

Laval théologique et philosophique



## Paulus and Gustavo : Religious Socialism and Liberation Theology

Ronald H. Stone

---

Volume 44, Number 2, juin 1988

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/400375ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/400375ar>

[See table of contents](#)

---

Publisher(s)

Faculté de philosophie, Université Laval

ISSN

0023-9054 (print)

1703-8804 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

Cite this article

Stone, R. H. (1988). Paulus and Gustavo : Religious Socialism and Liberation Theology. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 44(2), 155–167.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/400375ar>

---

Tous droits réservés © Laval théologique et philosophique, Université Laval, 1988

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

---

**é**rudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

## PAULUS AND GUSTAVO : RELIGIOUS SOCIALISM AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY \*

Ronald H. STONE

*RÉSUMÉ.* — Cet article présente de façon positive les écrits socialistes-religieux de Paul Tillich et de Gustavo Gutiérrez. Il entre en dialogue avec eux à propos des deux concepts de justice et de révolution. Dans le contexte révolutionnaire de l'Allemagne de son temps, les écrits de Tillich sur la justice sont axés sur le concept d'attente ; tandis que dans le contexte du Pérou de Gutiérrez le concept de libération a préséance sur celui de justice. L'enthousiasme de Tillich pour la révolution s'est adouci et il a élaboré son concept de justice dans le contexte de la situation politique des États-Unis après la seconde guerre mondiale. La pensée sociale de Gutiérrez évolue elle-même avec l'évolution de la situation au Pérou et en Amérique latine. Ces deux théologies sociales demeurent de puissantes expressions du combat pour la justice, et elles doivent être explorées en raison de l'espoir qu'elles présentent aussi pour d'autres contextes que les leurs.

*SUMMARY.* — The paper is sympathetic to the religious socialist writing of both Paul Tillich and Gustavo Gutiérrez. It joins the dialogue within the two concepts of justice and revolution. In the German revolutionary context Tillich's writing on justice was dominated by the concept of "expectation", in Gutiérrez's Peruvian context the concept of "liberation" has dominated the concept of justice. Tillich's enthusiasm for revolution mellowed, and he elaborated his concept of justice in the context of the post-World War II political situation of the U.S.A. Gutiérrez's social thought is in transition due to the changing Peruvian and Latin American situation. Both social theologies remain powerful expressions of the struggle for justice and need exploration for the hope they offer in contexts beyond their own.

---

\* Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society in Boston, MA on December 5, 1987.

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIALISM of Paul Tillich preceeded liberation theology and consequently never entered into dialogue with it. Liberation theologians of Latin America do not know much about Tillich's religious socialism and have not engaged it in dialogue. This paper is an attempt to bring into dialogue two traditions which themselves have not engaged in conversation.

The North American Paul Tillich Society has maintained some conversation with both parties to the dialogue. Even in its prefoundng days, when the Society existed as a consultation in the American Academy of Religion, attention was given to Tillich's social thought and its parallels to liberation theology. Several papers and published essays of the Society have either discussed parallels or suggested that the discussion between the two movements would be fruitful<sup>1</sup>. Similarly the Society of Christian Ethics has religious socialist members who are interested in both Tillich's social thought and in liberation theology. Enthusiasts for Tillich are in many cases, but not all, interested in keeping the memory of his religious socialism alive. There are individuals scattered throughout the continents who understand their analysis of social reality in a mixture of liberation and religious socialist themes. In my mind's eye, I visualize a thin red line of Tillich scholars around the world who still work out of Tillich's socialist convictions. In the United States as distinct from much of the rest of the world religious socialism is not very alive. My friend, Dorothee Sölle, in a meeting of the late, religious-socialist working group of the American Academy of Religion, referred to religious socialism in the United States as a discussion group "with neither a church nor a party."

The student of liberation theology will find only occasional references to Tillich in the literature. Ruben Alves' new book *Protestantism and Repression*<sup>2</sup> utilizes Tillich extensively in delineating his ideal type of Right-Doctrine-Protestantism to show the repressive tendencies of modern Protestantism. But he makes no use of the liberating possibilities of Tillich's religious socialism. Gustavo Gutiérrez has not referred to Tillich's religious socialism in writing. References to the German situation of the Nazi period in liberation theology are largely in terms of Bonhoeffer or the Confessing Church.

