The Suppression of Liberation Theology: A History of a Changing Peru, 1968-1988

By
Javier Francisco Mundul

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in History.

W. FRANK ROBINSON

Faculty Thesis Advisor — W. Frank Robinson

Director of Honors — Francis W. Weislo

Third Reader — Marshall C. Eakin

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Introduction

On March 13, 2013, Pope Francis was selected as the next Pope of the Catholic Church by the Cardinals. Pope Francis is the first Pope from South America and represented a significant shift and start of a new era in the Catholic Church as a once ignored and exploited continent had just had one of its own elevated to the highest position. This history of exploitation and Francis' eventual elevation to his status as Pope did not come without sacrifices and struggles in Latin America history. One Catholic reformist movement which sought to alleviate the continent of its unfortunate past and present during Francis' younger years in the 1950s was liberation theology. In countries rife with economic and social inequality, military dictatorships, and unequal democracies, liberation theology emphasized human rights and social justice for the people in the 1950s. Liberation theology is a theological tendency of Catholicism that challenged the structural reality of its environment in hopes of creating a just society. Churches and priests were the primary leaders of these movements as they emphasized a mixture of religious teachings with left-wing politics and values. One of the founders of liberation theology in Latin America was Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino, a Peruvian theologian and priest, who once noted how "I come from a continent in which more than 60% of the population lives in a state of poverty, and 82% of those find themselves in extreme poverty."[1] Peru was one of the continent's poorest, a country in constant political turmoil during the 1950s and 1960s where structural poverty dominated Latin America.

Democrats vied with the military and oligarchs over political and economic power during the 1950s and 1960s. These political conflicts left the people with much uncertainty over the stability and future of Peru. There were multiple points in the 1950s where a coup seemed to

[1] Quoted in Maximo Huaman Inga, "Gustavo Gutiérrez: A Prophet Born for the Liberation of the Poor?", (PhD diss., Catholic Theological Union at Chicago, 1990), 45.

be on the verge of happening, but no leader obtained the political capital to push forward with it. However, in 1962, Victor Raúl de la Torre, leader of the Socialist International affiliated, Peruvian Aprista Party(APRA), won the presidential election with 33% of the vote, but was denied office because of a military takeover. The coup took place on July 18, 1962, overthrew the government, and a military junta was set up to rule Peru.[2] The military allowed new elections and Fernando Belaunde Terry, leader of the Christian Democrats, won those elections and ruled Peru until another military takeover pushed him out of power in 1968 and General Juan Velasco Alvarado took power. The poor conditions of the people would force Gutiérrez to enter the foray in Peru and push for a democratic state by using liberation theology as a rallying force. The structural poverty that continued to plague Latin America is ultimately what forced Gutiérrez and other liberationists to undertake their struggle for a just Latin America.

Pope Francis experienced political, social, and economic realities in Argentina similar to those of Gutiérrez in Peru. This context has seemingly shaped Francis' views on a matter of issues that highly resembles the message espoused by liberationists. Pope Francis has expressed his support for LGBTQ rights, policies that would lessen the socio-economic gap between the poor and the rich, policies that combat structural poverty, and Francis has come head-to-head with some of the Church's conservative forces for their willingness to hide abuses done by the Church. In 2013, the *National Catholic Reporter* reported that "a progressive theological current that emphasizes the Catholic Church's closeness to the poor and marginalized, but was subject to decades of hostility and censure is now finding increasing favor in the Vatican under Pope Francis."[3] While not a devout supporter of liberation theology, Pope Francis' acceptance of a

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[2] Catherine M Conaghan, *Making and Unmaking Authoritarian Peru: Re-election, Resistance, and Regime*, (Coral Gables, FLA: Dante B. Fascell North-South Center, University of Miami, 2001), 78.

[3] Alessandro Speciale, "Liberation Theology Finds New Welcome in Pope Francis' Vatican," National Catholic Reporter, September 10, 2013, https://www.ncronline.org/news/theology/liberation-theology-finds-new-welcome-pope-francis-vatican, 1.

theology and values opposed by both Paul VI and John Paul II's Papacies represents a significant turnaround in the history of liberation theology. Francis noted in 2019, that "we old people laugh at how worried we were about liberation theology… let me tell you a funny story about the one most persecuted, Gustavo Gutiérrez, concelebrated mass with me and the then-prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith" -- the same Papal organ which sought to tear down liberation theology in the 1980s[4]. Francis goes on to note that "if anyone had said back then that the prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith would have brought Gutiérrez to concelebrate mass with the Pope, they would have taken him for a drunk."[5] Liberation theology no longer seems to be an ideology that is forced to remain in the shadows and has emerged into modern-day conversations once more. Pope Francis' meeting with Gutiérrez in 2013 is a new chapter for liberation theology which once again necessitates a reconsideration of its historical past to better understand why it was suppressed by the Church of the past. This history of suppression is necessary to understand so liberation theology can remain a prominent topic in contemporary conversations with Popes after Francis since structural injustice still exists. This thesis will argue that liberation theology offered an alternative path that Latin America could take that would free the continent from structural poverty, inequality, and instability. The theology would gain prominence quickly and attracted attention from members of the Latin America Catholic Church, the general populace, and even the highest authorities of Catholicism. It creates a 20-year narrative from 1968 to 1988 that highlights Gutiérrez's view of structural poverty in Peru and the changing political, economic, and social context in Peru. It also shows how that changing reality and suppression by the Church affected the fate of liberation theology in Peru. Finally, it explains why Sodalitium Christanae Vitae was able to assert itself as the

[4] Cindy Wooden, "Pope Reflects on Changed Attitudes toward Liberation Theology," Crux, February 14, 2019, https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2019/02/pope-reflects-on-changed-attitudes-toward-liberation-theology/.
[5] Ibid, 1.

predominant Papal organ in Peru while also sideling liberation theology. This thesis is a history of the Latin American Catholic Church and its attitudes towards a theology which sought to reform an institution with roots that went as far back as the 1500s.

Literature Review

This thesis places its roots in the fact that the Catholic religious climate has significantly changed since Gutierrez wrote his book, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* in 1973, but the social situation in Latin America has not changed. Latin America is still one of the most unequal continents in the world.[6] This changing climate in the Catholic Church and unchanging Peruvian reality necessitates a reexamination. This reexamination will show why and how a theological reflection that aimed to combat its historical reality was deemed to be too radical and too political by the same Church and Pope -- John Paul II -- that led a crusade for freedom against communism in Eastern Europe during the Cold War. Liberation theology was not given the same opportunity to oppose the political regimes in Latin America and was instead suppressed by members of the Latin American Church and the Papacy.

Before discussing the Peruvian context of liberation theology and its interaction with structural inequality and poverty in Peru, an interaction with the overall progression of liberation theology and its historical development in Latin America is needed to better contextualize the liberation theology in Peru. Carol Ann Drogus, a political scientist, argues in her review article, "The Rise and Decline of Liberation Theology: Churches, Faith, and Political Change in Latin America" that the Medellín Conference of 1968 "ushered in the era of liberation theology," but by 1992, the theology had largely subsided at a Conference in Santo Domingo.[7] The case of

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[6] Stephan Klasen and Felicitas Nowak-Lehmann D., *Poverty, Inequality, and Policy in Latin America* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009), 32.

[7] Carol Ann Drogus, "The Rise and Decline of Liberation Theology: Churches, Faith, and Political Change in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 27, no. 4 (1995): 466.

liberation theology interested Drogus and other political scientists as the movement's "legacy of uneven change" at the Christian Base community, Church, and state level provides a case study into why people choose to support one movement over another and why people even get involved with religion in the first place.[8] The liberationist movement is currently best understood by political scientists as a "reaction against conservative power-brokering" and as a way to "redress the disjuncture between the Church and the popular faith."[9] These movements had limited reach as Brazil, the most liberationist Church in the region, had only managed to reach around five percent of the population which calls into question the public appeal to liberation theology.[10]

The history of uneven changes also reveals how the South American and Central American cases of liberation theology varied considerably and the reception of the theology was not consistent across all contexts. Daniel Levine's *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism* offers a cross-national study of the popular Church in Venezuela and Colombia and how the character of the priests and nuns play an important role in determining the success of Christian Base Communities(CEBs). Conservative CEBs did not speak to the pressing issues faced by their population, while radical CEB's "refusal to compromise with the mystical and spiritual elements" of popular religion makes it unappealing to poor Catholics.[11] The lack of conformity across these CEBs makes it difficult to compare the effectiveness of these CEBs, but this weakness also reveals the "great expectations" of transforming society that liberation theology was unable to meet. Michael Budde argues in *The Two Churches: Catholicism and Capitalism in the World* that there will be a coming clash between the Latin American Church as it takes a

[8] Ibid, 467.
[9] Ibid, 468.
[10] James Cavendish, "Christian Base Communities and the Building of Democracy: Brazil and Chile," *Sociology of Religion* 55, no. 2 (1994): 184.
[11] Daniel H. Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 105.

more anticapitalist stance against the conservative Papal Church.[12] Budde is correct in arguing that the Latin American Church has forever been transformed and will never return to supporting the status quo that created the context for liberation theology initially. However, the "redemocraticzation of Latin America's political climate" makes a return to mutual Church-state relationship of the past more likely.[13] Political scientists approached liberation theology in a comparative manner in order to better understand why a person decides to get involved with a social movement and how the social movement interacts with the popular community. The fate of liberation theology cannot be argued. It is clear that liberation theology reached its "apex" in 1968 at the Medellin Conference and was in "certain decline" by 1992; however, the comparative analyses done by political scientists do little in actually interacting with the context liberation theology was operating in and how this context forced a response by the Church that would ultimately suppress and sideline liberation theology.[14]

Historians have approached the issue of liberation theology by acknowledging the context the theology is working in and how that context plays a role in the theology's goal of remediating their grievances with their current context. Curt Cadorette, a religious historian, directly acknowledges the historical backdrop of Peru and how it came to affect Gutiérrez's interpretations of structural inequality and its theological relationship with Catholicism. Cadorette argues that "both in the past and present, race, class, and gender determine who will flourish and who will perish in Peru. The legacy of colonialism is all too tragic… this is the human, historical background of Gustavo Gutiérrez."[15] However, Cadorette's acknowledgement of this historical backdrop is limited; he instead defends Gutiérrez and liberation theology. This

[12] Carol Ann Drogus, "The Rise and Decline of Liberation Theology," 473.
[13] Ibid, 475.
[14] Ibid, 468.
[15] Curt Cadorette, "Peru and the Mystery of Liberation: The Nexus and Logic of Gustavo Gutiérrez's Theology" in M.H Ellis and O. Maduro(ed.), *The Future of Liberation Theology. Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), 55.

type of analysis is well-known within the field of liberation theology. Curt Cadorette's article appears in section four of the book, *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays In Honor of Gustavo Gutierrez.* The book lacks serious criticisms or analyses of liberation theology due to the nature of the book. W.F. Hewitt asserts that "part IV contains sympathetic discussion of some of the more controversial aspects of liberation theology" in his review of the book.[16] This type of analysis is not atypical of the field, but Cadorette's analysis also reveals another key component to the type of scholarship done within liberation theology: a theological discussion of liberation theology.

Ismael Garcia applies this type of analysis as he believes that "discussing and simplifying liberation theology can have positive implications for our social situation."[17] Roger Haight, an American member of the Society of Jesus, as the Jesuits are formally known, also believes in this mission. Haight professes that the premise behind his book is one that "demystifies and reinterprets the theology in an anthropological understanding of human freedom … in hopes of demystifying and humanizing it."[18] A significant portion of scholarship around liberation theology tries to analyze it in order to demystify and defend the theology as liberation theology's historical context is one of constant criticism and analysis. There is a clear desire among writers and defenders of liberation theology in order to return the theology to public discussion to facilitate relevant conversations about the social structure of society.

Liberation theologians argue that to practice theology, one must always be doing it in a "constantly changing historical reality."[19] However, that approach has not been consistently

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[16] W.F. Hewitt Review of *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez*. Edited by Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989. 518 pp. $29.95, *Journal of Church and State*, Volume 32, Issue 4, Autumn 1990, 873.
[17] García Ismael, *Justice in Latin American Theology of Liberation* (Atlanta: Knox, 1987), 41.
[18] Roger Haight, *An Alternate Vision: an Interpretation of Liberation Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 6.
[19] Gustavo Gutiérrez and James B. Nickoloff, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, 165.

applied when scholars have written about the subject at large. Jeffrey Klaiber and his theological-historical analysis of the fate of liberation theology is excellent in many regards as he wrote a significant portion of his books and articles around the time of prominence of liberation theology. He also seriously considers the theology in a historical framework that is adapted to better understand their current context. For example, Klaiber argues in "Prophets and Populists: Liberation Theology, 1968-1988," "Gutiérrez is a theologian for the people on the move... and theologians like Gutiérrez reveal the growing strength of a popular lay church in Latin America."[20] Klaiber aptly analyzes the social currents that were quickly transforming the Peruvian context around himself; however, this is where his work on liberation theology ends. Theologians that study liberation theology interpret it through a set of interconnected ideas and how they relate to Catholicism, while historians study how the context shaped liberation theology and how the theology shaped the future context. Klaiber's work offers a middle ground in this regard as he does seriously consider the greater historical context around liberation theology, but he does so in a framework that connects and relates the theology back to Catholicism.

Thesis Objectives

My thesis seeks to expand upon this analysis by approaching liberation theology and interpreting how Gutiérrez and other liberationists tried to navigate through their context of structural poverty which would ultimately force the Church to suppress it. This thesis will illuminate debates at crucial events in the history of liberation theology and how liberationists tried to challenge the history of injustice in Latin America and highlight the growing opposition that began to form at all levels of the Church in Latin America and the Papacy. These events

[20] Jeffrey L. Klaiber, "Prophets and Populists: Liberation Theology, 1968-1988," *The Americas* 46, no. 1 (1989): pp. 1-15, https://doi.org/10.2307/1007391, 8.

include the Medellín Conference, the Synod of Bishops in 1974, and Pope John Paul II's criticisms of liberation theology at the Puebla Assembly in 1979. The inclusion of these debates and the reaction Gutiérrez and other liberationists had will portray the complex picture and suppression of liberation theology from 1968 to 1988. Capturing this debate between liberation theology and the conservatives of the Catholic Church is fundamental to the thesis as "in general, conservative groups in Latin America identify themselves with groups on the political right and manifest almost an obsession with the "infiltration of Marxism" in the Church."[21] For these groups, "Marxism refers to practically any serious reform project. That is why they often indiscriminately group Marxists with leftist non-Marxists and socialist-Christians under the same banner."[22] Even if conservatives were able to distinguish differences between Gutiérrez and his movement and Sendero Luminoso[23] -- a Maoist-inspired group that undertook violent revolution in Peru and created chaos-- it did not matter. By the 1980s, there was a concentrated movement that had been growing since the 1970s to dismantle liberation theology in Peru. This anti-liberationist movement's premise was based on its misunderstanding of how liberation theology had influenced the Catholic Church. Part of Gutiérrez's biggest struggle between the 1960s and 1980s is convincing the Catholic Church that it is possible to recognize that there are social faults in Latin America without necessarily conflating faith and politics, Marxism and Catholicism. Salvation also depends on committing to improving one's life and one's neighbors' condition in the present -- a deeply radical idea in hierarchical, unequal, and unjust societies like Latin America.[24]

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[21] Ibid, 1.
[22] Jeffrey L. Klaiber, *Historia contemporánea De La Iglesia Católica En El Perú* (Lima: Fondo editorial, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2016), 203.
[23] The Shining Path
[24] Lilian Calles Barger, *The World Come of Age: an Intellectual History of Liberation Theology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 103.

