Studia Missionalia Svecana
Olle Kristenson

PASTOR IN THE SHADOW OF VIOLENCE
Gustavo Gutiérrez as a Public Pastoral Theologian in Peru
in the 1980s and 1990s

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the role of Gustavo Gutiérrez as a public pastor in the 1980s and 1990s in Peru. His collaboration with the Lima newspaper La República from the early 1980s gave him a figurative pulpit from which he addressed the Peruvian public on specific occasions. The fundamental question in the dissertation is: How did Gutiérrez respond as pastor to the Peruvian public and how did he express his pastoral concern?

The study analyses materials that has not been object for previous studies, such as theological essays and articles in newspapers and periodicals. With inspiration from discourse analysis four discourses have been identified in Gutiérrez’ texts. These discourses interact and through this interaction Gutiérrez formulates his pastoral message.

For the socio-political analysis two political discourses are used, the radical and the liberal. The radical political discourse deals with justice for the poor and liberation from oppression as a condition for peace and harmony in society, which are in focus for the liberal political discourse. With the Catholic theological discourse Gutiérrez sets the socio-political analysis in relation to Catholic doctrine and through the pastoral theological discourse he gives reason for hope and inspiration to action. As an advocate for a theology of life, Gutiérrez urges those who read and listen to him to break the pattern of death and opt for this theology of life. In his role as pastor, Gutiérrez speaks words of comfort and encouragement but also words of admonition and warning to those in power who have the capacity to transform society.

Keywords: Bartolomé de Las Casas, CELAM, discourse analysis, Christian hope, God of life, Gustavo Gutiérrez, hermeneutic of hope, human rights, institutionalised violence, La República, liberation theology, pastoral theology, political theology, political violence, preferential option for the poor, reconciliation, resurrection, theology of life, Roman Catholicism in Peru, Sendero Luminoso, social movements, Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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Abbreviations

AP       Acción Popular
Apra     Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana
APRODEH Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos
C90-NM   Cambio 90-Nueva Mayoría
CDA      Critical Discourse Analysis
CCD      Congreso Constitucional Democrático
CCP      Confederación Campesina del Perú
CEAPAZ   Centro de Estudios y Acción para la Paz
CEAS     Comisión Episcopal de Acción Social
CELAM    Conferencia general del Episcopado Latinoamericano
CELAM    Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano
Celadec  Comisión Evangélica, Latino Americana de Educación Cristiano
CEHILA   Comisión para el Estudio de la Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina
CEP      Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones
CGTP     Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú
CNA      Confederación Nacional Agraria
CNDDHH   Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos
COMISEDH Comisión de Derechos Humanos
CONADEH Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos
CRF      Comando Rodrigo Franco
CTP      Confederación de Trabajadores del Perú
CVR      Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliacion
DC       Democracia Cristiano
DEI      Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones
EATWOT   The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
FEDEPAZ Fundación Ecuménica para el Desarrollo y la Paz
Fredemo  Frente Democrático
IBC      Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas
IDL      Instituto de Defensa Legal
IEP      Instituto de Estudios Peruanos
IS      Izquierda Socialista
IPEDEHP Instituto Peruano de Educación en Derechos Humanos y la Paz
IU      Izquierda Unida
JOC     Juventud Obrera Cristiana
MPC     Movimiento de Profesionales Católicos
MRTA    Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru
NGO     Non-Governmental Organisation
NRSV    New Revised Standard Version
OAS     Organisation of American states
OFM     Ordo Fratrum Minorum (the Franciscan order)
OK-A    Olle Kristenson Archive
ONIS    Oficina Nacional de Información Social
OP      Ordo Preadicatorum (the Dominican order)
PCP-SL  Partido Comunista del Perú, por el Sendero Luminoso de José Carlos Mariátegui
PPC     Partido Popular Cristiano
PUCP    Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú
SEPEC   Servicio Ecuménico de Pastoral y Estudios de la Comunicación
SJ      Societas Jesu (the Jesuit order)
SODEPAX Society, Development and Peace
SUTEP   Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educación del Perú
TL      Teología de la Liberación
UCA     Universidad Centroamericana
UNEC    Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos
UNI     Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería
UPP     Unión por el Perú
WCC     World Council of Churches
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Olle Kristenson
Introduction

We live in a time that for many people is both threatening and terrifying. Climate crisis, irreconcilable conflicts between nations and ethnic groups, economic injustice and seemingly widening gaps between rich and poor create desperation and resignation in vast sectors of the global population. After the dramatic events of 11 September, 2001 many people are obsessed and blinded by the so-called war against terrorism that has become a guiding principle in their worldview. Every time we board an aeroplane we are reminded of this by security checks. In the search for suspected terrorists fundamental human rights are often put aside.

Is there any hope at all for humanity? In such a situation the most important role of the church is perhaps to give reason for hope and encourage people to respond to both desperation and resignation.

My intention with this dissertation is to present a case study of a situation that for many was, and unfortunately still continues to be, characterised by resignation and despair, particularly by those who are poor and insignificant in society. This situation was characterised not least by a political violence constituted by terror attacks of armed opposition groups and the repressive response by the authorities that put the civilian population in crossfire. We who experienced this firsthand were blinded by the violence and terrified for our own security, which made it difficult to see with clear eyes. In this context I will present a priest who in his pastoral work saw, as one of his priorities, giving reasons to hope as a necessary response to respond to a desperate situation. His message was primarily aimed at his local parish but also for a wider context reaching the entire nation and perhaps even people all over the globe.

My wife Carin and I were sent by the Church of Sweden in February 1987 to work as commissioned co-workers in Peru with people related to Christian grassroots organisations. During our time in Peru, we were privileged to enjoy a close relation with Father Gustavo Gutiérrez and the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas where Carin worked for more than six years. We could personally listen to his preaching and his lectures in a time that was violent, confusing and where hope was hard to find. Through his proclamation Gutiérrez gave reason to hope and encouraged people to commitment and resistance in spite of the desperate situation.

Since my return to Sweden in June 1995 I have lived with and reflected upon Gutiérrez’ texts and tried to understand how he managed to give rea-
sons for hope and resistance in such a situation. How he succeeded to create hope in a time of violence and despair is the fundamental question in this dissertation.

No one that lived in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s was unaffected by the political violence that took the nation to the edge of civil war. Around 1990 half of the country was under marshal law; electric power cuts were frequent due to attacks against power stations. For more than a year these shortcuts were scheduled daily in Lima lasting for eight to sixteen hours. All who lived in Peru had to adjust to these circumstances, but more significantly hundreds of thousands directly affected by violence had to leave their homes and thus became internal refugees.

How could people give witness to Christian hope in this situation, in the midst of uncertainty and despair? How did people get strength to confront the fear and daily despair? For deeply committed Christians, the answer was quite simple: Jesus Christ, who through his death and resurrection has overcome the powers of destruction, is the reason for hope and this hope gave courage to live and confront fear and despair.

I often think of Sra María Reyna from the small Lutheran congregation Luz Divina in Márquez, Callao just outside Lima. She left her village in the Ayacucho region in 1985 as a consequence of the political violence. People in Ayacucho were terrified because there were no police stations, nor clinics or pharmacies. She had experienced this from her childhood. People felt that they had been abandoned and neglected by a government that never concerned itself about the people in the countryside. Sra Reyna thought that this was an immense violence against the countryside. People were not seen as human beings by those in power but as animals to be persecuted. This was not how it should be, because she strongly believed that God created all human beings alike.

The tense political situation directly affected her family. Her brother was captured and erroneously accused of being a terrorist. Her brother, a father of three, was imprisoned for four years without a trial. The reason for his imprisonment was that he provided food for somebody who came to his home. As a result of this incarceration his marriage was destroyed, his children were dispersed, and his wife married another man. No wonder Sra Reyna almost lost her faith in justice.¹

Sra Reyna shared her experiences with the other women in Luz Divina. Together they supported each other to grow in faith and share it with others. Their trust in God gave them not only comfort but also strength to overcome despair and fear. One of them, Sra Consuelo Trigo de Breiding writes in a lovely poem:

¹ Sepec 1992a, p. 45.
I do not fear death,  
for how many times have I already died  
of worry, of revulsion.  
I fear the life that comes after me.  
I weep in silence for this world  
of mine and those who stay behind  
to see the harsh things  
that life sometimes gives us.  
But for all that  
I find support in my faith, my sorrow  
and all the others, since  
from God life comes to me.  
I want to give it only to Him.\(^2\)

This dissertation deals mainly with the Peruvian context in a time of uncertainty and despair in which people tried to adjust themselves to a situation where terrorist and repressive violence worsened the daily life of the poor. In this situation committed Christians were inspired and guided by their faith. I believe that the Peruvian experience can be relevant for other situations where people experience systemic violence.

One of the theologians that took a leading position to encourage and give reason to hope was Gustavo Gutiérrez. Like every other Peruvian he was affected by the violence. He met people that suffered from violence both in his own parish and from other Christian communities from all of Peru.

Is there a need for another book on liberation theology in general and on the theology of its Peruvian nestor Gustavo Gutiérrez in particular? I believe there is a need as I consider it important to show how he responded to a situation that is familiar to many people in our world. By doing this, an aspect of Gutiérrez the theologian is sketched that might not be so well known outside Peru.

The focus of the study: Gutiérrez’ appearances in political public debate

When Gustavo Gutiérrez interprets the text about the widow’s mite (Mark 12:41ff, par)\(^3\) his emphasis is not on the offering of the widow but on the strategic option of Jesus to sit down opposite the treasury. According to Gutiérrez this option was based on what might be called a socio-political analysis of society. It would have been possible for Jesus to choose another place, another gate to stand and watch the people. But then he and the disci-

\[^2\] Trigo de Breiding and Trinidad Chirinos 1994, p. 36.

\[^3\] I have heard Gutiérrez speak of this twice. Once in a meeting with a group from the Church of Sweden central office in Uppsala (September 2002) and again at a retreat in Lima (January 2007).
ples would not have seen the widow. This was a strategic option; it made it possible for Jesus and his disciples to observe reality from this specific perspective and analyse the causes behind unjust structures in society. It is essential to know where to stand in order to be able to observe properly what takes place. According to Gutiérrez’ reflection, this is one of the tasks of the church, to make strategic options and to know where to be in a critical moment. In order to proclaim the gospel the church has to know how to locate itself in order to reach people.

The text about the widow’s mite also illustrates Gutiérrez’ own methodology. In this dissertation I will focus on how his theological reflection interacts with his analysis of the socio-political context. Gutiérrez says that in order to announce the Word of God it is necessary to know the people and their situation, to whom the message is directed. According to him it is essential for the church to see and interpret reality “precisely in order to be able to transform it”; this is a question about the fidelity of the church to the message of Christ.4

This dissertation aims at an analysis of Gutiérrez’ pastoral theological reflection during the two last decades of the last century. Doing theology, or “to speak about God” as Gutiérrez frequently says, can never be static, it is presented “in a constantly changing historical reality”.5

The dissertation covers a period in contemporary Peruvian history deeply affected by the political violence, which I will briefly sketch in Chapter 1.6 The violence perpetrated by the two armed opposition groups, Sendero Luminoso and the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA), and the governmental counterinsurgency strategy caused almost 70 000 deaths and disappearances8 and brought the country to the edge of civil war around 1990.

The political violence deeply affected most sectors of Peruvian society. For Gutiérrez, it made him emphasise certain themes in his theology, which can be detected in his writings. His formulation of the fundamental theological question is an evident response to the violence: How shall we make theology while Ayacucho is going on?9 It is thus possible to say that the politi-

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4 “[...]... para poder contribuir a transformarlas”, Gutiérrez 1984b.
4 With ‘political violence’ in this dissertation, I refer to the state of internal war in Peru during the 1980s and 1990s as consequence of the violence used by Sendero Luminoso and MRTA and the repressive response by the Peruvian authorities.
4 This is the term used in a document from Amnesty International, Peru: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission – a first step towards a country without injustice from 26 August, 2004.
4 This figure comes from the report presented by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission in August 2003, CVR 2003a. The whole report can be downloaded from the website of the commission: http://www.cverdad.org.pe
4 One of first times he formulated this question was in the concluding chapter of Gutiérrez 1986a, p. 222-223 (p. 102). I will come back to this expression below, see for instance Chapter 2, p. 98-99. Ayacucho in the Southern highlands was the most affected region by the po-
cal violence sharpened the way Gutiérrez formulated what he considered to be the fundamental theological question.

When Gutiérrez started to contribute to the newspaper *La República* in 1984 with theological essays and reflections, he became an important voice in the public debate, not least in relation to the political context. From this position he took an informal Christian leadership that had an impact on society in general and Christian communities in particular, both Catholic and Protestants. His general message was to meet people in the situation of violence and give reason for hope. Gradually he became pastor of the nation.

### Stating the problem

I formulate my problem in relation to how Gutiérrez responds to the question how to speak about God in a specific situation. For Gutiérrez this emerges from a pastoral concern grounded in his own experience of being pastor in Peruvian society. Therefore both the question and the way he responded to it is ultimately pastorally motivated for him. In the chaotic situation of political violence in Peru, Gutiérrez as a committed pastor saw a need for the church to respond pastorally to the agony of the population and give reason to hope, which he responded to.

We can call this pastoral message “public counselling”, 10 which is something different in relation to personal counselling and confession. Gutiérrez’ personal counselling is for obvious reasons beyond the reach of this research, but the public counselling can be assessed through the material I analyse. This public counselling is carried out, as we will see, in written essays and reflections but also in homilies.

Gutiérrez’ most productive time of writing, the 1980s and 1990s, coincided with this tense and violent situation in Peru. Most of what he wrote in this period directly or indirectly reflected the violent situation. To say that this influenced his theological reflection is of course an understatement. Therefore it is surprising that there is a scarcity of research of the interrelationship between the socio-political context and Gutiérrez’ theological reflection.

This dissertation is aimed to fill this gap and focuses on three things that have not been focused in previous Gutiérrez research:

1. I will connect Gutiérrez’ theological reflection with specific political events in a critical time in Peru. This shows the importance of the socio-political context in his theology and its pastoral response.

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10 The expression is mine and I relate it to public intervention by Gutiérrez.
2. I will point to Gutiérrez first and foremost as a pastoral theologian. Some researchers have acknowledged him as pastoral theologian, but they do not normally develop their analysis of Gutiérrez as pastor.

3. For this purpose I will use material that previously has not been used by researchers in their analysis of Gutiérrez’ theology, namely essays and articles in newspapers and periodicals.

My fundamental question is: How did Gutiérrez respond as a pastor to the Peruvian public and how did he express his pastoral concern? To grasp this general question I have identified the following guiding questions:

- How can the church respond to people in despair, as society is close to collapse?
- What kind of explanations does Gutiérrez offer to the present situations?
- What is his concrete message to specific groups in Peruvian society?
- How does Gutiérrez proclaim the gospel of hope in a situation characterised by death and unjust structures?
- What motifs does Gutiérrez develop to give reason for hope?

Gutiérrez – Pastor of the Nation

To the theological world Gutiérrez is probably best known as one of the “fathers of liberation theology” and author of the epoch-making *Teología de la Liberación* (1971). Together with his other books, numerous articles and theological essays he has gained a reputation as one of the most influential contemporary theologians. Many dissertations have been written about different aspects of his theological reflection. In most of them it is the academic theologian who is presented and analysed. He has a given place among the foremost 20th century theologians and possibly also one that will be of importance for theologians in the future.

There is, however, another Gutiérrez not as well known as the academic theologian and that is the pastor. Some researchers point to the pastoral perspective in Gutiérrez’ theology, but they do it mostly en passant. To some extent this is ironic since Gutiérrez has always strived to be first and foremost a pastor: “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 accompaniment.”

11 “Siempre he creído que como sacerdote, mi trabajo es fundamentalmente pastoral, de acompañamiento a la vida y a la marcha de un pueblo y de intento de anunciar el Evangelio desde ese acompañamineto.” Gutiérrez in Campos 1984a.
Pastoral theology

In Catholic tradition Pastoral theology is first of all “the general designation for the science of the care of souls”. This academic discipline is aimed at training the priestly candidates to fulfil the priestly ministry that traditionally is derived from a threefold office of teacher, shepherd and sanctifier (that is of the sacraments).

Heinz Schuster develops this and stresses that pastoral theology cannot be said to be “purely and simply a doctrine of the priestly office”. This “mis-conception” is a result of a “clericalist approach” in which “interest was directed solely to the situation of the individual ‘pastor’ and his activities”. Instead pastoral theology understood in this sense “can only regard the contemporary situation at any given time as the inescapable summons of God to the Church, reminding it of its ever new task of formulating and announcing the gospel of Jesus for – not against – human society as it exists here and now”. This perspective means that the contemporary situation is not just a question concerning a socio-political analysis for the church; it is a direct call from God to preach the gospel in that specific situation. When Schuster later states that “the primary aim of pastoral theology […] is […] the planning of the Church’s action for the present and the future”, it must be understood that the socio-political analysis is implicit in this planning.

For Schuster the socio-political analysis of the context is a sociological issue that necessarily has a theological character; it is a theological task that leads him to speak about a “social-theological analysis” that must be undertaken in order to set up a pastoral theology. In this pastoral theology three groups of questions must be established, questions that by definition are interrelated: questions that are related to the situation of the contemporary world as a whole such as a world-wide church, questions that relate to the structures of a specific society and finally questions related to the structures of the individual. Thus in Schuster’s view, the situation of the individual cannot be isolated from the universal or the national arena or vice versa. We will see that this view is present in the texts of Gutiérrez.

In liberation theology pastoral theology can be interpreted as a theology that “projects the light of the salvific word on the reality of injustices in order to animate the church to take part in the struggle of liberation”. It is also obvious that what has been called the “liberating pastoral” is the most impor-

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15 Schuster 1977, p. 1180.
16 Schuster 1977, p. 1181.
17 Schuster 1977, p. 1181.
18 “[…] proyecta la luz de la palabra salvadora sobre la realidad de las injusticias en orden a la animación eclesial en la lucha de liberación”, Boff, C, 1993, p. 96.
tant characteristic in formulating the praxis of liberation theology;\textsuperscript{19} a liberat-
ing pastoral that is traced back to the documents of Vatican II.\textsuperscript{20} I am sug-
gest ing that this interpretation of pastoral theology in liberation theology is very close to what Schuster suggests.

Pastoral theology can be manifested in the pastoral ministry.\textsuperscript{21} As a “ser-
vice of salvation” this ministry can be said to be “embodied in the proclama-
tion of the faith, the liturgy, the Christian service of the world and the gov-
ernment of the Church”; in this scheme preaching is considered the first
phase of proclamation.\textsuperscript{22} For obvious reasons my focus lies in the proclama-
tion, not so much because the “proclamation of the gospel is the primary
pastoral ministry”\textsuperscript{,23} but because it is the preaching in a figurate meaning of
Gutiérrez that is approachable through the material available; it is this
preaching in a broad sense that interests me. Viktor Schurr says that preach-
ing is not so much a question of pure biblical commentary, rather making
“the word of God audible in a given situation” where the situation is inter-
preted in light of the word of God.\textsuperscript{24} Implicitly this means that it is essential
to analyse and understand the actual socio-political context and make a theo-
logical assessment of it; that is what Schuster called social-theological
analysis.

From a different perspective – that of feminist and womanist pastoral the-
ology – Bonnie J Miller-McLemore and Brita L Gill-Austern state that in the
last ten to twenty years “the focus of pastoral theology has shifted dramati-
cally from care defined as counselling to care understood within a wider
social, political and religious context”.\textsuperscript{25} In their opinion, pastoral theology is
not to be seen only as a bridge between psychology and theology but also
“envisioned as portaging between theory and practice, the \textit{ekklesia} and the
academy, feminist theory and theology, aesthetics and teaching, and dynam-
ics of race and dynamics of gender”.\textsuperscript{26}

This perspective can be said to be implicit in both Schuster and Schurr,
but not as clearly stated as here. That pastoral theology must be understood
in relation to the socio-political context and that it has political implications
is fundamental for my reading of Gutiérrez. It is also essential for this posi-
tion to keep in mind the interrelationship between theory and practice as well

\textsuperscript{19} I consider the introduction in the \textit{Teología de la Liberación} illustrative in this respect: “This
book is an attempt at reflection, based on the gospel and the experiences of men and women
committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America.
It is a theological reflection born out of the experience of shared efforts to abolish the current
unjust situation and to build a different society, freer and more human.” Gutiérrez 1988, p. 61
(p. 1).
\textsuperscript{20} Antoncich 1993, p. 148-155. Antoncich refers above all to \textit{Gaudium et spes}.
\textsuperscript{21} See Schurr 1977, p. 1171-1178.
\textsuperscript{22} Schurr 1977, p. 1176.
\textsuperscript{23} Schurr 1977, p. 1176.
\textsuperscript{24} Schurr 1977, p. 1176-1177.
\textsuperscript{25} Miller-McLemore and Gill-Austern 1999, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{26} Miller-McLemore and Gill-Austern 1999, p. 12.
as the necessary dynamic interrelationship between the Christian community, the ekklesia, and the academy.

Gutiérrez as pastor

Gutiérrez was first chaplain to the Catholic students association, Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos (UNEC), in the 1960s and later to the Catholic movement of professionals, Movimiento de Profesionales Católicos (MPC) from the 1970s onwards. His role as pastor has above all been exercised in the Cristo Redentor church in Rimac from 1980 to 1998. Most of his intellectual theological reflection and writing has its origin in this pastoral work with students, professionals and, above all, with the members of his predominantly poor parish in Rimac. His pastoral work precedes the theological reflection in his books and other writings; theological reflection is only the second step (acto segundo); first comes praxis (acto primero).

It was difficult for an outsider to come close to his pastoral work in Rimac. His engagement in the network of the catholic professionals is different and I was invited to become part of it when we lived in Peru. One of its members once commented that he considered Gutiérrez to be “a friend and pastor” (amigo pastor). This movement serves as a community where its members support each other in family business as well as in professional matters and even in political affairs where Gutiérrez is an important reference. The last Sunday of every month they celebrate the Eucharist together with Gutiérrez as presiding priest if he is in Lima; around 50 people normally participate. For the celebration of Christmas and Easter 300 to 500 people participate. In addition to this the group meets for retreats led by Gutiérrez once or twice a year and for seminars and workshops.

The foundation for the position of Gutiérrez as pastor for Peruvian society was already laid in the 1960s through his role as chaplain for UNEC. In his work with the students he met many of those who would hold leading positions both within the political and academic circles of Peru. As a lecturer at the Catholic university in Lima he also established relations with intellectuals who were not active in the church; some would not even consider themselves to be Christians.

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27 I prefer to speak about community instead of parish as it is obvious that Gutiérrez is pastor not only of his parish but of other Christian communities. A Christian community can, for instance, be those assembled for a memorial service or even the readers of his essays and reflections.

28 I once asked his permission to visit the church and listen to him preaching there, but he kindly explained to me that he preferred not to expose his parish to foreign visitors. Although he added that if someone from his parish would invite me, I would be welcome. I have visited his parish only once and that was to fetch him for a lecture at a workshop.

29 Some of its members have been ministers in different governments or members of parliament.
Gutiérrez’ social commitment followed a concern that was initiated by the Peruvian Bishops Conference and highly supported by Cardinal Juan Landázuri Ricketts (1913-1997), archbishop in Lima. The Peruvian episcopate was highly committed to social issues in the 1960s and early 70s and young priests were encouraged to take part. There are numerous examples of statements and actions taken by the Peruvian hierarchy, local priests and religious movements in the 1960s and 1970s concerning a variety of societal issues such as human rights, workers’ rights, etc.30 Things began to change by the second half of the 1970s due to elections of new leadership within the Peruvian hierarchy. The election of Pope John Paul II in 1978 reinforced this conservative shift. But the church was still respected by vast sectors in Peruvian society even if its leadership did not speak with the same clear voice in the 1980s and 1990s. Bishops, for instance, became less visible in the struggle for human rights in the 1990s than before.

It is against the background of political violence and repression that I will depict the role of Gutiérrez in this period. He was well known both in ecclesial and secular circles in Peru, but in the mid 1980s he took up a new kind of national leadership that responded to the uncertainty resulting from accelerating political violence. He had written several essays and articles about the church and its commitment to social issues in the 1960s and 1970s, but mostly in church related magazines and journals. An interview published in the then newly established newspaper La República on 20 April, 198431 opened up a new kind of relationship that was to become important. In this interview Gutiérrez admits that he might have remained silent for some time due to his pastoral work in Rimac. The journalist asked him if he was aware that the media could be an “immense pulpit”. Gutiérrez responded that this was true, but he had not thought so much of this before. Later the same year his first essay in the newspaper was published.32 For the editors of La República33 Gutiérrez was an important voice from the church that was able to guide their readers.

31 Campos 1984a.
32 Gutiérrez 1984b and c.
33 La República was founded in November 1981 by a group engineers and economists; some were centre-right oriented, headed by the economist Javier Silva Rueto, and some were centre-left oriented around the engineer and businessman Gustavo Mohme Llona, who later became Member of Parliament for the leftist electoral alliance Izquierda Unida (IU). He died at the age of 70 in 2000 under circumstances that still have not been clarified. The political
La República kept its pages open for Gutiérrez on several occasions. Some texts were written on his own initiative as central essays in crucial moments; some of these will be discussed in this dissertation. On other occasions the editors asked him about texts, the latter include his reflections for the main Christian celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. The newspaper often referred to these reflections in their editorial, especially at Christmas.

The editors of La República were searching for a voice of the church that people would listen to and that shared the basic ideology of the newspaper. Gutiérrez fitted well with their plans. For Gutiérrez this was something new; his pastoral theological reflection was now made public in the mass media with a possible reach that extended far beyond ecclesial circles.

Simultaneously the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas (IBC) that Gutiérrez had founded in 1975 together with the publishing house Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones (CEP), created the bi-weekly bulletin Informativo in 1980 which changed its name to Signos a few years later. With this bulletin the editors hoped to reach people in the Christian base communities; lay people, priests and other pastoral agents. After only a year Gutiérrez began to collaborate with a reflection on the three readings from one of the actual Sundays of the Roman Catholic calendar.

These two news media came to be efficient means for Gutiérrez to reach both the Peruvian public in general and progressive ecclesial circles.

position of La República has for most of its existence been linked to some groups within the IU with some influence from the Apra party. It was in the 1980s and in the 1990s that it rose to prominence as one of the most important forms of media for the political opposition. It reached a circulation of up to 200 000 copies during these years. In the 2000s it had lost some of its importance and the circulation dropped to around 50 000. Its readers have normally been from the middleclass and lower middleclass, and can be said to represent an “alternative establishment” to quote Mirko Lauer who has been a collaborator with the newspaper almost from the beginning and is now member of the editorial council. Interview with Lauer 17 January, 2007, OK-A 16.

34 Gutiérrez has collaborated with La República almost from its start. There was an interest from the direction of the newspaper to involve him as they had an interest to reach the progressive part of the church linked to liberation theology and Mirko Lauer, who had been a student of Gutiérrez in the 1960s, was one of those who invited Gutiérrez to write for them. Gutiérrez points to his friendship with Mohme as the reason for his collaboration with the newspaper. Gutiérrez’ first contribution was a theological reflection on Good Friday 20 April, 1984 titled La hora de Jesus, Gutiérrez 1984a, the same day Campos’ interview was published. According to Lauer it is often Gutiérrez himself who decides the strategy of when to publish something he has written; while at other times La República invites him to write, e.g. for the great Christian celebrations Christmas and Holy week. But there can be no doubt that there is a mutual interest for both Gutiérrez and the newspaper that he collaborates with the paper. Gutiérrez has explained the agreement with La República. The paper will not change or shorten the text without thoroughly discussing it with him first; he had thought about possible cuts in the text by the publisher. Interview with Gutiérrez 18 January, 2007, OK-A 10c.