The comparison between Gustavo Gutiérrez's and Paul Tillich's religious socialism seemed appropriate. They share many common emphases. They both emphasize personal dimensions of religious life as expressed in mysticism and in human

- 
1. John B. LOUNIBOS, "Paul Tillich's Structures of Liberation", *Tillich Studies*, 1975, John J. Carey, ed. Tallahassee, Florida State University, 1975.  
H. Frederick REISZ, "Liberation Theology of Culture: A Tillichian Perspective", *Kairos and Logos*, John J. Carey, ed. Cambridge, The North American Paul Tillich Society, 1978.  
Theodore RUNYON, "Tillich's Understanding of Revolution", *Theonomy and Autonomy*, John J. Carey, ed. Masson, Mercer University Press, 1984.  
James W. CHAMPION, "Tillich and The Frankfort School", *Soundings* LXIX, (1986) n° 4.  
Dennis P. MCCANN, "Tillich's Religious Socialism: 'Creative Synthesis' or Personal Statement?", *The Thought of Paul Tillich*, James Luther Adams, Wilhelm Pauck, Roger Lincoln Shinn, editors, San Francisco, Harper & Row Publishers, 1985.
  2. Ruben ALVES, *Protestantism and Repression*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1985.

psychology. Marxism, class struggle, social revolution and socialism are significant in their thought. They are concerned to maintain their respective traditions while participating in reforming those traditions.

In my personal estimate they both express the characteristics Erik Erikson assigned to the term *homo religiosus*. They agonized personally over the inadequacies of their received traditions and in articulating new visions of religion transformed the human consciousness of many people with a world wide impact.

The two belong to a type of religious social thought. Comparison between the two is within a type, it cannot express the degree of dissonance that Tillich's work between Buddhism and Christianity exhibited<sup>3</sup>. This examination of their social thought focuses on *justice* and *revolution* while touching on related concerns.

### I. JUSTICE

Ismael Garcia's dissertation directed by James Gustafson has now been published as *Justice in Latin American Theology of Revolution*<sup>4</sup>. The focus on the work is on Hugo Assmann, Jose Miguez Bonino, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Jose Porfirio Miranado. Gutiérrez is regarded as the classical figure of the movement and his work is consulted most regularly in the book. The first major chapter entitled "The Centrality of Justice" argues that justice is the central concern of liberation theology. However, he is forced to argue that though "justice is central to the reflection and practice of liberation theologians, they never present a clear statement of what they mean by this frequently used term"<sup>5</sup>.

The argument develops that any formal definition of justice would come from the needs of the poor. Warnings are given against the dangers of an ahistorical understanding of justice. Justice may not be defined abstractly. The author admits even in the conclusion that the authors of liberation theology remain unclear about the meaning of justice, but that the elements necessary for a clear definition are available in their work. The elements may be there but the process of clarifying the relationship of those elements would still be a pretty abstract piece of work. Or maybe they cannot be clarified without more analysis.

Throughout Garcia's book the term *liberation*, which is defined abstractly, dominates the term *justice*. The work of liberation theology is focused mostly on conceptual work for overthrowing injustice rather than the building work of justice. Justice certainly presupposes order and liberation theology cannot, except for Nicaragua, be advocating order in any Latin American country at the present. Hannah Arendt's distinction between the working of fighting for freedom and structuring freedom is relevant here. Garcia may have been led to focus on justice because of the necessary fight against injustice.

3. Paul TILLICH, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1963.

4. Ismael GARCIA, *Justice in Latin American Theology of Liberation*, Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1987, p. 11.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

The conclusion<sup>6</sup> discusses aspects of justice from a liberation perspective. They are:

- 1) Justice is based on each person's equality of worth.
- 2) Justice reflects humanity's social nature.
- 3) Justice is based on a criterion of need.
- 4) Justice means "the eradication of all those forms of inequality that enable some to exploit and dominate others."
- 5) All are entitled to economic well-being and political freedom.
- 6) Institutions which care for the poor deserve support in a just society.
- 7) Justice implies the rich nations helping the poor nations.
- 8) Well-being has a priority over freedom given the historical struggles.
- 9) In the Latin American context only some form of socialism will lead to justice.