The beginning of the 1980s represents both a shift in the political context of Peru and a shift in my thesis as the rise of Sendero Luminoso ended the Peruvian appetite for liberation theology and this chaotic context gave the Peruvian Church more reasons to suppress the theology. However, the structural inequality that forced Gutiérrez to promulgate his theology of liberation remained intact. As the political and social realities in Peru changed, attacks and criticisms from the Papal hierarchy escalated, weakening liberation theology. Luis Figari Fernando's Sodalitium Christanae Vitae was able to assert itself in Peru and outflank liberation theology by professing a theology of reconciliation that accepts that there are social issues in Peru that necessitate active participation of the Church, but it does not divert from the path of God as critics to liberation theology would accuse Gutiérrez of doing. If Gutiérrez believes that theology must be conducted in a constantly changing historical reality, then the same has to apply to studying the historical progression of liberation theology in Peru.

This analysis benefits from an in-depth examination of the rich primary sources that have been left behind of the Medellín Conference, the Synod of Bishops in 1974, and the Puebla Assembly and the run up to it in 1979. However, it will also actively interpret and weave historical documents from newspapers like *La Republica,* a Peruvian left-leaning newspaper, *The Washington Post, the New York Times, El Tiempo,* a Peruvian newspaper, during these same chapters in order to display the historical reality and reaction to these events. These Peruvian newspapers and Luis Fernando Figari's book, *Aportes Para Una Teología de la Reconciliación,* have been translated by myself. Without the inclusion of newspapers and other sources that describe the historical situation during these events, this thesis would fall into the same issue previous scholars have run into by only offering a religious discussion and analysis of liberation theology. This thesis seeks to display the debate around these events.

Liberation theology was not always received in a positive manner and the theology came under direct scrutiny at the Medellín Conference of 1968, the Synod of Bishops in 1974, and the Puebla Assembly of 1979 with each operating under a similar social, political, and economic context as structural inequality was still rampant, the Cold War and anti-Marxist tendencies were in full swing, and the gap between the rich and the poor remained at an all time high.[25] In these similar contexts, liberation theology would be scrutinized heavily as the backdrop of the Cold War made the Church suspect of the theology due to its Marxist analysis. The Papacy would also take issue with its ability to lead people away from the Church; however, the theology would succeed in getting the Church to recognize the social faults in Latin America and get it to take a more active position in social affairs in Latin America. Liberation theology's reception would take a drastic negative turn in the 1980s as the rise of Sendero Luminoso created a sense of urgency which necessitated a non-political force to fight against it. The Church found its answer in Sodalitium Christianae Vitae as its theology of reconciliation accepted the social premises put forth by liberation theology, but rejected its emphasis on getting people to recognize their own social condition and act accordingly to it which could potentially lead adherents away from the Catholic Church. The changing social, political, and economic chaos of the 1980s ultimately helped the Church fully suppress liberation theology. Liberation theology was ultimately another Catholic reformist movement and tendency which sought to reform the Catholic Church by syncretizing theology with left-wing politics in hopes of liberating Latin America from its structural issues that suppressed the poor. However, the changing historical context of Peru would ultimately weaken the liberationists' cause, while also justifying to the Catholic Church

[25] Rosemary Thorp, *Progress, Poverty and Exclusion: an Economic History of Latin America in the 20th Century*. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, 1998, 42.

why it had to be suppressed even if liberation theology accurately described the structural reality of Latin America.

Thesis Format

The first chapter will provide an overview of what inspired Gutierrez to accept the frock of a Priest. Peru's socio-political and economic realities mandated a new examination that would free it from structural inequality and Gutiérrez would offer his theology as one that would accept doctrines and social ideas that the Church would oppose in the name of doing theology in a constantly changing historical reality. Gutiérrez would premise his theology around a preference for the poor in which "the Christian faithful are obliged to promote social justice" in order to aid "society's most vulnerable: the poor and the powerless."[26] Gutiérrez would also focus on development theory and the Alliance for Progress. This Alliance was an economic initiative sponsored by John F. Kennedy which sought to bring economic development to parts of Latin America and transform the structural economy of Latin American from one of agricultural subsistence to a modern, urbanized economy through major government intervention and aid from the United States.[27] However, Gutiérrez believed that this insistence on dependency had "failed to improve the condition of the Latin America and had instead contributed to greater trade imbalances and poverty."[28] Liberation theology operated in a changing context as the Latin American Church of the past had failed in animating the people to undertake a 'social revolution' that would improve their daily lives in opposition to structural inequality and poverty. Salvation was not only spiritual, but also temporal in the view of Gutierrez. Therefore, liberation theology has to be understood through a changing narrative and a changing Peru.

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[26] Gustavo Guttiérez, *Theology of Liberation: Liberation and Faith* (London: Concilium, 1973), 34.
[27] Thomas G. Paterson, *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 24.
[28] Ibid, 165.

The second chapter will provide a glimpse into the Medellin Conference and how Gutiérrez and his liberationists would clash with conservatives such as Alfonso Trujillo and his delegation in Colombia. This chapter will analyze the documents published by the Medellin Conference. These documents are significant as they are riddled with contradictions and active theological debate between conservatives and liberationists with the most important issue being about the level of involvement the Church should have in promoting justice and defeating structural inequality in Latin America. Both sides agreed that the Church should be involved, but each offered a different vision. Liberationists contended the Church should have a significant role in directly challenging these structures and empowering the people, while conservatives contended that the Church should have a more limited approach that favored pluralism and gradual change of the political governments of Latin America. The debates within the Church further devolved into issues about the role of the priest, the social context of Latin America, and the presence of foreign powers in Latin America like the Alliance for Progress. Through the discussion of the Medellin Conference, the thesis will highlight the important contributions liberation theology made in getting the inert Latin American Catholic Church to recognize the need to make a foray in social affairs, while also demonstrating the beginning of the formal opposition to liberation theology that would opt to suppress it by the end of the 1980s.

The third chapter will focus on a series of events in the discussion of liberation theology at the 'international level' at the Synod of Bishops in 1974, the run up to the Puebla Assembly during 1977 to 1978, and Pope John Paul II's criticisms of liberation theology at the Puebla Assembly. This chapter emphasizes the theological debates that had evolved in scale from a simple conference in Medellin to a serious confrontation at the highest level of the Catholic Church. During this ten-year period, liberation theology was heavily discussed at the highest

levels of the Catholic Church, while also revealing the hierarchical integrity of the Church which made reforming it difficult. These debates primarily criticized Gutierrez for potentially eroding the relevance of the Church and the Catholic faith. The Cold War was the backdrop of these conversations and Pope John Paul II's opposition to Marxism made liberation theology a difficult concept to accept in these international meetings.

The final chapter will discuss the rise of Sodalitium Christanae Vitae under Luis Fernando Figari and how this movement was the Church's public answer and opposition to liberation theology in Peru. Figari and his movement offered a theology of reconciliation in which Figari accepted that the social situation in Peru still necessitated active involvement in the Church, but Figari attempts to differentiate and distinguish himself from liberation theology by emphasizing the importance of self-reflection and how these self-reflections must return to God. In previous chapters, the discussion of Gutiérrez and how he conscienticizes his followers has been a central point of contention among conservatives over liberation theology and Figari's invocation of this concept played well with the Peruvian people. The rise of Sendero Luminoso in the 1980s also justified why a non-political context had to be taken as "liberation theology had taken on a political context by the 1980s."[29] Through the analysis of this changing Peruvian context, this thesis will show how liberation theology would be suppressed by the Papacy as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith accused liberation theology of failing to provide legitimate solutions to the current Peruvian context.[30] Gutiérrez would disagree, but the continued criticisms from the Catholic Church levied against the theology had finally manifested in Peru which would ultimately contribute to the Church opting to suppress Gutiérrez's theology.

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[29] Michael Novak, *Will It Liberate?: Questions about Liberation Theology* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1991), 87.
Novak notes how this characterization was unfair, but that is how liberation theology had progressed to this point.

[30] Gutiérrez, of course, did not lament over this fact as he was grateful that democracy had returned to Peru, but he still believed that the social condition in Peru had to be improved.

Chapter One: Gutiérrez's Theological Inspiration and its Tenets

Inspiration and Origins of Gutiérrez's Theology

The structural poverty and unchanging conditions of Peru forced Gutiérrez to begin his over half-a-century-long struggle for justice in Latin America in the 1950s. Gutiérrez was part of a new generation of priests who was influenced by José Dammert, a prominent figure in the Catholic Action Movement of Peru and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Lima.[31] Dammert premised the movement's goals around Pope Pius XI's interpretation of it in 1927 in which he argued that the "laity" must have active "participants in the apostolate of the hierarchy."[32] Catholic Action's emphasis on the voice of the poor and working class in the Church inspired Gutierrez to abandon his pursuit of medicine and become the President of Catholic Action in Peru in 1956.[33] Catholic Action under Gutiérrez "immersed itself in the ethos of poverty in Peru" and deemed that the composition of the Church "ought to be based on a new and aggressive lay apostolate"[34] in order to combat the "poverty that dominated his childhood" that was still present in his adult life.[35]

Gutiérrez was acutely aware of the poverty and oppression that his countrymen went through everyday. His father was a poor factory worker, his mother had no education, and he had been bedridden with polio for six years that left him lame.[36] Gutiérrez was also a Quechuan[37] by

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[31] Gustavo Gutiérrez and Robert R. Barr, *Las Casas: in Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 85.
[32] Jose Dammert, "Pope Piux XI and Catholic Action," in *Cristo Redentor,* 1952.
[33] Gustavo Gutierrez and Robert R. Barr, *Las Casas: in Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 108.
[34] Ibid, 132.
[35] Pérez Victoriono Prieto, "Origins of Liberation Theology in Colombia: Richard Shaull, Camilo Torres, Rafael Ávila, 'Golconda', Priests for Latin America, Christians for Socialism and Basic Ecclesial Communities," *Cuestiones Teológicas* 43, no. 99 (2016): 98.
[36] Gustavo Gutiérrez, and J. L. Idígoras, *Reflexión Sobre la Teología de la Liberación : Perspectivas Desde el Perú / Gustavo Gutiérrez, José Luis Idígoras y otros. Iquitos* Peru: Centro de Estudios Teológicos de la Amazonía, 1971, 54.
[37] A Native group of Peru.

birth which placed him in one of the most oppressed and prejudiced groups in all of Peru.[38] In contrast, most high-ranking members of the Peruvian Church, the government, and other members of elite Peruvian society came from white-Hispanic families who had "historically dominated and controlled" the economic, social, and political systems of the country.[39] The hierarchy heavily favored the elites, while also alienating and ignoring the poor which Gutiérrez deemed "unacceptable and in offense to God" in an essay from 1971.[40] The Peruvian context was one that suffered from a legacy of colonialism and imperialism. This legacy still had an impact on Peru as the concentration of production in the 1950s and 1960s was "primarily" in "very few hands" with a significant urban and rural divide exacerbating the economic inequality of Peru.[41] Gutiérrez argued that this economic inequality was a byproduct of "the relationship to development with capitalist economies" like the United States.[42] Structural poverty was proliferated by this relationship and Gutiérrez characterized the Latin American context as "one of dependence and unfair domination of the economic periphery[43] with the economic center [of the world].[44] Latin America's fate was tied to the major Western economies and "societal transformation" could only come about through "active participation of subjugated persons in societal transformation."[45]

Catholic Action under Gutiérrez emphasized the need to engage with these systems and "stress was laid on the education of leaders" with new members gravitating towards "spiritual

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[38] David Guillet, *The Dynamics of Peasant Decision Making: Quechua Communities and the 1969 Peruvian Agrarian Reform* (Austin, TX: Guillet, 1974), 18.
[39] Alcira Dueñas*, Indians and Mestizos in the "Lettered City" : Reshaping Justice, Social Hierarchy, and Political Culture in Colonial Peru*, Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010, 195.
Gustavo Gutiérrez, Inda Caridad, and John Eagleson, *A Theology of Liberation : History, Politics, and Salvation*; translated and edited by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1988, 56.
[40] Gustavo Gutiérrez, and J. L. Idígoras, *Reflexión Sobre la Teología de la Liberación ,*120.
[41] S.W. Bell,, "Los Desgraciados: Aspects of Poverty in Peru," *Journal of Latin American Studies 11*, no. 1 (1979): 223-32.
[42] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), 56.
[43] Latin America
[44] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 29.
[45] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Blessed" in *Catholic Action,* 1956, 12.

renewal, evangelism, and social issues" to combat this structural poverty.[46] Gutiérrez's understanding of structural poverty and his interpretation of the Bible lead him to liberation theology's greatest innovation: the preferential option for the poor, the oppressed, and the ignored.[47] This interaction with the poor and the ignored reveals liberation theology's "preference for the poor" in which "the Christian faithful are obliged to promote social justice, and mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor with their own resources."[48] This preferential option for the poor is inspired from key scriptures of the Bible as one "shall not oppress the poor or the vulnerable" as "the Lord hears the cry of the poor."[49] God is the "refuge of the poor" and true worship to God is to "work for justice and care for the poor and the oppressed."[50] However, this structural poverty could not be alleviated as the complex economic and political situation of Peru in the 1950s and 1960s made liberating the poor a difficult task to accomplish.