35 Some of these reflections were also published in La República. Most of them were later edited and supplemented with new reflections to complete the whole Roman Catholic readings for Sundays and holidays in the liturgical year and published in Gutiérrez 1995a.
Through his contacts with people from different levels in Peruvian society, Gutiérrez was invited to officiate several liturgical celebrations. These often had symbolic value such as memorial services for victims of the political violence. He became an invited lecturer and panellist to many seminars that dealt with the contemporary socio-political context. He was familiar with politicians, academic scholars and intellectuals and he often discussed with them both privately and in public. His role was that of the pastoral theologian, the priest, and his concern was a pastoral concern. So he became not only a pastor for his local parish and for the movements to which he served as chaplain but also for vast sectors of Peruvian society. That is why I have chosen to call him *pastor of the nation*.

**Peru as category for Gutiérrez**

In the texts I analyse in this dissertation Gutiérrez has a specific focus on Peru as a nation. His address is inclusive and he repeatedly stresses this by using expressions such as “our nation”, “our country” and “our people”. It is, however, not unproblematic for Gutiérrez to speak of Peru as a nation. He analyses and discusses this in his texts. Peru is to him a divided and fragmented country with gaps between sectors in society and this can be noted in how he addresses Peru and its people as a nation. Even though there is a kind of economic development and some people have been able to improve their conditions of life, poverty remains one of the most difficult problems and the gap between the poorest and the rich is widening.

In a round table discussion in December 1990, Gutiérrez said that “it is impossible to construct a nation and a fatherland for all when there is marginalisation and injustice for the majority”. Coming to the end of the discussion he came back to the issue: “How can we make a fatherland for all? Is it possible in this country to construct a fatherland for all without hiding the differences and inequalities today? Lies never build up. I believe that we have to see face to face what is happening today in our country, but it is true that that this demands energy from all sides.”

When we speak of Gutiérrez as “pastor of the nation” it is fundamental to have this in mind. His frequent talk of poverty as the breeding ground for most kinds of violence is his way of stressing this fact. In all his writing there is a striving to remind the nation’s rich of the poor and their situation.

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36 Published as a supplement with the title “Seis horas con el siglo XX” in the right wing magazine *Oiga* 7 January, 1991.

37 “Es imposible construir un país y una patria para todos sobre la marginación y la injusticia de la mayoría.” *Oiga* 1991, p. 20.

38 “¿Cómo hacer una patria para todos? ¿Será posible en este país construir todas una patria para todos, no ocultando las diferencias hoy día y las desigualdades? La mentira no construye. Creo que hay que mirar cara a cara lo que hoy día pasa en nuestro país, pero es verdad que se requieren energías de todos los lados.” *Oiga* 1991, p. 24.
For Gutiérrez to speak of “our country” or “our nation” has nothing to do with a romantic notion of the nation possessing a “soul” different from that of other nations; it is not nationalism and has no metaphysical overtones. Peru is for him a political entity and Peru as a nation means those who have a Peruvian citizenship. But Gutiérrez has an inclusive view of a nation; he is concerned about the gaps between rich and poor in Peruvian society. It is difficult to speak of Peru as a nation as long as vast sectors of the country are excluded due to poverty and injustice. A “good” nation must be characterised by a just distribution of its resources.39

Gutiérrez’ theology – a pastoral theology

Gutiérrez’ theology, not least in the way we meet him in this dissertation, is a pastoral theology. My reading of Gutiérrez that I present in the dissertation is his role as pastor, a pastor who wants to comfort and capacitate the people to whom he addresses himself. He is the pastor in his local parish and for the members of various networks. He is a pastor for the families who invite him to be the priest of family celebrations. But he also becomes a pastor on a national level as he approaches the whole population in the national trauma constituted by political violence.

I can see two functions in Gutiérrez’ essays and reflections: first, it is a question of pastoral advice to support and strengthen the readers and, second, it aims to give elements for other priests and pastoral agents in their pastoral work to respond to people’s needs in specific situations. In his homilies on family occasions we can trace the same pattern; it is words of consolation for the relatives but also for a traumatised population.

Gutiérrez’ pastoral theology reflects a praxis that comes out of his interpretation of being a priest. Pastoral theology in this aspect would respond to how Gutiérrez strives to exercise his mission of being pastor in a specific situation with a focus on the relation between the pastor and the community.

In Gutiérrez’ reflection, theology is a way of talking about God.40 The fundamental theological question for Gutiérrez is how to speak about God in a world where there is poverty and injustice. As Gutiérrez points out, all theology is ultimately pastoral theology as every problem it aims to respond to is a pastoral concern.41

39 This can be underlined by the fact that in two of the texts examined below, Chapter 3, p. 124 and 142 as Gutiérrez refers to the fact that the Spanish nación and nacer (‘to be born’) are derived from the same Latin word. In this thinking people who are born in a particular area belong to the same nation.

40 This can above all be seen in Gutiérrez 1986a, with its title Hablar de Dios (‘To speak about God’).

41 Stressed by Gutiérrez in my interview with him on 1 February, 2008, OK-A 10d.
Material

The intervention of Gutiérrez in the public debate as a response to the political violence of Peru in the 1980s and 1990s and his pastoral commitment in this context provide elements for a more comprehensive reading of his works which supplements the common understanding of Gutiérrez. There are references to the political violence in some of his books, but mostly as an issue in the wider socio-political context. The essays give a more complete picture.

Even if Gutiérrez considers himself as an “oral person”42, the written material of Gutiérrez is quite extensive and contains numerous books, essays and articles in daily newspapers and magazines, published interviews, lectures, etc. A bibliography, published by the National library in Lima in 2004, contains 1778 items and this is probably not complete.43 This means that it is almost impossible to get a complete picture of his production; especially if we have in mind what Robert McAfee Brown declared in his bibliography: “Gustavo’s own writings are a bibliographer’s nightmare. He (understandably) uses similar lecture materials on different occasions in different parts of the world; one of these will be published in a given country and then a somewhat similar, but not identical, lecture will be published in another country. […] The disentangling of these sources makes the ‘synoptic problem’ in New Testament scholarship seem like child’s play in comparison.”44

Much of Gutiérrez’ written materials were initially lectures, homilies, or biblical reflections that were later published as essays or articles. Some of this material was later developed in his books; most of his books are in fact extended lectures, lectures that have been structured into articles and essays before they became books. This is the way Gutiérrez normally proceeds and many researchers have noted this, but few have used his original texts in relation to how they were written within a specific moment and context.45

It is through his pastoral concern that Gutiérrez continues to systematise and develop his theological reflection. Gutiérrez says something in a specific situation, something that can be directed very precisely to people directly affected by a particular situation as will be seen, for instance, in two homilies from memorial masses. At the same time he directs his message to the entire Peruvian population.

The period chosen for the dissertation (1980-2000) was profoundly marked by the political violence in Peru. This period also became the most

42 This expression is taken from my interview with Gutiérrez on 23 April, 2003, OK-A 10b.
43 Gustavo Gutiérrez – Bibliografía (Biblioteca Nacional del Perú 2004), lists 733 books, essays or articles, 55 lectures, discourses or homilies, 233 interviews, 94 homages, 278 references and dissertations and 385 book reviews.
44 McAfee Brown 1990, p. 185.
45 Rieger makes the following comment in his dissertation: “Gutiérrez’ published articles tend to be overlapping, up to the point that whole sections are repeated literally, but at the same time also constantly reworking what has been said earlier.” Rieger 1994, p. 156.
productive period in Gutiérrez’ writing with the composition of several books and an innumerable number of essays and articles.

In the dissertation I mainly deal with texts by Gutiérrez from this period. I focus on texts that address people in concrete situations. These published texts are occasionally supplemented with interviews, both published and my own interviews. The material I use is mainly essays, articles and theological reflections first published in *La República, Páginas* or *Signos*, some have even been published in all three. The readers of *Páginas* are mainly church related people who are academically trained. *Signos* is more directed to the grassroots in the Christian base communities. The essays and articles in *La República* were intended for intellectuals and activists who were not necessarily practising Catholics.

The dissertation focuses on the theological essays and reflections by Gutiérrez published in *La República* where the interaction between the socio-political context and the theological reflection of Gutiérrez becomes

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46 In the 1970s apart from *Teología de la Liberación* 1971, he wrote the booklet *Líneas Pastorales de la Iglesia en América Latina* (1970) and *La Fuerza Histórica de los Pobres* (1979), which is a collection of essays from the 1970s. During the 1980s and 1990s he published the following books: *El Dios de la Vida* (1982; 1989), a book that is dedicated Monsignor Romero and reflects the death of various Latin American martyrs; *Beber de su Propio Pozo* (1983, new edition 2004), a book that is basically about Latin American spirituality from the perspective of liberation theology; *Hablaron de Dios – desde el sufrimiento del inocente* (1986), a book in which the agony of the Peruvian people suffering, especially in Ayacucho, during the political violence challenges the theological reflection; *La Verdad los hará libres* (1986), a book that contains the dialogue from the event at the Dominican university in Lyon 1985 where Gutiérrez obtained his doctoral degree in theology; *Dios o el Oro en las Indias* (1989), a book that was the first result of Gutiérrez’ research on Bartolomé de Las Casas; *Entre las Calandrias* (1990), a book that is an analysis of the Peruvian author and anthropologist José María Arguedas; *En Busca de los Pobres de Jesucristo* (1992), a well-documented monograph of more than 600 pages about the most famous defender of the indigenous population of the Americas in the 16th century; *Compartir la palabra* (1995), a collection of theological reflections for the whole Roman Catholic liturgical year; *Densidad del presente* (1996), a collection of essays and articles from the 1980s and early 1990s.

47 Published bimonthly in Lima by CEP. Without doubt *Páginas* is in an exceptional position. The publication in *Páginas* is important since Gutiérrez and the people around him consider these articles as central in his theological reflection. Essays and lectures considered to be crucial and programmatic for his theology normally appear in *Páginas*. For the understanding of his theology, these essays are almost as important as his books. Some of the essays were originally first published in *Páginas*, others were published elsewhere before subsequently appearing in *Páginas* and some are simply published lectures. Most of the ideas in his books have first appeared as essays in *Páginas*, even some of the key ideas in *En Busca de los Pobres de Jesucristo* noted above. One can say that publication in *Páginas* for Gutiérrez is a way of introducing and testing new ideas in his theological reflection. *Páginas* has also been the place were key lectures of Gutiérrez, especially in recent years, were first published.

48 This bulletin was originally biweekly but is since 2004 monthly and is jointly published by the IBC and the CEP. *Signos* is of interest for its publication of biblical reflections for the liturgical year which were recompiled in *Compartir la Palabra* (Gutiérrez 1995a), which has been useful for the understanding of how the contemporary socio-political context influenced Gutiérrez’ theological reflection and reflection on the mission of the church.
specifically clear. 49 His collaboration with *La República* can be grouped in five categories: reflections on Christmas and Easter and other celebrations in the liturgical year, essays on important church documents, 50 words of remembrance on the death of some prominent Church leaders, 51 entire homilies and essays after political events that made an impact on the population. 52

I will also use material from other texts, including his books, to reinforce his ideas and show that these texts are not isolated from his general ideas. 53 This is important, especially in Chapter 4 where I sketch Gutiérrez’ theology of life. A third source consists of some interviews made by journalists at *La República*. And finally a fourth source is my own conversations with Gutiérrez and my notes from some of his lectures and retreats. 54

I am reading Gutiérrez’ texts in its Spanish original version and refer to the original texts in the footnotes. However, I quote him from the English translations if the texts are available also in English and put that reference in brackets in the footnote. 55 Sometimes, when I disagree with the English translation, I put my alternative translation in a footnote. If I have not found an English translation, I make my own translation and put the Spanish original in a footnote. I have also decided to keep some words in Spanish in my text and then put the Spanish word in italics.

A big problem for international research on Gutiérrez is that only a few of his essays have been translated into English. I became aware of this as I read a passage on Gutiérrez in a book by R. S. Sugirtharajah on the Bible and the Third world. 56 From his reading of Gutiérrez’ books, and particularly *Hablar de Dios*, Sugirtharajah draws the conclusion that Gutiérrez has become less contextual (“it is stripped of all Latin American particularities”) as “his own country, Peru, is hardly mentioned”. 57 Sugirtharajah also suggests that there is “a shift in methodological orientation in Gutiérrez’ thinking” as he finds the accent of Gutiérrez’ theology “more on contemplation and emancipatory

49 The three first essays I present in Chapter 3 were published in Gutiérrez 1996a. In the English edition however this section was omitted which indicates that these texts are unknown to many scholars and have not been dealt with in previous research.
50 Like for instance his commentary essay on *Centesimus Annus*, Gutiérrez 1991c.
52 I have chosen four essays and some of his theological reflections from *La República* in specific moments for specific analysis. Occasionally I also refer to other essays and articles in *La República*.
53 His books are in principle not written primarily against the background of specific events. But many of his books can be said to be extended essays based on lectures he had given. His books are not limited to a specific contextual occurrence, which does not mean that they were written in a contextual vacuum. A hint of this can be seen in the fact that each book is dedicated to certain contemporary persons; thus reflecting the contextual situation.
54 I have taped some of the lectures and had them transcribed.
55 References to the English translations arse indicated in the bibliography.
57 Sugirtharajah 2001, p. 205.
spirituality than on action and social transformation”; Gutiérrez’ theology seems thus “to be moving to a more conservative type of theological discourse”. This interpretation of Gutiérrez is to certain extent understandable if only English translations are consulted. But the Spanish material provides material for a more comprehensive picture of Gutiérrez’ theology. In many of his essays we meet the committed Peruvian pastor who speaks into his contemporary socio-political context without hesitating to take politically controversial positions. There is apparently a possibility to find a more generalising and abstract Gutiérrez in the translated material and a more particular and concrete Gutiérrez who does not hesitate to bring political issues into his pastoral discourse in the Spanish original texts.

The consistency in Gutiérrez’ writings

Even if it is possible to detect some smaller variations in Gutiérrez’ later writings compared to his early production, there is a high degree of consistency in most of what he writes. This can be detected with a comparison between the latest edition of *Teología de la Liberación* and the first one. Except from the introduction to the new edition, *Mirar lejos* (*Expanding the View*), which is helpful for an overall idea about liberation theology, and a number of new footnotes there is only one chapter that has been completely rewritten. This fact should not be interpreted as a change in his theological reflection but is a result of a changing socio-political context. Apart from this the text is identical.

In the new introduction Gutiérrez ends with a personal anecdote that may illustrate this consistency:

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 acknowledged that his love perdured. My book is a love letter to God, to the church, and to

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58 Sugirtharajah 2001, p. 211.

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However, this consistency does not mean that there has been no evolution in the theological reflection of Gutiérrez. There is a slight variation in his stress on certain themes and issues due to his personal development, political context, new information, new knowledge, new themes, etc., or as he puts it himself: “whereas I was alive and therefore changing and moving forward thanks to experiences, to observations made on the book, and to lectures and discussions”.

Gutiérrez wants to stress that theology “is not limited to answering our queries; it also raises new questions and constantly requires of us an examination of our faith. On the other hand, speaking about God takes place in a constantly changing historical reality in which the ecclesial community lives.”

So the Gutiérrez we meet today is not the same as the one in the early 1970s, even though today he definitely affirms most of what he wrote then. His crucial books are *Teología de la Liberación* (the revised version from 1988), *Hablar de Dios* (1986) and *En Busca de los Pobres de Jesucristo* (1992). The consistency can be seen in the extent to which his different essays relate to the content in his books.

Another example of the consistency in Gutiérrez’ theology can be found in *La Verdad los hará libres* (1986). The most extended essay in this volume is the one with the same title. This essay can be interpreted as a response to the two instructions on liberation theology issued by Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In his response, Gutiérrez reflects on the support for his theology that he finds in the two instructions rather than defending himself. Gutiérrez tries to summarize his theological position in his previous writings as well as he seeks to prove that the basic ideas of liberation theology are in accordance with the official Vatican position.

**Previous research**

Much has been written about liberation theology in general and the theological reflection of Gutiérrez in particular. Scholars from all over the globe researched these subjects. Even if there has been some research in recent days much of it took place when liberation theology was “in vogue”, that is during the 70s and early 80s. This means that there is a focus on the early years of liberation theology, which also means that the later production of Gutiérrez has not been thoroughly analysed.

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61 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 60 (p. 44).
62 Gutiérrez 1994c, p.11-12 (p. 271).
63 Gutiérrez 1986b, p. 113-248.
64 See below, Chapter 1, p. 81 and Chapter 2, p. 94-95.
There are works that specifically deal with the theology of Gutiérrez, whereas others make comparisons with other theologians. After a general survey of relevant material, I will focus on four works that represent different angles of Gutiérrez’ theology and come from different contexts and époques.

Among the liberation theologians themselves there are works that introduce liberation theology, for instance by Leonardo and Clodovis Boff. Of specific interest is *Mysterium liberationis I-II* edited by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino with contributions from leading liberation theologians, among them Gutiérrez. Both Pablo Richard and Pedro Trigo have tried to stress the relevance of liberation theology in the new millennium.

Nordic research on Liberation theology

In the Nordic countries Manfred Hofmann has examined theological themes and the hermeneutic locus in liberation theology in Latin America. Kjell Nordstokke has analysed the ecclesiology of Leonardo Boff. Per Frostin sketches an African liberation theology out of some basic ideas from Latin America. Sturla Stålsett deals with liberation Christology of Jon Sobrino while Elena Vuola makes critical assessments from a feminist perspective.

Research with a focus on Peru and pastoral praxis

Catalina Romero, as a sociologist, and Jeffrey Klaiber, as a theologian and church historian, focus on the Catholic Church in Peru. Tom Burns analyses the role of the church in the human rights movement from his experience as parish priest in San Juan de Miraflores in the southern cone of Lima.

Franz Marcus sketches the pastoral praxis in response to the political violence in the shantytown Montenegro, with approximately 5,000 inhabitants, in San Juan de Lurigancho, the most populous district in Lima, where Sendero had a strong presence in the 1980s and 1990s. From the see – judge – act model he sketches the political context, the theological reflection

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68 Trigo 2006.
69 Hofmann 1978.
70 Nordstokke 1990.
72 Stålsett 2003.
73 Vuola 2000.
76 Burns 1996.
77 Marcus 1997.
in relation to the context and the pastoral praxis as a response to it with a specific focus on the community of Montenegro. For Marcus it is important to see how the political and structural violence relate to each other. The point of departure for the theological reflection is the preferential option for the poor to which the church must respond pastorally. Marcus shows in his dissertation that the pastoral praxis of both the Peruvian church in general and the Christian community in Montenegro in particular is based on the documents of the Latin American bishops conferences. In response to the presence of Sendero in Montenegro emphasis in the proclamation of the church is laid on the message of peace. The message is centred on the prophetic potential of the Christian community not to get resigned and lose hope.78

Specific Gutiérrez research

In terms of research on Gutiérrez, works have been written that deal with specific items in his theology such as spirituality,79 ecclesiology80 and salvation.81 Many make comparisons with other Latin American liberation theologians such as Leonardo Boff, Jon Sobrino, Juan Luis Segundo, etc., but also with European theologians as such as Johann-Baptist Metz, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jürgen Moltmann, Jacques Maritain, etc.

Of some interest is the Festschrift to Gutiérrez on his 60th birthday with brief contributions by a number of friends and scholars relating to his life and theology.82

Margaret Campbell has another kind of focus as she compares Gutiérrez with Jürgen Habermas.83 She analyses how critical theory and liberation theology might be able to respond to the crisis of Western society. Also of some interest for my research is Pedro Trigo’s review articles on Gutiérrez’ research on Bartolomé de Las Casas.84

For an overview of Gutiérrez’ theology I would like to point to the following four works on Gutiérrez’ theology:

78 Marcus 1997, p. 455.
82 The original version was published in English in Ellis and Maduro 1989. Most of the contributions were translated into Spanish and published with new contributions in three volumes, Romero and Lora (eds.) 1989, Thai-Hop (ed.) 1990 and Moreno (ed.) 1991. In the final process of my writing a Festschrift for Gutiérrez 80th birthday was published, de Prado and Hughes (eds.) 2008.
83 Campbell 1999.
Gutiérrez’ theology to the midst of the 1970s

*Miguel Manzanera, SJ* has examined most of Gutiérrez’ written material from the 1960s to 1975 in his extensive study from 1978, published by Universidad de Deusto. Manzanera’s study has to be considered as standard for the early Gutiérrez research. Even if it reflects only the first two decades of written material, it is helpful for the researcher of Gutiérrez’ theology today. Manzanera’s focus is on theology and how salvation and liberation are related to each other in Gutiérrez’ theology. Simultaneously he offers a comprehensive analysis of Gutiérrez’ theological reflections during this period. Manzanera sketches three stages in the theological development of Gutiérrez: the phase of searching (before 1968), the phase of establishment (1968-1971) and the phase of sedimentation (1972-1975).

After a presentation of how Gutiérrez reflects on salvation and liberation, Manzanera situates the theology of Gutiérrez in relation to traditional Christian theology, secular and political philosophy, modern theology and, finally, Latin American theology. For Manzanera, Gutiérrez’ theology is not only “prophetic” but also “traditional”. This is not meant in a conservative sense, “but in the most genuine sense with hermeneutic reference to the Church in its first centuries”. Manzanera also points to the influence of neomarxists on Gutiérrez, such as Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) and Gutiérrez’ compatriot José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930). But most of all Gutiérrez’ theology has, according to Manzanera, developed in dialogue with other Latin American theologians and Christians committed to the process of liberation.

After noting critics that find Gutiérrez’ theology influenced by Marxism, Manzanera sets up a model of three methodological moments to critically analyse Gutiérrez’ theological reflection: the fundamental theological question, the theological language and the hermeneutic. In Manzanera’s opinion, Gutiérrez not only renews fundamental theological questions and language, he suggests a “hermeneutic rupture” where theology intends to “de-

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85 Manzanera was born in Bilbao in Spain and has lived for many years in Bolivia.
86 Manzanera 1978.
87 See the bibliography of Gutiérrez’ written production from 1960 to 1977 in Manzanera, p. 428-432.
88 Manzanera, p. 15-88.
89 Manzanera, p. 89-189.
90 Manzanera, p. 191-275.
91 “[…] sino en el sentido más genuino de referencia hermenéutica a la Iglesia de los primeros siglos […].” Manzanera, p. 271.
92 Manzanera, p. 273. I will come back to José Carlos Mariátegui, founder of the Socialist party in Peru, in the following, see below, Chapter 1, p. 43.
93 Manzanera, p. 274.
94 Manzanera, p. 279-316.
privatise the Christian message and situate the fundamental theological problem to the relationship between faith and social praxis”.

After an analysis of Gutiérrez’ three levels of liberation Manzanera concludes by sketching a hermeneutic of the salvation-liberation process. For Manzanera this hermeneutic is still unfinished, but argues Gutiérrez has thus far contributed to the discussion.

In conclusion, Manzanera thinks that the soteriological approach of Gutiérrez is complementary to the idea of a progressive theology as it can “extend the theological vision from a concrete experience of oppression and repression”. There are still aspects in Gutiérrez’ theological reflection that need to be developed; there is for instance a need to reinforce the “scientific rationality [of the socio-political context] in the corresponding historical context and equally deepen its ethical-theological spirituality”.

I refer to Manzanera’s model of three methodological moments to assess Gutiérrez’ theological reflection as I introduce Gutiérrez’ theology in Chapter 2. I will also use his idea of the context as the locus of theology.

The theological process “from the underside of history”

In his 1994 dissertation at Duke University, Joerg Rieger compares Gutiérrez and Theodore Herzog as an analysis of liberation theology and spirituality from Latin and North American perspectives. Both are considered to “offer a new perspective which goes beyond much of the confinement of contemporary theology”. Much attention is paid to interpretation of “the other”, which turns out to be almost a hermeneutical key for Rieger to read Gutiérrez. Rieger’s interest is to re-examine how liberation theology brings forward its critique and alternative where one ingredient in the analysis is the interrelation between power and authority. Rieger makes use of Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) and his notion of the real. From Lacan Rieger stresses that an analysis of desire is necessary for transformation and this analysis is not only dealing with epistemological issues, “but leads up to

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95 “[…] desprivatizar el mensaje cristiano y situar el problema teológico fundamental al nivel de la relación entre la fe y la praxis social.” Manzanera, p. 314.

96 According to Manzanera these are socio-political, utopian-historic (which I prefer to call human) and redemptive-salvific liberation.

97 Manzanera, p. 317-418.

98 Manzanera, p. 400.

99 “[…] ampliar la visión teológica a partir de una experiencia concreta de opresión y represión […]” Manzanera, p. 422.

100 “[…] su racionalidad científica en el contexto histórico correspondiente, profundizar igualmente su espiritualidad ético-teológica [...].” Manzanera, p. 423.


102 Rieger is a German who lives in the US where he is professor of Systematic Theology at the Perkins School of Theology, SMU.

103 Rieger 1994.

104 Rieger 1994, p. i.

Both Gutiérrez and Herzog make an effort to “rethink spirituality in relation to Christian praxis and the underside of history”.

Rieger uses a Lacanian framework to analyse Gutiérrez’ critique of power and authority where “the power of the modern self” and “the power of the text” in Latin America is explored and analysed. His reading of Lacan “has helped us to recognize the historical factor of a dialectic of self and other in the production of identity”.

Rieger’s focus on the underside of history makes him develop Gutiérrez’ perception of the poor as historic subjects and their role in history striving for a transformation based on praxis of liberation where the state of poverty is said to mean death. In this process conversion to “the other” is crucial and is called “a theocentric event”.

Rieger concludes that what is needed is a “new understanding of the role and praxis of the oppressed” and that both Herzog and Gutiérrez are developing a new perspective. He also finds in their works that the role of the theologian is reconstructed; the theologian is no longer “the center of the modern history of ideas” rather he is in Gramsci’s words an “organic intellectual” with the task to examine “social practices and political identities in terms of power and authority”. In relation to the issue of truth Rieger argues that the encounter with the real “leads to the unmasking of untruth and an uncovering of unconscious truth”.

Rieger touches the pastoral concern in Gutiérrez’ theology and makes it a guiding principle as he introduces Gutiérrez’ liberation hermeneutics: his main concern “is pastoral rather than academic” which does not “devalue theoretical issues, but puts them into their appropriate place”. And Rieger is aware that Gutiérrez’ “writing grows out of oral presentations and discussions on the basis of practical commitments”.

In a more popular book, Rieger develops some further issues in his research. He analyses how the theology of Gutiérrez challenges the theological reflection in the north in the 21st century, especially the challenge posed by the poor, “from the underside of history”. Rieger points to two responses that both fail. One is elevating them to a prominent place and the other

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110 Rieger 1994, p. 121.
113 Rieger 1994, p. 452.
makes them recipients of charity. “Both camps of mainline theology […] have not yet understood that precisely at this point their binary logic has reached an impasse. Theological encounter with the underside calls for a paradigm shift and new theological categories.”

Rieger formulates the fundamental question: “how can those at the margins help theology to become more aware of, and accountable to, what God is doing?” And he is convinced that theology will benefit “from the ongoing attempt to rethink the movement of God’s praxis in relation to Christian praxis and the underside of history”. Rieger means that a theological position that starts with an encounter with the marginalised cannot “follow in the footsteps of modern theology.”

Rieger’s stress on “the other” as a hermeneutical key for the reading of Gutiérrez and his focus on the perspective of “the underside of history” are both contributions for a reading of Gutiérrez which have been important for my analysis.

**Gutiérrez and human rights**

One of the European theologians that Gutiérrez responds to is the Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973). Maritain’s political theories became specifically influential in Latin America, where his concept of New Christendom from the 1930s was important for the Christian democratic parties, not least in Chile in the 1960s. Of interest for my reading of Gutiérrez is also Maritain’s contribution in the preparation of the UN universal declaration of human rights from 1948 and his contribution in the preparations for Vatican II.