As the relationship of these diverse elements remains unclarified, Garcia's liberation attempt to conceptualize justice fails.

The perspective of Garcia is that: "Justice can only be properly defined in the activity of bringing it about in light of the concrete situations that limit its realization"<sup>7</sup>. This passion for the liberation process motivates this study and allows Jacques Maritain and other theorists who used natural law theory to define justice to be set aside. The natural law theory produced understandings of justice which informed Christian Democratic parties' reform efforts. But reform has been overcome, Garcia argues, the process called for is liberation. If socialist liberation is not on the foreseeable horizon for most of Latin America we are called back to look at alternative definitions of justice. For many countries striving to creep out from under military government or aspiring to moderate one party government some of the more traditional definitions of justice may still be helpful. Nicaragua's need for justice may require different concepts than Argentina's present situation.

Lebacqz<sup>8</sup> finds the contribution of Miranda and Gutiérrez to a theory of justice to be in their staying close to a Biblical meaning of righteousness. She explains that for Miranda and Gutiérrez justice is real, right relationships. This requires special attention to the poor for their situation must be altered. Justice is seen by their denunciations of injustice particularly the injustices done to the poor of Latin America. The world is characterized by injustice, God's work is particularly the righting of the wrongs which oppress the poor.

The important contribution of Gutiérrez requires an understanding of the Peruvian context which his translated works do not provide. The social research of his institute is published in Peru in *Paginas*. Las Casas center is located in Rimac a *barriada* of Lima. Tillich suggested that the writings of socialism are unintelligible without a commitment to the social struggle reflected in socialism. Moreover the writings of Gutiérrez are not intelligible without a commitment to solidarity with the

---

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-193.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

8. Karen LEBACQZ, *Six Theories of Justice*, Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1986.

poor to change their social situation. The poverty of Peru which leads to starvation and exploitation is the necessary context for understanding Gutiérrez's work. A remarkable new book by Curt Cadorette<sup>9</sup> is a necessary introduction to the Peruvian poverty of which Gutiérrez writes. Cadorette makes clear to North American readers the context of the sharp contrast between the poverty of the poor Indians of Lima and the benefits of capitalism to the wealthy of Lima. Moreover he puts meaning into the footnotes of Gutiérrez to Peruvian thinkers upon whom Gutiérrez draws. For years Gutiérrez taught a course based on the ideas of Mariategui of "adapting Marxist analysis to a critical dialectical understanding of Peruvian society and religion"<sup>10</sup>. Similarly Gutiérrez's friendship with and utilization of the Peruvian social-novelist Jose Mario Arguedas reveals the depth of the truth captured in the title of Gutiérrez's recent book *We Drink from Our Own Wells*. His work draws upon these Peruvian thinkers and current sociological-anthropological research including the work of his own institute. His utilization of Marxist critiques of society is indigenous drawing upon a long history of its critical application to the society of Peru. In the immediate context it has to take account of the new reality of Christian base communities in which he has invested his life, the shifts in ecclesiastical politics, the realities of the threat from *Sendero Luminoso*, or Shining Path guerrilla movement, the possibilities of the Alan Garcia regime, the ever present threat of military coup, the major players of international business, and the intervention by outside governmental pressures. Given the fluidity of these realities, Gutiérrez's realism may lead to shifts in his emphasis while always looking for openings in the situation which may give his people, the poor, a chance to improve their situation. His writings on justice and revolution are within the perceptions of a radically unjust, repressive social situation.

Gutiérrez writes of "institutionalized injustice" following the frequent use of it at the Puebla conference. One finds more references to institutionalized injustice in his writings than institutionalized justice. One of his clearest paragraphs on justice is that the proclamation of Jesus of the Kingdom of God is the proclaiming of a Kingdom of justice and liberation. Justice for him is absolute:

The only justice is the one that assuages all the consequences and expressions of this cleavage in friendship. The only justice is the definitive justice that builds, starting right now, in our conflict filled history, a Kingdom in which God's love will be present and exploitation abolished<sup>11</sup>.

Justice is used to denounce the present and as a perspective from which all oppressors will be overthrown. Liberation or the overthrow of the structures dominates the writing, rather than justice as something that the rulers could now deliver.