Liberation theology quickly rose to prominence in the early 1960s due to a necessity to find an alternative to the unjust social conditions and structures of Latin America. The theological path would be formally set forth at the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965, and it became the political force that Gutiérrez would use to liberate Peru from the horrid social, economic, and political context that plagued Peru. Gutiérrez felt that it was a necessity to undertake this mission because he believed that "poverty is not fate, it is a condition; it is not a misfortune, it is an injustice. It is the result of social structures and mental and cultural

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[46] Deane William Ferm, *Profiles in Liberation: 36 Portraits of Third World Theologians* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 143.
[47] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 88.
[48] Ibid, 76.
[49] Ibid, 86.
Exodus 22:20-26
[50] Job 34:20-28, Isaiah 58:5-7.

categories, it is linked to the way in which society has been built, in its various manifestations."[51] Liberation theology was a reflection of the poverty found in Latin America. It was modeled in a way that would best liberate and prioritize the poor as "ignoring the poor is to show both contempt for God and humanity."[52]

Liberation theology was also a theology that reflected Gutiérrez's time spent in Europe during his travels and learning at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. Liberation theology draws upon inspiration from the modern sciences, current events, and philosophies that were still condemned by the Church such as Marxism, Freudianism, and even evolution.[53] Prominent social scientists and activists like Karl Barth[54], Mahatma Gandhi,[55]Sigmund Frued,[56] and others also influenced liberation theology.[57] Gutiérrez openly accepts these 'ridiculed' texts and incorporates them into his theology because Gutiérrez believes that it is imperative to do theology "in a constantly changing historical reality" in order to truly speak about God.[58] Gutiérrez recalls how he "deemed it necessary" for theology to enter into dialogue with the contemporary context as "it seemed important to me to take up themes in my classes that would allow an examination of the meaning of human existence and the presence of God in the world in which my students lived."[59] Liberation theology is a "theological reflection born out of the experiences of the shared efforts to build a more human society."[60] Therefore, Gutiérrez's

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[51] "Discussion with Gustavo Gutiérrez over Global Health and Liberation Theology in Peru" at the 2011 Kellogg Institute for International Studies.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msmTIBkheJU&t=3442s&ab_channel=KelloggInstitute
[52] James B. Nickoloff, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings* (New York: Orbis, 1996), 145.
[53] Todd Walatka, *Von Balthasar & the Theodramatics in Light of Liberation Theology,* Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2017, 41.
[54] Protestant Priest and Social Scientist.
[55] Indian Lawyer and Leader of the Indian Independence Movement
[56] Austrian Neurologist.
[57] Fredrick B. Pike, "Religion and Utopia in Peru: From Aprismo to Liberation Theology," *Thought* (New York) 63, no. 3 (1988): 255.
[58] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "My Role as a Priest" in *La Républica*, April 11, 1973.
[59] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 198.
[60] James B. Nickoloff, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings* , 148.

writings "grow out of oral presentations and discussions on the basis of practical commitments" because a theologian is an "organic intellectual"[61] that examines the "social practices and political identities in terms of power and authority."[62] Gutiérrez almost likens himself to Moses by arguing that "I have always thought that as a priest, my work is basically pastoral, which means to follow the life and the march of a people and try to proclaim the gospel from this accomplishment."[63]

Gutiérrez's visioning of himself as a pastoral priest helps in elucidating his reason as to why he decided to incorporate once forbidden texts and philosophies into his theology. Instead of trying to create change through one document such as the Bible, Gutiérrez acknowledges that Latin America's position is one that has been socially constructed and skewed; however, overcoming such a skewed structure is a direct call from God to overcome this challenge. Gutiérrez calls upon St. Paul[64] to insist that "it is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."[65] This social construction is devastating for the Latin American poor since "poverty means death. Poverty is a situation that destroys families, people, and individuals and it is "institutionalized violence.""[66] This pastoralist understanding of what a Priest should do is not necessarily new – it is also inspired from his time in Europe where he saw French priests "standing with workers and students" at protests over factory working conditions.[67]

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[61] William E. Reiser, *To Hear God's Word, Listen to the World: the Liberation of Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 98.
Gutiérrez believes that a theologian is an organic intellectual.
[62] James B. Nickoloff, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings,* 152.
[63] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "My Role as a Priest" in *La República*, April 11, 1973.
[64] Galatians 5:1
[65] Gustavo Gutiérrez and Robert R. Barr, *Las Casas: in Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 45.
[66] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Beber en su Propio Pozo.* Lima: CEP, 1983, 107.
[67] Ibid, 185.

The primary aim of pastoralist theology is that it is always planning for the present and future, and by extension, this socio-political analysis of current events is necessary in order to create lasting change.[68] Christians cannot "pretend that conflict does not exist."[69] This planning is necessary to animate the Church to partake in the struggle to liberate others from a history and potential future of oppression and "to make the word of life present in a world of oppression, injustice, and death."[70] Ending the legacy of institutional violence requires that "justice is a prerequisite to peace" as these institutions were "violating fundamental human rights."[71]

Liberation Theology's Tenets and Peru's Contemporary Reality in the 1950s and 1960s

Animating the Church and getting the poor to recognize the current social conditions they live in are the two key areas in which Gutiérrez wanted to focus on when developing his theology. In this effort, Gustavo Gutiérrez also draws upon text and help from his Basque friend and fellow liberationist whom he met during his time in Europe, Jon Sobrino, a Jesuit Catholic. Writing in 1993, Sobrino argues that "the notion that God is the absolute future can be grasped only in the midst of a historical experience… even from the standpoint of orthodoxy it is impossible without some praxis… What happens in divine revelation? We do not get some abstract knowledge about God or some doctrine; we get a manifestation of God in action. What we get in revelation is the historical and historicized love of God."[72] The bible reveals God in history and how the divine revelations from the Bible reveal his and Jesus' role in the world. Jesus redeems man by suffering and dying; Jesus acts in history to redeem man.

The Bible, as interpreted by liberation theologists, teaches that "inaction is equivalent to participating in these unjust structures."[73] Such an interpretation has been rejected by the same

[68] Heinz Schuster, "Pastoral Theology" in *The Crucified and the Crucified*, London: Harper Collins Publisher, 1008.
[69] Gustavo Gutiérrez and Robert R. Barr, *Las Casas: in Search of the Poor,* 99.
[70] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Beber en su Propio Pozo.* Lima: CEP, 1983, 45.
[71] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 38.
[72] Jon Sobrino, *Jesucristo Liberador,* Colección Teológica: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1993, 201.
[73] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk*, 55.

socio-political structures that Gutiérrez faulted for oppressing his people and the Bible was used by these same structures to oppress the poor. Gutiérrez claims that "Christian categories and values were reinterpreted and reclaimed by the ideology of the existing social order, which was thus reinforcing the domination of one social class over another. Today the support of the dominant groups is always ready and often accepted to defend Christian civilization."[74] Gutiérrez believes that "conversion means a radical transformation of ourselves and the Church, it means to think, to feel and live as Christ present in the disposed and alienated man. Conversion is to commit oneself to the process of liberation of the poor and the exploited, committing oneself clearly, realistically, and concretely."[75] The Church and others in the past have failed to recognize the plight of the burdened man.

Gutiérrez places himself and his pastoralist theology in a context where one can see it is meaningfully interacting with a once ignored people. Gutiérrez's premises his theology around his believers and their "desires for a just society" since the ecclesial community is collective in nature. The role of the Priest is to "proclaim good news to the poor" as "God has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and to set the oppressed free." [76] Gutiérrez argues that the "spirituality that is born in Latin America is the one of the Church of the poor, so called by John XXIII; it is the spirituality of the ecclesial community which – without losing its universal perspective – seeks to make effective its solidarity with the most disadvantaged people of the world… 'New' spirituality seen as new is always the love of the Lord that calls us to reject the inertia and pushes us towards creativity."[77] This spirituality is

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[74] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Beber en su Propio Pozo*, 52.
[75] Gustavo Gutiérrez and James B. Nickoloff, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, 176.
[76] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job,* 85.
Luke 4:18.
[77] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Beber en su Propio Pozo,* 50.

powered by the "exploited people" that are willing to believe that their situation is not permanent.[78]

Finally, recognizing the perspective of the poor and who Gutiérrez seeks to reach out to rebel against their current conditions is the final component to understanding how he is trying to apply liberation theology to his Latin American context. Gutiérrez undoubtedly agreed with his friend, Leonardo Boff, a Brazilian theologian and liberationist, who argued in an essay in 1989 honoring the Peruvian priest that "reading history from the position of the poor is the dominant perspective of the Bible."[79] Christ, Boff continued, came to live voluntarily "as a poor person not because poverty itself has intrinsic value"[80] but to criticize and to "challenge those people and systems that oppress the poor"[81] and compromise what Gutiérrez, in an essay dated in 1990, called their "God-given dignity."[82] Liberationists affirm this view in hopes of the people recognizing that the greatest agents of social and theological change in the Bible were people living in poverty as well as. Gutiérrez believed in this perspective based on his experience as a Priest in Rimac – a working class sector of Lima, Peru.[83]

The way the history of developmentalism was playing out in Peru was also fundamental to his understanding of trying to conduct his theology that was reflective of the people of the Rimac, and by extension, the suppressed people of Peru. Gutiérrez recognized that the vast majority of social and economic change was in the hands of those who were least impacted by

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[78] Ibid, 52.
[79] Leonardo Boff, "The Originality of the Theology of Liberation," in M.H Ellis and O. Maduro(ed.) *The Future of Liberation Theology. Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), 41.
[80] Gutiérrez Gustavo and Robert R. Barr, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 52.
[81] Ibid, 57.
[82] Daniel G. Groody and Eduardo Zegarra Medina Raúl, *Gustavo Gutiérrez Textos De Espiritualidad* (Lima, Perú: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones (CEP), 2013), 102.
[83] Alexander L. Crosby, *The Rimac, River of Peru* (Champaign, Ill,: Garrard Pub. Co, 1966), 13.

these changes and were not proposing real change.[84] This continued legacy and impact it had on Peru was not lost to Gutiérrez as the majority of economic development had been done through the perspective of the governmental elite, the well-to-do citizens of Peru, and the governments of countries who benefitted from having a weak Peru. Gutiérrez specifically aimed his criticisms at the Alliance for Progress program initiated by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. This program aimed to establish stronger economic cooperation between the United States and Latin America. Writing nine years later in 1970, Gutiérrez disagreed and argued that "the changes proposed by the Alliance avoided …attacking the powerful international economic interests and those of their natural allies: the national oligarchies."[85] Accepting the changes put forth by the Alliance of Progress would be contradictory to Gutiérrez's beliefs since these changes were coming from the elites that benefited from the inertia of the socioeconomic structure in place. The Alliance of Progress claimed that it would improve the lives of all Latin Americans, but Gutiérrez was skeptical of this as "poverty is something to be fought against and destroyed, not something to be accepted or condoned by occasional acts of charity."[86] Gutiérrez elsewhere insisted that "intermittent generous actions to alleviate the needs of the poor temporarily" still contribute to "structural poverty."[87]

In Gutiérrez's eyes, the Alliance simply aimed to keep Peru in its unjust state to benefit the United States. The Latin American poor suffer from a biblical version of poverty in which poverty "is an interior attitude of unattachment [sic] to the goods of the world." Accepting the Alliance of Progress would be akin to falling "back into the conditions of servitude which

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[84] Curt Cadorette, "Peru and the Mystery of Liberation: The Nexus and Logic of Gustavo Gutiérrez's Theology" in M.H Ellis and O. Maduro(ed.), *The Future of Liberation Theology. Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutierrez* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), 55.
[85] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Notes for a Theology of Liberation," *Theological Studies* 31 (1970), 246.
[86] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk*, 68.
[87] Gustavo Gutiérrez and Robert R. Barr, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 41.

existed before the liberation of Egypt. It is to retrogress."[88] To combat this retrogression, "the oppressed must come together" in order to "work toward the transformation of present society in the direction of a new society characterized by widespread participation."[89] Gutiérrez acknowledged that his emphasis on peace and human rights was oftentimes at odds with proponents of the current order. Gutiérrez's form of peace "implies a respect for people. This is a very concrete problem in Peru, this relationship of peace and justice. The more you talk about justice, the more people will say you are against peace."[90] However, "the peace we are talking about is a peace that implies the recognition of human rights. Thus we do not believe that there is such peace without justice."[91] Human rights was something that was worth fighting for as his theological basis interpreted a peace without human rights as an unjust social order and it could not be "done from an armchair."[92] To acknowledge this social order would be akin to acknowledging and accepting the stasis that the Alliance for Progress was trying to push throughout Latin America. Liberationists put their theology into a contemporary context as salvation is not only spiritual, but also temporal.[93] This direct call to action and emphasis on temporal salvation would be a key topic of debate and conversation for both supporters and opponents of liberation theology at the Medellín Conference in 1968.

[88] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 163.
[89] Ibid, 164.
[90] Ibid, 248.
[91] Ibid, 248.
[92] Ibid,186.
[93] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 103.

Chapter Two: Conflict over the Direction of the Church at the Medellín Conference

Goals and Premises of the Medellín Conference

Liberation theology was initially very popular among members of the Peruvian Church as twenty-five Peruvian bishops approved of liberation theology and agreed that change was necessary in order to rescue Peru from its current situation in 1967.[94] However, the theology itself was controversial in the Latin American Church as its critics argued that the theology took priests away from their true mission, spreading the word of God across Latin America.[95] Juan Landázuri Ricketts, the Archbishop of Lima,[96] argued that "the preferential option for the poor, signifies that we must care in particular for those human beings who find themselves victims of poverty."[97] Liberation theology brought people closer to God by fighting the original source of sin, greed.[98] These debates created intense polarization in the Latin American Church and supporters and opponents of liberation theology would come head-to-head at the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America, which was held in Medellín, Colombia in 1968.

The conference's main goal was to find solutions to relieve the poor and oppressed in the Latin American society as everyone at the conference recognized that "the social situation demands an efficacious presence of the Church that goes beyond the promotion of personal holiness by preaching and the sacraments."[99] Both conservatives and liberationists agreed that the Church needed to take an effective stance against inequality in Latin America, but both sides disagreed over how the Church should approach such a sensitive topic. To change Latin

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[94] Míċeál O'Neill, *God Hears the Cry of the Poor: the Emerging Spirituality in the Christian Communities in Peru (1965-1986)* (Rome: Facultas Theologiae apud Institutum Spiritualitatis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1990), 65.
[95]Drogus Carol Ann, "The Rise and Decline of Liberation Theology: Churches, Faith, and Political Change in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 27, no. 4 (1995): 468.
[96] Archbishop of Lima from 1955 to 1989.
[97] Juan Landázuri Ricketts, "Mensaje del Gran Canciller de la Universidad. Monseñor Dr. Juan Landázuri Ricketts, Arzobispo de Lima y Primado del Perú" in *Derucho PUCP,* no. 14 (1968): 96.
[98] Ibid, 96.
[99] Jorge Mejía, "El Pequeño Concilio de Medellín," *Criterio* 41(1968): 688.