Whereas Gutiérrez is critical of Maritain’s New Christendom model and early expressed this in writing, he is more open to and recognises Maritain’s contribution to reflection upon human rights. The research of Robert Carle is therefore of interest for my research. In his Emory University dissertation of 1989 he focuses on how both Maritain and Gutiérrez contribute to a critical understanding of human rights theory. These contributions can be seen as a response to a critique from both theologians and political scientists that Carle finds the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights is “tied to an individualism that is irrelevant to non-Western cultures”.

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120 Rieger 1998, p. 16.
122 Carle is associate professor at Kings College in New York.
123 Carle 1989.
124 Carle in Dissertation abstract.
Carle’s conviction is that “theological and communitarian reformulation of rights language fulfils the needs of modernity more adequately than theories rooted in Lockean individualism”.125 Both Maritain and Gutiérrez, even if Gutiérrez defines himself in opposition to Maritain’s vision, have contributions to offer; Maritain from a Thomistic perspective and Gutiérrez from a perspective of the rights of the poor. According to Carle what is theologically adequate “is neither an unqualified acceptance nor a hostile rejection of human rights”. Both Maritain and Gutiérrez are thought to be able to contribute adequately to the discussion on human rights as they are both positive to human rights but also critical of their foundation in the Enlightenment.126

Carle’s introduction to Gutiérrez’ theology has much in common with other introductions to Gutiérrez. What is distinctive is how he sets some aspects in Gutiérrez’ theology in relation to Maritain. Carle therefore starts with some notes on experiences of Christian democratic parties in Latin America as these can be said to be promoted by Maritain’s vision of New Christendom, to which Gutiérrez was critical.127

Carle sketches Gutiérrez’ view on human rights as a critical position of the liberal focus; this does not stress the need for a transformation of economic and social structure in benefit of the poor. It is undeniable that this is correct, but I disagree with Carle when he talks about Gutiérrez’ relation to socialism because he overemphasises this.128 I also disagree when he suggests that for Gutiérrez “violent revolution may be the only means for Latin American peoples to liberate themselves from dependency” and even states that Gutiérrez says that pacifism is not an option for many in Latin America.129 However, Carle sees “an important change in the tone of Gutiérrez’ theology” in his later books.130 In the 60s Gutiérrez considered the poor to be “privileged agents of an inevitable historical transformation” and in the 80s to be “the privileged agents of God’s redemptive love and presence”. I think that Carle exaggerates this shift of positions even though there is some truth in it. For Carle this could lead to closer relations between Gutiérrez and the Vatican and also open up “dialogue with ‘moderate’ alternatives like that of Maritain”.131

In a comparing chapter, Maritain’s perception of “common good” is contrasted with the liberation perspective of Gutiérrez. Both are said to have strengths and limitations as metaphors to govern political activity: “Liberation theology is a good tool for critiquing theologies and social structures

125 Carle, p. 17.
126 Carle, p. 65.
128 See for instance Carle, p. 175.
129 Carle, p. 201. As will be seen in both Chapter 3 and 4 below, this is hardly a correct interpretation of Gutiérrez.
130 This is however relative as Carle refers to Gutiérrez 1983 and 1986a.
that produce injustice, but it does not develop a social theory for constructing a just society.” The common good of Maritain “is both critical and constructive, containing a theology of the state, [and] an analysis of major institutional structures”. Carle finds that the option for the poor is “an important corrective for Maritain’s hierarchical interpretation of the common good, natural law, and distributive justice”, concepts that according to Gutiérrez can easily justify oppressive structures. Gutiérrez’ perspective from the underside of history is said to challenge “Maritain to temper his commitment to the common good and natural law with an egalitarian notion of distributive justice”. Gutiérrez also challenges Maritain to relate his epistemology to a class perspective.

Carle finds that Maritain and Gutiérrez have “developed a basis for a reconstruction of rights theory that corrects the most serious defects in liberalism”. Their theory of individual rights is theologically based and linked to an ethic of virtue and they “develop a theory of economic rights that qualifies property rights with a theology of common use and of communitarian obligations.” They both seek a social order where the poor and marginalised would have more freedom and greater participation in society. According to Carle “the contributions of Maritain and Gutiérrez to human rights theory have become normative for post-Vatican II Catholic social thought”. He also says that the catholic critiques of capitalism and socialism “reflect a commitment that extends back to the social teachings of Leo XIII and embraces the concerns of both Maritain and Gutiérrez”. Not least the focus on human rights has been an important factor in this and has given rise to norms that strengthen the individual as a person and emphasise the protagonist role of each human being in the construction of society.

Carle’s dissertation reflects the fact that Gutiérrez relates to European theology and specifically to French theology. Maritain might not be the most influential for Gutiérrez’ theology but undoubtedly he relates to Maritain’s theology as can be seen in his first writings, where he distances himself from Maritain’s idea of New Christendom. On the other hand Maritain’s contribution to the human rights discussion is relevant for Gutiérrez. As the human rights issue is inevitable in a dissertation that deals with two last decades of the 20th century, it is of some relevance for this dissertation.

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132 Carle, p. 217.
133 Carle, p. 234.
134 Carle, p. 237.
135 Carle, p. 243.
136 Carle, p. 244.
137 Carle, p. 261.
Gutiérrez as a Catholic Theologian

Gaspar Martínez makes a comparative analysis of Johann Baptist Metz (1928- ), Gustavo Gutiérrez and David Tracy (1939- ) with the aim to explore the heritage of Karl Rahner (1904-1984) and how this has been developed in three different cultural and social contexts. Even though Martínez is not only dealing with Gutiérrez, he gives an updated and comprehensive view of Gutiérrez’ theology up to the end of the 1990s.

Martínez begins his presentation of Gutiérrez with a brief social, cultural and ecclesial background to his theology. Here Martínez sketches a political and ecclesial history of the Latin American continent in general and Peru in particular that is relevant for the theology of Gutiérrez. He also touches upon the phenomenon of Sendero Luminoso, but does not refer to how this phenomenon was treated in Gutiérrez’ theological reflection. This section ends with reference to the Latin American bishops conferences in Medellín (1968), Puebla (1979) and Santo Domingo (1992) and their documents.

In the section on the beginning of Gutiérrez’ theological reflection, that is from his theological studies in Europe in the 1950s until the publication of Teología de la Liberación 1971, Martínez identifies a development from links to la nouvelle théologie to a more Rahnerian theology by the end of the 1960s. Martínez sees this as a result of the close relationship between Gutiérrez’ theology and his pastoral work, exemplified in his role as advisor to the catholic students’ organisation (UNEC) and later the movement of catholic professionals (MPC). For Martínez, Gutiérrez’ theology is both a church theology and a theology of and for the church; it “is pastorally driven”.

Teología de la Liberación must, according to Martínez, be seen “as Gutiérrez’ central statement, whose implications he has continued to develop ever since”. In Martínez’ view, Gutiérrez not only applies Rahner’s theology to Latin America, he opens new perspectives that challenge Rahner’s theology. Martínez shows how Gutiérrez transcends and critiques Rahner in two ways. Firstly, by focusing on the poor, Gutiérrez does not “turn to the subjects” but to the “nonsubjects” in order to show the encounter with God’s mystery in a situation of injustice and innocent suffering. Secondly, Gutiérrez relates to Rahner’s view of one history (both general history and history of salvation), but rereads it from the perspective of the poor.

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138 Martínez is a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Bilbao and earned his PhD from the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.
139 Martínez 2001.
140 Martínez, p. 89-110.
141 Martínez, p. 93-94. I will come back to Sendero Luminoso in Chapter 1; most of Gutiérrez texts from the 1980s and 1990s that I analyse in Chapter 3 have references to the political violence that emerged as a result of Sendero’s actions.
142 Martínez, p. 111-120.
143 Martínez, p. 236.
144 Martínez, p. 122.
145 Martínez, p. 122.
concludes that Gutiérrez’ theology is a rereading of the main themes of Christianity from “the underside of history”. He states that Gutiérrez’ theology has its origin in three different but interrelated factors: a critical understanding of the Latin American context, the changes within Catholic theology manifested in Vatican II, and the strong emphasis on the need for transformation in the Latin American church manifested in Medellín 1968.146

Martínez also touches on the accusation that Gutiérrez is supposed to reduce Christian faith to a merely Marxist based political program. In response to this Martínez comments that to acknowledge the existence of social classes is not the same as relying on a Marxist analysis of class struggle. Instead he points to how Gutiérrez, like Mariátegui, looks for a Latin American version of socialism. When Gutiérrez interprets reality, scientific knowledge is not enough. Martínez points, therefore, to the “utopian level of knowing” in Gutiérrez where utopia becomes a vision of a never-ending transformation of history.147

According to Martínez there is a third way of analysing reality for Gutiérrez, “the knowledge based on faith and interpreted and made explicit in theology”. Martínez identifies two sources for this: the influence of la nouvelle théologie, and later from Rahner, on Gutiérrez and Gutiérrez’ own principle of reading the Bible from the point of view of the poor.148

Martínez says that after Puebla 1979, Gutiérrez “devotes most of his theological effort to deepening the insights of liberation theology concerning spirituality and the notion of God”. His theology becomes more related to systematic theology and the Bible becomes more important in his theological reflection.149 Spirituality is said to be “the cornerstone of his theology and, possibly, his main contribution to the theological enterprise”. Saying this, Martínez recognises that “spirituality has been a constitutive element of liberation theology from its inception”. Martínez refers correctly to all of Gutiérrez books from this time, but rather striking he does not refer to the underlying situation of political violence that is my focus in this dissertation. According to my reading these events made an impact on Gutiérrez and deepened his theological reflection in his books, but also in his theological essays and reflections that I am dealing with in the dissertation.

As Martínez makes a final comparing analysis of the three theologians, he finds that for both political theology (Metz) and liberation theology (Gutiérrez), “social sciences and critical social theory play a very important role”. Gutiérrez uses social sciences to know the situation to which his theology responds but his strictly theological work is not grounded in social sciences. This leads Martínez to say that although all three theologians “have devel-

146 Martínez, p. 123.
147 Martínez, p. 129-131.
148 Martínez, p. 131-132.
149 Martínez, p. 139.
oped their theological projects in close dialogue with critical social theory, they have become more and more theocentric and their theologies have become in that respect more explicitly theological”.150

Of the three theologians, Gutiérrez is the one that most frequently and systematically refers to the Bible; “he is a clear example of how to read the scriptures theologically”. Martínez explains this by saying that Gutiérrez pays “attention to their ecclesial sense as the one controlling the reading” but also uses “biblical critical methods to enrich that reading”. For that reason this constant use of the Bible is considered by Martínez to be one main characteristic in the theological method of Gutiérrez. Needless to say, Gutiérrez’ reading of the Bible is made from the perspective of the poor and the reading “is not only a personal act but a communitarian one”. Finally, Martínez stresses that Gutiérrez’ reading of the Bible is seen “as a dialogue between two concrete experiences of faith and of historical salvation and hope”.151 This focus on the Bible can be linked to Gutiérrez’ pastoral perspective that I intend to follow in my own analysis.

After some comparison of notes on the three theologians regarding history, salvation, Christology, ecclesiology and eschatology,152 Martínez concludes his analysis with how the mystery of God is encountered in history. All of them “have evolved in a strictly theological way; that is to say, have come to consider the question of God the fundamental […] question of their theologies”.153 For Gutiérrez the history in which this encounter with God takes place is a history, which is read “through the eyes of the poor and oppressed”, where the face of God is revealed in the face of the poor.154 Theology is for Gutiérrez a way of talking about and with God. Martínez correctly refers to Hablar de Dios,155 which can be seen as a biblical commentary with the book of Job being the crucial book for this interpretation. This book focuses on both the suffering of the innocent and innocent suffering where the central question for Gutiérrez is how to talk of the God of love and justice in the midst of poverty and injustice. Rather than, as Martínez says, the book of Job is for Gutiérrez not primarily dealing with “the theodicy question but the question of the God/creature relation as a totally gratuitous relation”.156 Gratuitousness (Spanish: gratuitud) turns out to be one of Gutiérrez’ most important themes, which for him means “the absolute lack of motive and reason”; for Martínez gratuitousness becomes in Gutiérrez the name of God’s mystery.
For a general reading of Gutiérrez, Martínez is important. His presentation is complementary to Manzanera as he takes his analysis of Gutiérrez’ texts almost down to the present day. He could have put Gutiérrez’ texts more in relation to the context of political violence, which undoubtedly would have deepened his perspective, and he could have used some of the theological essays and reflections that related to the context of political violence.

Theory

In recent years discourse analysis has been a useful tool in scientific research of various kinds. The Danes Marianne Winther Jørgensen and Louise Phillips make a comprehensive presentation of this theoretical tool.\(^{157}\) Normally discourse analysis reflects an idea that the language is structured in different patterns that can be analysed and thus be better understood. A discourse can be said to be “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world”.\(^{158}\) Discourse analysis is a series of multidisciplinary approaches that is used in many different social domains and it offers a deconstructive reading that uncovers underlying messages in the text.\(^{159}\)

According to discourse analysis the exercise of the discourse, often called discursive practice, is seen as a social practice that shapes the social world.\(^{160}\) Some analysts such as Norman Fairclough\(^{161}\) separate discursive practice from other social practices meaning that the discursive practice interacts dialectically with other social practices.\(^{162}\) This view known as critical discourse analysis (CDA), says that the discourse is a social practice that both constitutes the social surrounding and is constituted by other social practices; the discourse is situated in a dialectic interrelationship to other social dimensions.\(^{163}\) The discourse turns out to be both an action through which people can influence the world and an action that is socially and historically situated in a dialectic relationship with other social aspects.\(^{164}\)

According to Fairclough, a discourse is a communicative event with three dimensions: it is a text in the technical sense, it is also a discursive practice where texts are both produced and consumed, and finally, it is a social prac-
tice in a wider context where it interacts with other social practices.\textsuperscript{165} This can be illustrated in the following figure:\textsuperscript{166}

![Diagram](image)

\textit{Figure 1. Critical discourse analysis according to Norman Fairclough.}

The text, as such, can be analysed according to its own characteristics: its style, its grammatical construction, its rhetorical construction, etc. In the discursive practice the focus is how the text is constructed and produced and how it is communicated and received by its readers. The main objective for the critical discourse analysis is to delineate the relationship between discourse and social practice with a focus on the discursive practices’ role to maintain social order or promote social change.\textsuperscript{167}

No matter the importance of the first two dimensions, they must be put in relation to the third, the social practice. It is the analysis of the relationship between the discursive practice and the social practice that leads the analysis to fruitful conclusions.\textsuperscript{168} This analysis must be supplemented with social and cultural theory.\textsuperscript{169}

It is possible to identify different discourses in a specific area and it is essential to find a way to structure the relationship between these discourses. In this context the contribution from Fairclough on introducing the concept of \textit{order of discourse} is useful.\textsuperscript{170} This concept designates different discourses within a certain area, discourses that can be in conflict with each other. The order of discourse can help us to structure the relationship between different discourses so that we can better understand the intentions behind a certain discourse.

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe present another example of discourse analysis.\textsuperscript{171} According to their interpretation, known as \textit{discourse theory},\textsuperscript{172}

\begin{itemize}
\item Jørgensen and Phillips, p. 68.
\item Jørgensen and Phillips, p. 69-70.
\item Jørgensen and Phillips, p. 86.
\item Jørgensen and Phillips, p. 69.
\item Jørgensen and Phillips discuss this on for instance p. 27, 55-57, 70-76 and 138-144.
\item See for instance the presentation in Jørgensen and Phillips, p. 24-59.
\end{itemize}
the meaning of the discourse is crystallised around a series of so-called *nodal points*. A nodal point is defined as a concept around which the discourse is arranged and from which it gets its meaning.\(^{173}\) The objective of the discourse directs how the ingredients are organised, which means that the nodal points will have different contents and meanings depending on the intention of the person that presents a certain discourse. Discourse theory has therefore designated these nodal points as *floating signifiers* indicating that the same words have different content depending on the actors.\(^{174}\) This means that a discourse is never static in its content, which leaves it open to different and sometimes conflictive interpretations. From this assertion we can draw the conclusion that it is essential to clarify different interpretations. The fact that a signifier is floating indicates that *one* discourse seldom is sufficient to interpret and understand it.\(^{175}\) Moreover, that there is more than one discourse indicates a hidden conflict between the different interpretations of the signifiers.

Discourse analysis can be used to analyse pastoral theology where the pastor can be seen as “bearer of a discourse” and the pulpit is the most apparent site.\(^{176}\) One important challenge that discourse analysis poses to pastoral theology is that it enables pastoral theology to theorise the socio-political context in the care of souls. If pastoral theology neglects to situate the individuals in a socio-political context it is not only inefficient, in a subtle way it also blames the victim instead of analysing the power structures that are involved.\(^{177}\)

Pastoral theology can easily be narrowed to deal with the domestic sphere within a discourse that claims, for instance, that domestic violence is a family or religious affair. Discourse analysis would point to the need for relating it to the socio-political context, which inevitably politicises the perspective and gives rise to an oppositional discourse where power structures are analysed and challenged.\(^{178}\) Such a perspective would lead to a pastoral discourse that challenges power structures while strengthening and empowering those who suffer from unjust structures.


\(^{175}\) Jørgensen and Phillips, p. 149.

\(^{176}\) This has been analysed by Susan Dunlop in Dunlop 1999.

\(^{177}\) Dunlop 1999, p. 136 and 139.

\(^{178}\) Dunlop 1999, p. 141-143.
Method

As was stated above Gutiérrez’ theology is first and foremost pastoral theology. It is obvious that to Gutiérrez pastoral theology is not just a question of cure of souls but also understanding people in their socio-political context and responding to their specific concerns. Therefore, the analysis of society becomes vital in his pastoral approach. This analysis must be understood in relation to the well-known model that he and most of the liberation theologians adopted from the Catholic Action movement in Europe, to see – to judge – to act.\textsuperscript{179} To see presupposes a willingness to apply a comprehensive socio-political analysis of the contemporary society based on a multidisciplinary use of social sciences, to judge presupposes the capacity to assess this analysis by a reading of the Bible and central church documents, and finally, to act presupposes a willingness to set up a pastoral plan of action that responds to this assessment.

For my reading and analysis of Gutiérrez’ texts I have derived incitement from discourse analysis. The Fairclough model on the three dimensions of the communicative event (social practice – discursive practice – text) is implicit in my reading of Gutiérrez. The social practice, that is the interaction between Gutiérrez’ discourse and the socio-political context, can be seen as constitutive for the theological reflection of Gutiérrez. That is why Chapter 1 is foundational for my dissertation.

Inspired by my reading of Laclau and Mouffe, I have identified four discourses in Gutiérrez’ texts. These discourses will be my analytical tool in the following. We will see how they interact with each other and sometimes even contradict each other. But together they constitute a comprehensive view of Gutiérrez’ theological reflection in these texts.

The fourth discourse, the pastoral theological discourse, can be seen as a synthesis of the other three: the radical political discourse, the liberal political discourse, and the Catholic theological discourse. But it is more than a synthesis, it is the foundation for Gutiérrez’ theological reflection. It is elliptic with two foci: to give reason for hope in a difficult situation and inspire people to do something, to act, in this situation. There are thus political implications in this discourse even though Gutiérrez never prescribes a political agenda.

Table 1 summarises and systematises the four discourses that I have identified in Gutiérrez’ texts: As we will see in Chapter 3 these discourses are present in the texts of Gutiérrez that I have selected. No discourse can be seen as isolated from the others. On the contrary, they relate to each other, they criticise and challenge one another.

\textsuperscript{179} The structure got sanction from the Latin American hierarchy as it was applied and expressed in the documents of the general Latin American bishops conferences in Medellin 1968, Puebla 1979 and Aparecida 2007.
If the pastoral theological discourse is what really concerns Gutiérrez, the other three can be seen as needed to sustain it. Relating the four discourses to the see – judge – act model makes it possible to see how they relate to each other. The two political discourses are necessary for the socio-political analysis, to see; the Catholic theological discourse gives criteria for assessment, to judge; and the pastoral theological discourse intends to respond to the specific situation, to act.

Table 1. *Four discourses in Gutiérrez’ theological reflection.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Formulation</th>
<th>Key issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The radical political discourse</td>
<td>True peace can only be achieved if violence and unjust structures are attacked at their roots, which implies justice and a life in dignity for the poor. Struggle for justice will involve conflict.</td>
<td>Unjust structures and poverty constitute institutionalised violence and are breeding grounds for the political violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The liberal political discourse</td>
<td>A nation must be constructed on democratic principles and respect for human rights. There is a need for ethics and moral integrity in order to establish peace and national harmony in a fragmentised society as that of Peru. There is also need for a national consensus in the defence of democracy and human rights.</td>
<td>Destruction of democratic institutions hampers political action, which makes national coexistence impossible and the country ungovernable. National reconciliation and defence of human rights presuppose a wish to counteract impunity and uncover truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Catholic theological discourse</td>
<td>The God of life provides life for all. The dead are not strangers; they are all images of God that Jesus gave his life for. The Church is Christ’s ongoing life in the world.</td>
<td>Faith in the God of life implies an unconditional option for life. Life, not death will have the final word in history. Solidarity with the poor is “prompted by faith”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pastoral theological discourse</td>
<td>The defiant hope based on faith in resurrection makes it possible to endure a difficult situation. The pastoral discourse admonishes, comforts, teaches and encourages the believing community.</td>
<td>The joy of Easter gives reason for hope. Hope is not only something to simply wait for; it is a source for action and commitment to those who suffer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *radical political discourse* focuses on the unjust structures in the Latin American context in general and the Peruvian in particular. Gutiérrez is particularly concerned about the poor and their claim for justice; real peace implies justice for the poor. For Gutiérrez his perspective on conflict and his stress on social classes are crucial in this discourse. This discourse often provokes conflict and implies confrontation between often irreconcilable interests. The radical political discourse says that the poor may not remain poor; the poor has a right to a decent life. As long as poverty remains, it is not possible to speak about national consensus, democratic coexistence and harmony in the Peruvian society. To speak about justice implies that something has to be done about poverty and the unjust structures in society, what
the Latin American bishops had called institutionalised violence in Medellín 1968.

Can justice be obtained through violent means or should it be through peaceful means? This is a crucial question for Gutiérrez. His position put him in confrontation not only with the government but also with Sendero Luminoso and MRTA. The radical political discourse can easily lead to a position where violent means are justified to obtain justice in society. Both the liberal political and the Catholic theological discourse are called upon to regulate the extreme interpretation of the radical political discourse that for instance the armed opposition groups in Peru, Sendero Luminoso and MRTA, represented; the lives of the poor may not be achieved at the price of others’ lives.

Focus in the *liberal political discourse* is on national unity, democratic coexistence, ethics in politics, peace, respect for human rights and national reconciliation. The big challenge is how national harmony could be promoted in such a fragmentised and afflicted society as the Peru of the 1980s and 1990s and how national coexistence and democratic life could be promoted in order to reach national harmony. Does it make any sense to speak about Peru as a nation? The liberal political discourse focuses on human rights and peaceful reforms rather than on violent means. This is also a position that the democratic leftist parties took in 1980 with the general elections and return to democracy. This discourse may dominate the texts that I examine in Chapter 3, but it is conditioned by the radical political discourse. National harmony can never be achieved as long as the poor remain poor. This is a position that Gutiérrez maintains through all the difficult years of political violence; poverty and unjust structures in society constitute the breeding ground for the political violence. The radical political discourse identifies the problem and the liberal political discourse points to possible strategies to overcome it.

The *Catholic theological discourse* is based on the Bible and catholic doctrinal documents; what can be read from the doctrine, from the Holy Scriptures, from the liturgy, etc., is of relevance for today’s challenges to the believer. The Church is Christ’s ongoing life in the world. This discourse focuses on a deep respect for human life and the God of life who provides life. It also talks about ethics and points to solidarity with the poor, an option that “is prompted by faith”. In Gutiérrez’ texts this discourse is both explicit and implicit. It is explicit not least in the sense that he often quotes papal encyclicals and other statements of the popes, and his quotations from the Latin American bishops conferences are numerous in his texts. More implicit is the way he takes part in the public debate.

The *pastoral theological discourse* is more than a synthesis of the other three discourses. It is a discourse that is aimed to give reason for hope in a desperate situation. It is a defiant hope that is based on the joy of Easter and the faith in resurrection, a hope that is not only something to wait for; it is a
source for action and commitment with those who suffer. It is a discourse where theology and politics meet, a discourse that often points to action of some kind.

My focus lies on the pastoral theological discourse. A pastoral theological discourse that strives to give reason for hope in a difficult situation needs to include the Catholic theological discourse as well as the radical and the liberal political discourses.

In developing my interpretation of the pastoral theological discourse in Gutiérrez’ writings, I start my analysis from a seemingly unlikely place. I use a model that I have developed out of four words taken from the liturgy of the Church of Sweden that was used until 1986. Upon ending the homily, the priest was supposed to invoke prayer using the following words: “Praised be God and blessed in eternity, [he] who with his Word comforts, teaches, admonishes and warns us”. The role of the pastor as preacher and communicator was thus in the tradition of the Church of Sweden precisely to give comfort, teaching, admonition and warning, which can be regarded as a pastoral “plan of action”.

The words comfort and admonish reflect the wording in the Swedish translation of Romans 12:8 where it is said that s/he who comforts and admonishes shall be given the gift of comfort. A parallel is found in Karl Barth when he says: “How can the Holy Spirit guide, comfort, admonish and strengthen them when He is not present?” To ‘guide’ is closely related to ‘teach’, but to ‘strengthen’ brings something new into the picture that is useful for my purpose.

The situation in Peru at the end of the 20th century was very different from the situation in which the Church of Sweden was acting in first half of the same century. Still there are similarities in the conditions for preaching and the pastoral discourse. So with a slight shift in focus I have constructed a model that suits my intention to analyse the pastoral theological discourse in his public counselling. I think Barth has a point, but I prefer talking of ‘encouraging’ rather than ‘strengthening’ as encouragement was something important to stress in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s. This gives us a model of four elements, where two of them relate to a pastoral concern of care: ‘comfort’ and ‘encourage’; and the other two relate to a pastoral concern of teaching: ‘teach’ and ‘admonish’, which as we will see might lead to political action.


181 This is one of the gifts present and exercised in the Christian community as Paul describes it Romans 12:3-8. The Swedish translation of of the Bible from 1917 says: “är någon satt till att förmana, så akté han på sin plikt att förmana” (v.8). The translation from 1999 has “tröstens gåva hos den som tröstar och förmänar”.

Outline

In this introductory chapter I have presented the background and the methodological basis for my analysis. Chapter 1 is a sketch of the general socio-political and ecclesial context with a focus on the political events in the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter 2 provides an introduction to Gutiérrez, first some biographical notes and then a presentation of some fundamental concepts in his theological reflection.

From this we move to Chapter 3, which is the main chapter. Here I present written texts by Gutiérrez (essays, homilies and theological reflections) from which I develop an understanding of Gutiérrez as pastor in the shadow of violence. In Chapter 4 I systematise Gutiérrez’ reflection of a theology of life as it is presented mainly in his books. It is both a general background to his writing in a specific moment, but also an example of how the moment influenced his general theological reflection. From this we can conclude that his books provide an overview of his more developed theology, but the essays offer less polished and more detailed examples of the processes the author went through.

And finally, in Chapter 5, I make an assessment of Gutiérrez pastoral response to the socio-political context systematised in six binary oppositions that in the final analysis can be summarised in the binary opposition of life and death.
Chapter 1

Socio-political and ecclesial context

Introduction

According to my understanding of Fairclough in the critical discourse analysis (CDA), a written text is constructed in a discursive practice where the discourse is a social practice that responds to a specific socio-political context. The objective of the CDA is to analyse if the discursive practice maintains the social order or promotes social change.¹

In my view the theology of Gutiérrez develops as an interactive process between the socio-political context in Peru and Latin America and the theological reflection. Not only his texts analysed in Chapter 3 responds to the specific socio-political context in which they are written, but also his books and other texts as will be shown in Chapter 4. And his texts must be seen as a contribution to the public debate and how people should respond to the specific political situation. It is therefore need for a quite extensive chapter on the socio-political context, both the historic present and the past. Without this most of Gutiérrez’ writing will be incomprehensible.