In his meditations on Job, Gutiérrez makes it clear that though justice is essential to the meaning of God, the meaning of God is not circumscribed by any theories of justice. Job has been freed in the end from "the temptation of imprisoning God in a

---

9. Curt CADORETTE, *The Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez From the Heart of the People*, Oak Park, Meyer and Stone, 1988.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

11. Gustavo GUTIÉRREZ, *The Power of the Poor in History*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1983, p. 14.

narrow conception of justice”<sup>12</sup>. The theology of retribution is abandoned but the obligation of doing justice with God is affirmed. We seem to lack in Gutiérrez that which Karen Lebacqz and Ismael Garcia were looking for, “a theory of justice.”

Justice was not the central term of Paul Tillich’s religious socialist polemic against capitalism. He did not often judge capitalism by the criteria of justice rather he assumed the contradictions within capitalism were going to destroy it. He regarded the spirit of capitalism as the proclamation of a self-sufficient finitude, and his basic argument with it was that it was not open to the experience of the unconditioned. Capitalism encouraged alienation, competition, and meaninglessness, and it was self-destructive. Justice became a central concept for Tillich in his American experience when the socialist cause or at least the expression of it in the categories of the young Marx seemed irrelevant to the American social scene.

Three exceptions to the above generalization are his essays: “Grundlinien des Religiösen Sozialismus” (1923)<sup>13</sup> and “Man and Society in Religious Socialism” (1943)<sup>14</sup>, and *The Socialist Decision* (1933)<sup>15</sup>. Neither the essays nor the book push the discussion of justice to the ontological depths of his later work. Neither essay use the criteria of justice as a weapon by which to criticize society the way Reinhold Niebuhr did in the same period. It could further be said that the Hegelian background is just below the surface in the 1923 work and the 1943 essay is more reminiscent of the political philosophical discussion in England and America.

Human nature according to the 1943 essay bears the claim that every human being be recognized as person<sup>16</sup>. There is a natural equality which is the quality of claim to express one’s creativity, later he would say power of being. “This is the ultimate criterion of justice<sup>17</sup>.” Justice concedes to finitude that the contingent characteristics of human *existence* prevent absolute equality. But justice requires that all accidental differences by which he meant sex, race, intelligence, strength, birth, ought not infringe upon *essential* equality. Therefore, all the structures which reinforce *essential* inequality were to be opposed. Fascism, monopolistic capitalism, class determined education all result in dehumanization, or the violation of the opportunity to express one’s power of being, and therefore they were opposed to justice.

Justice plays an important role in Tillich’s most profound socialist writing. *The Socialist Decision* was written in 1932 under the pressures of reactionary seizure of power in Berlin by Chancellor Franz von Papen and the romantic-revolutionary gains

---

12. *Id.*, *On Job*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1987, p. 91.

13. TILlich, “Grundlinien des Religiösen Sozialismus”, *Blätter für Religiösen Sozialismus*, IV Heft 8/100 (1923), Also, G.W. (1962), Vol. II. Translated James Luther Adams, ed. *Political Expectation*, New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1971.

14. *Id.*, *Christianity and Society*, Vol. 8, n° 4, 1943, pp. 10-20.

15. *Id.*, *The Socialist Decision*, translated by Franklin Sherman, New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1977.

16. *Id.*, *Christianity and Society*, Vol. 8, n° 4, 1943, p. 17.

17. *Ibid.*

by the Nazis. Neither party in Tillich's analysis represented the claims of justice. They both appealed to myths of the origins of life and not to a future shaped by the critique of justice. Tillich argued for an understanding of socialism that would be religious in its respect for the origins of being and prophetic in its insistence on justice. The symbol of the future is "expectation." Expectation expresses the direction of humanity, it is the power of human transformation. He finds the power of expectation in the longings of the proletariat to overcome the demonic conditions under which they survive. In the book the discussion of expectation is elaborately developed. It is a powerful precursor to the later theologies of hope. This development of expectation, which is a presentation of eschatology in secular-autonomous term obscures the importance of justice in the argument. Still justice, though not elaborated, is important. The call of the future is that of justice. Justice is the demand arising in human consciousness that calls for the future to be different. Justice requires expectation. Tillich puts it: "the ought is the fulfillment of the is. Justice is the true power of being"<sup>18</sup>.