America, the conference needed to acknowledge that having a more active Church in the socio-political sphere was a necessity. The Church of the present "must always maintain an independent stance in regard to the political order and to specific regimes" as the Church of the past "created suspicion of an alliance with the ruling classes" which would be a "countersign to its pastoral role."[100] The Latin American context demanded an active and independent Church. The conference was attended by bishops and other-high ranking clergymen from all Latin American countries with majority hailing from conservative, religious hierarchies in the Church who were still cautious about the general role the Church should have in the everyday affairs of Latin America.[101] The Conference was organized by the Latin American Episcopal Council, also known as CELAM. This group was divided between the liberationists who were in control of the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America in Medellín and the liberationists dictated the general direction the conference would take.[102] The liberationists were in a clear minority, but this did not stop them from promogulating their vision of a just Latin America to the conservatives of the Latin American Church.[103]

The Medellín Conference published 16 documents regarding the bishops' beliefs about what path Latin America could take. These documents are fundamental to understanding the Medellín Conference as they discussed the socioeconomic structures in place across Latin America that made it difficult for justice to be achieved and what a peaceful society should look like. Liberationists emphasized the need for conscientizing the people, getting them to recognize their social condition in order to act against it, and the necessity of priests helping people escape

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[100] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Preamble," 13. Directly quoted Guadiam et spes, the Pastoral Constitution of the Modern Church that was adopted at the Second Vatican Council in 1964/1965.
[101] Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment,* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 45.
[102] Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12.
[103] Alejandro Crosthwaite O. P., "Medellin Conference (CELAM II)," In *Encyclopedia of Latin American Religions*, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019, 510.

their miserable condition.[104] The Medellín Conference directly acknowledged the tenets Gutiérrez's theology set forth by emphasizing the need to fight against unjust social structures, getting people to acknowledge these structures are unjust, and animating the Catholic Church to recognize that traditional preaching and sacraments were not enough to liberate Latin America.

Although there was a significant political divide between the conservative clergymen, led by then-Priest Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, and the liberationists of the Latin American Episcopal Council, both groups agreed to attend this conference in hopes of liberating Latin America from centuries of oppression. At first, the attendants of the Conference premised their goals in the following statement: "the difficult progress towards development and integration [in Latin America] could become an important catalyst in the process of unification… the upheaval[105] we are experiencing demands for new attitudes of us so that we can carry through an urgent, global, and profound reform of structures."[106] The Council acknowledged that there was a serious need for reform. The Conference hoped that reform would be created by trying to dismantle the "institutionalized violence of poverty"[107] that was endorsed by the military dictatorships and "the subjection of foreign capital -- which so often exercises domination without being controlled" negatively impacted the "standard of life of the greater part of the population ."[108] They hoped to end the history of the Church's indifference and inaction to these sinful structures as "sin is at the heart of every breaking of brotherhood and sisterhood among human beings."[109] The clergymen hoped that their efforts would encourage the poor to oppose and object violence of poverty and that the poor should demand more social services such as soup kitchens, higher wages, better

[104] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Opening," 14.
[105] In reference to the rampant rise of social inequality, authoritarian political systems
[106] The Bishops of Latin America, "The Medellín Statement." *New Blackfriars* 50, no. 582 (November 1968): 73.
[107] Ibid, 74.
[108] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Poverty," 31.
[109] The Bishops of Latin America, "The Medellín Statement," 75.

health care, and greater respect from the elite classes of Latin America.[110] However, this goal that the council put together would soon be placed into direct contradiction with the actual writing that went into the rest of the 16 documents that were proposed and published by the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America.

Debate over the Church's Role in Organizing against the Oppressive Structures of Latin America

The most diverging issue between the conservative clergymen and the liberationists' was the issue of the social and economic structures that came to dominate Latin America and how the Church would respond to organizing against these structures that continuously proliferated suppression across Latin America. Throughout Latin America's history, well-developed states had consistently abused and extracted resources from Latin America. This phenomenon of imperialism continued even after the rise of military dictatorships in Latin America as dictators would recognize and accept the exploitation of their own countries in exchange for political and economic support from countries like the United States and other business partners in the region.[111] The conservatives of the conference relied on their understanding of developmentalist thought which is a "tempering of excessive inequalities between the poor and the rich" and "all of the sectors of society, but in this case, principally the social-economic sphere, should, because of justice and brotherhood, transcend antagonisms in order to become agents of national and continental development."[112]

Conservatives like Alfonso Trujillo were aware that Latin America's economic history had been brutal and manipulated by states concerned with profit over the lives of Latin

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[110] Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 32.
[111] García Ismael, *Justice in Latin American Theology of Liberation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 102.
[112] Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Justice*, 45. Conservative Block(Unable to determine writer).

Americans as "hunger, misery, ignorance, and oppression" loomed over the continent.[113] Colombian Bishop and eventual Cardinal[114], Anibal Munoz Duque, a member of Latin America's most conservative Church,[115] wrote that "the misery that besets large masses of human beings is an injustice which cries to the heavens…a person or a group of persons cannot be properly of an individual of a society, or of the state. The system of liberal capitalism and the temptation of the Marxist system would appear to exhaust the possibilities of transforming the economic structures of our continent."[116] Munoz admits that the Latin American continent has suffered from capitalism, but Munoz is reluctant to acknowledge Marxism as a viable alternative due to its "power to mitigate against the dignity of the human person"[117] and Latin America's "temptation for violence" because of its history of colonialism.[118]

However, conservatives were not necessarily ready to abandon the developmentalist system entirely and preferred to try and reform the political governments of Latin America. Luis Concha Córdoba, another member of Colombia's clergy, cautioned that "one takes for granted the importance of primacy of its [developmentalism's] capital, its power to improve….but we must denounce the fact Latin America sees itself caught between these two options": Marxism or liberal capitalism.[119] Concha felt he had a duty to "denounce egotistical institutions, and appeal to all men of good will to unite their intellectual abilities, resources, and abilities" in order to construct a society developed in "justice, love, and restraint."[120] The conservatives proposed an economic-social system that could allow Latin America to prosper, while

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[113] Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Justice*, 12.
[114] Promoted to the position of Cardinal-Priest in 1973.
[115] Colombian Church.
Michael J. LaRosa, *Cleavages of the Cross: the Catholic Church from Right to Left in Contemporary Colombia*, 1995, 24.
[116] Bishop Anibal Munoz Duque, Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Social Development,* 43.
[117] Bishop Anibal Munoz Duque, Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Justice,* 56.
[118] Ibid, 56.
[119] Bishop Luis Concha Córdoba, Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Justice,* 59.
[120] Bishop Luis Concha Córdoba, Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Our Work: A Sign of Commitment,* 14.

remediating the "grievances of the poorer nations' people" and "the elite."[121] Their proposal revealed their tendency in supporting a slow, but gradual change in Latin America. The bishops wanted to avoid inciting riots or other physical clashes that would take away from the search for justice in Latin America in order to "permanently assure the rights and ineligible liberties of citizens and free functioning of intermediary structures."[122] The priests "make an urgent appeal to the businessmen, to their organizations and to the political authorities, so that they might radically modify the evaluation… the meanings regarding the goal, organization, and functioning of business… in an effort to conduct their business according to the guidelines supplied by the social teachings of the Church."[123] This line of thinking was popular among conservative clergymen because they thought that it could accomplish the conference's goal of reforming the structures of Latin America that kept the continent in disarray. It would help bring both classes together as both groups would realize that wealth is a material thing and God's love for everyone should be paramount.[124] The conservatives acknowledged the social and economic reality of Latin America, but "transforming the economic structures of our continent" was not on their agenda.[125] Therefore, their emphasis on appealing to the businesses and those who have traditionally benefited from these past structural injustices is representative of the conservatives' desire to not radically alter the structures in place in hopes of avoiding potential conflict.

Liberationists at the conference would counter by publishing a rebuttal in document 16 titled, *Peace*[126] in 1968, at the end of the Conference. Liberationists contended that the current

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[121] Bishop Luis Concha Córdoba, Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Justice,* 63.
[122] Bishop Anibal Munoz Duque, Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Social Development,* 31.
[123] Bishop Luis Concha Córdoba, Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Justice,* 64.
[124] Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Justice*, 61.
[125] Documents of the Medellin Conference, *Social Development,* 47.
[126] Gutiérrez talks about the liberationists' work on the document in his book, *The Truth Shall Make you Free.* Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990).

socio-economic model in place was a form of "institutionalized violence" against the Latin American poor that needed to be "conquered by means of a dynamic action of awakening and organization of the popular."[127] For liberationists, peace could only be attained by a politically active and outspoken poor.[128] Gutiérrez argued that "the term development has synthesized the aspirations of poor peoples during the last few decades. Recently, however, it has become the object of severe criticism due both to the deficiencies of the development policies proposed to poor countries… and also to the lack of concrete achievements of the interested governments."[129] Dependency continued to be a large issue for liberationists at the conference as they believed that it continued to suppress Latin Americans by keeping the continent "dependent on the centers of power which controls its economy."[130] Gutiérrez would expand this criticism by noting how "it has become clear that underdevelopment is the end result of this process… the dynamics of the capitalist economy lead to the establishment of a center and a periphery, simultaneously generating progress and growing wealth for the few and social imbalances, political tensions, and poverty for the many."[131] Rather than having an imposed agenda be set upon Latin America by forces like the United States, Latin Americans needed to exclude themselves and propose a theory of liberation that is "beyond the horizon of the economic-political landscape."[132] These differences found between the conservatives and the liberationists' exemplified the role and interpretations of what a priest should do for their community. For conservatives, this meant serving as protectors of the poor and ensuring that

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[127] Gustavo Gutiérrez and James B. Nickoloff, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, 284.
[128] Bertrand M. Roehner, "Jesuits and the State: A Comparative Study of Their Expulsions (1590–1990)," *Religion* 27, no. 2 (1997): pp. 165-182, 168.
[129] "Medellín Document on Peace" in *Between Honesty and Hope* (Maryknoll, N.Y." Maryknoll Publications, 1970), 202.
[130] Ibid, 203.
[131] Ibid, 204.
[132] Ibid, 207.

"Latin America is absent of violence" and "bloodshed."[133] Liberationists contended that priests should be "an active and effective participant in the struggle"[134] to politicize farmers, industrial workers, Native minorities, and "other men subject to slavery," while avoiding "violent struggle."[135] The priests must help the poor recognize that their situation will not improve unless the oppressed "themselves can freely raise their voices"[136] and "express themselves directly and creatively" in the "heart of the people of God."[137] The lack of "political consciousness" in Latin America made the "educational activities of the Church" and its priests "absolutely essential" in transforming the "political life" of the nation.[138]

Role of the Priests in Educating the People and Social Activism

The general role a priest should have was a crucial difference between the liberationists and the conservative clergymen at the conference. Conservatives opposed a politically active clergy and contended that "the feeling of anguish at the urgency of the problems cannot make us lose sight of what is essential."[139] Conservatives called upon the words of Jesus to the "tempter" in which Jesus argued that "it is not on bread alone that man lives, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."[140] A politically active clergy could potentially erode the purpose of the Church if it were to actively participate in political affairs and place the affairs of humankind over God's message. The differences between the liberationists and conservatives would grow as Pope Paul VI's visit to the Eucharistic Conference in Colombia would do little to alleviate tensions as Paul VI supported the conservatives' reasoning over the liberationists. The Pope approved of the conference and argued that "from the very first centuries of the Church,bishops,

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[133] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Justice," 11.
[134] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Peace," 21.
[135] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 101.
[136] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "The Poor," 7.
[137] Ibid, 8.
[138] "Medellín Document on Peace" in *Between Honesty and Hope* , 231.
[139] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Social Organization," 31.
[140] Deuteronomy 8:3.

as rulers of individual churches, were deeply moved by the communion of fraternal charity and zeal for the universal mission entrusted to the Apostles. And so, they pooled their abilities and their wills for the common good and for the welfare of the individual churches."[141] Pope Paul VI believed that the Church of Latin America should decide its own destiny as that precedent had been set in history. These priests were cognizant of the social, political, and economic issues that their own followers faced. The priests recognized that the powerful central Church that was "removed from the economic struggles of the everyday man" made it difficult for the poor to accept that the Church understood their struggles.[142] Pope Paul VI, three years later in an interview in 1968 with the American Catholic National Catholic Reporter, explicitly argued that the rights of man were fundamental and clearly called for social change; however, the Pope rejected violent revolution and active Church influence in the search for social change as violence was "not Christian" and "changes were to be brought about from "within""[143]. Pope Paul VI endorsed the conference itself; however, he directly criticized the general message the liberationists wanted to put forth at the Conference. Pope Paul VI's direct criticism of the liberationists' message exemplified the complexities and differences between both groups at the conference which found its way into the documents.

In "Education,"[144] Paulo Friere, an influencer of liberation theology, friend of Gutiérrez, and author of the *Pedagogy of the Opposed,* wrote that education was a fundamental tool that allowed people to learn the practice of freedom and apply that freedom in actively changing reality. Friere argued that "the task of educating our brothers does not properly consist in incorporating them into the existing cultural structures that envelop them, since these can in fact

[141] 4 Pope Paul VI, "Christus Dominus", Vatican Decree, October 28, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html. No. 36.
[142] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "The Poor," 11.
[143] Mary Clane, "Pope Paul VI and the Medellin Conference," *National Catholic Reporter*, Aug. 2, 1968.
[144] Published after the Conference in 1968.

be oppressive. Education consists of equipping them so that they themselves, as authors of their own progress, may in a creative and original way develop a cultural work in keeping with their own rich heritage… education gives way to the theology of liberation – a prophetic, utopian, theology of hope"[145] Liberationists believed that an education that emphasizes the importance of humanity and teaches one that God is revealed as having preference for those people who are "insignificant, needy, marginalized, unimportant, despised, and defenseless."[146] Gutiérrez expanded on this view of the Priest's educational role by noting how "preference implies the universality of God's love, which excludes no one."[147] By emphasizing the importance of being able to understand one's context, liberationists hoped that the oppressed people would be able to create a path for themselves as opposed to having to rely on a path set by someone or something that benefits from oppressing people. Carlos Mugica, an Argentinian Priest and supporter of Gutiérrez, [148] wanted the people to "utilize Christ's valor in their internal revolution of Latin America," while also opposing those who "pretend to reduce Christ as a violent, guerilla fighter."[149] Liberationists clearly wanted to signal to the conservatives at the conference that the theology was not trying to upend the social order in a "violent analysis of Christ."[150] Liberationists were most concerned about educating the people and ensuring that they could fight against the entrenched structures in Latin American that continued to suppress them. This was a difficult position that conservatives were unable to support. Some were worried that the Latin American Church could potentially find itself as being the structure that the poor should not rely

[145] Documents of Medellin Conference, "Education," 102.
[146] Ibid, 103.
[147] Gustavo Gutiérrez and James B. Nickoloff, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, 109.
[148] Murdered in 1974 by a far-right group known as the 'Argentine Anticommunist Alliance' informally known as Triple A.
Carlos Mugica and Gabriel Mariotto, *Peronismo y Cristianismo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Punto de Encuentro, 2012), 2.
[149]Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Education," 108.
[150] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "The Elite," 12.

on if it became "associated with the oppressive structures" of Latin America due to its past history.[151] In essence, the liberationists were potentially proposing an educational basis that could damage the Church's position. Therefore, the conservatives also responded in the "Education" document.