In this chapter on the socio-political and ecclesial context, I focus on the two last decades of the 20th century in which political violence² marked Peruvian society. In order to understand this it is necessary to briefly survey Peruvian history from the colonial conquest to present days. In my presentation of the context, I have focused on factors that are relevant for my understanding of the poor and the development of their place within the organisation of Peruvian society as one factor for the emergence of liberation theology. I consider this necessary in order to understand the participation of Gutiérrez in the public debate, which I will analyse in Chapter 3 and 4 below.

¹ See above, p. 30-31.
² I deliberately choose to use this expression for the violence caused by the armed opposition groups, Sendero Luminoso and MRTA and the counterinsurgency strategies by the Peruvian governments during the 1980s and 1990s that took the country to the edge of civil war and according to the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission caused around 70 000 victims.
1.1 Colonial heritage and its consequences

The European colonisation of the Americas\(^3\) was exceedingly cruel and brought the death of a great proportion of the indigenous population. There are no exact figures but a cautious calculation argues for a decline from about 50 million people on the American continent at the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492 to less than 10 million by 1570. This process is often with good reason characterised as a demographic catastrophe.\(^4\) It is a process that is very well documented by Spanish conquistadores and indigenous people like the Peruvian Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (c. 1535 – c. 1615).\(^5\) The reasons for the decline are normally presented as being four factors: malnutrition as a result of changed alimentation, the presence of new diseases, the wars of conquest and hard work under slavery conditions.

As the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano has pointed out in his *Las venas abiertas de América Latina*,\(^6\) the enormous natural resources of what today is Latin America attracted the first Europeans that came after the arrival of Columbus. Spain conquered the Aztec empire and established the Viceroyalty of New Spain in Mexico City in 1519. After the conquest of the Inca Empire in 1532 the conquistadors founded Lima in 1535 as the capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru, which became the centre for colonial South America. Soon after this the Inquisition court for South America was installed in Lima.

At the end of the 18\(^{th}\) century the Inca descendent Tupac Amaru II (1742-1781) almost succeeded in liberating the former Inca Empire from Spain, but his rebellion was finally defeated in 1781. Tupac Amaru, his wife and their sons were cruelly executed.

There is also a general agreement that there is a colonial heritage that still affects present Latin America. José Carlos Mariátegui analyses this in his epoch making *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad Peruana*.\(^7\) In recent years social scientists of contemporary Peruvian context, such as Julio Cotler,\(^8\) Carlos Contreras and Marcos Cueto\(^9\) and Nelson Manrique\(^10\), have

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\(^3\) I have opted to use this designation for the American continents, which is more common than “the Indies”. However Gutiérrez uses *las Indias*, which is translated “the Indies” in the quotes I make in the dissertation.

\(^4\) For a discussion on the figures see for instance Keen and Haynes 2004, p. 9-10. They assert estimations of the indigenous population before 1492 that vary from 8,4 million (Kroeber) to 90-112 million (Dobyns). According to Dobyns’ calculations the indigenous population decreased up to 95 percent. Galeano estimates that the number dropped from 70 – 90 million to 3.5 million over 150 years. Galeano 1977, p. 51.

\(^5\) Best known is his work *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* that was first published in 1615. The manuscript was found in 1908 in Copenhagen. A facsimile was published in 1936.

\(^6\) It was first published in 1971 and has been translated into numerous languages. I have used the Swedish translation *Latinamerikas öppna ädor*, Falköping, 1977.

\(^7\) Mariátegui 1961; first published in Lima 1928. It is translated into English with the title *Seven interpretive essays on Peruvian Reality*. Mariátegui was originally a journalist.


\(^9\) Contreras and Cueto 1999.

\(^10\) Manrique 2002.
all commented upon this. Cotler identifies two characteristics in this colonial heritage that are visible today: Peru’s dependence on capitalistic development and the persistence of colonial relations in the exploitation of the indigenous population.11

1.1.1 Independence and the republic

The Latin American independent movements started in the 1810s with the Venezuelan general Simón Bolívar (1783-1830) and the Argentine general José de San Martín (1778-1850) as its most important exponents. The rebellion of Tupac Amaru was a real threat for the Lima aristocracy, which to a certain extent might explain why they were not so willing to join the independence endeavour as the Creole aristocracy in the other Spanish colonies. Consequently the independence process was later and took longer in Peru than in other Latin American countries. On 28 July, 1821 San Martín pronounced Peruvian independence in Huara, 160 km north of Lima. But it was not until the battle at Ayacucho in December 1824, commanded by Bolívar, that Peruvian independence finally became a fact. Bolívar had a vision of establishing a federation of independent states, a project often called the Bolivarian project, with the establishment of the United States as a model. A reminder of this plan lives on in today’s cooperation within the so-called Bolivarian states, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

But one cannot speak about a real transformation of the social and economic structures of Peru; it was just a “formal political change” where both the marginalization of indigenous peoples and “the dependent nature of economy” were maintained.12 The colonial structure had been vertical with the Spanish king at the top, delegating the power to his representatives: the viceroy, the bishop, etc. Liberal ideas, with inspiration from the French revolution and the independence of the United States, were “an ideological banner only for a very small intellectual elite”.13

Peru’s history after independence was for a long time characterised by a complicated series of shifts of military governments headed by different military caudillos.14 A situation arose where weak liberal regimes were confronted with the caudillos in the 19th century and the military in the 20th century; authoritarianism and centralism still characterised Latin American society.15

12 Contrears and Cueto 1999, p. 58.
13 Klaiber 1988, p. 22.
14 This is a term for a Latin American phenomenon that denotes a strong, often informal, leader who establishes an authoritarian relationship with his subordinates.
15 Klaiber 1988, p. 22.
Electoral processes were held in the middle of the 19th century but they were indirect and only a small portion of citizens were able to participate. By the end of the century we can speak of more normal elections, but still only for a small minority of the population.

The period from 1895 to 1919 was one of relative political stability, but the governments represented oligarchic interests. During this period the first unions were formed and disturbances such as riots and strikes appeared. The elected president in 1919, Augusto Leguía, used these disturbances as a pretext to dissolve the congress and impose a civilian dictatorship supported by the military, which lasted until 1930.

In the 1920s the oligarchic project that tried to assimilate Peru with European civilisation began to undergo a crisis due to, among other things, the increasing urban middle class.

The oligarchic structure in postcolonial Peru is a predominant factor that according to many analysts lasted into the 1960s. A simple definition of oligarchy is “a political system governed by a few people”. Sinesio López explains that within this oligarchic époque a clear difference between the state and society did not exist. The system was characterised by racial and ethnic exclusion wherein land ownership served as the decisive factor in the social structure of society. The oligarchic structure explains much of the political development in Peru during the years preceding the period that I deal with in this dissertation.

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16 The 1860 constitution stated that those who were tax payers, proprietors, able to read or ran workshops could participate in the indirect elections, Contreras and Cueto 1999, p. 124.
17 The electoral law from 1895 excluded women and illiterates, giving the right to vote to less than 110 000 people: a mere two to three percent of the population. Contreras and Cueto, p. 156. In the 1956 elections women were allowed to vote for the first time. Contreras and Cueto, p. 246. It was not until the new constitution of 1979 that universal suffrage was introduced, which made it possible even for the illiterate people to vote in the 1980 elections. This reintroduced democracy and initiated the longest period of democracy in Peru’s history. López comments that the universal suffrage was reached in spite of not having a strong suffragette movement, López 1997, p. 325-326.
18 Reid 1985, p. 28.
20 Contreras and Cueto 1999 speaks of an “oligarchic restoration” from 1948, p. 239-260. Cotler 2005 describes and analyses the crisis in the oligarchic system in the 1960s, p. 295-334. López 1997 analyses the considerable changes in the oligarchic system from 1950 to its end which he argues came about in 1975, p. 247-290. He terms this period the move “From an oligarchic state to a neoliberal state”.
22 Sinesio López is political scientist, lecturer at the Catholic University in Lima and ex-director of the National Library of Peru.
1.1.2 José Carlos Mariátegui and Víctor Haya de la Torre

During the Leguía regime two political movements, which can be described as expressing “the first coherent opposition to the dominion of Peru by the oligarchy and foreign capital”, were founded by two of Latin America’s most influential political thinkers in the 20th century: José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930) and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre (1894-1979).

Mariátegui was a journalist who had lived in Europe, mainly in Italy, from 1920 to 1923. There he came into contact with less orthodox versions of European Marxism. Together with some intellectuals and trade union leaders he founded the Peruvian Socialist party in 1928, which after his death became the Peruvian Communist party and affiliated with the Third International. For Mariátegui a revolutionary desire was essential for the liberation of Peruvians.

Haya de la Torre was a student leader who was influenced by the Russian revolution. He was deported by Leguía and subsequently founded Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (Apra) in Mexico in 1924 as an anti-imperialist movement on a continental scale. For Haya de la Torre, the main problem for Latin America was the alliance between foreign capital and domestic feudalism. Apra today is without doubt the best organised political party in Peru and until 1980 was in constant conflict with the government and/or the military.

López calls the years 1930-1956 the “three party system”, characterised by the tension between the oligarchy, the army and Apra. The military took over in 1930 and initiated what the historian Jorge Basadre (1903-1980) called “the third militarism”. A civil government took over in 1939, but was marked by the previous military regime. Only between 1945 and 1948 was there a “democratic breath”. General Manuel Odría imposed an authoritarian dictatorship in 1948 that lasted until 1956. During this period Apra, the communist party and trade unions faced repression. With Odría the oligarchic system revitalised slightly.

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24 Reid 1985, p. 29.
25 The indigenous movement was emerging and some intellectuals like Mariátegui tried to combine studies on the Peruvian reality with European models, Contreras and Cueto 1999, p. 199. This becomes very clear in his Siete ensayos de Interpretación de la Realidad Peruana, Mariátegui 1961.
26 Reid 1999, p. 31.
28 Contreras and Cueto 1999, p. 207. Basadre was oriented to the political left and one of his most famous book is Perú: Problema y Posibilidad (1931).
29 Contreras and Cueto 1999, p 207.
1.1.3 The Catholic Church from colonial time to the 1950s

The history of the Catholic Church in Peru as in all of Latin America is intimately related to its colonial history. The colonisation of the Americas was partly a consequence of the bull by Pope Alexander VI in 1493 that delegated the Christianisation of the Americas, except what today is Brazil, to the Spanish king. The colonisation was thus basically seen as a means for the evangelisation of the Americas; the only justification for the Spanish presence was that the gospel should be preached to the indigenous people. Colonisation and mission thus went hand in hand in Latin America.

Nobody can objectively argue that this colonial past has been a glorious past for the Catholic Church, even though there were some individual exceptions. During the first decades there was a relative freedom for the church that permitted people like the friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, OP (1474-1566) in the 1510s and 1520s to develop his theological reflection and pastoral action in Hispaniola. He became a symbol for the defence of the indigenous population and their rights to a decent life. Las Casas came to the Americas as a conquistador; he later became a Dominican brother and was converted to the cause of the Indians after friar Antonio de Montesinos’, OP (-1545) famous sermon in December 1511. The brutal reality of the Indians struck Las Casas and he realised that this reality caused numerous premature and unjust deaths among the Indian population. The presence of the Spaniards was intended to be “for the salvation and conversion of their souls. Yet it has become a very quick and miserable death, and final perdition”.

The situation for the church in Peru did not differ from that in other countries. The fact that the inquisition court for Viceroyalty of Peru was established in Lima in 1570 probably sharpened the policy against heretics and made life more difficult for the critics of the church. The first two archbishops of Lima, Jerónimo de Loayza, OP (1498-1575, archbishop 1548-75) and Toribio Alfonso de Mogrovejo y Robledo (1538-1606, archbishop 1580-1606), were open to some dialogue with the indigenous population and a catechism in Quechua was published. Toribio de Mogrovejo was even the first canonised person related to the Americas. Around 1570 there was a shift in the colonial strategy of Spain, which in Lima was manifested by the viceroy Francisco Toledo (viceroy 1569-81). Toledo developed the Viceroy-

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30 That is the island which today is the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Its capital Santo Domingo was a centre for the first part of the Spanish conquest.
31 We have no textual sources for this sermon except Las Casas’ own notes, Gutiérrez 1992a p. 28. In this sermon, directed to the Spanish conquistadors, Montesinos asks rhetorically: “On what authority have you waged such detestable wars on these people [...] Are they not human beings? Have they no rational souls? Are you not obliged to love them as you love yourselves?” Quoted from Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 48-49 (p. 29).
32 Las Casas in Carta a un personaje de la corte, 1535, quoted in Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 32 (p. 17); italics by Gutiérrez.
33 He was Spanish of origin. The first person born in the Americas to be canonised was Santa Rosa of Lima (1586-1617).
alty system in Peru, which drastically reduced the independence of the church. In Peru ecclesial experiments like Quechua catechesis were put to an end. Efforts in line with Las Casas’ ideas were questioned in an anonymous pamphlet called, *Parecer de Yucay*, published in 1571 and probably written by the cousin of Toledo, friar García de Toledo. This pamphlet is, according to Gutiérrez, a theological justification of the colonial exertion of viceroy Toledo’s power.

A reminder of the colonial past can be seen in the gigantic colonial churches in several villages in the Peruvian mountains. These churches illustrate the colonial strategy. The indigenous people were forced to move from the countryside into villages where the Catholic Church represented the colonial power. With its links to the colonial power, it is not surprising that independence led to a deep crisis for the church.

The Peruvian church was divided after independence; all the bishops except one and all the Spanish royalist priests left the country and returned to Spain. It took several decades to overcome the crisis. The Church remained an influential factor in Peruvian society. The new leadership asked Rome to continue with the right to patronage over the church but this request was not accepted until 1875 by the pope Pius IX when the rights of patronage were given to the president of Peru. This long process contributed to the weakening of the church, both in regard to its internal structure and to its image among Peruvian elites. By the end of the 19th century the Catholic Church was clearly subordinant to the state. The rights of patronage were valid until the new constitution of 1979 came into effect in 1980.

1.2 1956 – 1979

1.2.1 Democracy and military regimes

Discontent from the exporting industry together with a growing political awareness among the “masses of the people” created conditions that forced the dictatorial government to resign and new elections were held in 1956. In these elections two new political parties appeared: *Acción Popular* (AP) and *Democracia Cristiana* (DC). But the conservative Manuel Prado backed up by Apra won the elections. The leader of AP, Fernando Belaunde Terry

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34 Gutiérrez 1992a p. 545.
36 Romero 1993, p. 31.
37 Klaiber 1988, p. 36.
38 Romero 1993, p. 31.
39 An account of this process can be found in Romero 1987, p. 35-42.
41 Reid 1985, p. 38.
(1912-2002), played a central role in Peruvian politics until his death. Deadlock in the 1962 elections between Haya de la Torre and Belaunde caused the military to intervene and take over in a coup that is characterised as being the first institutional and anti-oligarchic military coup.

Fernando Belaunde in alliance with DC was elected president in 1963. A guerrilla movement appeared in 1965. The rebellions were controlled after some months and its leaders imprisoned, but the government had been weakened. After the guerrilla episode, the Belaunde government had serious problems responding to the expectations and demands of the population and its last years were marked by increased repression, corruption scandals, and economic problems. Belaunde became politically isolated when DC, except the right wing that had formed Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC), left the government. Belaunde was left without any real possibilities to handle the situation.

A group of nationalist and reformist elements within the military led by General Juan Velasco Alvarado took power and installed the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces in October 1968. This government began to nationalise a number of transnational companies in the mining and oil sector and implement a series of social reforms such as a land reform beginning in 1969.

In comparison with other Latin American military regimes that restricted openness in society by repressive violent means, the Velasco government sought to include the majority of the population and maintained open spaces for discussion and action.

Velasco was overthrown by one of his generals, Francisco Morales Bermúdez, in August 1975 and a more “traditional” military regime took over. Popular discontent took various forms due to the fact that the grassroots people’s movements and the leftist parties had become stronger. On 19 July, 1977 these movements organised a national general strike. This strike has been described as a “breaking point for the Peruvian labour movement, uniting it for the first time with flourishing people’s movements and creating […] a tremendous political force under the direction of progressive political parties”. The general strike was not the only factor but contributed to open the democratic transition; it showed a wide-spread social discontent with the military government within the population.

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42 Belaunde was not new in Peruvian politics; he had been a member of the chamber of deputies in the Peruvian congress for Frente Democrático Nacional 1945-1948.
44 Romero 1999, p. 31.
45 “[…] un punto de quiebre para el movimiento laboral peruano, uniéndolo por primera vez con los florecientes populares, y creando, de ahí en adelante, una formidable fuerza política bajo la conducción de partidos políticos progresistas.” Youngers 2003, p. 33.
46 López 1997, p. 278.
But there was still a long way to go. The Peruvian authorities and employers responded with repressive means. An estimated 5,000 of the striking workers were sacked. The governmental repression as a result of the 1977 general strike made an enormous impact on Peruvian society and generated a series of protests. These were exemplified with two statements published on 31 July\(^47\) and 20 August\(^48\) in *La Prensa*, which had been signed by a number of Peruvian intellectuals, Non-Governmental organisations, and grassroots organisations, including people and institutions related to the church. The subscribers protested against the violations of the human rights, particularly mentioning the detentions of the people’s leaders and massive dismissals of those who took an active part in the general strike. The subscribers of the first statement also recognised that “those most affected by the economic policy are the ones that in addition to this are suffering from the hardest aggressions against their personal freedom”;\(^49\) this was understood to be recognition that poverty seriously puts in danger “their rights and also their possibilities to a humane life”. They finished the statement by inviting a general reflection on “the problem of human rights”: “It is necessary to develop a consciousness that better responds to the situation of scarcity among the majority [in the country] and a more acute sensibility in relation to any violation of the dignity of the people.”\(^50\)

The human rights theme had not really been on the agenda before but due to the repression the Peruvian human rights movement emerged, developed and found new forms of response to this. This process ended with the establishment of the *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos* (CONADEH) in 1979.\(^51\)

Less than two weeks after the general strike, president Morales Bermúdez called for general elections for a constitutional assembly to be held in 1978. AP decided to boycott the elections. Apra became the largest party in the assembly with just over 35 percent of the votes; the leftist parties were successful and received around 30 percent and PPC took 24 percent.\(^52\)

Apra took control over the assembly by forming an alliance with PPC and Haya de la Torre was elected president, even though he was terminally ill in cancer. Just before he died he signed the new constitution in July 1979. The major innovations were the abolition of the death penalty except in wartime and giving the right to vote to all over the age of 18, even the illiterate. The majority of the leftist parties opted for democratic means in their political

\(^{47}\) Titled “Reclaman Respeto a los Derechos Humanos”.

\(^{48}\) Titled “Derechos Humanos: Exigencias Inmediatas”.

\(^{49}\) “[...] son los sectores más afectados por la política económica, los que adicionalmente sufren las mayores agresiones contra las libertades personales”, *La Prensa* 1977a.

\(^{50}\) “Es necesario desarrollar una conciencia más viva de la situación de carencia de las mayorías, una sensibilidad más aguda respecto a cualquier violación de la dignidad de las personas.” *La Prensa* 1977a.

\(^{51}\) I will come back to the human rights movement below.

\(^{52}\) Reid 1985, p. 76.
strategy and said no to the armed struggle. This opened the way for general elections in May 1980 and a return to democracy.

1.2.2 Social movements and grassroots movements

Social pressure gave birth to several political changes between 1930 and 1960 when grassroots political movements irrupted into the political scene. Sinesio López argues that what he calls “social protests” contributed to the development of Peruvian society as these protests challenged the state and made it respond to the demands of the masses. In the Peruvian experience this was not only an irruption of people, but a dynamic process of organisation of grassroots initiatives on different levels in Peruvian society. According to Rosa Alayza there was a strong anti-oligarchic tendency in this dynamic process which contributed to a transformation of Peruvian society from an oligarchic society to a modern democratic society in the beginning of the 1980s.

In times of democratic regimes the needs of the people are normally channelled through the political parties and discussed in parliament or in regional and local governments. In times of dictatorial governments social movements offer a possibility for people to express their needs. This is one explanation that López gives to the significance and dynamic of the social movements in Peru in their historic perspective. He has developed an extended analysis around the role of social movements in the efforts to establish citizenship for the masses in Peru. López’ conclusion is that what was about to be called the *movimiento popular* in the 1970s was the spinal column of civil society. He sketches the role and significance of the social movements and the consequences of this process in the following way:

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53 Cotler 2005, p. 41.
55 Rosa Alayza is a political scientist and director of the IBC since 2001.
58 I find it difficult to find a suitable English translation to this concept so I prefer to use the Spanish expression italicized in my text. It is tempting to translate it with ‘popular movement’ as many do; ‘movement’ might do, but the form in singular causes problems. But above all it is obvious that the word ‘popular’ invites a series of misunderstandings. The Spanish *popular* means ‘of the people’ and can thus be translated as ‘from/of the people/s’ but also that might lead to misunderstandings. In other contexts one would speak of *organizaciones populares* or *organizaciones sociales*. The leaders of these groups came to play an important role in Peru especially in the late 1970s and were normally called *dirigentes populares*. As can be seen the common word in these terms is *popular* or its plural *populares*. Sometimes I will use ‘people’s organisations’ and sometimes even ‘popular’ would do, but it should then be understood in relation to these social movements that are closely related to the people at the grassroots level.
The most important change that Peru has experienced in this [the 20th] century is perhaps the passage from a closed society of lords towards a society of citizens, a process that still is not concluded. Peru has in fact experienced a profound and silent revolution during the last 50 years: the massive emergence of Peruvians with rights of different kinds that are more or less recognised, but maintained with difficulty. Thanks to this uncompleted change, Peruvians have ceased being objects of the powerful to become transformed into subjects with rights and power.60

Alayza has a similar view on the phenomenon as she states that this is a process where the organised poor coming from different experiences and different ideological influences “express a collective will to constitute themselves as subjects of their social and organisational task”.61 Rolando Ames62 identifies “a high proportion of ideological and organisational autonomy within the popular classes”.63

These positions illustrate a high estimation of the capacity of these grassroots initiatives that can be said to slightly idealise the phenomenon. Yet it cannot be denied that there was much dynamism in these efforts, especially in the 1970s. Historically these groups of the poor had been marginalised, but during the 1970s began to convert themselves into a movement which took a more active responsibility within society.64

The term *movimiento popular* arises in the Peruvian political discourse by the end of the 1970s.65 The term refers to different kinds of grassroots social movements that were promoted by the political left and responded to the fact that there was a degree of heterogeneity as well as a convergence of class awareness in these grassroots struggles. The use of the term *movimiento popular* recognises that these often heterogenic initiatives began to become a political factor. The term refers to a process where these heterogenic initiatives united and thus came to play a political role that challenged the political power.66 Romero says that the *movimiento popular* “was identified by the

60 “Quizás el cambio más importante que ha vivido el Perú en este siglo ha sido el tránsito de una sociedad cerrada de señores a una sociedad de ciudadanos, a través de un proceso que todavía no ha concluido. El Perú ha experimentado, en efecto, una profunda revolución silenciosa en los últimos cincuenta años: la emergencia masiva de peruanos y peruanas con derechos de diverso tipo, más o menos reconocidos, aunque difícilmente garantizados. Gracias a este cambio inconcluso, los peruanos han dejado de ser objetos de poder para transformarse en sujetos de derechos y de poder.” López 1997, p. 27.

61 “[...] afirman una voluntad colectiva de constituirse en sujetos de su quehacer social y organizativo”. Alayza 1984, p. 6.

62 Rolando Ames is a political scientist and a lecturer at the Catholic university in Lima. He is coordinating the area of political science at the university since 2006. He worked at the IBC 1982-1985 and was senator in the Peruvian parliament for the *Izquierda Unida*, IU 1985-1990. He was a commissioner in the TRC commission.

63 “[...] un alto grado de autonomía ideológica y organizativa de las clases populares”. Ames 1985, p. 3.

64 Alayza 1985, p. 6

65 Ames 1985, p. 4.

66 Ames 1985, p. 4.
affirmation of the power of the people to participate, to make decisions, to manage their organizations, to control the central government, to press for better conditions in their neighbourhoods [...]. They were also convinced of their value as human beings, and aware of the different perception of that value in society at large.”67 Alayza sees an option for social transformation in this mobilisation and protest “that never had been seen before” in these occurrences around the general strike in 1977.68 Ames means that the movimiento popular has the potential “to invent new kinds of political expression and representation”.69

Alayza identifies three levels of social and grassroots movements. The first is a broad spectrum of movements and groups that strive for a transformation of society; the second is more specific social movements that organise themselves for a specific cause, and the third, the movimiento popular.70 Important for the movimiento popular is its perspective on ‘class’ that implicitly indicates that there is a conflict between these movements and those with political and economic power in society.

In comparison with Brazil, where the social movements emerged as a result of people’s consciences within a situation where political parties could not operate publicly, the condition in Peru was quite different. Here there was a close relationship between the movimiento popular and the leftist parties.

Within the movimiento popular it is possible to distinguish a number of different movements. The two classical movements are the trade unions and the peasants’ movement. In the 1960s unions of public servants, such as the bank employees’ association and the teachers’ association, Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educación del Perú (SUTEP), also became important.

In Peru the trade unions trace their origins to the beginning of the 20th century with the struggle for an eight hour workday, fair salaries and decent working conditions. The largest union, Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú (CGTP), was founded in 1968. The name was taken from the first confederation founded on the initiative of Mariátegui in 1929. Apra and communist trade union leaders had founded the Confederación de Trabajadores del Perú (CTP) in 1944.71

The struggle of the peasants’ movements circled around the legal right to the land they were cultivating, “the land for them that cultivate it”;72 this was a demand that the Velasco government tried to respond to with agrarian re-

68 Alayza 1984, p. 4.
69 Ames 1985, p. 3.
71 Reid 1985, p. 13.
form laws from 1969. In 1956 the most important peasants’ movement, Confederación Campesina del Perú (CCP) was established.\textsuperscript{73} To reinforce agrarian reform, the Velasco government established the Confederación Nacional Agraria (CNA) in 1974 as a mass organisation of the cooperatives and to serve as a rival to CCP which was critical in the agrarian reform’s lack of consideration to the peasant communities.\textsuperscript{74}

In the 1960s a third movement was about to take form as a response to migration to the cities, mainly to Lima but also to the cities in the countryside. The urban population rose from 26.9 percent in 1940 to 40.1 in 1961 and still further to 53 percent by 1972.\textsuperscript{75} Settlers that came from rural areas invaded new land in the big cities and organised themselves in ward associations\textsuperscript{76} in order to claim both legal confirmation of land and basic services from the municipalities such as electricity, water and drainage and later also health clinics and schools.\textsuperscript{77}

A rapid expansion of higher education around 1960 radicalised the youth and served as an incentive for strengthening both people’s organisations and the political left. The increasing presence of social movements influenced political organisations, but also sectors within the army and even the church.\textsuperscript{78} The emerging liberation theology must be understood in this context.\textsuperscript{79}

The Velasco government was in principle encouraging the organisation of these groups and legislated in favour of their rights. This contributed to the relative strength of the \textit{movimiento popular} towards the end of the 1970s in spite of the military regime of Morales Bermúdez. It was this strength that made the general strike in 1977 powerful enough that it could open a process back to democracy and general elections in 1980.