Justice means: "the dignity of being free, of being the bearer of the fulfillment implied in the origin. This recognition of the equal dignity of the 'Thou' and the 'I' is justice"<sup>19</sup>. Here though not stated is the definition of justice as the second commandment of Jesus: "Love your neighbor as yourself." To the religious reader the trusting in expectation for the proletariat is similar to really living as if one expected an answer in history to the daily prayer "Thy Kingdom Come". Tillich's argument in the book depends upon the proletariat and the proletariat's ability to understand its possibilities of transforming its historical situation. The book is committed to the possibilities of the proletariat. Of course very few of the proletariat could have understood the book if they had read it. Nazi suppression of the book in 1933 made even the possible reading of it an impossibility.

Beyond the justice rooted in the I-Thou encounter, Tillich speaks of justice as the consent to the social contract. Justice is therefore necessary to power as distinct from force. Consent to power, in the long run, depends upon the recognition of justice.

Consent is given because those who assent to the exercise of power consider the way in which the unified will is executed to be just. The exercise of power appears to be just when all members of a society can acknowledge that their own will is contained in the will of the whole<sup>20</sup>.

Tillich perhaps overestimated the need for assent to a successful party's version of justice by other groups. The Nazis demonstrated the power of terror and force in dividing groups with alternative visions of justice competing for power. Tillich's hope in linking justice to power was to dissuade socialists from utopian politics of justice that neglected power. For him, "the problem of power proves to be the problem of a concrete justice"<sup>21</sup>. In his perspective, the Social Democrats had failed to "exercise

---

18. *Id.*, *The Socialist Decision*, p. 6.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 141.



and consolidate" power when it had come to them. Socialism in his view had been stronger in working on elaborating justice than it had been in exercising power. The state depends upon both justice and power and effective politics required an understanding of their mutual dependence. Justice for Tillich in this 1932 writing was the movement toward the classless society and the planned economy. It was antithetical both to the revolutionary Nazis and the reactionary Junkers. It depended upon the emergence of both a tougher and a more religious socialism. The failure of such a movement to emerge permitted the Nazis to win and consolidate power without justice and barbarism to reign on a formerly Christian Europe.

Tillich's 1954 work *Love, Power, and Justice* is his most systematic discussion of justice. Here he unites reflection on justice to two concepts on which he had worked for years, love and power. He attempted to find a way between realists who would reduce justice to the meaning of power and idealists who would assert the demands of justice without reference to power. He sought to overcome dichotomies in Protestant ethics between justice and love without collapsing them into each other.

The method of the volume may be confusing<sup>22</sup>. I would regard the method as that of conceptual analysis of basic categories of ethics and politics. Tillich asserts that such elaboration is the work of ontology. Consequently he calls what I would regard as conceptual analysis of terms that have ontological implications as well as other meanings, ontological analysis. Also much of the method is etymology, but Tillich in his search for "root" meanings of terms also regards this as ontology. This difference in naming the method Tillich uses does not vitiate the results for me. It does mean however that the following of Tillich's argument leaves the conclusions as to the relationship of love, power, and justice as one model reflecting several human even political decisions rather than seeing it as a conclusion necessarily rooted in the way things ultimately are. Tillich's Protestant principle forces him to agree with the above conclusion.

"Justice is the form in which the power of being actualizes itself<sup>23</sup>." All beings drive towards transcending themselves in Tillich's ontology. This drive toward transcendence produces competition, and justice is the form that allows creativity to be expressed without destroying the whole.

Tillich's discussion of justice is complete only if the whole book is comprehended. Even reflection on the whole book leaves a sense of incompleteness. The understanding of justice is dynamic and relative to each society. The argument of the book is in movement and a few sentences indicate Tillich knew it was not completed. Mark Thomas of Beloit College has engaged me in discussion regarding how we are to understand the text. After learning from his suggestions, it seems to me that the overarching principle of justice is love. This requires other principles including the adequacy of any understanding of justice to its particular historical situation. Equality

---

22. See: Alistair M. MACLEOD, *Paul Tillich: An Essay on the Role of Ontology in His Philosophical Theology*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973.