Conservatives disagreed and argued that "didactic methods are more concerned with the transmission of knowledge than with the creation of a critical spirit. From the social point of view, our educational structures are oriented to maintain the dominant social and economic structures rather than to their transformation."[152] Liberationists believed that priests and education should be used as a way to enlighten and arouse a group of people who have been forced to keep quiet for centuries under oppression. The priests had to help the poor "in the defense of their right to life, in the struggle for dignity, social justice" and aid them in "their[the poor's] commitment to liberation."[153] This is a call for a total transformation of society and it adopts a tone that is revolutionary in nature. Gutiérrez argued that ignoring these calls would create a "breeding ground for eventual conflicts and violence" if left unchanged.[154] Conservatives disagreed with such an interpretation and instead offered a belief that the priests should use education as a tool to integrate those who have been left behind society into the greater society since they argued that the "poor did not have an appetite for violence."[155] Conservatives at the conference saw education as a way to put everyone on an equal playing field and create a unified understanding of what it means to be free, while liberationists' believed that each person had the responsibility to create their own path – they just had to be educated to do so. Alfonso Trujillo

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[151] *La Patria*, "Interview with Jorge Manrique Hortado over the Banzer Plan and Efforts at Medellin," January 16, 1976.
[152] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Education," 95.
[153] Gustavo Gutiérrez "Sobre el Documento de Consulta para Medellín", (1968): 48.
[154] Ibid, 56.
[155] Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Education," 99.

affirmed this position by arguing that "it is a monolithic education, at a time when the Latin American community has awakened to the richness of human pluralism; it is oriented to sustaining an economy based on the desire for Latin Americans to be "more" in the joy of their self-realization through service and love."[156] Conservatives were not necessarily advocating for a completely centralized path as they understood that the centralized path forced upon others led to oppression. Instead, this emphasis on education and bringing marginalized people into the fold would be "channeled towards a truly human economy" that would be rich with diverse thought, while still retaining a unified, Latin American order that could not easily be dismantled like the vision they perceived that was offered by liberationists.[157] The conservative path was one in which one was allowed to take detours, but the ultimate purpose of taking these detours is to find the best path forward that returns to God. This path unifies everyone under the message of God as "an authentic peace implies a [process] of struggle, creativity, and permanent conquest" over these oppressive structures.[158] The conservatives at the Conference acknowledged the history of dependence and oppression in Latin America and this history mandated that they reform the old ways that had done little to remedy the history of oppression. Therefore, they emphasized the importance of pluralism at the conference. This was an acknowledgement that the general premise -- how to improve the social reality of Latin America -- behind the conference was correct, but they were not willing to accept a theology that also threatened the ability of the Catholic Church to proselytize in Latin America.

Faith into Politics

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[156] Documents of Medellin Conference, "Education," 105.
[157] Ibid, 106.
[158] Cardinal Mario Casariego y Avevedo, Documents of the Medellin Conference, "Professional Organization," 8. A Spanish-born Guatemalan Cardinal who refused to sign any documents proposed by liberationists and wrote against them in this document.
Jose Luis Chea, "The Process and the Implications of Change in the Guatemalan Catholic Church," ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1988.

Conservatives also criticized liberation theology by arguing that it turned faith into politics. Priest Luis Trujillo of Colombia argued that liberation theology "imprisons some people when making an interpretation of the Gospel of the Church, of theological reflection, comparable to the manner in which an octopus imprisons its victim with its tentacles softly and flexibly and finally in a viselike grip."[159]Trujillo was a conservative bishop who hailed from Bogota's diocese and was worried that liberation theology was just another political movement that spoke softly to the people and gave them dreams of what a free Latin America could be, but in reality, Trujillo argued that liberation theology would apply its viselike grip and entrap Latin America in another oppressive social context even worse than the one Latin America was already in. Trujillo did not want the Church to become actively involved in politics and argued that "it is obvious that the neutrality of the Church concerning a wide conception of politics, as related to the common good, cannot be other than its neutrality facing a more strict sense of the term, referred to its specific goal: power."[160] Trujillo was concerned about protecting the Church's standing in Latin America which is why he put so much emphasis on the importance of the power the Church had in Latin America. Trujillo believed that the Church was fundamental in ending the problems in Latin America, but was worried that if the Church became too political, then the military dictatorships in Latin America would oppress the Church and then the people would be left with no other institution that could speak for them. The dictatorships had not come for the Church yet because of the Church's strong position of power ever since the arrival of the Spanish in the New World. Such power is temporary and not guaranteed. However, he did not believe that the Church should "abandon its neutrality and become a promoter of new systems."[161] Trujillo's

[159] Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, "Liberation or Revolution? An Examination of the Priest's Role in the Socieconomic Class Struggle in Latin America" (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc, 1977), 75. Published in 1977, but this section details his thoughts during the Conference.
[160] Ibid, 122.
[161] Ibid, 124.

reluctance to accept a more socially active and progressive Church is based on his mistrust of the liberation theology movement's leaders who turned faith into politics and Trujillo was wary of a theological movement that he believed had fused Marxism with the word of God due to Marxism creating a sense of conflict between the two classes when the entire purpose of the Conference was to bring everyone together. For this reason, Trujillo invoked the importance of the Eucharist in an interview with the Colombian newspaper, *El Tiempo,* after the Conference in 1969 when he was discussing the achievements of the conference. Trujillo noted how "the Eucharist is for both the poor and rich...class struggles have no place in our theological perspective."[162] Conservatives were naturally wary of the positions taken by liberationists by the nature that these positions could endanger both the members of the clergy and the Church. Although Gutiérrez would later deny these similarities to Marxism, Trujillo, Munoz, and others were concerned by the origins of liberation theology and at the very least, these concerns would manifest into greater opposition in the 1970s.

Conclusion

The Medellin Conference was a success for liberationists as the conference received significant attention from the press, from members of the clergy from all around Latin America, and even the Pope. However, not all of this attention was positive and the documents published from this conference are riddled with inconsistencies and conflicts over the path the Latin American Church should take. Gustavo Gutiérrez left the conference with both positive and negative reactions. Gutiérrez was ecstatic that his theology that was meant to help the people of Latin America and the Church had received significant attention, but in some ways, he was also disillusioned as he would later write in 1970 that "while the conference correctly identified many issues prevalent in Latin America… it did little to signal [who was behind these issues] to the

[162] Ricardo Rodríguez, "Entrevista con Obispo Alfonso Lopez Trujillo" in *El Tiempo*, May 4, 1969

people."[163] One of the reasons as to why Gutiérrez felt disillusioned by this Conference was the lack of concrete exemplifications of these injustices in Latin America. There is no mention of any dictator, oppressive structure, or national oligarch on these papers -- the Medellin Conference papers are left with generalities that were vaguely applied to the oppressive structures in Latin American. Instead of the bishops coming together and directly calling out the military dictatorships, the poverty, and socioeconomic structures as Gutiérrez had done with the Alliance of Progress, the bishops purposefully omitted any examples in order to avoid retribution from these states. Ultimately, the Medellin Conference would attract significant attention and help spread liberation theology throughout Latin America; however, this conference also offers a glimpse into the beginning of the opposition to liberation theology that would take a more active position against the theology in the coming decade. Gutiérrez's measured reaction to this Conference also reveals the Church's ability to weaken critiques brought against the Church in the name of stability and tradition. The Medellin Conference was an early warning sign about the fate of liberation theology and the suppression the conservatives of the Latin American Church and Papacy would bring against liberation theology.

[163] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Spiritual Writings,* 196.

Chapter Three: Developmentalism and the Papacy's Opposition to Liberation Theology, 1970-1980

Developmentalism and the Social State of Peru

The Medellin Conference was a momentous occasion for liberationists across Latin America as the conference gave a semblance of acceptance and legitimacy to the theology even if there were conflicts over certain points about the theology such as educating the people, advocating for peace, the role of a priest, and other questions. The Latin American Catholic Church was willing to come to the table and try to outline a path for all of Latin America even if there were disagreements. Unfortunately for liberationists, this sense of success was short-lived. Liberation theology began to be criticized by the Papacy. However, the criticisms of liberation theology did not solely stem from Gutiérrez's interpretations of Catholic theology. Gutierrez's understanding of history was especially problematic for the Papacy and serves as the basis for their criticisms of the theology. Gutiérrez argues that history and theology are inseparably interwoven.[164] Gutiérrez argues that "in the 1960s, a new attitude emerged. The development model[165] has not produced the promised fruit. A pessimistic diagnostic has now replaced the former optimistic one. Today we see clearly that the proposed model was an improper one. It was an abstract model, an ahistorical one, which kept us from seeing the complexity of the problem and the inevitably contradictory aspects of the proposed solutions."[166]

Although the general economies of Latin America improved during these ten years, it also created a false belief that Peru was evolving in a positive way that was reflective of its

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[164] Not a contentious position in the Church based on the story of Christ dying, and then rising, but important for the contextualization of liberation theology.
John Eagleson, Inda Caridad, Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (N.Y: Orbis Books, 1989), 86.

[165] Developmentalism as referenced in Chapter 1

[166] Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Viabilidad de una comunidad latinoamericana," in *Estudios Internacionales* (Santiago de Chile), April, 1971.

historical background. Instead of Peruvians being lifted out of poverty through developmentalism, the gap between the rich and the poor, the Hispanic Whites and Hispanic Blacks, and other social indicators severely widened.[167] The poor were still poor, but there was now a concentrated focus from initiatives such as the Alliance for Progress that proposed a plan that created a "false sense of improvement" among the people, and by extension, a lack of political, social, and economic action that the people could take when interpreted by Gutiérrez. Although this is a very negative analysis of the alliance and lacks consideration of the fact Kennedy died before the plan could be fully realized, Gutiérrez's understanding of the alliance's goals influenced his theology. This false understanding of Latin America's position distressed Gutiérrez and made him argue that "the reality of history ceases to be the object of the application of abstract truths and the idealist interpretations and becomes rather the privileged locus, the point of departure and return, of the process of knowledge itself. The praxis that transforms history is not a moment in the feeble incarnation of a limpid, well-articulated theory, but the matrix of authentic knowledge and the acid test of validity of the knowledge."[168] Moreover, "the Christian community, which professes a truth "that keeps working itself out," is called on to participate actively in constructing a just order. Here is a fact that theology dare not neglect, lest it incur the reproach, so often merited, that Christians undervalue all involvement in the world."[169] Praxis and involvement of the poor are key to changing the destiny of Latin America, which so far had only been shaped by the will of those who stood to benefit the most from keeping Latin America in an ahistorical stasis.

Gutiérrez recognizes this false path created by external forces as a 'sin.' Gutiérrez argues

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[167] Rosemary Thorp, *Progress, Poverty, and Exclusion: An Economic History of Latin America in the 20th Century* (Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, 1998), 145ß.
[168] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor,* 61.
[169] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Pensamiento latinoamericano sobre Subdesarrollo y Dependencia Externa," 519, 1972.

that "sin –breach of friendship with God and others – is according to the Bible the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, and the oppression in which persons live…we emphasize the fact that things do not happen by chance and that behind an unjust structure there is a personal or collective will responsible to reject God… sin is evidence of oppressive structures, in the exploitation of humans by humans."[170] Gutierrez's emphasis on sin reveals his tendency to support communion and why the premise of liberation theology is on liberating the people and getting them to come together and recognizing their social condition in a Catholic lens. If people were divided by the oligarchs, the military dictatorships, and other social structures that controlled the people, then sin would continue to be ever-present in society. An isolated person cannot commit to praxis. Therefore, to counter sin that is artificially constructed in society, Gutiérrez believed that "only a sufficiently broad, rich, and intense revolutionary praxis, with the participation of people of different viewpoints, can create the conditions for fruitful, historical theory… the entire process of liberation is directed toward communion… to sin is to refuse communion and fellowship."[171] Gutiérrez advocates for a praxis that is able to recognize the importance of communion with each other and to dissociate themselves from oppressive structures that he would classify as sin. This disassociation of oppressive structures is critical to analyzing the position of the Church in its current state and how Gutiérrez would end up angering critics inside the Papacy.

Historical Stasis of the Latin American Church

Gutiérrez argues that "the Latin American Church has lived, and still does, largely in a ghetto state. Thus the Church has had to seek support from the established powers and the

[170] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), 85.
[171] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Verdad los hara Libres: Confrontaciones* . Lima: Instituto Bartolome de Las Casas and Centro de Estudios y Publicac(Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1978). 104.

economically powerful groups, in order to carry out its task and, at times, face its enemies."[172] Gutiérrez draws upon history to show that the Church has always had to accept a secondary role and gain legitimacy from the state in order to exert its own will and power over its follower whether in a positive context or a negative one. With his previous discussions regarding the problem of 'sin' in society and its association with oppressive structures, Gutiérrez is directly criticizing the Church even though he represents the Church in Rímac, Peru. In 1971, Gutiérrez would invoke words from his deceased friend, Monsignor Larrain, former President of CELAM, to further highlight the need for the Church to leave its ghetto state. Gutiérrez quotes Larrain in his seminal work, *A Theology of Liberation,* and argues that "as many people die every year from misery, and from hunger and disease it causes in the World, as died in the four years of World War II. Every year, undevelopment kills millions of human beings. Never in history has there been a crueler battle. This blood tax, paid by the undeveloped world, is a scandal that cries out to the Father in heaven… we Latin Americans are not threatened by atomic weapons. The threat to our peace is undevelopment. The Church has to take a stand, but cannot do so because of its association with Latin American governments."[173]

Gutiérrez makes this criticism even more explicit by arguing "in the past two years[174] we have seen a flurry of public statements: from lay movements, groups of priests and bishops, and entire episcopates. A constant refrain in these statements is the admission of the Church's solidarity with Latin America's plight… the reality so described is more and more obviously the result of a situation of dependence, i.e.. the centers where decisions are made are located outside our continent – a fact that keeps our countries in a condition of neocolonialism."[175] Gutiérrez

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[172] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor,* 98.
[173] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 1972, 105.
Monsignor Larraín, "Underdevelopment in Latin America," 11.
[174] Book is published in 1972 so the past 2 years is in reference to events occurring between 1970 to 1971
[175] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), 142.

admits that priests, bishops, and other members of the Church are accepting of his cause and even notes how ""development" is gradually being replaced by the term "liberation""; however, the position of the Church makes it difficult for true change to occur due to the Church's past of accepting and needing help from the oppressive structures of Latin America to maintain power.[176] Gutiérrez notes how "active participation in the process of liberation is far from being a fact in all of Latin American Christian community. The bulk of the Church remains tied in various ways to the established order."[177] However, Gutiérrez is adamant that "liberation will be achieved by a thorough change of structures. The term "social revolution" is heard more and more – and ever more openly."[178] To Gutiérrez, the Latin American Church has had to balance itself and fight for relevance throughout its entire history even though the social impact the Church has on Latin America is undeniable. The Jesuit societies of Latin America that were forcibly removed at the request of the Spanish and Portuguese Kingdoms and approved by the Church seem to support Gutiérrez's conclusions. Without support from those two Kingdoms, then the influence of the Church would have waned during the Reformation – an era in which the Church needed every ally they could get. The Church had the strongest influence over culture in Latin America; however, its relationship with the state has always kept the Church in check. Gutiérrez was trying to actively fight and reverse this trend as he realized that the Church being subservient to the state prevented the Church from actively conscientizing the people. Gutiérrez's concerns about the Church and its continued association with oppressive structures is problematic to the Church since it questions the Church's legitimacy if the people believed Gutiérrez's criticisms.[179]

Debate at the Synod of Bishops in 1974

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[176] Ibid, 144.
[177] Ibid, 152.
[178] Ibid, 157.
[179] William S. Maltby, *The Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 43.