\textsuperscript{73} Reid 1985, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{74} Reid 1985, p. 15 and 52.
\textsuperscript{75} López 1997, p. 313.
\textsuperscript{76} The expression in Spanish is normally \textit{organizaciones vecinales}, literally ‘neighbourhood organisations’.
\textsuperscript{77} Every association is organised in a board, \textit{consejo directivo}, elected by a general assembly. Most of associations have committees that are responsible for electricity, water, etc. The relation to the municipalities varies; sometimes there is cooperation and sometimes there can be open confrontation. There was also a time around 1990 when cells from \textit{Sendero Luminoso} infiltrated the ward associations. There are many examples of a strong ideological confrontation between \textit{Sendero} and the ward associations, \textit{Sendero} even assassinated some of the association leaders.
\textsuperscript{78} Cotler 2005, p. 295.
\textsuperscript{79} Romero stresses the importance of the emergence of the \textit{movimiento popular} for the changes that were about to come within the Peruvian church in the 1960s and 1970s, Romero 1993, p. 147. Further on she stressed that the “prophetic charisma of the Church in the seventies is related largely to this movement” but also underlines that this relation was interdependent: “the Church has been actively involved nurturing the popular movement”, Romero 1993, p. 177.
1.2.3 The Catholic Church

The research of Catalina Romero\(^80\) has provided valuable contributions for the analysis of the last 50 years of the Peruvian Catholic Church with a specific focus on liberation theology. She develops a typology of Church currents, which considers three factors - theology, models of Church organisation, and assessments of the social basis and adherence - in her interpretation of the relation between church and society. It is a typology of social practice and discourse within the church rather than a typology of ideas. She identifies four types: 1) the traditional pre-Vatican II perspective, 2) those that adopted the ideas of Vatican II, 3) liberation theology, and 4) those that reacted against the commitment of the church with the world after Vatican II.\(^81\)

Romero develops a periodization of Peruvian church history, which is based on an analysis of the interrelationship between three levels or dimensions: internal factors within the national Peruvian church, international church factors and the societal dimension (the Peruvian social structure and political relations but also references to the Latin American context)\(^82\). Romero identifies three periods: 1958-1968 (“Social concern and the re-encounter with the poor: a new basis for autonomy and critique”), 1969-1978 (“The option for the poor: a prophetical renewal of traditional relations”) and 1979-1988 (“Tradition and prophetism, authoritarianism and democracy: tensions in Church, State and Society”). In an article from 1999 she changes the shifting year to 1992,\(^83\) naming the period from 1993 onwards El derecho a la vida, nuevas reformas y pobreza (“The right to life, new reforms and poverty”).\(^84\)

It should be said that these periods are more approximate than precise. Romero relates to the dates of the general conferences of the Latin American bishops (CELAM),\(^85\) as they coincided “with national events that could be indicative of a shift in the social relationship between Church and society”,\(^86\) stressing that the CELAM conferences mark the end of the process, not the beginning.

There are other examples of periodizations, which for good reasons highlight other aspects, but they do not alter the fundamental idea in Romero’s analysis, rather they complement it. Francisco Moreno makes a division in the 1970s between Medellín and Puebla, around 1972/73. There was a shift

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\(^80\) Catalina Romero is sociologist and presently dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Catholic university in Lima. She was director for the IBC 1982-1991.

\(^81\) Romero 1993, p. 90-91.

\(^82\) Romero 1993, p. 80.

\(^83\) The year 1992 was crucial for many reasons as will be seen on the pages below; what happened on the socio-political level had consequences for the church and theological reflection.

\(^84\) Romero 1999, p. 43-46.

\(^85\) Conferencia general del Episcopado Latinoamericano; for a presentation of CELAM conferences, see below, pp. 55-56. The office in Bogotá is also lettered CELAM, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano.

in the CELAM leadership in 1972 when the conservative cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo (1935-2008) from Medellín was appointed general secretary. Simultaneously in Peru new elections within the Peruvian bishops’ conference resulted in less influence for liberation theologians. The third period in Moreno’s periodization spans from Puebla 1979 until 1984 when he wrote his book.87

Jeffrey Klaiber, SJ, has a slightly different periodization in which the period 1968-1975 corresponds to the military government of general Velasco and is called “the socio-political church”.88 Klaiber refers to the subsequent period between 1975 and the publication of his book in 1988 “the socio-pastoral church”.89

My own periodization is based on Romero’s texts and I use her vocabulary in characterising the four periods. The first two periods coincide with this part of the socio-political context. I have synthesised some events that relate to the societal dimension and the international and national church factors in Romero’s terminology in Table 2.

The Catholic Church in Peru, with a few exceptions, maintained its traditional conservative position until the midst of the 1950s. After that the church entered into a dynamic process that made the Catholic Church one of the most significant institutions in Peruvian society.90 Under the dynamic leadership of the archbishop in Lima, Juan Landázuri Ricketts, OFM, 1954-1989 (cardinal 1962), the Peruvian Catholic Church developed new pastoral practices, in which liberation theologians like Gustavo Gutiérrez played important roles.

The first conference of the Latin American episcopate, CELAM I, in Rio de Janeiro (1955) and later the instalment of the CELAM office in Bogotá were important steps for this new orientation of the church. In 1957 the pope, Pius XII, had called for European missionaries to come and work in the Latin American church. Together with young Peruvian priests trained in Latin American and European seminaries, the foreign priests began to work in poorer areas both in the Andean mountains and in the shantytowns of the cities.91

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89 Klaiber 1988, p. 409-482.
90 Romero 1999, p. 17.
91 Romero writes about the dynamic development of the Catholic Church from 1958 to 1969 and its social concern developed as a consequence of its national leadership and a dynamic change both at the national and international level, Romero 1993, p. 103-145, and concludes: “Further, the influx of foreign clergy […] soon made diversity a central trait of the Peruvian pastoral during the decades” (p. 144) and “The presence among the poor of the new generation of Peruvian priests and the new missionaries, both priests and nuns, along with the experience of the lay movements among the students and the workers, provided a new material for theological reflection” (p. 145). Klaiber also points to the role of foreign clergy and confirms the picture of Romero, Klaiber 1988, p. 380-382. He mentions especially the Maryknoll
### Table 2. Church, state and civil society in Peru 1955 – 1979.

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<td>new political parties: AP and D</td>
<td>early land reforms, nationalisations</td>
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<td>elections military coup</td>
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<td>guerrilla rebellions</td>
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<td>DC splits and PPC is founded</td>
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<td>1955 CELAM I in Rio de Janeiro</td>
<td>1973 new leadership, CELAM</td>
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<td>1958 John XXIII, new pope Vatican II</td>
<td>1978 John Paul II, new pope CELAM III, Puebla</td>
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<td>1962-65 Paul VI, new pope</td>
<td>1968 liberation theologians influence the Peruvian hierarchy</td>
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<td>1965 CELAM II, Medellin</td>
<td>1971 first theological course (“summer course”) at the Catholic university in Lima</td>
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<td>1959 social week</td>
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<td>1962 Mons. Landázuri appointed cardinal</td>
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<td>1965 CEAS is founded</td>
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<td>1968 Gutiérrez speaks about Theology of Liberation in Chimbote</td>
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<td>1969 Landázuri appointed cardinal</td>
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<td>1974 liberation theologians influence the Peruvian hierarchy</td>
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<td>1971 first theological course (“summer course”) at the Catholic university in Lima</td>
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In 1958 there came another initiative from the Peruvian episcopate. The bishops studied the social and economic problems in Peru and published a pastoral letter on “the social question in Peru”. Many analysts point to the first so-called social week (*semana social*) initiated by Monsignor Landázuri in August 1959 as an important step toward a new openness that was to characterise the Peruvian church. The purpose was to reflect upon how the church should respond to the emerging social problems of the country. The outcome was an emerging awareness within the church for social issues. According to Klaiber this constituted the beginning of a new era for the church. This week was followed by a second social week in 1960. In 1965 the bishops created the *Comisión Episcopal de Acción Social* (CEAS) in order to coordinate different social initiatives within the church.

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CELAM

In 1955 the Latin American bishops on the initiative of Monsignor Dom Helder Câmara (1909-1999) in Brazil and Monsignor Manuel Larraín (1920-1966) in Chile met for their first general conference in Rio de Janeiro (CELAM I). Among other things this meeting resulted in the establishment of the bishops’ council in Bogotá.

CELAM created a strong regional structure that permitted the Latin American church to develop its own way of being church distinct from other regions. The CELAM conferences have played an enormously important role for the development of the Catholic Church in Latin America that has also had echoes in other parts of the world. The hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church gave these conferences a special weight and the documents that were later approved by the popes who had taken part, were given a semi-official status close to that of encyclicals.

There can be no doubt that the most important of these meetings was the second general conference in Medellín 1968. This was a break through for the reflection of the church and its mission in the Latin American society, especially for the understanding of poverty and violence. For my focus in this dissertation its documents on Peace and Poverty of the Church are the most important and I will make reference to them later on. The role of CELAM II in Medellín for the development of liberation theology can hardly be overemphasised.

And even though the following conferences in Puebla 1979 (CELAM III) and in Santo Domingo 1992 (CELAM IV) cannot be said to have been as prophetic as Medellín, CELAM continued to be a strong institution and relatively independent from the Vatican. Interpretations of the third conference in Puebla 1979 vary. Some see it as a step backwards, but it is more generally seen as a confirmation of the Medellín conference; it was in Puebla that the preferential option for the poor was developed. The fourth conference in Santo Domingo 1992 was a disappointment for many but did not mean any alteration from the important issues addressed in Medellín and Puebla.

The fifth conference, CELAM V, in Aparecida, Brazil 2007 marked a return to the issues of both Medellín and Puebla, but lies outside the concern of this dissertation. The meeting in Aparecida brought the first visit to Latin America for Joseph Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI and, despite what

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94 Paul VI was present in Medellín 1968, John Paul II in Puebla 1979 and Santo Domingo 1992 and Benedict XVI in Aparecida 2007.
96 Document 14, La Pobreza de la Iglesia, p. 137-142.
98 See Puebla, No. 733-735 and 1134-1165.
might had been expected, the general opinion is that the bishops reinforced some of the dynamics from both Medellín and Puebla.  

**Institutionalised violence**

For this dissertation the Medellín document on Peace is of specific interest. This document begins with challenging words about the causes of the unjust situation of Latin America: “If ‘development is the new name for peace’, Latin American underdevelopment with its own characteristics in the different countries is an unjust situation which promotes tensions that conspire against peace.” These words might reflect an analysis of the former president of CELAM, Monsignor Larraín, who died in a car accident just before the conference. In 1965 he had written: “As many people die every year from misery, and from the hunger and disease it causes in the Third World, as died in the four years of World War II. Every year, underdevelopment kills millions of human beings. Never in history has there been a crueler battle. This blood tax, paid by the underdeveloped 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 underdevelopment.” While the bishops’ conclusion might be considered drastic it is nevertheless quite logical: this situation reflects realities “that constitute a sinful situation”.

The bishops then analyse the Latin American context and the status of peace. They describe the above named tensions that conspire against peace including: marginalisation, different kinds of social inequalities, and, different kinds of oppression from those in power. But they also point to a growing awareness among the poor. And they set this situation in relation to economic structures that create poverty and constitute “a source of internal and external tensions” but also to a political aspect where “imperialism of any ideological bias” is denounced. This analysis of the socio-political context is then confronted with the doctrine of the church. Here social injustice in the Latin American society is described and called “institutional-

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99 Gutiérrez who was present in Aparecida has given testimony on this in his essay *La opción preferencial por el pobre en Aparecida* (Gutiérrez 2007b).
100 Gutiérrez as a theological expert in Medellín took an active part in redacting this document.
101 Reference to *Populorum progressio*, No. 87.
102 Medellín 2:1.
104 Medellín 2:1.
105 Medellín 2:2.
106 Medellín 2:3.
107 Medellín 2:5, 6.
109 Medellín 2:8-10.
110 Medellín 2:14-18.
ised violence”.111 This expression was based on the bishops’ view that “justice is a prerequisite for peace”.112 The structures of this institutionalised violence have consequences that were said to be “violating fundamental rights”.113 The bishops were obviously of the idea that there is a relation between institutionalised violence and violations of fundamental human rights. And therefore it cannot be a surprise that, as they put it, “the ‘temptation to violence’ is surfacing in Latin America”.114 Passivity in the face of people’s suffering of human rights violations can therefore never be justified: “One should not abuse the patience of a people that for years has borne a situation that would not be acceptable to anyone with any degree of awareness of human rights.”115 The bishops concluded this paragraph with an exhortation to the Church and its members to action, where the pastoral concern that is a guiding principle throughout the whole document is focused: “Facing a situation which works so seriously against the dignity of man and against peace, we address ourselves, as pastors, to all the members of the Christian community and asking them to assume their responsibility in the promotion of peace in Latin America.”116

In Puebla 1979 this perspective was still valid even though there was less stress on injustice as the basic cause to institutionalised violence. However, almost synonymously, according to Gutiérrez,117 the bishops refer to injustice as institutionalised.118 The notion of institutionalised violence appears to be limited to “subversive and repressive” violence. This violence “knocks human dignity down to their most elemental rights”.119 But the bishops insist in referring to the relation between institutionalised violence and lack of human rights.

In Santo Domingo 1992 there was less stress on institutionalised violence; the concept is never used, but it is noted that violations of human rights are not just a question of terrorism and repression, but also a result of “extreme

111 Medellín 2:16. The term is parallel to what the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung the following year would name “structural violence”, Galtung 1969. “Institutional violence” is a more common phrase but I have decided to use the form “institutionalised violence as it corresponds to the Spanish: violencia institucionalizada as it is used in the official translations.
112 Medellín 2:16.
113 Medellín 2:16.
114 Medellín 2:16.
115 Medellín 2:16.
116 Medellín 2:16.
117 For instance in Gutiérrez 1989c, p. 57 and in Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 387.
118 Puebla 509, 562.
119 “[...] se atropella la dignidad humana hasta en sus derechos más fundamentales”. Puebla 1259.
poverty and unjust economic structures” and this is called “violence against the rights of the children, women and the poorest groups of society”.

Liberation Theology

One cannot identify a specific date when liberation theology was born nor specify who the first to speak in those terms was. It is rather a movement born among several Latin American theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, who individually and together began to see the need for a new way of being church. A group of Catholic theologians began to meet regularly in the 1960s. Gutiérrez was one of those, and among the others we can find names such as Juan Luis Segundo, Jon Sobrino, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff. One can identify the meeting in Petropolis, Brazil in February 1964 as one starting point. There is no first hand documentation from this meeting, only references in other works. In 1966 the group met in Santiago de Chile and material from this meeting was published in *Salvación y Construcción del mundo*. On the Protestant side there are early representatives of liberation theology such as José Míguez Bonino, Rubem Alves and Milton Schwantes.

When analysts try to evaluate the rise of liberation theology they often point to three factors. Firstly, the lack of priests and other pastoral agents in the 1950s that prompted the pope call for missionaries to Latin America. When these new missionaries arrived to Peru they were more open than the Peruvian priests to the needs of the people and the challenges this posed for the church. Secondly, they mention the impact of Vatican II which signified dramatic and profound change for the Catholic Church. Thirdly, they point to a factor outside the churches. New ways of analysing society arose through the development of the social sciences within universities. This was partly a reflection of what has been called a university boom, which consisted of an enormous increase of both new universities and university students. This factor put new and deep challenges to the church. I would like to add a fourth factor and this is the irruption of the popular masses into the political sphere from the 1960s onwards, which I sketched above. The church was not unaffected by this as is reflected in the Medellín document. Thus the poor became a great challenge for the church.

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120 “condiciones de extrema pobreza y de estructuras económicas injustas” and “violencias contra los derechos de los niños, la mujer y los grupos más pobres de la sociedad”. Santo Domingo 167.
121 For instance in Oliveros 1980, p. 51-57. Oliveros highlights three contributions in the meeting; by Gutiérrez, Juan Luis Segundo and Lucio Gera.
123 Cueto and Contreras 1999 point to the Peruvian development, p. 281. The number of university students in Peru more than tripled from 30 247 in 1960 to 109 590 in 1970.
1.3 1980 – 2000

1.3.1 Return to democracy

Apra suffered from an internal crisis in the search for a new leadership after Haya de la Torre and the leftist parties experienced ideological splits. This opened the way for Belaunde who easily won the presidential election with more than 45 percent of the votes in the 1980 elections. He built his government with support from the PPC. However, the government of Belaunde was a failure. It could not meet the expectations of the people and its popular support decreased. Economic conditions became worse and living conditions during the Belaunde government deteriorated. In addition to this, the government did not have a strategy to counteract the violent situation created by the appearance of Sendero Luminoso.

After an evaluation of the failure of the left in the general elections the left wing parties formed an electoral front in late 1980 called Izquierda Unida (IU). Alfonso Barrantes Lingán (1927-2000) was elected to chair the front. IU had already participated as an electoral front in the municipal elections in November 1980 in which AP was again successful. However, IU made important gains in the polls and came second in Lima and won six department capitals. In the municipal elections of 1983 IU was even more successful and followed Apra as the second political force on the national level. On this occasion IU won control in Lima, where Barrantes became mayor, and in the old Inca capital Cusco.

1.3.2 Sendero Luminoso and MRTA

While Peruvian society prepared for a return to democracy through the electoral process, the previously unknown Maoist faction of the Peruvian Communist Party, Sendero Luminoso, burned some ballot boxes at polling stations just days before the elections in May 1980. This action would mark the political agenda of the following two decades.

The political left had become divided. A Maoist branch of the Peruvian Communist Party broke with the Moscow-line branch in 1965, but there existed a series of other leftist parties that had emerged from the communist

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124 Reid points to an initial growth of the economy (1980-1981) followed by deep recession (1982-1984), Reid 1985, p. 84. Manufacturing industry fell by 20 percent from 1981 to 1983 and by 1984 the industry was only operating at 40 percent of its capacity; textiles, vehicle assembly, engineering and leather industries suffered most from the crisis, Reid, p. 85. Peru’s economic collapse was part of the dept crisis in Latin America from 1982 and the impact of this crisis “was disproportionately severe in Peru”, Reid, p 88-89.

125 McDonald 1993, p. 209. For Sendero Luminoso see below.

126 Reid 1985, p. 121.

127 Apra got 33 percent of the votes and IU 29; Reid 1985, p. 122.
party. Some others had originally emerged from radical groups within Apra. *Sendero* emerged in 1971 from the Maoist branch. The name came from an interpretation of a phrase by Mariátegui: *Partido Comunista del Perú, por el Sendero Luminoso de José Carlos Mariátegui* (PCP-SL). *Sendero* was chaired by a lecturer in philosophy, Abimael Guzmán Reynoso (1934- ), from the national university San Cristóbal in Huamanga in Ayacucho. Guzmán always appeared in his writings and messages as *Presidente Gonzalo* (Chairman Gonzalo) which alluded to Chairman Mao in China; his ideological teaching spurred the metaphysical expression *Pensamiento Gonzalo*, which is translated ‘Gonzalo Thought’. The followers of *Sendero* perceived their group to be the heirs of Mao and the Cultural Revolution in China, pretending to be the “fourth spear of communism”. They searched for the construction of a society similar to the communist China of the Cultural Revolution. Terror and violent actions, or people’s war (*guerra popular*) as the *senderistas* themselves called it, were the means to reach this goal; the world revolution was to be started in Peru under the leadership of *Chairman Gonzalo*. The political violence of *Sendero*’s terror and the authorities’ repressive counterinsurgency policy took Peru to the edge of civil war in which the majority of the Peruvian people were caught in the crossfire. *Sendero*’s attacks were not only directed against the military and the Peruvian authorities, they were also targeting social movements and their leaders, such as churches and NGOs.

Very few people in Peru took notice of the activities of *Sendero* during the first years and it was not until the end of 1982 that president Belaunde called for a massive military response to combat *Sendero*. 1983 and 1984

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129 In most English speaking literature the English translation of *Sendero Luminoso*, ‘Shining path’, is used. I prefer to use the Spanish form and in my text use only *Sendero* as is customary in contemporary Spanish writing. I will in the following use the Spanish form, *senderistas*, for its adherents. For more reading about *Sendero*, see for instance Degregori 1990, Gorriti 1990, Strong 1992 and Manrique 2002.
130 This is one of the oldest Peruvian universities founded in the 17th century.
131 ‘Gonzalo Thought’ is meant to be the writings of Guzmán. On the website of Red Sun Magazine, http://www.redsun.org, an English-speaking website of Sendero one can read the following in a document from November 2006: “Gonzalo Thought is the application of the universal truth, of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism, to the concrete conditions of Peruvian society and the world today. Therefore we say that the most substantive and most developed of Gonzalo Thought is found in the general political line of the Party and there the developments and contributions of Gonzalo Thought to Marxism are specified. Even more so, Gonzalo Thought solves new problems of the people’s war and develops bases of strategy and tactics for the world revolution. […] Chairman Gonzalo has generated Gonzalo Thought, theoretical foundation for the practice of the communists of today, in Peru and the World, for the people’s war, when we have entered the development of a new great wave of the world proletarian revolution, it is the theoretical foundation of the world revolution today. In this way, Gonzalo Thought contributes to the development of Marxism, and neither imperialism nor the reaction wants this – revisionism even less so.” http://www.redsun.org/mpp_doc/mpp_200611_GT_En.htm, retrieved 22 June 2009.
came to be the bloodiest years in terms of deaths, but activities were still concentrated in remote areas in the Andean mountains especially in the Ayacucho region, one of Peru’s poorest and where the violence initially emerged.

In 1984 another subversive group was born, *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (MRTA). This group was more of a “conventional” Latin American guerrilla organisation, but mainly using terror as a means. However, they normally did not attack leaders of the social movements or the political parties. There was an open ideological conflict between Sendero and MRTA that in some places took violent forms, like around Huancayo in the central Andean region.

1.3.3 From Alan García to Alberto Fujimori

The governmental parties, AP and PPC, lost almost all of their electoral support in the general elections in 1985 and for the first time in Peruvian history Apra came into power with their young charismatic leader Alan García (1949- ) as president. IU consolidated its political platform and became the second force in the Peruvian parliament in 1985.

After two more or less successful years in power, things started to become more difficult for the Apra government after adopting laws for the nationalisation of banks in 1987. Just after this a deep economic crisis became evident due to the incapacity of the Apra government to govern the country which resulted in a dramatic devaluation of the Peruvian currency and hyperinflation. For the population this development was disastrous, but it also motivated a mobilisation of opposition from the nearly depleted right wing parties. In October 1987 the movement Libertad under the leadership of the well-known author Mario Vargas Llosa (1936- ) was founded. Libertad assembled, among others, the Peruvian industrial and business sector, which historically had not openly taken part in politics and electoral processes. Together with AP and PPC, Libertad created the electoral front Frente Democrático (Fredemo) for the 1990 general elections, united around Vargas Llosa as their presidential candidate.

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132 According to estimations approximately 3,500 people were killed in 1983 and the same number again in 1984. According to the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report it is likely that these figures are grossly underestimated.

133 Its presidential candidate Barrantes should have run in the second round against Garcia but withdrew since Garcia obtained almost 50 percent of the votes in the first round.

134 In 1985 the old currency, Sol, was replaced with the Inti, and three zeros were erased; One Inti was equivalent to 1,000 Soles and one USD was worth 14 Intis. Five years later the USD was worth around 500,000 Intis and from July 1990 six zeros were erased and the name Inti million was introduced; from July 1991 the currency became the Nuevo Sol.

135 For 1989 the inflation was almost 2,800 percent and for 1990 almost 7,000 percent.

136 Each of these three groups got one third of the candidates for the parliament in the 1990 elections.
When the Apra government began to decline many thought that the second political force, IU, would gain in the 1990 general elections since neither a centre-right government nor a centre-populist one had been able to demonstrate how to properly lead the country. A split within IU became definite in November 1989 just as the pre-electoral campaign was about to start, when a more moderate fraction headed by Barrantes left IU and founded Izquierda Socialista (IS). This incapacity to maintain unity within IU was probably the most important factor that hindered the leftist front to occupy the political vacuum that the former political blocks had left. To this fact one has to add a decline in the social movements’ organisational structure and their involvement in the political life, which to a certain extent was due to a lack of willingness or capacity for IU to relate to their social base. The activities of Sendero were another factor. Sendero had assassinated several IU representatives and activists on various levels as well as leaders of the social movements. On the other hand some of the parties within the IU were accused by the military and the government of supporting Sendero. On the international stage two factors were decisive: the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the electoral loss of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua in February 1990, just before the Peruvian elections in April.

Everything seemed thus to be developed into a confrontation between the Apra candidate Luis Alva Castro and the neo-liberal Vargas Llosa for the presidential elections in April 1990. But less than a month before the elections the then unknown rector of the Agrarian University in Lima, Alberto Fujimori, started to ascend the opinion polls. Within a month he rose from obscurity to finish in second place with 25 percent of the votes, only just behind Vargas Llosa who obtained 28 in the first round. That brought about a second round in June, which Fujimori quite easily won with votes from Apra, IU and IS. The vote for Fujimori was in many respects a protest against the traditional parties and the neo-liberal policy that Fredemo had said they would introduce.

1.3.4 Peru under Fujimori

In July 1990 when Fujimori assumed the presidency the Peruvian state was practically destroyed. Three components were said to be responsible for this: international financial groups, armed opposition groups and irresponsible

\[137\] In my view, the Apra party have the characteristics of a populist party that is oriented to the centre even if it is affiliated to Socialist International. “In Latin America, populism has encompassed many forms, but all have shared qualities of being urban-based, multi-class coalitional, hierarchical, cooptive, ad hoc, and non-revolutionary, led by ebullient (if not charismatic) figures who promised to redress popular grievances and to build social solidarity.” They “are nationalistic in character but often have no consistent ideology or agenda; rather, they often adopt a range of issues to fit the needs of the times.” Populist leaders include Juan Perón in Argentina, Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico, and José María Velasco Ibarra in Ecuador. Levine 1998, p. 7-8.
populism under the Apra government headed by Alan García that brought economic crisis.\textsuperscript{138}

Fujimori called for some prominent personalities from the left to be advisors and three were selected to be part of his first government.\textsuperscript{139} However, only a few weeks after his installation as president, 8 August, the government announced a drastic programme to respond to the economic crisis and inflation. Over night the price of oil went up by more than 3.000 percent and food prices rose 300-500 percent. This came as a shock for the population, especially for the poor; the programme was called ‘fuji-shock’.\textsuperscript{140} The government of Fujimori, who had criticised Vargas Llosa, was about to apply exactly the same politics proposed by the international financial institutions.

Fuji-shock provoked much desperation in numerous sectors of the Peruvian population. The international community interpreted the crisis as a situation of humanitarian emergency and emergency assistance, like that after a natural catastrophe, was sent to Peru from the UN, foreign governments and international NGOs.

Fujimori did not have any political or social base. His electoral movement Cambio 90 was created out of three groups within the Peruvian society, people from the national universities, small industry businessmen and local leaders from the evangelical churches. Cambio 90 became the third political force behind both Fredemo and Apra and the government was far short of having a majority in either of the two chambers of the parliament.\textsuperscript{141} Instead of seeking alliances in parliament Fujimori began to minimise the importance of the parliament and govern with decrees bringing confrontation with the parliament. He broke with most of the evangelical leaders during his first year, the leftist ministers left the government\textsuperscript{142} and Fujimori became more and more dependent on the military. There was a wide spread frustration about the ability of the authorities to deal with Sendero and MRTA. The critiques were specifically directed at the parliament that instituted the laws

\textsuperscript{138} Lopez 1997, p. 286.
\textsuperscript{139} Gloria Helfer (IU), member of the network around Gutiérrez, became minister of education; Carlos Amat y León (IS) minister of agriculture and Fernando Sánchez Albavera (IS) minister of energy and mining.
\textsuperscript{140} One drastic example of what the fuji-shock meant for the poor can be taken from the cooperative catering in the small Lutheran congregation Luz Divina in Márquez, Callao. The women had collected 800 000 Intis (approx 5,40 USD) in a fund for kerosene and other expenses. Before fuji-shock they could buy 160 litres of kerosene for that amount; after they could buy less than 6 litres. According to a fax sent to the Church of Sweden in September 1990, OK-A 24.
\textsuperscript{141} This was the first time since 1980 that the president did not have majority in the Peruvian parliament. In reality Cambio 90 came to be the second force since the parliamentarians of Fredemo ceased to act together and instead began to defend their own groups. According to a report to the Church of Sweden in January 1991, OK-A 25.
\textsuperscript{142} Amat y León renounced in October 1990, Helfer in December 1990 and Sánchez Albavera was dismissed in November 1991.
and the courts that implemented them. Many of the presumed terrorists who had been arrested were released for want of evidence.