23. TILlich, *Love, Power and Justice*, p. 557.

as the second subsidiary principle has both its expression in hierarchy in which equals in rank are treated equally and its democratic expression in which all are recognized as equal in certain aspects of life. This equality is the recognition of the "demand to treat every person as a person." In liberal society the recognition of the principle of personality elevates liberty to the rank of "an essential principle of justice". If reflection on love is seen as central to justice then the principle of community, solidarity, comradeship or community is the context in which the unresolved tensions in the principles of equality and liberty are contained. So through Tillich's discussion we can see: adequacy, equality and liberty expressing the reality of human personality, and community as the four principles of justice based on the ontology of love<sup>24</sup>. All through the discussion of the principles of justice, Tillich can be seen analyzing the concepts as they appeared historically, but also stipulating his preferred meanings. The stipulations reflect his existentialist background and his protest against dehumanization.

The principles of justice are applied at various levels of justice. He lists the: a) intrinsic, b) tributive including 1) distributive, 2) attributive, and 3) retributive, and c) transforming. The transforming level of justice is where the Biblical roots of Tillich's discussion of justice are most clear. Creative or transforming justice is the form of reuniting love which does what is necessary for the reunion of beings.

Love does not do more than justice demands, but love is the ultimate principle of justice. Love reunites; justice preserves what is to be united. It is the form in which and through which love performs its work. Justice in its ultimate meaning is creative justice, and creative justice is the form of reuniting love<sup>25</sup>.

The background of Tillich's discussion of justice reaches through his entire thought, but perhaps has been said to provide a context for understanding his aim. The influence of Hegel is particularly strong in *Love, Power, and Justice* and the fragment on love is particularly in the background. Tillich's oft repeated statement that the relationship between theology and politics was the driving force of Hegel's system applies only a little less accurately to Tillich.

Tillich recognized the need for a socialist ethic while promoting socialism, but he did not write it. Consequently the term *justice* was underdeveloped in his most socialist period. Despite Garcia's claim for its centrality in liberation theology it appears there to be subsumed under the categories of liberation. Only in the older Tillich does it become a central term and here it is expressed as the form which allows life to flourish and not as a denunciation of the present. Tillich's discussion of justice can be read from his earlier commitments of passionate, religious socialism, but the book itself is not written that way. The formal presentation of justice, which the liberation theologians avoided, in Tillich seems to lose its force of moral indignation against the present. In this book, particularly, the absence of the proletariat is felt. Tillich did not find a proletariat in America and the force of his socialism was lost. He did not have the liberation special class of the poor. His groups are national groups not

24. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

classes in this writing. Tillich does not expect fulfillment in history, Gutiérrez demands social fulfillment and righteousness. It may be just this passionate zeal for overthrowing structures of injustice that prevented Gutiérrez from presenting an adequate formal definition.

## II. REVOLUTION

As a religious socialist Paul Tillich supported the revolution which ended the German Empire. He hoped that the revolution would both push the social changes in a socialist direction, and become more consciously a religious movement. He tried in the pre-Nazi period to defend the humanistic gains of the revolution, and in 1932 he urged it to deepen its socialist commitments. If one regards the Nazi coup of 1933 as a revolution, Tillich participated in losing a revolution. His urging the defeat of National Socialism from 1933–1945 could be seen as counter revolutionary struggle by a political exile. Though I would rather regard his efforts as continuation of the religious-socialist revolution which was never achieved.

In *The Systematic Theology*, revolution is discussed as part of historical ambiguity in relationships to the Kingdom of God. Sentences recall his fight with Emanuel Hirsch e.g. "Demonic consequences result from absolutizing the fragmentary fulfillment of the aim of history"<sup>26</sup>. Also the discussions of personal bitterness and the disruptions of human ties must refer to the conflicts with his friend turned enemy<sup>27</sup>. Other sentences are reminiscent of his own socialist revolutionary essay:

In such movements of expectation, however unrealistic they may be, the fighting Kingdom of God scores a victory against the power of complacency in different sociological and psychological forms<sup>28</sup>.