In 1968, the Papacy appointed conservative bishops in Peru at the expense of liberationists in the Peruvian Church as a way to curtail the advancement of liberation theology in the Peruvian Church during the Medellin Conference.[180] This was one of the first acts the Papacy took against Gutiérrez, his allies, and liberation theology. These acts continued at the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1974. Although the bishops at the Synod wanted to discuss the matters of the family, Pope Paul VI wanted to discuss the importance of evangelization – a key area of liberation theology.[181] Paul VI noted how "evangelization, therefore, is not an occasional or temporary task but a permanent and constitutive necessity of the Church: from the command, "Go therefore and teach all nations."[182] To liberationists, evangelization was inseparable from the promotion of justice throughout the world. At the Synod, Cardinal Alfredo Scherer of Porto Alegre, appointed by Paul VI, strenuously disagreed. Liberation theology, he argued, did not bring people closer to God but "proposes to make followers aware of their critical condition…" Evangelization, he insisted, possessed a specifically religious quality "and a fully theological meaning, which frees man from sin and proposes love of God… as the ultimate destiny of eternal life."[183] His meaning was explicit. If priests like Gutiérrez were taking people away from God, then the entire purpose of the Church came under challenge. Lurking beneath this argument, however, was an underlying concern for the declining influence of Catholicism around the world. In one article by Archbishop Joseph Bernandin, Bernandin directly tackles the rise of atheism and its impact on the younger generations moving away from Catholicism, but emphasizes that "in the midst of our dismaying divisions, we must all preach only one name under heaven by which all must be saved."[184] Therefore, Bishops like Alegre and other attendants at the Synod

[180] Jeffrey Klaiber, "Prophets and Populists: Liberation Theology, 1968-1988," The *Americas* 46, no.1(1989): 5.
[181] Pope Paul VI, Synod of Bishops in Rome, *Opening Address,* 3.
[182] Pope Paul VI, Synod of Bishops in Rome, *Opening Address*, 5.
[183] Cardinal Alfredo Scherer, Synod of Bishops (1974), 195.
[184] Archbishop Joseph Bernandin, "The Churches: Unparalleled Opportunity," Synod of the Bishops(1974), 56.

accused Gutiérrez's theology of lessening the influence of Catholicism even if Gutiérrez theology aptly identified the social situation in Latin America. The Synod mandated that evangelization is religious is nature and that the focal point of Catholicism was the salvation of man through God.

Other criticisms appeared at the Synod. Archbishop Pablo Muñoz of Quito, argued that "in our territories, part of the Third World, the bishops felt that there was a great need for liberation, the question was how this could be guided or controlled? This theology of liberation poses a dilemma since it could easily have serious repercussions from some governments and the church could be silenced or its existence threatened if our bishops were to lead them in uprising."[185] Although there is no indication that Gutiérrez and his liberationists wanted to start a violent revolution, the Archbishop's comments reveal fear of political instability and perhaps even suppression at the hands of the state. Muñoz admitted the influence of liberation theology "in the developed countries" and the Church's need there "to deal with the themes of justice and peace is felt as a demand of gospel…"[186] He warned that the situation was different in Latin America, where the Church was uncertain "about what issues are involved, which methods should be used or how to relate the Church to these issues without taking one away from God."[187] The problem of secularization at a conference trying to tackle how to better spread the word of God through evangelization as Muñoz was worried about the degradation of support for Catholicism around the world. Muñoz notes how "liberation theology has been unable to create a distinction between secularization (a natural process) and secularism (a philosophy of interpretation the world as a closed system in which the religious dimension of life has no place) … the evaluation of secularization perceives it not so much as evangelization, but as a challenge

[185] Pablo Muñoz, "Report on Latin America," Synod of Bishops(1974), 45.
[186] Ibid, 46.
[187] Ibid, 47.

to the faith requiring a different formation in the faith."[188] Muñoz limits his report by compiling the reports from his fellow bishops about Latin America to the Synod, but Muñoz is still able to push a narrative which questions liberation theology's ability to aid and solve the Church's waning influence among the people. Gutierrez proposed his theology to work in a continuously changing historical reality, but Munoz and other bishops at the Synod disagreed with this assessment.

However, this narrative also reveals the Synod's inexperience with liberation theology as Gutiérrez had at this point answered questions on how liberation theology was compatible with Catholicism through analyzing Christ as a redeemer of man. This fact was not lost upon some attendants at the Synod as Reverend Peter Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, noted at the Synod how "Christ came to redeem the whole man, body, and soul. Moreover, he came to redeem us not just as individuals but as a community, a race. The Church should be concerned with eradicating such temporal evils as hunger and poverty, and oppression in all its forms…at the same time evangelization cannot be reduced to a movement for social and political reform, any more than Christianity itself can be."[189] Kolvenbach would later go on to defend liberation theology in an interview with the *New York Times* about liberation theology's usage of 'class struggle' in its analysis in 1984.[190] Kolvenbach's presence and defense of Gutierrez at the Synod was emblematic of the Church's acceptance that the situation in Latin America was unacceptable, but they still believed that Gutierrez's theology was too problematic to commit to. The Church was extremely concerned about making a political entrance in Latin America, but Kolvenbach's defense of Gutiérrez helped reintegrate liberation theology in the Catholic

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[188] Ibid, 50.
[189] Reverend Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "Social and Political Order," Synod of Bishops(1974), 88.
[190] Kenneth Briggs, "Jesuit Chief Defends Liberation Theology and Social Activism," *New York Times*, October 28, 1984,
https://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/28/world/jesuit-chief-defends-liberation-theology-and-social-activism.html.

framework by emphasizing Christ's mission to redeem the community, the race, and all humanity from oppression in all its forms. However, this defense did not convince the future pope, John Paul II, who was in attendance at the Synod in 1974. John Paul II was elected Pope in 1978, and he would serve as an antagonist towards liberation theology because of his mistrust of Marxist analysis based on his upbringing in communist controlled Poland. John Paul II would use his position as Pope to fight communism in Poland and he received a strong reception in a visit to Poland in 1979 based on this commitment. His visit was like "a crusade and a political campaign" where he emphasized that "there is no other way for man to find himself and confirm who he is except by seeking God in prayer"[191] and alluded that the "Church is the true homeland to all Catholics" in the world.[192] John Paul II had a natural distrust of communism due to its anti-religious nature and he would actively seek to diminish the influence of liberation theology across Latin America in hopes of defeating its 'Marxist' connections at the Puebla Assembly of 1979.

Conservatives Dominate the Puebla Assembly of 1979

John Paul II would take these criticisms from the Synod and continue to push back against liberationists in a speech he gave before the Assembly of Puebla[193] in 1979. John Paul II argues, "the conclusions of the Medellin conference, with all the positive elements that they contained, have been made with incorrect interpretations …the idea of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive man from Nazareth does not tally with the Church's catechesis. By confusing the insidious pretexts of Jesus' accusers with the very different attitude

[191] Pope John Paul II, "Holy Mass and Act of Consecration to the Mother of God, Homily of His Holiness John Paul II," Częstochowa, Jasna Góra, June 4, 1979, http://www.vatican .va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790604_ polonia-jasna-gora_en.html
[192] "Cardinal Dziwisz on John Paul II's 1st Poland Trip," Kraków Archbishop explains what changed Europe, June 12, 2009, http://www.zenit.org/article-26164?l=english (accessed September 13, 2011), interview by Marcin Przeciszewski and Tomasz Krolak of the Polish Agency Kai, thirtieth anniversary of visit.
[193] In Mexico

of Jesus himself, some people adduce as the cause of his death the outcome of political conflict, and nothing is said about the Lord's will to surrender himself to his passion."[194] John Paul II completely rebukes Gutiérrez's imaging of Christ as a political figure and a revolutionary. His invocation of the Medellin Conference and the general location of the conference, Puebla, Mexico, makes it clear that the same arguments heard at Synod were now present in the highest position of the Catholic Church. Moreover, the warning put forth about seeing Christ as a political figure would send a signal to the delegation at the Puebla Assembly that the Church must maintain a neutral role in pushing for a just society. Alfonso Trujillo, now a Cardinal, was tasked with creating a 277-page preparatory document to set the stage for the Puebla Assembly.[195] Trujillo argued that "the Church opens the saving power of Christ" to the "doors of the state, economic and political systems, the extensive areas of culture civilization and development…we invite all, without distinction of class"[196] Trujillo's assemblage of this document emphasizes the growing influence of the conservative position at the Medellin Conference in which there was a real desire to work with the existing institutions in order to end suppression as opposed to fully transforming them. However, Cardinal Brandao Vilela[197], Archbishop of São Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, would also write in this document that "the values of our culture are threatened. The fundamental rights of man are being violated. The devastation of wars continues…the great enterprises for man's betterment have not adequately solved the problems that challenge us… we must keep an ever-vigilant presence in the world."[198] Vilela's words reveal the conservatives' recognition that there were still injustices being committed against humanity and a constant watch needed to be kept to limit these injustices.

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[194] Pope John Paul II, "Address before the Puebla Assembly, 1979," 3.
[195] Majorie Hyer, "Conservatives Seen in Control at Puebla Bishops' Meeting," *Washington Post*, January 28, 1979, 1.
[196] Alfonso Trujillo, Preparatory Document for the Puebla Assembly, 1979, 103.
[197] An Archbishop who had a good relationship with both progressives and conservatives.
[198] Brandao Vilela, Preparatory Document for the Puebla Assembly, 1979, 168.

Pope John Paul II formally accepted these documents at the Assembly, but he also accused some of thinking that the Kingdom of God was now "not attained by faith and membership in the Church, but by the mere changing of structures, and by social and political development, and as present wherever there is a certain type of involvement and activity for justice… it is wrong to state that the political, economic, and social liberation coincides with Salvation in Jesus Christ."[199] Although John Paul II did speak in favor of Latin American priests about the "correct idea about Christian liberation" that brought one Closer to God, John Paul II's comments are a major revocation of liberation theology. John Paul II believed that liberation theology was potentially trying to politicize the message of the gospel, misinterpret the history of Jesus's sacrifice, and was even potentially leading people away from the message of God. However, this Assembly, John Paul II's speeches, and the preparatory document received a poor response from liberationists who reviewed the events after the conference. This negative reaction was further bolstered by the fact that Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino, Leonardo Boff, and other prominent liberationists had not been invited to the Assembly even though their names were submitted as delegates.[200] Reverend Sergio Torres, a Chilean Priest and leader of the group, Theology in the Americas" believed that "it was a dismal document, full of unjustified fears… the reality is that Puebla betrays Medellin."[201] In the twelve-year period since the end of the Medellin Conference, liberation theology was met with an opposition that was not only in force in Latin America, but also angered the highest authorities of Catholicism in the entire world. Liberation theology would now be forced to go on the defensive in the coming years in the theology's battle for survival across Latin America. The Papacy and Peruvian Church would also deem the chaotic

[199] Ibid, 5.
[200] George Williams Huntston, "John Paul II's Concepts of Church, State, and Society, " *Journal of Church and State* 24, no. 3 (1982): 475.
[201] Sergio Torres, "The Retreat at Medellin," February 28, 1979.

context of Peru one that would necessitate a return to evangelism instead of praxis -- a significant rebuke of liberation theology.

Chapter Four: The Silencing of Liberation Theology and the Rise of Sodalitium Vitae -- the Peruvian Church's Public Answer to Liberation Theology

The Sodality's Origins and a Theology of Reconciliation

By 1992, the bishops' conference in Santo Domingo "marked liberation theology's slow but certain decline" as the conference had "rid itself of the class-based political vision" liberation theology sought to expose to the people in their Christian Base Communities throughout Latin America.[202] Liberation theology had also lost its representation in the Peruvian Catholic Church as there were fewer than a "handful of liberationist Bishops in the Peruvian Church" by the end of the 1980s when put into contrast with the 25 bishops -- including the Archbishop of Lima -- that supported the theology in the 1960s and 1970s as Paul VI and John Paul II had opted to appoint non-liberationists to these posts.[203] Liberation theology had been suppressed and had "failed to reach a significant population" from the 1960s to the 1980s.[204] However, this suppression and inability to reach a large population did not stop the Peruvian Catholic Church from treating liberation theology as something that "had to be extinguished" and "made an example of" in the view of Jeffrey Klaiber, a religious historian.[205] The Peruvian Church deemed that theological currents that attempted to reform Catholicism and the Church in deeply hierarchical and unjust societies like Latin America necessitated a response. The Peruvian Church opposed liberation theology from an organizational perspective throughout the 1980s, but it would also create a public response that would start to position itself as an antithesis to liberation theology in as early as 1973.

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[202] Carol Ann Drogus, *"The Rise and Decline of Liberation Theology: Churches, Faith, and Political Change in Latin America," Comparative Politics* 27, no. 4 (1995): 465.
[203] Victor Alzamora, "La Declinación de la Teología de la Liberación en la Iglesia Peruana" in *El Tiempo,* April 4, 1989.
[204] Carol Ann Drogas, "The Rise and Decline of Liberation Theology," 472.
[205] Jeffrey Klaiber, *La Iglesia En El Perú: Su Historia Social Desde La Independencia* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 1996), 118.