Fujimori could use the people’s growing discontent with the political parties and the courts in his political discourses and criticised what he called “traditional parties” and “traditional politicians”. His political discourse became more and more authoritarian and it is easy to see how this indicated what was about to happen in April 1992.143

1992 came to be a crucial year as political violence was about to reach its peak. As Fujimori did not have a majority position in the parliament, the situation became more and more impossible until he finally decided on the 5 April 1992 to dissolve the parliament and the judicial organisation in his peculiar coup d’état (autogolpe).144 Since his target was the parliament as well as the courts and judges, groups that were criticised and disgusted by a majority of the population, his action was approved by a majority of Peruvians. This gave Fujimori free hands for his political programme. The situation was tense. Ex-president García succeeded to flee out of the country to Colombia and later to France, where he was to stay until the fall of Fujimori in 2000. The presidents of the two parliamentary chambers, the Senate and the chamber of Deputies, were held under house arrests for a couple of weeks and oppositional newspapers like La República were partially censured for a week.

On 8 April, Fujimori appeared live on most of the TV channels to again justify the measures taken. A quotation from one of the daily reports that we sent to the Church of Sweden after the autogolpe illustrates what took place and how this was interpreted: Fujimori talked “with all the characteristics of a dictator: superciliousness and self-assuredness. The message was only a long offence on basic democratic principles even if he claims to speak in the name of democracy and in the interest of the population. The politicians in parliament are only earning a lot of money and instituting laws that do not mean anything for the people and the judges are corrupt and can be bought by money. The motive for the critique of the parliament was that it had stopped a number of government bills. Now it is time to ‘moralise’ so that the government can impose its neoliberal policy and counterinsurgency strategy.”145

The political opposition was pinioned. The dissolved parliament met and tried to maintain the constitution. More than half of the members of the dis-

\[143\] My wife and I wrote in a circular letter from December 1991: “Peru is being transferred to a civil military dictatorship where the president with support from the military can do whatever he wants.” OK-A 26.

\[144\] This was indeed a coup d’état, but as the constitutionally elected president headed it, it was designated in Spanish as autogolpe; I will use the Spanish term in the following. According to Collins Spanish Dictionary 2000, an autogolpe is a “coup organised by the government itself to allow it to take extra powers”, p. 108.

\[145\] According to a report to the Church of Sweden from 9 April, 1992, OK-A 27.
solved parliament\textsuperscript{146} met a week later to appoint the first vice president Máximo San Román to Peru’s constitutional president and as their spokesman before the Organisation of American states (OAS).

The original intention of Fujimori was to select a committee that within six months would present a proposal on a new constitution for a coming referendum. Due to international pressure, especially from the OAS, Fujimori was later forced to call for new elections for a \textit{Congreso Constitucional Democrático} (CCD) later the same year with the task to replace the 1979 constitution with a new one.

The \textit{autogolpe} was not just a deathblow against the political parties; it was also a deathblow against the social movements. Less than 12 years after the successful efforts to restore democracy, the social movements in Peru were almost completely crushed. Trade unions and other social movements were unable to act due to reduced support from the people and the political parties had been almost completely defeated. President Fujimori, in alliance with the military, had skilfully defeated political opposition from political parties to local organisations.

Some of the bigger parties boycotted the elections for the CCD, but the elections took place on 22 November 1992. Fujimori’s political formation, \textit{Cambio 90-Nueva Mayoría} (C90-NM), received only 38 percent of the votes, but through manipulation and the nullification of votes it obtained a majority in the parliament.

As 1992 drew to its end Peru was in a deep crisis. Certainly political violence had begun to decrease and people were beginning to feel a little safer, but politically the crisis was profound. The constitution of 1979 was annulled, the parliament was dissolved, the political opposition neutralised and president Fujimori seemed to control all the mechanisms of the state. He governed the country from a strong position, supported by the military, Peruvian industry, the majority of the media and more than 60 percent of the population. The image of \textit{el chinito},\textsuperscript{147} that was supposed to have brought order to the Peruvian economy and defeated \textit{Sendero} and MRTA by capturing their leaders, was well spread.

In October 1993 the proposal for a new constitution was approved in a referendum with a slight majority.\textsuperscript{148} The new constitution strengthened the presidency and allowed for one re-election of the president. One highly controversial issue was whether capital punishment for treason against the nation for terrorist involvement should be incorporated in the new constitution. Church groups fruitlessly spoke against this amendment.

\textsuperscript{146} 38 of 60 senators and 100 of 180 representatives; according to a report to the Church of Sweden from 13 April, 1992, OK-A 28.

\textsuperscript{147} This was an expression of any Peruvian with Asian origin and was often used as a nickname for Fujimori.

\textsuperscript{148} 52% in favour and 48 % against; there were people who questioned the figures and talked about fraud. Circular letter from Gardbring and Kristenson, December 1993, OK-A 29
The tiny majority that voted in favour of the new constitution created a slight hope for a change in the elections in April 1995. The political opposition tried to mobilise an alternative. People from some sectors of the political left and people from the centre, without being organised in parties, called for the former general secretary of the United Nations, the Peruvian Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, to lead an electoral alternative front against Fujimori and Unión por el Perú (UPP) was founded.

But all these efforts were in vain. The government controlled the state administration completely and the elderly Pérez de Cuéllar\(^\text{149}\) could not attract the majority of the poor. In the elections Fujimori comfortably defeated his opponent and C90-NM got a majority in the new congress.\(^\text{150}\) These elections were catastrophic for the political parties or “traditional political parties” as Fujimori used to say scornfully. With its leader García in exile, Apra – the best organised party, the leftist, centre and right wing parties obtained only a total of 6 percent in the elections.

None of the elections in 1992 and 1995, nor the referendum in 1993 can be said to have been free and democratic. Fujimori was in control of it all. Media was, however, relatively free except for a few weeks after the autogolpe when they were censured. But the majority of the media applied a kind of “self censure”, which definitely favoured Fujimori. People were still afraid after their experience of the activities of both Sendero and the authorities’ counterinsurgency policy, so in order to stay calm they supported Fujimori. There was a lot of manipulation, but perhaps not direct electoral fraud during these electoral campaigns although the opposition was quite frustrated over the situation.

After a manipulative manoeuvre in the CCD at midnight 13/14 June 1995, representatives from the governmental party succeeded after a short debate to have the congress adopt an extraordinary and disputable law, nr 26479, at three o’clock early in the morning of 14 June. This law gave amnesty to those who committed violations of human rights in the counterinsurgency strategy against Sendero and MRTA from May 1980 to the day of the law’s adoption. The initiative of the law came from the government and was presented by Gilberto Siura, congress member of C90-NM.\(^\text{151}\) It was approved with support from the conservative group Renovación. The rest of the opposition together with 5 members of C90-NM voted against it.

\(^{149}\) Pérez de Cuéllar was 75 years at the moment.
\(^{150}\) Fujimori got 64 percent of the votes and Pérez de Cuéllar 22. In the congress C90-NM got 67 seats of 120. Missionary report to the Church of Sweden, October 1995, OK-A 30.
\(^{151}\) Siura was one of the few evangelicals that Fujimori did not marginalise and purge. Siura got epithets in the opposition press such as “the ineffable Siura” or “the indescribable Siura”. When the Cantuta case began to be disclosed he even said that the victims had “self-kidnapped” themselves. More about Siura and his role in this law can be found in López Rodríguez 2008, p. 137-138.
It is not a strain to presume that the main reason for this law was the outcome of the Cantuta case with its probable links to the massacre in Barrios Altos in Lima in November 1991. Consequently those counterinsurgents held in custody were released immediately after president Fujimori promulgated the law the following day.

Critically, reactions from the political opposition were immediate including the Coordinadora National de Derechos Humanos, who emitted a statement later that same day, and the permanent council of the Peruvian bishops’ conference on 15 June. Most of the newspapers criticised the law in their editorials and critiques also came from international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Grassroots manifestations of discontent took place in central Lima some days after and on one banner it was written “Siura: Aren’t you afraid of God” which made a clear reference to the fact that Gilberto Siura was an evangelical leader. A poll from the Peruvian poll institution APOYO showed that 87 percent of the population was against the release of those who were believed to be responsible for the Cantuta case and indicated the fact that for the first time president Fujimori had a significant decrease in popular support, from 76 to 68 percent. The adoption of the law took place just two months after Fujimori’s landslide victory over Pérez de Cuéllar and a month before his second turn as president of Peru began. One could probably argue that this law was the peak of Fujimori’s arrogant way of governing the country. His reign would last another five years, but his popular support slowly began to decline and international critiques against his government began to increase.

To all democratic forces in Peruvian society this was a painful moment and in spite of all protests against the law there was not any hope in sight in the near future.

1.3.5 Sendero Luminoso and the counterinsurgency response

Around the mid 1980s, Sendero changed strategy and under the slogan “from the countryside to the city” (del campo hacia la ciudad) started to execute actions in the big cities, not least in Lima; it is assumed that Guzmán spent most of his last years in Lima directing the activities of Sendero before his capture in September 1992. The political violence was escalating with a series of car bombs, electrical short cuts, so-called paro armados, selective

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152 About the Barriosa Altos and La Cantuta cases eee next section below, p. 69-72.
153 “Inaceptable amnistía.” Published in among other places Signos No. 11, June 1995, p. 2.
154 Also published in Signos No. 11, 1995, p. 5.
156 Signos 11 1995, p. 5.
157 English ‘armed strikes’. This was a strategy of Sendero to threaten people to stay at home and not go to work; I will use the Spanish expression in the following. Announcements of
political assassinations and other actions taken all over the country, which led to the declaration of a state of emergency in more than half of the country.\textsuperscript{158}

It was impossible to be unaware of the activities of \textit{Sendero} during this time. Most noticeable were the power outages due to repeated attacks against the electrical transmission towers in Lima and all around the country from the late 1980s through the early 1990s. There was a certain regularity in the attacks of \textit{Sendero}: electric cuts were to be expected at midnight on 31 December, around 17 May (the day the armed struggle began in 1980), around 18 June (“the day of heroism”; i.e. the day of the prison massacre 1986)\textsuperscript{159} and in October (the month of Guzmán’s birthday). This fact, in combination with shortage of electrical production from the water power stations in the mountains, led to electric rationing for 8-16 hours a day for all the households in Lima from January 1992 to January 1993.

In the second half of 1989 Peru was planning for municipal elections in November and general elections in April 1990. At this stage the violent activities of \textit{Sendero} intensified during the electoral campaigns and culminated some days before the elections. This included the assassinations of some candidates. This was very clear in the second part of 1989. \textit{Sendero} had announced a \textit{paro armado} for 3 November (nine days before the municipal elections). The presidential candidate for IU, Henry Pease, took the initiative and planned a march for peace in protest against \textit{Sendero}. Most of the political parties responded positively to this invitation and their leaders took an active part in the march together with a number of grassroots organisations, NGOs, churches, etc. Around 50 000 marched through the streets in central Lima. Some of the participants admitted that they did not march without fear, but their dedication to show repudiation for \textit{Sendero}’s violent strategy was stronger. Many analysts maintained that this expression released many people from fear, which permitted them to vote in the elections. \textit{Signos} wrote in an editorial after the municipal elections:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Sendero} was defeated in the ballot boxes. What happened cannot be underestimated because it is the first time, with the march for peace as a foretaste, that the Peruvian people broke the ice of silence and inactivity in order to collectively express that it is not willing any longer to indefinitely accept the blackmail of terror. This was only a first, but decisive step and its political significance is much more powerful than any military victory. This shows that it is thus not a mistake to affirm that people are the principal protagonist
\end{quote}

\textit{Paro armados} were spread through writings on the walls and with pamphlets, especially in the shantytowns and the day before some buses were burnt in order to heighten fear.\textsuperscript{158} Lima even had curfews during the night both in 1987 and 1991.\textsuperscript{159} See below, next page.
One can thus interpret both the peace march and the willingness to vote as a protest and an emerging popular resistance against Sendero’s terror as a political means. This resistance from broad sectors of civil society including the grassroots undermined the position of Sendero as a legitimate political protagonist, a strategy that showed itself to be more powerful than any military victory.

However this insight never became part of the counterinsurgency policy of the Peruvian authorities. In principle there was not really any difference in the way that the different governments responded and set up their counterinsurgency policies after 1983. What was supposed to be needed was a military strategy and Sendero was fought by military means, quite contrary to what was stressed in the editorial above.

One exceptional action was the prison massacres in 1986, less than a year after Apra and Alan García had begun to govern the country. On 18 June, during the meeting of the Socialist International in Lima, Peruvian military forces attacked prisoners who were adherents of Sendero in three prisons in Lima, San Juan de Lurigancho, El Frontón and Santa Barbara. Some days before, senderistas had started riots in the prisons to which the government responded with military interventions. Prisoners were shot dead and in El Frontón they were even attacked from the air. Nearly 250 prisoners died. The protests against the government’s induced violence, both nationally and internationally, were strong.

Paramilitary groups as well as death squadrons began to operate by the end of the 1980s. One paramilitary group was established by the Apra government and was named Comando Rodrigo Franco (CRF) after an Apra official who was assassinated by Sendero in 1987. During the first years of Fujimori’s government a death squadron was created within the army called Grupo Colina. One of its first actions was an attack against a private barbecue in Barrios Altos in central Lima in November 1991 where 15 people were assassinated.

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160 “En las urnas Sendero fue derrotado. El hecho no puede ser subvalorado porque es la primera vez – con el anitcipio de la marcha por la paz – que el pueblo peruano rompió el hielo de silencio y la inacción para expresar colectivamente que no está dispuesto a aceptar indefinidamente el chantaje del terror. Ha sido sólo un primer paso, pero decisivo, y su significado político lo hace mil veces más poderoso que cualquier victoria militar. Muestra entonces que no es errado afirmar que el principal protagonista en una estrategia es el pueblo, la sociedad civil y que la lucha contra el terror es en primer lugar una cuestión política y social.” Signos 10 1989, p. 3.

161 For the actions carried out by CRF, see the TRC report (CVR 2003a), Tomo VII, p. 195-211. For the assassination of Rodrigo Franco, see the TRC report (CVR 2003a), Tomo VII, p. 255-265.

162 This action was investigated by the TRC and their evaluation can be found in the TRC report (CVR 2003a), Tomo VII, p. 475-493. The case was also presented to the Inter-
Another example of the counterinsurgency policy was to provide the so-called *rondas campesinas* with weapons. These groups had a long history in Andean culture and started to develop in Cajamarca in northern Peru. Originally they were a way for the villagers to create defence groups against criminals that threatened life in the villages, to protect against cattle thieves, etc. Some *rondas* started to confront *Sendero* in Ayacucho in the 1980s; some even on initiative of the military called *Comités de Defensa Civil* (‘committees of civil defence’).\(^{163}\) Armed with sticks, machetes and eventually some old rifles they had very little chance to be any real threat to *Sendero*. Around 1990 the government, starting in Ayacucho where the *rondas* system was not particularly well organised or developed, began to arm the *rondas* groups and set them under military command as part of the a counterinsurgency policy. This was highly criticised by the human rights movement in Peru. Since the *rondas* were badly equipped and not sufficiently trained it was feared that this would only increase the violence. However, these groups are considered to be one of the factors that led to the defeat of *Sendero*.\(^{164}\) Peasants that were members of the *rondas* were often considered to be *carne de cañón* (‘cannon fodder’) as they were subordinated the military, but on the other hand they were proud over their capacity to confront Sendero and thereby be more efficient than the military. Being subordinated, they began to develop a space as an independent group within the Peruvian society.\(^{165}\)

Many thought that the measures of the *autogolpe* on 5 April were about to give some legitimacy to the armed struggle of *Sendero*. The year 1992 had already begun violently with a series of selective assassinations by *Sendero* of leaders from social movements. Its most spectacular was perhaps the brutal assassination of one prominent feminist leader and vice mayor, María Elena Moyano in the district Villa el Salvador in southern Lima in February.\(^{166}\) She had on various occasions publicly criticised *Sendero* and so the attack on her was not entirely unexpected. The assassination was widely repudiated within Peruvian society.

Shortly after the *autogolpe*, the actions of *Sendero* intensified in a series of attacks starting with new *paros armados* and spectacular car bombs (some containing almost a ton of explosives) in Lima in May and June.\(^{167}\) People in

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\(^{164}\) See for instance Degregori (ed.) 1996.


\(^{166}\) She was shot and badly injured during a political speech. While she still was conscious the assassins placed an explosive in her mouth and her body was torn into pieces by the explosion.

\(^{167}\) Among the targets for their attacks in May and June 1992 were the embassy of Japan, one TV channel and the commercial centre of San Isidro.
Peru began to be deeply worried in the polarised situation; it was difficult to see any peaceful and democratic outcome. What was about to happen in July was logical, but none the less frightening. On 16 July, just before the celebration of the national Peruvian holidays on 28 and 29 July, the whole country, and Lima in particular, was subjected to a series of attacks by Sendero on an unprecedented scale. The impact of the attacks was enormous and the inhabitants had a sense that anything might happen in that moment. Sendero had proclaimed two days of paro armado on 17-18 July and in the evening on the 16th a series of spectacular attacks were carried out. For instance various powerful car bombs exploded in different parts of Lima. The most powerful exploded in Tarata, a small street in fashionable Miraflores. A multi-storey building was completely blown out but only about 25 people were killed. Simultaneously a local police station in Villa el Salvador was attacked. Another car bomb exploded outside the Bolivian embassy in San Isidro. The following day disturbances continued. Buses were attacked and informal taxi drivers were burned to death inside their small VW cars. Even though Sendero carried out bloody actions in other parts of Peru, none was as much in the centre of attention, and Tarata became a symbol for both the terror of Sendero and the popular resistance against it. Some days after this a protest march against the terror was arranged in central Miraflores. The local mayors from both Miraflores and Villa El Salvador walked side by side together with people from both districts and other parts of Lima. At this moment, Peru was shocked and trapped in a vice of fear; it was difficult to see a way out of the situation.

The repressive response from the government came immediately. The following day nine students and their teacher from the teachers’ training university in Cantuta in Chosica just outside Lima disappeared.168 The actual circumstances would not be known until later and it became a symbol for the actions of Grupo Colina. Additionally, the case was one of those presented to the Inter-American court of human rights in San José in Costa Rica.169

Another dramatic date in 1992 was 12 September. In the evening of 12 September, news of the capture of Abimael Guzmán and several members of the central committee of Sendero spread through the television channels. The

168 In the strategy of Sendero, the school system was of specific interest. Sendero needed teachers for the schools in the so-called liberated areas. They also wanted to have sympathizers within the collective group of teachers. Therefore they tried to infiltrate the students in the national teachers’ training universities. The principal was Cantuta and there is no doubt that Sendero’s presence there was considerable. This strategy of Sendero has been analysed in Ansión, Del Castillo, Piqueras and Zegarra 1992.

169 The sentence was presented 29 November, 2006 and declared the Peruvian state responsible for the assassinations of the students and their teacher. http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_162_esp.pdf. Retrieved 20 March, 2009. It was also treated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and was one of the most important cases in the trial against Fujimori. See the TRC report (CVR 2003a), Tomo VII, p. 233-245.
capture was carried out by a special force within the Peruvian police that followed a trace to a house that on the surface was a ballet school with a senderista as the teacher and instructor. After some months of supervision the police acted and could arrest Guzmán and other Sendero leaders without any resistance. The political panorama began to change completely. As a consequence of its authoritarian and hierarchical structure, Sendero became incapable of carrying out its armed struggle to the same extent. The violent actions diminished slowly due to the fact that the cells of Sendero were cut off from their orders coming from the central committee.

Through leaks from discontented forces within the army what had happened to the victims of Cantuta became public in July 1993. The burned remains of what was supposed to be the students and the teacher were found in small holes in a place outside Lima. They had been assassinated at another location, but when leaks made it known where they were killed the bodies were removed, burned and relocated. In November the place where Grupo Colina had assassinated them was found just beside the highway between Lima and Chosica.

After heavy critiques from the political opposition and oppositional media, such as La República and Caretas, members of Grupo Colina with its leader, mayor Martín Rivas, were captured. The government did everything in their power to prevent a trial in civil court. It took the Supreme Court more than two months to make a first statement about whether the case should be decided in civil or military court. Since they could not obtain a qualified majority the parliament met in a nocturnal session on 8 February, 1994 with most of the political opposition absent and shaped a new law stating that simple majority would be sufficient for decisions like this. The protests from jurists, politicians and media were immediate as well as from the US Secretary of State. Finally the case was put to a military court and those responsible were sentenced to short imprisonments in military custody.

The remains of the students and their teacher were finally buried in September 1994 in a service where Gutiérrez presided. In relation to the funeral, the relatives and 800 people that were present demanded a truth commission to clarify what happened to the victims.

1.3.6 Crisis and decline for movimiento popular

The movimiento popular reached its peak around 1980 with Peru’s return to democracy as one of its greatest achievements. However, the intention to create a political front based on these grassroots initiatives failed and this

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170 Caretas is a weekly political magazine that took a clear stand in opposition to the Fujimori governments after the autogolpe.
171 See the report to the Church of Sweden from 14 February, 1994, OK-A 30.
172 Signos 17 1994, p. 4.
created an obstacle for the maturation of the *movimiento popular*. The establishment of IU at the end of 1980 was an attempt to create this political front partly as a response to the mass grassroots initiatives, but it never developed more than in this inaugurating phase; the creation of IU did not have the collective repercussion that it might have reached if it had been created two years earlier. The establishment of IU could never compensate for the loss of strength in political perspective within the *movimiento popular* 1980-85. Ames identified a certain level of anarchy within the movement where the struggle for survival was the main focus for most of the people. This was even more clearly articulated later when the economic crisis and the escalating political violence forced people to focus on survival rather than on support for the social movements and their political programs.

In spite of this, according to Ames in 1985, the class-consciousness of the *movimiento popular* subsisted within the world of the poor. He points to three steps of this movement: the trade unions, the ward movements and, finally, a new phenomenon that later came to be called functional movements. Ames characterises these initiatives as existing not only “in [the] function of the struggle for survival […] but [also] as a proposal to alternatives for solidarity assistance with solutions for its [that is the people’s organisations] more urgent needs”. The presence of this new kind of organisations on the public scene can be partly to compensate for the debilitation of workers and ward organisations. Examples of these functional organisations are above all women’s organisations such as cooperative caterings, women’s clubs of production and the so-called “a glass of milk programme”.

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174 Ames 1985, p. 4. It should be noted that Ames’ article was published in July 1985 just three months after his election as senator for IU and when he was about to be installed as such.
175 Ames 1985, p. 5.
176 “[…] en función de la lucha por la sobrevivencia […] sino de la propuesta de alternativas para la ayuda solidaria con la solución de sus necesidades más urgentes.” Ames 1985, p. 5-6.
178 Many women organised themselves in mothers’ clubs, *clubes de madres*, that sometimes related to the ward organisations but mostly were independent from them. These groups often dealt with what can be seen as traditional women’s activities such as cooking, knitting, sewing etc.
179 This is a term that I have invented for the Spanish *comedores populares*. Sometimes it is translated ‘soup kitchens’ (soup kitchen would rather correspond to *ollas comunes*) in the literature but this is hardly a correct translation as the cooperative caterings are organisations where women themselves have formed the structures with elected leadership. López Rodríguez calls them “popular canteens” (López Rodríguez 2008, p.145-149) but also that gives associations in the wrong direction. The popular catering could have some subsidies of food but much of the food is paid for by the women themselves. A committee cook and the families pay at cost price.
180 These groups can, for instance, knit, sew or make toys in order to sell and raise some extra income for the group and its members.
181 This programme, *vaso de leche*, was originally introduced by the IU regime in Lima in 1983. The municipality distributed milk powder to organised women’s groups.
Alayza sketched a more positive picture by the end of 1985. She identified the development of the *movimiento popular* as a part of a more extensive social process among the grassroots that took into consideration the cultural, social, racial and religious particularities. This is a dynamic of the people (*dinamismo popular*) that according to her brings about “musical and artistic expressions that have generated new forms and channels of production, commerce, educational attention etc”. She saw in these initiatives a potential for a more protagonist participation of these local leaders in society. \(^{182}\) Ames had named this potential phenomenon “people’s protagonism” (*protagonismo popular*). \(^{183}\)

The common view after the electoral victory of Apra in 1985, the defeat of the political right and with IU as the second political force in line with Alayza was quite positive and Ames could identify some positive signs. But he also identified some factors that were about to come true as things were developing. The most important of these factors was the incapacity of the legal political left to transform the initiatives and the commitment from the *movimiento popular* into political programs.

López characterises the 1980s as a “lost decade” and “wasteful moment”: “Instead of opening new routes for the country […] this period constitutes a return to the past and the political experiences that had failed.” \(^{184}\) It should be said that López primarily refers to the general political development and does not so much blame the *movimiento popular* for this. This debilitation of the social movements, according to him, corresponds proportionally to a strengthening of the subversive groups and particularly of *Sendero*. \(^{185}\)

The 1980s was perhaps most of all a decade of decline of the political parties that opened for the influx of independent political groups, the election of Fujimori in 1990 and the political catastrophe for the political parties in 1995.

One important factor in this process was without doubt the debilitation of the *movimiento popular*. One factor that we often discussed within the organisation I worked for, SEPEC, \(^{186}\) was that many competent leaders from the *movimiento popular* were recruited to form part of the electoral lists of the IU and some were even elected to the municipalities; others were re-

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182 “Expresiones musicales y artísticas propias, que ha generado nuevas formas y canales de producción, comercio, atención educativa, etc.” Alayza 1985, p. 9.
183 In my interview with Ames 29 October, 2006, OK-A 13, he could not remember when he first developed the idea, but reference to this expression has been given by both Alayza in my interview with her 27 October, 2006, OK-A 11a and by López in a panel about the celebration of *Páginas* edition number 200 earlier in 2006, OK-A 22; Alayza even used the expression in the title for her article from 1985, Alayza 1985.
184 “En lugar de abrir nuevos caminos al país [las dos etapas en que se divide] este periodo constituyen un retorno al pasado y a las experiencias políticas que se habían fracasado.” López 1997, p. 279.
185 López 1997, p. 285
186 Servicio Ecuménico de Pastoral y Estudios de la Comunicación. It was founded in 1985.
Recruited to the offices of the IU representatives both in the municipalities and in the congress. Some of the best leaders were thus taken away from the grassroots organisations and the efforts to introduce and form new leaders were disregarded.

Another factor was of course the activities of Sendero and the counterinsurgency policy of the authorities that put people’s leaders in a difficult position; out of fear many leaders did not dare to articulate the views of their organisations. Still there was without doubt a potential in these organisations, but the circumstances did not permit them to be articulated in a political alternative to the Fujimori government in the 1990s.

The debilitation of the movimiento popular continued in the 1990s. To the factors mentioned above, the authoritarian politics of Fujimori must be added. With the possible exception of the functional women’s organisations, the whole of people’s organisations “suffered from progressive erosion” during this period.187

1.3.7 The fall of Fujimori

In the second half of the 1990s things began to change. The popular support for Fujimori began to decrease and people started to manifest their opposition openly. Media began to be more independent and open for critique of the government. One important public institution that had been installed was the ombudsman function (Defensor del pueblo) with an office (Defensoría del pueblo), created in the constitution from 1993. According to the constitution it was the congress that nominated the ombudsman and the first appointment was Jorge Santisteban. This appeared to be an independent institution within the state and became an important factor for the democratic forces in Peru.