By the time of this volume he has lived a long time with revolution (1918–1963), and he can neither deny the hopes of revolutionaries nor expect the fulfillment of those hopes. He remembers his own excesses and also the power of hope. There is no general solution: the status quo movements and churches need the spirit of transformation, the prophetic movements and churches need the reminder of the ambiguity of history and of individual fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.

Revolutions are sometimes the only way to release new creativity. They may be crushed in counterrevolution, and suppression may mean less creativity than before the struggle. Tillich rejected the antirevolutionary bias of much of the tradition of the church while cautioning of the dangers of revolution<sup>29</sup>.

Gutiérrez regards theology of liberation as still in its early stages. It is a style of reflection in solidarity with the poor who are struggling to abolish injustice. It is in alliance often with Marxists. Its goal is to assist in building a new society. In the new

---

26. TILlich, *Systematic Theology*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1963, III, p. 390.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 343-344.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 388-389.

society the ownership of the means of production will not be in private nor foreign hands. Obviously in *A Theology of Liberation* a revolution overthrowing the present rulers was a goal. The theology itself will be verified:

by active, effective participation in the struggle which the exploited social classes have undertaken against their oppressors<sup>30</sup>.

Gutiérrez's early writing is clear enough to be understood advocating the church changing sides, raising consciousness, forming a critical-supportive theology of revolution by the poor. Often his own perspective is hidden in his exegesis of the revolutionary potential of the documents of Medellín and Puebla which he had a hand in writing. His advocacy of social revolution is clearest in his chapter "Towards a Transformation of Latin American Reality"<sup>31</sup>.

By the time *A Theology of Liberation* was published in English, his writing in Spanish eliminated any doubt as to his meaning<sup>32</sup>. The poor were being heard but only by those engaged in the revolutionary struggle against the Latin American order. The poor were to end the class society, appropriate the means of production, undertake their own political order, and engage in the creation of a new consciousness<sup>33</sup>. The coming into the revolutionary practice he described as "the *most important* fact in the life of the Latin American Christian community"<sup>34</sup>. Admitting some dependence on the theologies of revolution, Gutiérrez distinguishes the popular movements from such theologies. For here in the popular movements the thinking is by the people within the struggle rather than it being thought applied to the struggle. This distinction is not easily grasped, but it does I believe point to a distinction between Gutiérrez's theology of transformation and Tillich's philosophy of transformation.

Gutiérrez really is more of the people than Tillich ever was of the proletariat. Tillich's early ministry was with the proletariat, but his life was with the intellectuals after World War I. Gutiérrez's research and much of his teaching is with the poor. Of course the programs of both were dependent on the potency of the class for which they articulated socialism. Tillich's proletariat seemed to disappear in post-war America. Gutiérrez's poor seem unlikely to disappear in Latin America. Given the immediacy of the suffering, and the program of revolution, we need only to see if Gutiérrez maintains any of Tillich's sense of ambiguity about revolution. The ambiguity is not present in his early writing. The task of liberation theology was to assist Christians into the Latin American revolutionary process<sup>35</sup>.

In his later writing however the theme of joining the revolutionary process is muted. Obviously he cannot urge Christians to join the Shining Path which leads a

30. GUTIÉRREZ, *A Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, Orbis Press, 1971, p. 307.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-114.

32. *Id.*, *Power of the Poor*, p. 37. Essay first published in 1973 in Spanish.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 38. It is probable that this description of the goals of the revolutionary society is Gutiérrez's meaning of justice.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Id.*, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 301.

revolutionary struggle in his own country. The national security states have destroyed revolutionary movements throughout Latin America. A sadder, more contemplative Gutiérrez is read in his lectures in Peru in 1982, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*<sup>36</sup>. The mystic, non-activist writer Henri Nouwen wrote the introduction and seemed to value the spiritual crisis of Central America as “something more than political conflict”.