In 1973, a group calling itself "God and Country" began making public statements at the Catholic University of Lima.[206] It would align itself with many conservative student groups and change its name to Sodalitium Christinae Vitae.[207] Luis Fernando Figari, a secondary school teacher and one who had ties to many influential priests in Peru, was the founder of this movement.[208] Figari used Sodalitium Vitae as a way to protest liberation theology in Peru.[209] Sodalitium Vitae started out as a simple student group organization and a lot of the early recruits of the Sodality came from the schools where Figari taught at -- Santa Maria and San Isidro.[210] Figari would later obtain a teaching position at the Seminary school at the Catholic University of Lima.[211] It is at this seminary where he would align himself with like-minded conservative bishops like Fernando Vargas Ruiz, Oscar Alzamora, Augusto Vargas Alzamora, and others who believed that "liberation theology had gone outside its pastoral role."[212] The organization's goals emphasized traditional values and traditional Catholic teachings by arguing in favor of a theology of reconciliation.

Figari would use this mantra of reconciliation by trying to diffuse the political activism of Priests and Churches within Latin America by hoping to "find common ground with the poor" through traditional Catholic teachings to ensure nonviolence.[213] Reconciliation theology rejected liberation theology's "temporal salvation" and its theological perspective which was "hidden behind a scientific framework" in an effort to "treat its analysis of Peru's condition as fact instead of theory."[214] Sodalitium Vitae advocated for a return to "Catholicism's spiritual

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[206] Catholic University of Lima, "Campus Happenings(1973) -Conservatives Unite," 1.
[207] Ibid, 1.
[208] Catalina Romero, "Cambios en la Relación Iglesia-Sociedad en Perú," in *La Républica*, August 18, 1973.
[209] Ibid, 1.
[210] Luis Fernando Figari, *Formation and Mission of Sodalitium Christianae Vitae* (Lima: Catholic University of Peru, 1985), 67.
[211] Ibid, 68.
[212] Ibid, 73.
[213] Luis Fernando Figari, *Aportes Para Una Teologia de la Reconciliación* Lima: APRODEA, 42.
[214] Ibid, 32.

salvation" as humankind was not meant for a "revolutionary road."[215] Humankind was "instead" meant for a road "that is filled with love and compassion for each other -- liberation theology took man away from his intended purpose."[216] Figari's desire to return humanity to its intended purpose was also inspired by his visioning of Peru. Figari rejected liberation theology and its "scientific framework" and instead argued that the current Peruvian context in the 1970s was one that "only recently escaped its unjust situation" under "John Paul II -- the man sent by God."[217] Peru was in a "stage of improvement and recovery" from its unjust past and "Gutierrez's insistence that expedient measures to combat continued inequality" were "mistaken" and "in offense to God."[218] Figari argued that the "Church should continue to work in tandem with the Peruvian Government to continue to "improve the conditions of the poor without promoting" supposed "theologies of revolution."[219]

Figari would highlight his support for Reconciliation theology and how it was in line with traditional Catholic thought by invoking Pope John Paul II's *Reconciliation and Penance* in his book, *Aportes Para Una Teología de la Reconciliación.* Pope John Paul II argues that "the global reality of negativism, extortion, death, destruction, conflicts between men necessitated reconciliation. A reconciliation is a return to an encounter, not only with God, but with ourselves to set aside differences… the premise of reconciliation is based on sacrifice and overcoming differences in order to reconstruct a new world under God's vision."[220] Figari invoking these words is a direct response to Gutiérrez and his liberationists as Figari believed that "nonviolence was necessary" to overcoming the political, social, and economic problems present in Peru.[221]

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[215] Ibid, 33.
[216] Ibid, 35.
[217] Ibid, 61.
[218] Ibid, 65.
[219] Ibid, 66.
[220] Ibid, 45.
[221] Ibid, 49.

Sodalitium Vitae's interpretation of Peru's context contradicted the context liberationists proposed in that the process "to recovery has already begun and inequality is vanishing from our society" under the "leadership of Pope John Paul II" who recognized "the plight of the poor and needy without resorting to Marxism."[222] Figari argues Reconciliation theology allowed its followers to unite with each other over their differences and utilized God as their point of reunion. This emphasis on reunion was a criticism of Gutiérrez's interpretation of evangelization in which the priest's role is to get people to recognize their social situation and to act against it, but Gutiérrez believed that the conclusion one makes does not necessarily have to return to God. Figari's invocation of John Paul II's belief that reconstructing a new world had to follow God's vision is emblematic of Sodalitium Vitae's movement to get people to recognize their situation, while not potentially minimizing the importance of the Church. Although Gutiérrez was also a fervent believer in nonviolence and committed to his goal of improving the Latin American condition, Figari believed that "Gutiérrez had failed to control his flock."[223]

Figari argued that activist movements like liberation theology did more harm than good due to their reliance on demonstrations, strikes, land squatting, and other political actions that eroded "God's importance in theology and a conversion of Christ to a radical liberator."[224] Figari accuses Gutiérrez of using these methods and misinterpreting the gospel in order to gain prominence in Latin America. He notes, "the ideas of liberation theology, influenced by Marxism… when ideas are ill guided, one cannot expect fruitful results."[225] Although Figari admits that not all the political problems present in Peru have been worsened by Gutiérrez, he emphasizes that the supposed connection to Marxism is simply too strong to argue away. Figari

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[222] Ibid, 78.
[223] Ibid, 44.
[224] Luis Fernando Figari, *Formation and Mission of Sodalitium Christianae Vitae* (Lima: Catholic University of Peru, 1985), 67.
[225] Luis Fernando Figari, *Aportes Para Una Teología de la Reconciliación,*58.

argues that "political activism endangers the peace" in Latin America that had only been recently attained in 1980 through a serious "manipulation of the gospel."[226] Sodalitium worried that this 'manipulation' would "stop the Priest from being realistic and will fail to foresee that conflicts will grow" and "lead to violence" if Gutierrez and his followers deemed that their impoverished reality needed to be rectified "expediently" through the gospel.[227] The priest "is a peacemaker" that "must profess that any liberation that sits outside the realm of the Church" and in a "temporal setting" will only create "new oppression."[228] Although the connection to Marxism and liberation theology is dubious at best with the only true similarities between the two is their usage of social analysis to highlight the historical problems of colonialism and imperialism,[229] Figari's invocation of Marxism and criticisms of Gutiérrez is representative of the Sodalitium Vitae's belief that liberation theology at its core was not a theology that was compatible with the Church. This incompatibility, according to Figari, "necessitated" a new movement that was more-in line with the Church's values that could also try to directly face the prominent issues in Latin America raised by Guiterrez without utilizing a similar methodology or praxis.[230]

In 1981, Gutiérrez would once again respond to these charges of Marxism by arguing that "we believe that our focus is fundamentally different. Our main objective is not to put an end to our status as clergy, but to commit ourselves as priests to the Latin America revolutionary process. Our analysis of Latin America can be separate from Marxism."[231] Although Figari and other critics of the theology would not come to the same conclusion about his theology, what truly seems to anger Figari is Gutiérrez's insistence on "social action" that creates change in

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[226] Ibid, 61.
[227] Luis Fernando Figari, *Aportes Para Una Teología de la Reconciliación,* 84.
[228] Ibid, 89.
[229] García Ismael, *Justice in Latin American Theology of Liberation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 121.
[230] Luis Fernando Figari, *Aportes Para Una Teología de la Reconciliación,* 157.
[231] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Nuestro Situacion," in *La República,* November 11, 1981.

Latin America.[232] This disdain towards activism also revealed the Church's view towards reformism. Figari would agree with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, a staunch ally of John Paul II and critic of liberation theology, that "we must always bear in mind that the Church is not ours but his[God]."[233] Therefore, "the reforms, the 'renewals' -- necessary as they may be -- cannot exhaust ourselves in a zealous activity to erect new, sophisticated structures."[234] The Church was not necessarily in the hands of the priests themselves and any attempts to reform the Church "would imply a sense of ownership" over the gospel and its teachings.[235] Ratzinger emphasizes that the "Church needs in order to respond to the needs of man in every age is holiness, not management" or "reform."[236] Gutiérrez affirms his belief in social activism by arguing that "our social and ecclesiastical condition is very different and demands action. Latin America demands above all a salvation which is verified in liberation from widespread injustice and oppression. It is the Church that must proclaim and support this liberation… the Church must have a great conscientizing impact upon the people."[237] However, Guiterrez's commitment to such a plan is also part of the reason why the reconciliation movement under Figari would eventually successfully overtake Gutiérrez's theological movement as Figari attacked the most extreme examples and supporters of liberation theology to argue to Peru how dangerous it was.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Scrutinizes Liberation Theology

Liberation theology would face intense pressure from the Papacy in 1984. This attack was led by the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith which is an arm of the Papacy. Its primary purpose is to defend Catholic doctrine and it is this congregation in which Gutiérrez would face

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[232] Luis Fernando Figari, *Aportes Para Una Teología de la Reconciliación,* 154.
[233] Ibid, 104. Figari discusses the 'Ratzinger Report' that Vittorio Messori, an Italian Journalist, collected over a number of private discussions with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger that were later published in 1985.
[234] Ibid, 106.
[235] Ibid, 107.
[236] Ibid, 108.
[237] Ibid, 1.

stiff repudiation of his theology in 1984. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope who would come to be known as Pope Benedict XVI, was in charge of the Congregation at this time. He was tasked with aiding Pope John Paul II with his fight against communism in the world with the Cold War serving as a backdrop to this investigation. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the bastion of doctrinal purity that was established to combat Protestant Reformation, responded to liberation theology in the Peruvian context. The Congregation argued that "faced with the urgency of sharing bread, some[238] are tempted to put evangelization into parentheses, as it were, and postpone it until tomorrow: first the bread, then the Word of the Lord. It is a fatal error to separate these two and even worse to oppose the one to the other. In fact, the Christian perspective naturally shows they have a great deal to do with one another."[239] Although the Congregation narrows in on Gutiérrez's emphasis on praxis over the importance of the word of God, the Congregation also adds a direct threat to Gutiérrez and his theology in this document. This "fatal error" the Congregation refers to is a threat of excommunication from the Catholic Church – the most damning punishment an ordained Priest can receive. The backdrop of the Cold War during this investigation added significant burden to Gutiérrez when placed under scrutiny by the Congregation as "concepts uncritically borrowed from Marxist ideology and course to theses of a biblical hermeneutic marked by rationalism are at the basis of the new interpretation which is corrupting whatever was authentic in the generous initial commitment on behalf of the poor."[240]

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[238] Gustavo Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, Jon Sobrino, and other prominent liberationists.
Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation: "the Truth Makes Us Free" (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1986), 19.
[239] Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" Instruction on certain aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" (The Vatican), https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html, 1.

[240] Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" Instruction on certain aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" (The Vatican),

Ten years after the Synod of Bishops in 1974, the Papacy had become even more opposed to liberation theology as it was now nullifying Gutiérrez's "generous initial commitment on behalf of the poor" that the Bishops had seriously considered when discussing liberation theology at the Synod. The Congregation also saw the theology's marxist analysis as "intolerable" because some identify "God himself with history and to define faith as "fidelity to history," which means adhering to a political policy which is suited to the growth of humanity." As a consequence, "faith, hope, and charity are given a new content: they become "fidelity to history"; "confidence in the future"; and "option for the poor." This is tantamount to saying they have been "emptied of their theological reality."[241] At its core, Marxist analysis was intolerable to the Church because it had transformed concepts that Gutiérrez had previously emphasized as being a part of religiosity to non-religious items. Gutiérrez wanted to utilize praxis to encourage the people to ask for greater freedom, rights, for businesses to participate in charitable acts, and for people to have hope in believing in a better future, but the Congregation under Cardinal Ratzinger came to the conclusion that these concepts and Marxism could not be easily separable. Cardinal Ratzinger had concluded that Marxist analysis and its conclusions one could make were not inseparable even if they were offered in a theological perspective as "atheism and the denial of the human person, his liberty and rights, are at the core of the Marxist theory."[242] Although the criticism was not necessarily a new one to Gutiérrez, it was a criticism which threatened to end his dream and his theology if he were to be excommunicated and defrocked.

Gutiérrez responded to these criticisms in an article he wrote for *La República* in 1984. Gutiérrez disagreed with the Congregation's assertion by noting how , "in terms of their basic

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https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html, 1.

[241] Ibid, 1.

[242] Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" Instruction on certain aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" (The Vatican), 1.

ethos, Christanity must criticize capitalism radically, in its fundamental intention, while it must criticize socialism functionally, in its failure to fulfill its purpose."[243] Gutiérrez definitely acknowledges that he is working in a context that syncretizes religiosity with scientific discourse, but offers a rebuttal to demonstrate that their current economic structures had failed Peru. His reminder to the congregation recognizes the failures of capitalism, while also acknowledging that socialism had failed functionally to avoid the threat of excommunication. While Gutiérrez was making his defense to the Congregation public, he was also actively writing against Sendero Luminoso, a Maoist group that actively tried to overthrow the Democratic state of Peru through Guerilla tactics. Gutiérrez believes the "struggle for justice has to be carried out at the same time as freedom is claimed not for a minority nor for a majority but for all. It is necessary to defend democratic life, which even if it is imperfect and fragile makes viable the proposals and discussion about alternative formulas in order to construct a different society."[244] Gutiérrez actively defends democracy against Maoism because he recognizes that violence will only lead to destruction as "these efforts for justice and freedom, suppose for a respect for human values that cannot be forgotten -- not even for those who violate them by spreading terror and death."[245]

Gutiérrez places the premise for his theology around the importance of human rights -- Sendero Luminoso's abuses against humanity contradicts everything that liberation theology stood for. Instead of seeing Sendero Luminoso as a byproduct of the times, Gutiérrez sees the group as a terrible blight on the Peruvian people because of their "lack of respect for justice and freedom. Terror brings repression." [246] Gutiérrez believes that the democratic structures in Peru that one should be fighting for is one that respects the rights of all and the government must be

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[243] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *La República, "*La Defensa de la Teología de la Liberación,*"* November 8, 1984, 15.
[244] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *La República,* "La Lucha por la Justicia," January 24, 1985.
[245] Ibid, 12.
[246] Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 107.

able to act with moral integrity and political ingenuity in order to eliminate the threat Sendero Luminoso posed in diminishing the gains liberation theology had made in Peru in the 1960s and 1970s. Gutiérrez ends this essay by calling upon his Christian readers to "appeal to all sound forces in the country in order to reach a national consensus in refusing every form of inhuman violence in favor of life and peace. This commitment will not be easy. The task that lies before us is immense and the personal cost might be very high. For a Christian, it is nevertheless obvious that it is life and not death and its allies that will have the final word; this makes our hope more living and our hunger for God more powerful."[247] Gutiérrez argues that Christians cannot risk becoming complacent and accepting the status quo because that is what the undemocratic structures of Peru had forced them to do since the colonization of Latin America by Spain. Continuing this tradition of acceptance would invalidate everything they had fought for up to this point. A real Christian must contribute to fighting against Sendero Luminoso by continuing to have a strong emphasis on a liberal political discourse that respects human rights, justice, and democracy, while also sustaining itself through Catholic theological discourse. The Congregation's accusations that liberation theology is a Marxist one is a completely baseless accusation when considering Gutierrez's defense of the democratic institutions in place in Peru, his defense and emphasis of the human spirit, and his total rebuke of Sendero Luminoso's Maoist lens.