With decreasing support for Fujimori, the political opposition began to hope a victory in the April 2000 elections would be possible. But the question was who among the potential candidates would have the best possibility to beat Fujimori, who was running for the third time.188 Alberto Andrade (1943-2009), the mayor of Lima, was the one that was thought to have the best prospects. He and his adherents were exposed to defamation from the tabloid press and his support decreased in the opinion polls a few months before the elections. A real political scandal was discovered in March 2000 just a month before the elections when it was detected that Fujimori’s new

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188 According to the 1979 constitution, a president could not be re-elected directly after one period. This was changed in the 1993 constitution that permitted re-election one time. Fujimori arbitrarily made the interpretation that his election 1990 was according to the 1979 constitution and that his election 1995 was the first election according to the 1993 constitution. Consequently, in his interpretation he could be re-elected in 2000; this interpretation was highly criticised by the political opposition.
electoral alliance, *Peru 2000*, had falsified more than a million signatures for the inscription of the alliance. However, the efforts to have a judicial investigation of this fraud did not succeed and the case was closed.

During these events support for Alejandro Toledo began to increase in the opinion polls and in spite of attempts at defaming him, he received just over 40 percent of the votes; Fujimori just under 50. The electoral result was deeply questioned by the opposition and international institutions began to talk about an electoral fraud. Toledo withdrew his candidature from the second round since he could not find any guarantees for a clean electoral process. Instead he called for a massive protest demonstration in July 2000 in central Lima with tens of thousands of demonstrators coming together from all over Peru in favour of a more democratic society, *la marcha de los cuatro suyos*.\(^\text{189}\)

Enormous problems were foreseen since Fujimori’s new electoral front, *Peru 2000*, did not obtain a majority in the congress. Less than two months after the instalment of Fujimori for his third term of office, a political bomb put an end to Fujimori’s presidency. A video showing Fujimori’s security advisor, Vladimiro Montesinos, paying one of the opposition members of congress in order to obtain a majority in the congress was showed in a press conference. Two months later Fujimori fled to Japan and obtained asylum there. The Peruvian congress removed him from the presidency and the chairman of the congress, Valentín Paniagua (1936-2006), AP, was installed as the interim president.

One of the last things Paniagua’s government decided was to set up a Peruvian Truth Reconciliation Commission (TRC)\(^\text{190}\) to investigate the whole process of political violence from 1980 to 2000. The commission was installed by the interim government in June 2001 and was confirmed by President Alejandro Toledo when he took over the presidency in July the same year. The commissioners represented different sectors of Peruvian society and the rector of the Catholic University in Lima, Salomón Lerner, chaired the commission. Its report presented on 28 August 2003 can be seen as an analysis of the socio-political context in Peru for the two last decades of the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century.\(^\text{191}\)

In an effort to influence the 2006 electoral process in Peru Fujimori left Japan for Chile in November 2005 to lead the campaign for the newly established electoral alliance *Alianza por el Futuro* (Alliance for the Future), headed by the ex congress member Martha Chávez (leader of *Nueva Mayoría*) and Fujimori’s daughter Keiko Fujimori. Fujimori had been barred by the Peruvian congress in 2001 from holding office for ten years and there-

\(^{189}\) ‘The march from the four cardinal points’; *suyo* is a Quechua term for the four regions in the Inca Empire.

\(^{190}\) In Spanish: *La Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación* (CVR). I will use the English translation and abbreviation (TRC) in my text except when I am quoting a Spanish text.

\(^{191}\) For more information, see the homepage of the TRC, http://www.cverdad.org.pe.
fore could not run himself. Due to a detention order by Interpol he was arrested by the Chilean police just a few hours after his arrival and placed under house arrest. Peruvian authorities began a process to get him extradited for trial in Peru. Finally, in September 2007, he was extradited and the principle trial began in December.192

The main trial, for violations of human rights, lasted more than a year and on 7 April, 2009 Fujimori was sentenced to 25 years in prison being found politically responsible for two cases of kidnapping and the assassinations of Barrios Altos and Cantuta. The verdict was historic as it marked the first time that an elected head of state has been extradited back to his home country to be tried and convicted of human rights violations.193 Another legal process investigating corruption followed shortly after this. On 20 July, 2009 he was sentenced to another seven and a half years in prison for taking 15 million US-dollars from the Peruvian state. The fourth and final trial for bribes and telephone espionage ended on 30 September, 2009 with Fujimori declaring himself guilty. By this he avoided a long trial with more than 150 witnesses, which was expected to affect a possible presidential candidature of his daughter Keiko in 2011. For this he was convicted for another eight years.194

1.3.8 Human rights movement in Peru

The human rights movement in Peru has its own particular characteristics. To some extent human rights issues were introduced relatively late in comparison to other Latin American countries. On the other hand the movement is well organised and Peru is the only example where the different human rights organisations have succeeded to unite under an umbrella organisation. A third characteristic is that the human rights movement had to respond to the fact that the majority of the victims were poor Indians in remote areas.195

Human rights were an issue that became important on the political agenda, at least at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of 1990s. People on all levels were affected by the political violence of Sendero and the repressive counterinsurgency policy of the various governments from 1980 to

192 Previously to the main trial he was sentenced in December 2007 to six years in prison for ordering an illegal search and seizure of documents and videotapes in the possession of the wife of Vladimiro Montesinos in 2000.
193 The TRC had already in its general conclusions (No. 100) stated that “The TRC have indications to affirm that president Alberto Fujimori, his advisor Vladimiro Montesinos and high officers within the national security service have penal responsibility for the assassinations, forced disappearances and massacres perpetrated by the death squadron called ‘Colina’; “La CVR posee indicios razonables para afirmar que el presidente Alberto Fujimori, su asesor Vladimiro Montesinos y altos funcionarios del SIN tienen responsabilidad penal por los asesinatos, desapariciones forzadas y masacres perpetradas por el escuadrón de la muerte denominado ‘Colina’.”
194 The Peruvian newspaper Peru 21, 29 September, 2009.
195 Drzewieniecki 2000, p. 15.
2000, especially Alberto Fujimori’s governments after his autogolpe in 1992. Human rights organisations and activists were accused of supporting the presumed terrorists, while Sendero accused them of being servants of the bourgeoís. Both sides found the issue of human rights to be a way for the opponent to use public opinion to benefit its own political interests.

As a response to the political violence in the 1980s and 1990s, the establishment of the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDDHH) in 1985 became an important factor in the struggle to defend human rights and promote a more democratic society. The Coordinadora liaises with national, regional and local human rights organisations; in 2001 this totalled 59 organisations.¹⁹⁶ Several of them are linked to the churches, both on national and local levels. The Spanish missionary Pilar Coll became its first executive secretary.

The Coordinadora was not born out of a vacuum. Coletta Youngers has written about the history of the Coordinadora and traces its roots within the Peruvian human rights movement starting in 1977.¹⁹⁷ This was, as we have seen, a time when pressure from the Morales Bermúdez government began to harden, partly as a consequence of popular protest actions. Grassroots’ leaders of different kinds were arrested and the need for their defence increased. One initiative by Alfonso Barrantes founded Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CONADEH) in 1979, a group Rolando Ames and Father Felipe Zegarra, vicar in Carmen de la Legua in Callao, participated in.¹⁹⁸

There was an intention to coordinate different initiatives on national, regional and local levels. This coordination was urgent as a way of responding to the repressive government but also to put pressure on the government to change its policy. As a result of the general strike in July 1977 many workers were fired and many people were arrested. The legal needs for their defence became urgent. The two public statements produced by a number of Peruvian intellectuals in July and August mentioned above¹⁹⁹ can be seen as among the earliest public appearances of the emerging human rights movements.

Although the history of the human rights movement can be said to begin in 1977 this does not mean that there were no forerunners. The Peruvian bishops’ conference created its CEAS in 1965. CEAS’ secretariat for human rights was installed in 1977 and Pilar Coll was the person that organised this secretariat at CEAS. However, CEAS had been involved with human rights support before that. The anthropologist Imelda Vega-Centeno organised this

¹⁹⁶ Youngers presents them all, Youngers 2003, p. 462-507.
¹⁹⁷ Youngers 2003, p. 29; originally her intention was to write the history of the Peruvian human rights movement but this turned out to be to broad; Youngers, p. 11.
¹⁹⁸ According to my interview with Zegarra, 8 May, 2003, OK-A 21. In the early 1980s CONADEH changed its name to Comisión de Derechos Humanos, COMISEDH and became one of the leading members of the Coordinadora.
¹⁹⁹ See above, p. 47.
work, partly as a response to the treatment of those who participated in the guerrilla moment in 1965. Yet this work also became important as a response to violations of human rights during the first military regime of general Velasco Alvarado and also when refugees from Chile began to arrive to Peru after Augusto Pinochet’s coup in September 1973. Important ecumenical initiatives were taken during these years through CEAS and Celadec.\(^{200}\) This is a story that still needs to be told.\(^{201}\)

In a unique way, under the umbrella of the *Coordinadora*, both church oriented and secular organisations succeeded in collaborating to become an important voice for the defence of human rights. The *Coordinadora* and its member organisations distanced themselves from both the armed opposition groups and the counterinsurgency policy of the government and was thus heavily criticised by both the Peruvian authorities and *Sendero*.

Member organisations of the *Coordinadora* dedicated to legal assistance of imprisoned people\(^{202}\) decided not to defend people that were openly known to be part of either *Sendero* or MRTA.\(^{203}\) Consequently both these groups created their own legal networks for the defence of their people.\(^{204}\)

A network created in May 1989 closely related to the churches but with a slightly different approach than the majority of *Coordinadora’s* members was *Perú, Vida y Paz*. The network collaborated closely with the *Coordinadora*. The aim was to organise public events to promote the message that peace was under construction and thus to create awareness of the importance of respecting life and fostering a consciousness about basic democratic principles and respect for human life. One of their slogans said: “If we gather wills, and if we act now, there is reason for hope.”\(^{205}\) One can say that *Perú, Vida y Paz* represented one of two ways of working with human rights, to announce human rights, while the majority of the members of the *Coordi-

\(^{200}\) Celadec (*Comisión Evangélica, Latinoamericana de Educación Cristiana*) was founded in Lima 1962. It is an ecumenical organisation that covers the whole of the Latin American continent and had its head office in Lima until 1984.

\(^{201}\) Imelda Vega-Centeno briefly told me about this in my interview with her on 26 April 2003, OK-A 20a. She has in later communication supplemented this picture.

\(^{202}\) Mainly Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH), CEAS, Centro de Estudios y Acción para la Paz (CEAPAZ), COMISEDH, Fundación Ecuménica para el Desarrollo y la Paz (FEDEPAZ) and Instituto de Defensa Legal (IDL).

\(^{203}\) This was a decision to take distance from both *Sendero* and MRTA as the human rights organisations considered their violent means to be illegitimate in the Peruvian situation. Furthermore, *Sendero* distanced themselves and even threatened the human rights organisations as they considered human rights to be a bourgeois concept. José Burneo, first working for CEAS then for CEAPAZ and later for FEDEPAZ (he was also an expert in the TRC commission), explained to me in my interview with him 8 May, 2003, OK-A 14, that they trusted the person that wanted legal assistance from any of the organisations. But it was made clear for the applicant that if in the legal process it became obvious that s/he belonged to either *Sendero* or MRTA neither of the organisations could continue giving legal assistance.

\(^{204}\) *Sendero*’s lawyers’ association was called *Abogados democráticos*.

\(^{205}\) “Si sumamos voluntades, si actuamos ahora, hay razones de esperanza.” Taken from an email from Hortensia Muñoz from 28 January, 2008, OK-A 18b.
nadora mainly worked to denote violations of human rights. Denouncing violations is mainly about revealing and protesting against violations of human rights, while announcing is about creating conditions for a democratic society where human life is respected and violations against human rights are prevented. Perú, Vida y Paz, under a collective leadership in which the anthropologist Hortensia Muñoz and Gerardo Távara played significant roles, became an important platform for church groups during the critical years at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. By the end of the 1990s the organisation was dissolved because it had played its role.

A popular resistance against the political violence, both the revolutionary and the repressive reactionary violence, was progressive. A testimony of this is found in the reaction of a neighbour after one of Sendero’s selective assassinations on a popular leader in San Juan de Lurigancho in Lima in October 1991. The neighbour came to assist the leader, saying, “If it is against my neighbour, it is against me”. The neighbour was also assassinated. These words became the slogan for a protest demonstration in San Juan de Lurigancho against the political violence some days afterwards.

The balance of the political violence in the 1980s and 1990s gives a picture of the important role that the human rights movement played in Peru, particularly through the Coordinadora. Highly criticised by both the Peruvian governments and Sendero, it succeeded to mobilise people for the defence of human rights and promote democratic awareness, but it also provided defence for many people unjustly charged of being adherents to either Sendero or MRTA. Their role in the defeat of Sendero and later in the mobilisation to prepare for a new democratic process that led to the fall of Fujimori can hardly be exaggerated.

1.3.9 The Catholic Church

In general terms the pace of reforms slowed down in the Catholic Church after the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978. In Latin America this was manifested in the appointment of more conservative bishops. This can also be seen in Peru.

The new constitution that took effect in Peru in 1980 also had consequences for the church as the old patronage ceased to be valid. The new constitution separated the Catholic Church and the Peruvian state and the freedom of the church was recognised. The state was no longer appointing bishops; this function went back to the Vatican.

Slowly people linked to liberation theology lost influence, but they still had support from a group within the Peruvian hierarchy. The bishops in the

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206 Spanish: “Si es contra mi vecino, es contra mi”.
208 Romero 1987, p. 35-42.
South Andean developed pastoral experiences inspired by liberation theology as did, for instance, the Cajamarca diocese and some other dioceses in the north.

The first visit by Pope John Paul II in February 1985 made an enormous impact in Peru. It is likely that this visit gave the pope a better view of liberation theology and made him less sceptical. One impressive experience was the outdoor mass celebrated in the Villa el Salvador district in the southern part of Lima, where one million people participated.

In the previous year the Vatican presented the first of two instructions on liberation theology, which to a certain extent was critical. Two years later the second instruction on liberation theology was published. This instruction was more favourable to liberation theology.

In January 1990 Cardinal Landázuri was replaced by Monsignor Augusto Vargas Alzamora (1922-2000), SJ, as archbishop of Lima. He was known to belong to the more conservative wing of the Peruvian episcopate but shown to be moderate towards liberation theology and later on in his leadership to be open. He was not directly elected president of the bishops’ conference; instead Monsignor José Dammert (1917-2008) in Cajamarca was elected the new president and he became the leader of the Peruvian delegation to the CELAM IV conference in Santo Domingo in 1992.

In the election campaign for the second round of the presidential election in 1990, the Catholic Church came to play an embarrassing role according to many. As Alberto Fujimori had support from some evangelical pastors, the campaign between Vargas Llosa and Fujimori was interpreted as a campaign between the Catholic Church and the emerging evangelical churches. Monsignor Vargas Alzamora publicly supported the candidacy of Vargas Llosa as he interpreted the candidacy of Fujimori as a threat against the Catholic Church. The bishops’ conference presented television commercials in favour of Vargas Llosa in an attempt to prevent Fujimori being elected. Even though Fujimori is a catholic, he never forgot this during his presidency and he gladly provoked the Catholic Church on issues like birth control and sterilisation of poor women. During the first year he gradually marginalised most of the evangelical congressmen and only kept relationships with a few that supported his kind of leadership. At the same time Fujimori established close relations with conservative groups in the Catholic Church such as Opus Dei that gradually increased its influence within Peruvian society. The most obvious example is his relation to the Opus Dei bishop Juan Luis Cipriani

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209 Instructions on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation (Liberatatis Nuntius), 1984.
210 Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation (Liberatatis Conscientia), 1986.
211 Vargas Alzamora was not alone in this position. Monsignor Luis Bambarén in Chimbote, who was known to be among the more progressive bishops, wrote a pamphlet, Sectas y Política, Bambarén 1990, warning for the evangelicals as part of this campaign. López Rodríguez sketches the role of evangelicals in politics during the Fujimori regime, López Rodríguez 2008, p. 133-145.
(1943-), first auxiliary bishop in Ayacucho, then archbishop there before becoming archbishop of Lima in 1999 and Peruvian primate.

The Catholic Church continued to be one of the most respected institutions in Peruvian society even though the conservative forces increased their influence in the hierarchy at the expense of the progressive sectors. But the church spoke with less clarity and not as openly as in the years before.

The liberation theology movement was not passive and tried to defend its position. I remember a statement from one layperson in the late 1980s admitting that they constituted a minority within the church, but she added: “we are a strong minority”. I interpreted this as a way of saying that they were still a considerable number on the one hand and driven by a strong conviction and commitment on the other hand.

As the official leadership became more cautious of pronouncing themselves, groups like the Movimiento de Profesionales Católicos (MPC) Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos (UNEC) came to play a more important role as a voice from the church. One example on how the MPC and UNEC took initiative in the public debate was the seminar in August 1990 titled Derechos del pueblo hoy y compromiso profesional that sought to find a Christian response to the critical situation just a few weeks after the fúji-shock. Gutiérrez was the final speaker and tried in his intervention to stress the need for a Christian hope; a hope that is unconditional. Hope must be based on the reality as it really is, that is to understand the situation of the poor. Hope has to be shown through solidarity with the poor and finally it has to be based on respect for the rights of the poor to be treated with justice. In those days it was often said that “the crisis affects us all”. Without denying this, Gutiérrez said: “it is necessary to add that the crisis hit so unequally that there are some that practically end up under the waterline”.

Table 3 presents the two last periods in my periodization built on Romero’s analysis, which focuses on how the societal dimension interplays with international and national church factors.

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213 Hortensia Muñoz took as one example of this the fact that several bishops participated in a manifestation for peace in 1985 under the slogan Lo quinto: no matar (The fifth: do not kill). In a collection of names against the death penalty 1993 only one bishop participated. From my interview with her 23 October, 2006, OK-A 18a.

214 Gutiérrez 1991d.

Table 3. *Church, state and civil society in Peru 1980 – 2000(09).*

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<td>1980 Sendero initiates armed struggle</td>
<td>1993 referendum for new constitution</td>
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<td>1980 general elections, return to democracy</td>
<td>1995 re-election of Fujimori</td>
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<td>1983 political violence accelerates</td>
<td>1995 declining popular support for Fujimori</td>
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<td>1985 Alan García, president</td>
<td>2000 re-election of Fujimori</td>
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<td>1985 CNDDHH founded</td>
<td>fall of Fujimori interim government of president Paniagua</td>
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<td>1986 prison massacres</td>
<td>2001 new elections, TRC installed, A Toledo president</td>
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<td>1989 peace march in Lima</td>
<td>2003 TRC report</td>
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<td>1989 fall of Berlin Wall</td>
<td>2006 Alan García president</td>
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<td>1990 A Fujimori, president, “fuji-shock”</td>
<td>2007 trial of Fujimori starts</td>
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<td>1992 autos golpe (April)</td>
<td>2009 Fujimori sentenced for violation of human rights</td>
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<td>1992 La Cantuta (July)</td>
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<td>1992 Guzmán captured (September)</td>
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<td>1992 elections to CCD (November)</td>
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<td>International Church Factors</td>
<td>2005 Benedict XVI, new pope</td>
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<td>1980 assassination of Monsignor Romero</td>
<td>2007 CELAM V, Aparecida</td>
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<td>1984 first instruction on TL</td>
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<td>1989 assassination of Jesuits in San Salvador</td>
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<td>1992 CELAM IV, S Domingo</td>
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<td>National Church Factors</td>
<td>1995 Mons. Vargas Alzamora appointed cardinal</td>
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<td>1985 first visit of JP II to Peru</td>
<td>1999 Juan Luis Cipriani (Opus Dei) archbishop in Lima</td>
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<td>1988 second visit of JP II</td>
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<td>1990 A Vargas Alzamora (SJ), new archbishop in Lima</td>
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1.3.10 Liberation theology and human rights

Peru is, as we have seen above, considered to be the only country in the world where most of the human rights organizations have been assembled under an umbrella organization. There is no doubt that churches played an important role in these efforts; sectors of the Catholic Church have even been called the second most important precursor of the human rights move-
ment in Peru. Of the Coordinadora’s 59 members approximately 30 are linked to churches (catholic, evangelical or ecumenical groups), international NGOs, or official church bodies, like CEAS or groups on the diocesan or parish level.

1977 became a decisive year also for the churches in the defence of human rights. There was a common view among people around Gutiérrez to see the defenders of human rights as “civilians” concerned about individual rights but who were unable to identify the rights of the poor. They failed to see the fact that being poor meant not having access to the legal system in order to defend their rights.

Páginas dedicated one issue to the theme of human rights. This was the first time this theme appeared within the circle around Gutiérrez and can thus be seen as a watershed. The language is marked by the historical situation and is full of the rhetoric of that moment. But the initial remark is still valid and says much about how human rights were perceived from a liberation theological point of view: “The defence of human rights must be understood and applied in practice as a defence of the rights of the poor.”

The principle article in this issue was Derecho del Pobre, Derecho de Dios written by Hugo Echegaray (1940-1979). This article became extremely important as a reference for people linked to the church who took an active part in the struggle for human rights in Peru.

Echegaray starts with some words from Proverbs: “Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him.” He states that God is the liberator and that He is just. Being just means that God sides with the poor that the world is ignoring. Echegaray presents a reading of the book of Job, where Job’s innocence is stressed and compared to the innocence of the exposed and poor today. Through his courage to question the unjust structures Job appears to be a more true witness of faith than those who adapt to injustice and accept the structures.

All this is focused to one point; the poor have the right to be loved by God. The Reign of God is interpreted as an answer to a people whose

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216 Drzewieniecki 2000, p. 3. She mentions leftist and indigenista lawyers using “the legal system to fight abuses against the poor and discriminated” as the first precursor.
217 It depends how one defines each member; see the list in Youngers 2003, p. 462-507.
219 Páginas 11-12 1977.
220 “[L]a defensa de los derechos humanos debe ser entendida y debe plantearse prácticamente como defensa de los derechos de los pobres.” Probably written by the editor of Páginas, Hugo Echegaray, Páginas 11-12 1977, p. 18.
221 Hugo Echegaray was advisor to UNEC and one of Gutiérrez’ closest collaborators.
222 Proverbs 14:31
223 Echegaray 1977, p. 13. This kind of argument is based on the same basis as the statement on the preferential option for the poor.
224 Echegaray 1977, p. 15.
225 Echegaray 1977, p. 16.
fundamental rights have not been met. Therefore the defence of the rights of the poor must be a permanent task for the church. To Echegaray, this struggle for the rights that are constantly denied becomes the place for people to meet God. This must be understood to mean that God in a specific way is present in the striving to satisfy the fundamental rights of the poor. Echegaray concludes his article stating: “The Lord is showing us the way to the radical defence of these rights. The lack of food and safe working conditions for the least of the brothers constitutes an insult of the everlasting love that the Father offers us.”

The reactions against the repression after the general strike in July 1977 were, as has been said above, strong from sectors within the churches. In a statement by the executive committee of the priest movement Oficina Nacional de Información Social (ONIS), the priests heavily protested against the repression but in line with Echegaray much more stressed the rights of the poor than other voices of protest:  “Therefore, the defence of human rights must be based on the defence of the rights of the poor. […] Indeed, to speak of human rights in general terms and suppose an equality that does not exist, means to close the eyes in front of the profound structural causes of its permanent violation and thus to adopt a liberal and bourgeois perspective in the handling of the situation.”

There can thus be no doubt that the understanding of human rights within the circles around Gutiérrez right from the beginning was interpreted in relation to the rights of the poor.

1.3.11 The Churches and the political violence

The churches were of course also affected by the political violence, both with Sendero and the Peruvian authorities as authors. Sendero attacked

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226 Spanish: Reino de Dios. The English translation of Spanish Reino with ‘kingdom’ is problematic. The English word gives associations in direction to the king, the one who rules; German Reich would give better associations. Therefore I prefer to translate it with ‘reign’.
227 “El Señor nos traza el camino de la defensa radical de estos derechos: las necesidades de los más pequeños entre los hermanos cuya carencia de alimento suficiente, de seguridad y de trabajo constituye un insulto contra el amor universal que el Padre nos ofrece.” Echegaray 1977, p. 17.
228 The statement was titled “Al pueblo en lucha por sus derechos” and was spread as a mimeograph on 8 September, 1977, republished in CEP 1978, p. 87-89.
229 “Por eso defender los derechos humanos debe significar fundamentalmente la defensa de los derechos del pobre, […]. En efecto hablar de derechos del pobre, de las clases explotadas del país. En efecto hablar de los derechos humanos en forma general, suponiendo una igualdad inexistente, es cerrar los ojos a las causas estructurales profundas en su más permanente violación y adoptar una perspectiva liberal y burguesa en el tratamiento de la cuestión.” CEP 1978, p. 89.
230 For an overview of the churches and the political violence, see the chapter on the churches in the report of the TRC (CVR 2003a), Tomo III, Capítulo 3.3. La Iglesia Católica y las iglesias evangélicas, p. 385-490.
evangelical churches, mainly of Pentecostal origin in the Ayacucho region early in the 1980s. The churches organised human rights groups on both national and local levels, especially in the Southern part of the Andean region. Catholic diocesan human rights groups played an important role in the dioceses of Puno, Sicuani, Ayaviri and elsewhere. But human rights groups were counter-acted in the worst affected areas by the bishops in Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurímac. One might even interpret this to mean that the church’s willingness to support human rights initiatives in the south contributed to a lower number of victims in these departments. The TRC stated in the conclusion of their report that “the role of priests, lay persons and catechists contributed to strengthen the social fabric and construct a barrier that debilitated the progress of PCP-SL and the overflowing of what was called the dirty war” in departments such as Puno, Cajamarca, Ancash, Ucayali and Amazonas. However the TRC notes that the defence of human rights was weak in Ayacucho and the commission “deplores that some ecclesiastic authorities in Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Abancay did not fulfil its pastoral commitment”.

Sendero attacked different church institutions in Puno on various occasions. The inhabitants reacted strongly with support from the church hierarchy. In August 1986 a seminar entitled Puno quiere la Paz was held in Puno, organised by the Comité de Derechos Humanos Puno (CODEH Puno), the bishops in Puno, Juli and Ayaviri, and CEAS. On this occasion, Gutiérrez held one of his first interventions in relation to the political violence, El Señor – Amigo de la Vida.

In June 1983 a Spanish priest, Vicente Hondarza, was assassinated in Chancay around 100 km north of Lima. Sister Agustina Rivas López was one of the first victims of Sendero from a religious order. She was assassi-
ated in Junín in September 1990.\textsuperscript{236} The first foreign nun to be assassinated by \textit{Sendero} was the Australian Irene McCormack who was killed in Junín in May 1991.\textsuperscript{237} In 1991 the diocese of Chimbote, 400 km north of Lima, was under pressure from \textit{Sendero}. In July 1991 \textit{Sendero} tried to kill a Spanish priest in the city of Chimbote\textsuperscript{238} and a Peruvian Dominican in Chimbote was threatened and forced to go to Lima. In August \textit{Sendero} murdered two Polish and one Italian priest in the countryside of the diocese of Chimbote.\textsuperscript{239} All these priests worked with the poor inspired by liberation theology and these deeds made a great impact on the Peruvian people in general and the church in particular.

It is not least against this background that we must read the texts by Gutiérrez that is in focus for this dissertation. But first something must be said about Gutiérrez in his ecclesial and societal context.

\textsuperscript{238} He was Miguel Company.” \textit{Signos} 2 1991, p. 2.
Chapter 2

Gustavo Gutiérrez – the theologian

In order to introduce my focus on Gutiérrez as pastor of the nation, it is necessary to briefly sketch some biographical notes and some basics in his theological reflection. To get an overall picture of the theology of Gutiérrez is probably an insuperable task. To get a general view of his written material would require a volume widely exceeding the limitations of an academic dissertation of this kind. I will give priority to the issues that illuminate my purpose with the study.