The turn toward spirituality was a possible development from *A Theology of Liberation*. It was only one possible development, he could have developed in terms of social ethics or deeper social analysis. But many have been killed and his writing reflects their martyrdoms, though he does not reflect on Che Gueverra and Camilio Torres as he did in his earlier work. My colleague Gonzalo Castillo speaks of a Gutiérrez evolving out of his emphasis on social revolution. Perhaps such an evolution is necessary as revolution in a socialist direction is not imminent and the persecution is terrible. The most recent book of meditations, *On Job*, has also dropped the theme of social revolution. There are cold winds of repression blowing from the Vatican. Finally, if the theology of liberation is to truly be the second act, it must wait upon social revolution in South America to mature before it can reflect upon it. He wrestles with *Job* finding there an innocent suffering but a book still calling one to join God in struggling for justice. The choice of *Job* rather than *Exodus* for commentary is significant, however. When he writes here of his Peruvian context, he writes of the incredible suffering, deprivation, terrorism, and oppression. Then he writes: “What we must deal with is not the past but, unfortunately, a cruel present and a dark tunnel with no apparent end”<sup>37</sup>.

Themes of *kairos* and *utopia* are still present in Gutiérrez’s writing, but they are muted. *Kairos* refers to a favorable time<sup>38</sup>, but the moment is of the Lord’s knocking on the doors of the Latin America church community calling it to solidarity, prayer, and deeper spirituality with the poor. The theme of *utopia* is still of a people building a new world, but the denunciation is more sorrowful than it was a decade earlier. The annunciation is not so clear. “The process is only beginning”<sup>39</sup>.

The muted nature of these once powerful themes is familiar to students of Tillich. *Kairos* and *utopia* in Gutiérrez both required the transformation of the condition of the poor. Likewise in Tillich the connection between the proletariat and socialism saved socialism from utopianism. Only through the transformation of the proletariat could socialism arise. In his later years, the waiting expectantly in the sacred void while fighting evil replaced the expectation of the transformation of the proletariat. *The Socialist Decision* and *A Theology of Liberation* are both affirmative of utopian politics even though Tillich avoids the term. His later affirming of the “spirit of utopia” while avoiding utopianism is more cautious. The religious socialism of the two remains much less demanding in their later years. In both cases it has been brutalized and defeated, in Tillich’s case by National Socialism, and for the present, in Gutiérrez’s

---

36. *Id.*, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, Maryknoll, Orbis Press, 1984.

37. *On Job*, p. 30.

38. *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, p. 136.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

case by the national security state in Chile, by terrorism and murder in other states, and by the dynamics of Peru.

The complexity and the richness of the minds of the two thinkers also contributed to their changing emphases. The frustration of religious socialism in Tillich's case freed him to evolve with more emphasis on psychology and religion and to write his *Systematic Theology*. In the case of Gutiérrez his more recent writings and speeches are emphasizing spirituality and ecclesiology. The Marxist analysis has faded and his solidarity between the poor and a renewed church is within the bounds of approved Vatican social teaching.

Still Gustavo's journey goes on<sup>40</sup>. At sixty, God willing, new insights from the poor of Lima will be fertilizing his mind. The fading of Marxist categories may lead to a more thoroughly indigenous, more thoroughly Christian, social philosophy in the increasingly stimulating Peruvian context of the Garcia administration.

The accounts of both Gustavo and Paulus reveal dynamic thinkers taking account of their times. Both agree that discussion of religious socialism requires sensitivity to the struggle of the under classes though they focus on different classes as the bearers of their hopes. Both reveal possibilities in a humane Marxism far removed from a dogmatic reading of Karl Marx or the cruelties of pre-Gorbachev Russian socialism. Both of them require socialism to be open to full religious expression of the people. Both of them are indigenous, we may say, existentialist thinkers. Together they reveal different forms of Christian-Marxist dialogue which the world needs for its health. The Christian-Marxist dialogue has possibilities for assisting the poor in their struggles and also for the promotion of peace among the more affluent. If the Soviet empire truly opens itself to full discussion new forms of conversation will emerge, but the already accomplished labors of Tillich and Gutiérrez can contribute to that conversation. The more socialist members of the Western alliance may find in their work contributions to their understanding of religion and socialism. The more capitalist members of the Western alliance can utilize their thought not as answers, but as needed perspectives on their continual transformation to more humane societies.

---

40. Robert MCAFFEE BROWN concludes his short biography of Gutiérrez with a chapter "There is no conclusion: the Curtain Stays Up, the Play Goes On and We Are on Stage." *Gustavo Gutiérrez*, Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1980. My use of his first name in this paragraph is deliberate, it expresses our friendship and sense of comradeship in hope and faith.