguity; rather, it means the openness of the church to receive both God’s mission and God’s power to achieve God’s work in her context.

In general, theology should be both “from above,” namely mysterious, and “from below,” namely, contextual. Nevertheless, contextual here could be global or local. While traditional theology used to be global, liberation theology is local. However, the sources of Christian theology: “Scripture, tradition, reason, and religious experience,”²⁴⁴ are always both mysterious and contextual. Every one of these resources is a product of interaction between the thoughts and the work of God and the context of human life. Theology without mystery is a human philosophy. Also, there is no theology without context.

The context of the Egyptian Church is full of problems. Some of these problems increase over time like poverty, political oppression, economic exploitation, religious oppression, etc. Others have appeared recently with regard to the problem of a growing challenge from atheist voices in our society. At the same time, the church is still dominated by a certain understanding of

²⁴⁴ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 120.

her role in preaching God's word, celebrating sacraments and providing some people with some social services. However, the main message of the Christian faith, which is proclaimed always by the Spirit within the church is that Jesus Christ is a liberator. His work as a liberator includes both spiritual and physical aspects of being human. The Egyptian church, therefore, must articulate a theology which reflects a liberating Christology; one by which people could know how Jesus, as a liberator, interacts with the contextual problems. Theology must reflect on how the church sees her role. Theology must reflect God's will for a context filled with poverty and oppression. Theology must finally reflect God's eschatological promises which inform their context for ministry and mission.

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Soli Deo Gloria.