The Congregation would recognize this mistake in their second assessment of liberation theology in 1986. In "Introduction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," the Congregation would remove its Marxist criticisms of liberation theology and instead reconsider Gutiérrez's emphasis on the human spirit and the preference for the poor. In its various forms, "human misery is the obvious sign of the natural condition of weakness in which man finds himself since

[247] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *La Républica,* "La Lucha por la Justicia," August 24, 1985.

original sin and the sign of his need for salvation. Hence also those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a love of preference on the part of the Church, which since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation."[248] The Congregation's original rejection of liberation theology had now been replaced by an acceptance of one of Guiterrez's key tenets -- the preference for the poor. Poverty was something that one had to strive for and the Congregation even admits that in the past, some members of the Church had failed in this mission. The Congregation was being reflective of its past as it understood that "man is worth more for what he is than what he has."[249] The Congregation cleared its suspicions it had over Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, Jon Sobrino, and many other prominent liberationists as a reexamination of the theology's contents and statements made by these theologians before the second review revealed that there was little Marxist intent found within the theology as they had previously concluded in 1984. Instead, the Congregation recognized that "it is the most radical evil, from sin and the power of death, that he [God] has delivered us in order to restore freedom to itself and to show it the right path. This path is marked out by the supreme commandment, which is the commandment of love" and that this love is the "social doctrine of the Church in this long path ahead of us."[250] Gutiérrez was able to reach an "amicable conclusion"[251] with the Congregation; however, the public relations hit that Gutiérrez and his theology took during these years would be detrimental to the health of the theology in Peru and Figari would capitalize on this situation.

A Chaotic Peru and the Sodality

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[248] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860322_freedom-liberation_en.html, 1.
[249] Ibid, 1.
[250] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860322_freedom-liberation_en.html, 1.
[251] Ibid, 1.

In the 1980s, there was a sense of urgency amongst Peruvians as Sendero Luminoso continued to be a brutal force as it murdered Priests, kidnapped citizens, and did other heinous acts.[252] With this air of urgency, liberation theology was on the wrong ideological flank in this chaotic Peruvian context. Conservatives in Sodalitium Vitae and the Peruvian Catholic Church became emboldened and would take advantage of this opportunity to propose liberation theology was a 'radical and extremist' theology. Figari recognized that it was difficult to paint Gutiérrez as a radical as Gutiérrez still maintained a high-profile presence in the Peruvian media with his various pieces on liberation theology and criticisms of Sendero Luminoso still circulating throughout Peru. Therefore, Figari and conservatives changed tactics and mixed in together the various radical priests and groups that were present in Church-sponsored programs in their dubious efforts to tie Gutiérrez's theology to radical elements of the Peruvian Church in the 1980s.[253] This effort would reveal the institutional Church's coordinated attack on reformist groups within the Peruvian Church, while taking advantage of the chaotic political and social climate within Peru.

Figari and other conservative Bishops like Vargas Alzamora and Ricardo Durand would hone in on radical, Church-affiliated groups to showcase the supposed 'radicalism' of liberation theology. Conservatives found their scapegoat within the Peruvian town of Ayachuo, a town with a resident Christian Base Ecclesial community. Figari and others accused the resident priests of "taking the people down a path that would find themselves on the frontlines of Sendero Luminoso," but the priests relented and admitted that "we searched for radical change in society. We fought for the differences of those changes and to mobilize the people for their well-being."

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[252] James Ron, "Ideology in Context: Explaining Sendero Luminoso's Tactical Escalation," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 5 (2001): 576.
[253] Luis Fernando Figari, "Thoughts on Equipos de Misión Obera" in *Aportes Para Una Teología de la Reconciliación,* 108.

Another priest admitted that "liberation theology needed to go further and accept violence… a radical change had to be made. If you look for examples, like even the American revolution, the greatest changes occurred through armed revolution."[254] Figari would also highlight that the priests decided to undertake this struggle since the peasants had told them in the past that they did not feel supported by the Catholic Church. In one interaction with a Bishop, the "peasants noted that they were not sure if the Bishop was actually a leader of the Catholic Church or if he was a member of the government. The Bishop always put the government first instead of us farmers."[255] Figari and other conservatives of the Catholic Church touted the failures of the Christian Base communities as they had "radicalized the most at-risk members of society" and "transformed them" in a way that looked very similar to the "radicalization of Christ as a freedom fighter."[256] Christian Smith, a religious historian, would argue that "there is no instance in liberation theology where radical violence" is justified in the "renewal and reformation of a nation,"[257] but Figari and his Conservatives would take these events and brand liberation theology as something that would "divide friends and enemies and the good and bad."[258]

A second instance in Tarapoto would also anger Figari and his conservative allies. In this case, the Organization of Labor Missionaries were expelled from Tarapoto as the missionaries believed that "our very commitments to man and the revolutionary process impels us to continue as clerics" because "socialism, so often criticized and accused of materialism, is in its essence a

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[254] Luis Fernando Figari, Vargas Alzamora, and Ricardo Durand Florez, "Radicalism in Ayachuo" in *Liberation or Revolution? The Priest's Role*, 107.
[255] Ibid, 121.
[256] Ibid, 123.
[257]Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 32.
Luis Fernando Figari, Vargas Alzamora, and Ricardo Durand Florez, "Radicalism in Ayachuo" in *Liberation or Revolution? The Priest's Role,* 142.
[258] Luis Fernado Figari, Vargas Alzamora, and Ricardo Durand Florez, "Radicalism in Ayachuo" in *Liberation or Revolution?,* 117.

deep commitment to spiritual and ethical value."[259] Bishop Alzamora would disagree and argue that "the ideas of the organization...influenced by Marxism and by the so called theology of liberation resulted in the death of 5 professors, 2 men, and 3 women who had been coerced into undertaking a hunger strike by this organization" because of the inability to obtain food at a "reasonable price."[260] Alzamora would move to expel this group from the Peruvian Church for "affecting work outside the limits of the religious pastorate."[261] Figari would expand upon these grievances and noted how "sometimes shaping community is understood as forming an elite of chosen ones. Forming community, however, encompasses everything: all social levels, all cultural spheres, and on those things that pull us together - through unity in God and faith… community does not involve political action" but instead an "obligation to do something for their community."[262]

Conclusion

It is through this desire for forming a greater community in accordance with faith and God that would inspire Figari to hold a Conference in 1865 that would draw over 600 participants. This Conference also recognized the Peruvian context that was filled with "violence and terror" in 1985.[263] Figari and other bishops that attended this conference with peasant participants argued that "there are clusters of authors characterized for their conflictual orientation, predominantly political - who are the principal exponents of said Marxist analysis. For certain sectors, the Peruvian, Gustavo Gutiérrez, is considered as a leader in that orientation."[264] The Sodality affirms its antagonistic position against liberation theology and its

[259] Vargas Alzamora, "Strikes in Tarapoto: A Priest's View," *El Observador,* March 28, 1985.
[260] Luis Fernando Figari, "Organization of Labor Missionaries" in *Aportes Para Una Teología de la Reconciliación,* 165.
[261] Vargas Alzamora, "Strikes in Tarapoto: A Priest's View," *El Observador,* March 28, 1985.
[262] Ibid, 167.
[263] Felix Morales, "La Reunion de Sodalitium Christianae Vitae," *El Observador,* December 15, 1985.
[264] Ibid, 13.

political lens as the Sodality affirmed that "Latin Americans are part of the Third World. This situation dramatizes the lives of many who cannot advance their own efficient means for solutions, some have great influence, but this influence lies in their political orientation" in a "non-political topic [religion]."[265] Figari would utilize testimonies from various poor farmers and other primary workers who he had invited from his tours across the rural countryside as a way to show the supposed 'popularity' of the Sodality at the Conference. Some notable examples include the testimony from Gabriel Garcia, a farmer who had left one of liberation theology's 'radical' communities, in favor of one in which he deemed "most effective in enabling small agriculturalists and merchants to compete with the huge capitalist businesses in a democratic association that was a powerful barricade against unrestrained capitalism and destructive egalitarian Communism" with "rich emphasis on spiritual renewal."[266] The Sodality highlighted the Conference's objective of encouraging greater communion, while also displaying the reality of the "culture of survival" Peruvians went through everyday in fear of "Communists, Sendero Luminoso, and political activists."[267] The Sodality took up the farmers' plight of inequality and poverty in the face of foreign economic powers, while also removing politically charged language from the poor.

The Sodality and its recognition of the Peruvian context represents liberation theology's success in shifting the conservation and animating the Church to take social action, but the Sodality's attacks on liberation theology is also reflective of the Church's ideological revisionism of liberation theology and its impetus on social action.[268] Sodalitium Vitae positioned itself in a

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[265] Ibid, 14.
[266] Luis Fernando Figari, "La Defensa de lo Espiritual," December 18, 1985.
[267] Luis Fernando Figari, "La Defensa de lo Espiritual," December 18, 1985.
[268] Alexander Wilde, "The Progressive Church in Latin America: an Interpretation," in Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde (eds.), *The Progressive Church in Latin America*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. Montes, Ofelia. 1987, 52.

way to quiet the masses and represent how the Church supposedly understood their concerns about the Peruvican condition without having to resort to a 'Marxist' or an overtly 'political' frame. With help from the Papacy and their appointments favoring conservatives and traditionalists, the Sodality and its allies in the Peruvian Church were able to reassert their authority and sideline a theology that wanted to reform the Peruvian Church's hierarchy. In 1994, now-Cardinal Vargas Alzamora certified the Sodality as a diocesan Society of Apostolic Life and John Paul II gave it Papal approval in 1997. John Paul II would honor the Sodality in a speech in 1997 where he praised the organization "for its commitment to joining Christians together in an era of great turmoil and its role in guiding man back to God."[269]

[269] Enrique Bastille, "Pope John Paul II Recognizes Sodalitium Christinae Vitae and its Evangelizing Efforts," *El Tiempo,* July 9, 1997.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1990s, liberation theology continued to decline in Peru and across Latin America. In 1997, John Paul II gave Papal approval to Sodalitium Christinae Vitae which was representative of the organization's growing influence in the region and how John Paul II viewed the organization and its reconciliation theology as being in-line with the Church. However, nearly twenty years later, it almost seems like the roles have been reversed as the Vatican, under Pope Francis, began considerations on whether Sodalitium Christianae Vitae should be dissolved or reformed. Peruvian Cardinal Pedro Barreto Jimeno Of Huanyao argued that "personally, I think that when a religious organization has committed a crime, because it has to be said that way – from the point of view of sexual abuse and economic side where there are also problems – it has to be dissolved," he argued.[270] He added that the proposal to dissolve Sodalitium Vitae is something "that many are talking about. And it is not that Pope Francis and many representatives of the Holy See disagree, but rather that we are on that path."[271] Sodalitum Vitae can only be punished through excommunication as they are simply a lay organization; however, the pressure Sodalitium Vitae has come under in recent years is similar to the pressure that liberation theology had received in the 1980s. The roles had now finally been reversed with the election of Pope Francis who has called for greater emphasis on social equality, justice, and freedom.

In a conservation with a journalist in 1993, Gutiérrez noted how:

> Some years ago, a journalist asked whether I would write *Teología de la Liberación* today as I had two decades earlier. In answer, I said that though the years passed by, the book remained the same, whereas I was alive and therefore changing and moving forward thanks to experiences, to observations made on the book, and to lectures and discussions. When he persisted, I asked whether in a love letter to his wife today he would use the same language he used twenty years ago; he said he would not, but he

[270] "Sodalitium Movement Should Be 'Dissolved,' Cardinal Says," Catholic Philly, , https://catholicphilly.com/2020/03/news/world-news/sodalitium-movement-should-be-dissolved-cardinal-says/, 1.
[271] Ibid, 1.

> acknowledged that his love perdured. My book is a love letter to God, to the church, and to the people.[272]

Gutiérrez wrote his theology as a way to help guide Latin America to a just society. Gutiérrez's emphasis on his desire to make his theology a love letter to God, the church, and to the people is representative of his honest attempt to try and create a work that did so; however, his theology became an unrealized dream in Peru. This thesis recognizes the changing political, economic, and social context Gutiérrez and his theology faced throughout the twenty-year period examined in order to demonstrate how Gutiérrez never truly retreated from liberation theology, but was instead opposed by a conservative Church. His continued emphasis and relevance of the theology never wavered in these years even from attacks from Popes who accused his theology of being too radical; however, the context in which he was working in a changing environment which ultimately contributed to liberation theology becoming an unrealized dream. The fate of liberation theology between 1968 and 1988 cannot truly be debated as scholars who have written on the subject admit that the pressures and criticisms Gutiérrez faced during these years made it difficult for the theology to flourish -- liberation theology did subside by the end of the 1980s.[273]

To ignore liberation theology in our current context is a mistake as "Latin America remains the most unequal region in the world as kids are forced to obtain jobs as young as ten to support their families and this continued inequality has stunted the growth of the region" in a report published by the United Nations in 2011.[274] Latin America's continued inequality mandates a solution and one potential solution may be found in Gutiérrez's reformist framework

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[272] Gustavo Gutiérrez and James B. Nickoloff, Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings (London: SCM Press, 1996), 308.

[273] J. Andrew Kirk, *Liberation Theology: an Evangelical View from the Third World* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1985), 193.
Roberto Sirvent and Duncan Reyburn, *Theologies of Failure* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 104.

[274] United Nations, the United Nations Commission of Economic Cooperation in Latin America and the Carribeans, *Inclusive Social Protection in Latin America: A Comprehensive, Rights-Based Approach*, New York,:NY: UN Headquarters, 2011.

and theology as Pope Francis' influence, rehabilitation of the Church's image, and the growing desire for equality in the world creates an incredible opportunity for liberation theology to reassert its position in Latin America and even be applied to foreign contexts. Gutiérrez originally wrote his theology as a love letter to the people, the Church, and to God in hopes of getting the people to acknowledge the necessity for a just world. When considering the current evils in the world, a reexamination of liberation theology and why and how it was suppressed in Peru is a necessity in trying to better understand and propose a solution to improve our contemporary social reality. However, the impact and importance liberation theology has had on the Catholic Church cannot be understated. For centuries, the Catholic Church utilized its social, political, and economic capital to grow. However, Gutiérrez utilized his theology to animate the Church and actually put weight behind its actions in trying to improve the social conditions for all residents living in the Third World. Pope Francis' current emphasis on equality for all is a new chapter in the Catholic Church's history as it navigates potential reforms, eliminating corruption, and promulgating a better future which signifies the need to continue to better understand and analyze reformist Catholic movements in today's socio-political climate.

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