2.1 Gutiérrez in his ecclesial context

2.1.1 Studies and ordination

Gustavo Gutiérrez was born on 8 June, 1928. He was the only son in a family with two younger daughters that lived under limited circumstances. From the ages of 12 to 18 he was bound to a wheelchair due to a severe case of osteomyelitis. This was not only physically painful, for he understood that his illness severely affected the economy of his family. His experience of this physical problem came to play an important role for his theological reflection. His close friend aged two years younger and fellow ordinand at his ordination, Jorge Álvarez Calderón, remembers Gutiérrez from before they became acquaintances sitting in his wheel chair; Álvarez did not think that this boy would ever be able to work, nor did he think they would later form a close friendship.

Partly due to his illness, Gutiérrez started to study medicine at the oldest university in the Americas, San Marcos in Lima, in 1947 with the intention

3 Comment by Álvarez in my interview with him on 11 November, 2005, OK-A 12. See also Álvarez Calderón 1989, p. 65.
of becoming a psychiatrist.\(^4\) His commitment to the Catholic Action movement and the Catholic Students’ movement in the 1940s brought him into contact with young priests and a growing interest for the role of the church in society.\(^5\)

As a result of this Gutiérrez decided to become a priest and left his medical studies and began to study philosophy in Chile.\(^6\) As other young Latin American students of theology he was sent to Europe for his priestly formation. He started to study philosophy and psychology in Leuven, Belgium as many other catholic Latin American academics at that time.\(^7\) In 1955 he went to the Dominican university in Lyon, France for his theological studies. His studies in Europe meant an encounter with modern European theology where *nouvelle theologie*, Thomistic reflection and Dominican theologians such as Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990)\(^8\) and Yves Congar (1904-1995) influenced him.\(^9\) But protestant theologians such as Karl Barth (1886-1968) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) also became important as references.

Martínez points to two aspects in the European experience that were important: the lay institutions initiated by the Catholic Action movement and chaplained by a priest, and pastorally driven theology in which the church was crucial.\(^10\)

This European theological reflection prior to the II Vatican council, especially in France, was a dynamic time for the Catholic Church with efforts to relate church praxis more closely to the contemporary context. These tendencies hinted toward what was about to happen in the council.

Jorge Álvarez remembers this time in the Festschrift for Gutiérrez:

Europe in these years experienced a post-war phase and many sectors of the church were experimenting with the challenges of a world of reconstruction. There was a strong missionary movement towards society and a return to the fountains of the Bible and the tradition. In this context we learned to make theology, not as a mere scholarly exercise but as an effort of questioning, searching and going deeper into the foundations. I remember how Gustavo as a student followed the news from both Europe and our own countries with in-

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\(^5\) See for instance the testimony of Monsignor José Dammert in the Festschrift for Gutiérrez, Dammert 1989, p. 37-40. This testimony is not included in the English version produced prior to the Peruvian edition.


\(^7\) In Leuven Gutiérrez wrote his licentiate dissertation on Sigmund Freud, *Source et premiers développements de la notion det conflit psychique chez S Freud*. This research was to have an important role in the later formation of his liberation theology. In Leuven he studied alongside and became friends with Camilo Torres from Colombia who was killed 1965 just after he had joined the Colombian guerrillas.

\(^8\) Chenu has written an appreciative article for the 10th anniversary of the publication of *Teología de la Liberación*, Chenu 1981.


\(^10\) Martínez 2001, p. 112.
terest, raising questions from the viewpoint of faith. What was really on the agenda was to prepare oneself to become a pastor for a world of change.¹¹

There can thus be no doubt that Gutiérrez is familiar with European and North American theology and philosophy¹² and he recognises his indebtedness to these traditions not the least in Teología de la Liberación where there are numerous references to theologians in both Europe and North America.

For Gutiérrez European theology is important, but not sufficient for the Latin American church to be credible for that specific moment. The starting point is different and the interlocutor is different; where progressive European theology seeks to answer the questions of the nonbeliever; liberation theology seeks to respond to the challenge of the nonperson.¹³

Gutiérrez’ masters dissertation focused on religious freedom and his supervisor proposed he develop it further into a doctoral thesis. However his pastoral vocation appeared to be more important and in January 1959 he was ordained priest in the archdiocese of Lima by archbishop Landázuri. Yet he returned to Europe for one year to complete his theological studies at the Gregorian University in Rome.

During the first years after ordination he was a student chaplain and an advisor for UNEC. Together with the older brother of Jorge Álvarez, Carlos Álvarez Calderón, Gutiérrez was offered a simple living in the convent of some Franciscan sisters in the centre of Lima within walking distance of the leading Peruvian universities at that time, San Marcos and the Catholic University. Carlos Álvarez was chaplain for the Juventud Obrera Cristiana (JOC). The two young priests had long discussions from their respective angles about the new challenges for the church coming from the workers and the students; from these discussions the basic ideas for what was going to become the theological reflection of Gutiérrez began to develop.¹⁴ Together with Carlos and Jorge Álvarez and some other young priests, Gutiérrez founded the progressive priest movement ONIS which was to play an important role for liberation theology in Peru.

¹¹ “En efecto, Europa en ese tiempo vivía la etapa de la post-guerra y muchos sectores de iglesia experimentaban los desafíos de un mundo en reconstrucción. Había un fuerte movimiento misionero hacia la sociedad y un retorno a las fuentes bíblicas y de la tradición. En ese contexto aprendímos a hacer teología no como un mero trabajo escolar sino como un esfuerzo de cuestionamiento, de búsqueda y profundización. Recuerdo cómo Gustavo, estudiante, seguía con interés las noticias, tanto las de Europa como las de nuestros países, y se cuestionaba desde la fe. Porque de lo que se trataba en efecto, era de prepararse para ser pastor en un mundo en cambio.” Álvarez Calderón 1989, p. 67.


¹³ “The theology of liberation begins not with the problematic of the ‘modern (bourgeois) human being’, but with that of the poor and dispossessed - those whom the bourgeois dominators seek to maintain ‘without a history’ [...] ‘Progressive’ theology seeks to answer the questions of the nonbeliever; liberation theology confronts the challenge of the nonperson.” Gutiérrez 1979, p. 159 (p. 92); italics in the English translation.

¹⁴ According to my interview with Álvarez 11 November, 2005, OK-A 12.
In the early 1960s Gutiérrez not only met the students as chaplain and advisor. He began to lecture at the Catholic University in Lima in both theology and social sciences. The 1960s meant a university boom with an increasing number of students at the universities and the establishment of new universities. The Catholic University in Lima came to play an important role as many young intellectuals who would later take important roles in Peruvian politics and administration studied there. Some of these took the course on José Carlos Mariátegui that Gutiérrez taught for several years. In these courses he met and got to know several of those people that came to play important roles in political circles by representing leftist groups and parties. These contacts became crucial for his political involvement later on. Gutiérrez become aware that it was necessary for theology to enter into dialogue with the contemporary context:

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. This led me to confront Christian faith with thinkers like Albert Camus, Karl Marx, and others, as well as film directors like Luis Buñuel and Ingmar Bergman, and writers like José María Arguedas or poets like César Vallejo. I believe that the dialogue of faith with contemporary thought, especially with thought that is critical of Christianity, is necessary and life-giving. I remember with great affection those years I spent at the university and the conversation with students such topics brought about.

This dialogue of faith with contemporary thought has become a distinctive feature in the theology of Gutiérrez that is decisive for this dissertation.

2.1.2 Gutiérrez and the emergence of liberation theology

During his early years of medical studies, Gutiérrez got to know Monsignor Manuel Larraín, one of the initiators of CELAM, who recruited him to the team of theological reflection for CELAM in 1967. In that capacity Gutiérrez was one of the experts that took part in the second general conference in Medellín 1968 (CELAM II) where he was partially responsible for the documents on Peace and Poverty of the Church. In the following conference

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15 Gutiérrez had the intention to write a book on Mariátegui, which was never completed largely due to his pastoral concerns and the need to formulate his interpretation of liberation theology. He wrote an article on Mariátegui (Gutiérrez 1995c) and was interviewed in Páginas (No. 127, “Mariátegui: un hombre libre”; Tovar and Casas 1994) for an edition focusing on the first centenary of Mariátegui’s birth in 1994.

16 The poet César Vallejo (1892-1938) together with Arguedas and Mariátegui are the most quoted Peruvians from the 20th century in Gutiérrez’ writings. See Gutiérrez 1993f and the interview by Pérez and Urdanivia 1992.

17 Quoted from McAfee Brown 1990, p. 25.

18 A post that Gutiérrez held until 1979.
in Puebla 1979 (CELAM III) Gutiérrez participated as advisor to several of the Latin American bishops.

Gutiérrez participated together with other Latin American theologians who were about to introduce the “first generation” of liberation theology at a meeting in Petrópolis, Brazil in February 1964. The objective was to get to know each other and exchange ideas in order to renew the theology in Latin America. Gutiérrez started his contribution with the question “How can a dialogue with people in Latin America that is saving be established?”19 One can sense that this is “the seed of the critical praxis principle that will inspire the theological reflection of Gutiérrez”.20

The theologians continued to meet and in the meeting in Santiago de Chile in July 1966 Gutiérrez lectured on religious freedom: one of the crucial issues in Vatican II.21 Some of these ideas he was going to explore more in the early years of liberation theology.22 Shortly after this lecture Gutiérrez, in his capacity as “conciliar expert”, wrote a report on the issue.23

In 1968, just a month before CELAM II in Medellín, Gutiérrez spoke about liberation theology for the first time in a meeting organised by ONIS in Chimbote.24 A year later he was invited to a workshop in Cartigny organised by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and to SODEPAX25 to speak on theology and development.26 In 1970 the basic ideas from these lectures were published in a North American journal.27 In 1971 his epoch making

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19 “¿Cómo establecer el diálogo salvador con el hombre en América Latina?” Manzanera 1978, p. 20.
21 His lecture was published two years later, Gutiérrez 1968.
24 Chimbote is located 400 km north of Lima along the coast. The title of the lecture was “Hacia una Teología de la Liberación”; I have a photo copy of it in my archive, OK-A 1. A Swedish sociologist, Ulf Borelius, has in a report questioned whether Gutiérrez spoke of liberation theology in Chimbote at all. He suggests that a manuscript of the lecture found is a revised version that can be dated to the beginning of 1969. Borelius 2004. His arguments are not convincing to me and we discussed it in Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift (Borelius 2005 and Kristenson 2005b and c). My primary source is the North American Dominican Enrique Camacho, who was organising the meeting in the Social action centre in Chimbote. In a conversation with me in November 1994 he told me how Gutiérrez entered in the hall, and then went forward to the black board where the supposed theme for the lecture was put, Una teología de desarrollo (‘A theology of development’), and wiped out the word desarrollo replacing it with liberación. This version was confirmed in an interview with Father Camacho by Zinia Becerra and Carmen Maria Pinilla in Páginas 210, 2008, p. 104.
25 SODEPAX, Society, Development and Peace, was formed in 1968 by the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. SODEPAX organised a series of conferences on church and issues related to peace and development. It was dissolved in 1980.
26 Gutiérrez refused to speak about theology and development and focused once again on theology and liberation. The material from the workshop, as well as the lecture by Gutiérrez, was published by the WCC. Gutiérrez’ lecture is published with the title The meaning of development, with the subtitle, Notes on a theology of liberation, Gutiérrez 1969.
27 Gutiérrez 1970b.
book *Teología de la Liberación* was published.\(^{28}\) He participated in the first meeting of The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) in Dar es Salaam in 1976. In 1974 he co-founded the IBC in Lima.

In 1980 Gutiérrez was called to take responsibility of the church *Cristo Redentor* within the parish *San Francisco de Paula* in Rimac, Lima. In 1983 he became chaplain and advisor for the MPC.

In 1985 received his doctorate in theology at the Dominican University in Lyon by defending his writings up to that point.\(^{29}\) This was of course an important recognition during a time when the critique of his theology started to intensify.

### 2.1.3 Critique and support from the hierarchy

There can be said to have been a general support from the Catholic hierarchy in the early years for liberation theology in general and for Gutiérrez in particular, even from the Vatican.\(^{30}\) But critical voices within the Latin American hierarchy began to appear and succeeded to obtain changes within CELAM in the elections in November 1972, when Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo in Medellín was elected general secretary. He held the post until 1984. A research centre was established at the CELAM office in Bogotá that established the periodical *Tierra Nueva*, which came to be a critical voice against the liberation theologians.\(^{31}\)

Gutiérrez was, during the first years, strongly supported by the Peruvian episcopate headed by the archbishop of Lima, Cardinal Landázuri. However there were critics within the Peruvian hierarchy. Archbishop Ricardo Durand Flores in Callao wrote two critical books on liberation theology.\(^{32}\) When liberation theology was attacked, especially in the midst of the 1980s, when Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith emitted the two instructions on

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\(^{28}\) McGovern says that “it remains the best-known work in liberation theology and the best overall statement of its position”, McGovern 1993, p. 10. The first English translation came in 1973 and has been republished in several editions; a revised edition in both Spanish and English was published in 1988 with a completely new introduction.

\(^{29}\) His summarising defence as well as the dialogue with the jury have been published in Gutiérrez 1986b, p. 11-73 (p. 1-52).

\(^{30}\) McGovern 1993, p. 11-12.


\(^{32}\) The first book, *Observaciones a Teología de la Liberación*, was written in 1985 and the second, *La utopía de la Liberación*, in 1987 and edited in 1988. Both books were directed to “priests, members of religious orders, pastoral agents and other believers in Callao”, Durand 1988, p. 7. The second book is dedicated to John Paul II who “defends and promotes the theology of liberation that is ‘useful and necessary’ […] and clarifies and corrects what is not homogenous with theology of all times”, Durand 1988, p. 5. Durand is stressing that his readers will see “how incomplete the exam of the books of F. G. Gutiérrez was in Lyon [for his doctorate]”, Durand 1988, p. 7.
Gutiérrez was supported by the bishops' conference in Peru.\textsuperscript{34} One important source of support for Gutiérrez was a letter from Karl Rahner dated 16 March, 1984, just two weeks before his death, to Cardinal Landázuri in which Rahner expresses his sincere conviction that the theology of Gutiérrez is "entirely orthodox" and that "a condemnation [...] would have dire consequences for the climate necessary to ensure the continuation of a theology that is at the service of evangelization".\textsuperscript{35}

The position of the Vatican has been ambiguous, which might be indicated by the saying "nothing comes from the Rome that doesn't come to Rome".\textsuperscript{36} The two visits to Peru by John Paul II in January and February 1985 and May 1988 played an important role, especially the first one in 1985.\textsuperscript{37}

In a letter from 1986 to the Brazilian bishops John Paul II wrote about the role of liberation theology and how it should relate to the Magisterium of the church. One could perhaps argue that the relevance of liberation theology is conditioned by its truthfulness to the Magisterium, but phrases such as "we are convinced [...] that the theology of liberation is not only opportune, but also useful and necessary" were appreciated by Gutiérrez.\textsuperscript{38}

The pope's second visit to Peru offered a completely different view. This was a very short visit, just two days, and the pope implicitly criticised Gutiérrez both publicly in a speech on the main square in the centre of Lima, Plaza de Armas, and more privately in a meeting with the Peruvian bishops. In his speech on Plaza de Armas, the pope pointed to "mistakes" committed by liberation theologians as they sketched poverty in economic terms. To speak about liberation in such a context will only be "a false liberation and not the liberation which Christ offers". The bishops were told to detect "mistakes and errors".\textsuperscript{39} There can be no doubt that the pope's "lost sheep" refers to Gutiérrez. Monsignor Durand's second book on Gutiérrez was presented just two weeks after the pope's visit.\textsuperscript{40} As the Peruvian episcopate was di-

\textsuperscript{33} See above Chapter 1, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{35} The letter was published in \textit{Latinamerica Press} 10 May, 1984 and in \textit{Informativo}, No. 22, April 1984, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{36} This was often repeated to me during my years in Peru as people were saying that Gutiérrez’ real problems were located more in Peru than in Rome.
\textsuperscript{37} Gutiérrez wrote an appreciative article on the visit in \textit{La República}, Gutiérrez 1985a. He was also interviewed in the journal \textit{Qué Hacer}, Velarde 1985.
\textsuperscript{38} Quoted from McGovern 1993, p. 18. Gutiérrez used the quotation on several occasions, for instance in the new edition of \textit{Teología de la Liberación}, Gutiérrez 1988, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{39} According to my report to the Church of Sweden from 12 July 1988, OK-A 23.
\textsuperscript{40} Durand 1988.
vided and Gutiérrez still possessed support from several of the bishops, no sanctions were taken against him.

When Monsignor Augusto Vargas Alzamora, SJ, was appointed as the new archbishop of Lima in January 1990 there was a fear that Gutiérrez’ position was about to become more difficult. A press release from the Archbishop’s office in September 1990 expressed its satisfaction for “the clarifications made that are considered appreciable” in the response of Gutiérrez from 18 June, 1990 to a letter from the new archbishop about his theology in which Gutiérrez expressed his adhesion to the Magisterium of the church.41

Gutiérrez thus succeeded in establishing a good relation with Vargas Alzamora as well. By the end of 1998 Gutiérrez asked for a leave for medical treatment and to finish a book about the preferential option for the poor. He went to Lyon and stayed with the Dominican fathers there where he had studied theology in the 1950s and defended his writings for his doctoral degree in May 1985. Shortly after that the Opus Dei bishop Monsignor Juan Luis Cipriani from Ayacucho was appointed archbishop of Lima in January 1999. A few years later Gutiérrez entered the Dominican order and was invited to lecture at the University of Notre Dame (USA) in 2001.

In September 2006 the Peruvian bishops’ conference emitted a statement signed by its president Miguel Cabrejos saying that with the article La Koinonía Eclesial,42 “the process of clarification of the problematic points in some of the author’s books has been completed”. It is also said in the statement that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome “consider it necessary that the article […] be more extensively known”.43

Gutiérrez has not only been criticised from conservative wings within the Catholic Church. Some consider that he is not progressive enough, that he adapts too easily to the hierarchy. Gutiérrez’ own explanation is that for him the overall concern for the poor is paramount over personal views and disagreements with the Magisterium.44 From feminist circles, from indigenous groups and from more radical catholic groups voices can be heard implying that Gutiérrez “has chosen to bow to these restrictions for the sake of staying within the Catholic church rather that venturing into new areas of concern, such as women, sexuality and reproductive issues, ecology, protestants and indigenous religions, which Catholic conservatives would view with added distance”.45 The critique can be said to be valid to some extent, but it can

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41 La República and El Comercio, 22 September, 1990.
42 Gutiérrez 2006a.
43 “Dando así por concluido el camino de clarificación de los puntos problemáticos en algunas obras del autor.” “considera necesario que el artículo […] sea más extensamente conocido”. Prot. No. 119/06-AT-CEP, Lima 1 September, 2006. That is why the bishops’ conference published it as an offprint together with its statement.
44 Commented upon in our conversation 1 September, 2002, OK-A 10a.
45 Radford Ruether 1996.
also be said that the gender conflict is implicitly present in much of his writings, for instance when he talks about poor women as being “double exploited”.46

2.1.4 In defence of life, the 1980s and 1990s

The year 1980 can be seen as a shift in the theological reflection of Gutiérrez. It is not that he abandoned his first insights presented in *Teología de la Liberación* or substantially changed his theological position. These elements remained but as other issues arose in new political contexts new ways of formulating the theological reflection were necessary.

The assassination of Monsignor Oscar Romero on 24 March, 1980 was one crucial event that Gutiérrez commented upon:

> The most important event since the Puebla conference was the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador. I think that his martyrdom [...] has greatly enriched the Latin American church overall. [...] For some years now something has been happening in Latin America that some people refuse to recognize: the fact that many Christians are giving their lives, witnessing unto death to the gospel, to the God of love and the God of the poor.47

Another important factor during this year was the political violence in Peru that started with the attack by *Sendero Luminoso* on a polling station in Ayacucho in May 1980. My main focus in the dissertation is on the theological essays that Gutiérrez wrote in *La República* as responses to the violence, which I will present in Chapter 3.

2.1.5 The role of theology

It is as pastoral theologian Gutiérrez intervenes in public political debate: “Since I am a theologian my view of poverty is taken from the Bible where poverty means something more than just something economic; I also understand it as insignificance of the human being, what turns people into insignificants.”48

Manzanera points to three methodological factors in Gutiérrez’ theological reflection: the fundamental question, the language and the hermeneutic. Manzanera stresses that Gutiérrez does not pretend to give a theoretical con-

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48 “Como soy teólogo, entiendo por pobreza lo que está en la Biblia, algo más que lo económico; entiendo la insignificancia de la persona, lo que convierte a los hombres en insignificantes.” From an interview with Gutiérrez in *El País*, 9 December, 2005
tribution to the theological methodology. My material confirms this standpoint; Gutiérrez’ aim is above all pastoral.

The fundamental question

In Manzanera’s reading one objective of theology is to form a faith perspective to illuminate for the believer what is taking place and what it means for the faith. Gutiérrez’ intention is to present a believer’s interpretation of what is taking place.

Manzanera also suggests that doing theology, by its very nature, has a critical questioning character. This is in accordance with Gutiérrez’ own understanding of theology as “a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word”.

There can hardly be any doubt that the formulation of the fundamental theological question has been a primary concern for Gutiérrez throughout his entire life: what does it mean to do theology? The focus of Gutiérrez is to reflect around the question of who God is and Gutiérrez literally translates theology as a way of speaking about God: “How are we to talk about a God who is revealed as love in a situation characterised by poverty and oppression?”

This was his initial question, but there can be no doubt that the situation of political violence sharpened his thinking and he was about to formulate it like this:

How are we to do theology while Ayacucho lasts? How are we to speak of the God of life when cruel murder on a massive scale goes on in ‘the corner of the dead’? How are we to preach the love of God amid such profound contempt for human life? How are we to proclaim the resurrection of the Lord where death reigns, and especially the death of children, women, the poor, indigenes, and ‘unimportant’ members of our society?

Gutiérrez’ way of formulating the fundamental theological question was challenging even before the emergence of political violence in Peru, but became even more challenging in the 1980s and 1990s. Gutiérrez refers to Johann-Baptist Metz’ point that Western Europe in general and Germany in particular cannot escape from the challenging question that the holocaust raised for the theological reflection: “To learn how to say ‘I’ in the face of

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49 Manzanera 1978, p. 279.
50 Manzanera 1978, p. 280.
51 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 85 (p. 57).
53 Italics in both the Spanish original and in the English translation.
54 This is the meaning of Ayacucho. The name was given after the bloody conquest by the incas around 1500.
55 The Spanish word insignificantes can better be translated ‘insignificants’ as I have done throughout the dissertation.
56 Gutiérrez 1986a, p. 223 (p. 102).
the catastrophe of Auschwitz is [...] above all a job for theology itself.” So for Metz, the theological task is a question of how to do theology after Auschwitz. In Latin America the question must be put differently according to Gutiérrez, because injustice and premature death are still a reality for a majority of the poor on the continent, where their human rights are daily violated. In addition to this he wants to stress that the political violence adds another dimension. It was in Ayacucho, one of poorest counties in the country, that Sendero initiated its activities and the region was the most affected county. That is why Gutiérrez writes “while Ayacucho lasts”.

This raises some questions for Gutiérrez: What does this mean in the specific socio-political context? What challenges does the context raise for the churches? What should be the contribution from the churches based upon a critical reflection of what is taking place? What we can find in both his theological reflections and his theological essays is an intention to face these questions. Gutiérrez thus directs himself outwards towards society with a response based on his theological reflection. But he also directs himself inwards towards the Christian community with a message of hope which is also a call to respond to the situation with an attitude of faith and solidarity.

Gutiérrez says something to the general public in a specific situation, through his essays and reflections in La República. In his inward message to the Christian communities Gutiérrez tries to relate what takes place in society to the Christian life, often reflected upon from the themes of the liturgical year. One can see this as a way of empowering his readers and listeners to respond and act as committed citizens and Christians.

This way of raising questions not only produces a responsible and theological response to what takes place in society, it also provides a framework to the overall understanding of how to do theology.

Renovation of language

Manzanera characterises the theology of Gutiérrez not least as a renewal of the theological language. Manzanera identifies the principle aspect of this renovation in the prophetic character of Gutiérrez’ theological language. In Manzanera’s definition, a prophetic language “looks for a way to transform

57 Metz 1984, p. 27.
58 “Holocaust theology” or “theology after Auschwitz” has become a frequent expression for European postwar theology. The third Theological symposium “The church, Jews and Judaism” in Warsaw in April 1991 was titled “Auschwitz – Reality, Symbolism, Theology”. Here Michel Horoszewicz in a paper pointed to how Gutiérrez “made a remarkable inculturation by introducing Auschwitz into Latin America under the form of ‘home of the dead’ (the meaning of Ayacucho)”. A report from the symposium can be find in http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/CHROSTOW_III.html, retrieved 22 September, 2009. However Horoszewicz misses the point as he quotes Gutiérrez saying “since Auschwitz” and not “while Ayacucho lasts”.
the situation of oppression in which the theological reflection, in the light of
the word of God, has a place to fill”.60

In Gutiérrez’ essays it is not only possible to find his striving to raise
hope, but perhaps even more present, his ambition to influence those in
power. He is an advocate for the need to go deeper in the analysis of the
causes of poverty and injustice. It challenges the present situation and aims
to transform the situation of oppression.

The hermeneutic principle: the poor and their liberation
Manzanera identifies the real novelty in the theology of Gutiérrez in the area
of hermeneutics. The novelty is so considerable that Manzanera does not
hesitate to call it a rupture; a “hermeneutic rupture in the way of doing the-
ology” 61Manzanera focuses on the liberating praxis as the axis in Gutiérrez’
hermeneutics and more en passant comments that liberation theology parts
“from the real existence of the poor and oppressed determined by their
struggle for liberation”.62 According to my understanding it is more correct
to focus on the poor in the first hand, with the liberating process of the poor
as one key in the hermeneutics of Gutiérrez.

The main characteristic in Gutiérrez’ theological reflection is the focus on
the poor and their liberation. There is a consistency in his way of dealing
with this issue that could be perceived as arduous, as if he always repeats
himself and does not have anything new to say. But for Gutiérrez this consis-
tency is necessary as the situation of the poor continues to be precarious in
most contexts. One has, however, to be aware that there has been a devel-
opment in Gutiérrez’ theological reflection over time, but always with the
poor in focus.63

One guiding principle has been the phrase Gutiérrez borrowed from
Guaman Poma which later became the title of his book about Las Casas, In
search for the poor of Jesus Christ.64 Another is his concern for the situation
of the poor. He could say things like “I am more concerned about the future
of the poor than the future of liberation theology” and he is very much con-
cerned about how phenomena such as globalisation or even the debate over

60 “[...] busca transformer la realidad de opresión en la que tiene lugar la reflexión teológica a
62 “[...] de la experiencia real de los pobres y oprimidos empeñados en la lucha por su
63 In one of his latest theological essays, Gutiérrez points to a process of changes that is still
going on: “The forms of the entry of the poor and oppressed in the historic scene in earlier
days are not the same today […] it is necessary to be attentive to the unpublished routes that
they take nowadays. […] It is not possible to identify what we call the irruption of the poor to
only one of its historic manifestations”. (“Las formas de entrada de los pobres y oprimidos en
el escenario histórico asumidas en el pasado no son las mismas hoy, […] es necesario estar
atentos a las inéditas que toman actualmente. […] No se puede identificar lo que llamamos
irrupción del pobre a una sola de sus manifestaciones históricas.” Gutiérrez 2007b, p. 10.
64 Spanish: En Busca de los pobres de Jesucristo.
postmodernism affect the poor. Out of this he developed and elaborated his perspective on the poor from the question posed from his reading of Ex. 22:26-27: “Where will the poor sleep?”. This question is basically a pastoral question raised against the background that as a consequence of globalisation and other factors there is hardly any room in society for the poor.

This can also be seen in his preaching and in his theological essays. The focus on the poor is always the starting point for Gutiérrez in his reflection. Everything he says and writes must be guided by what he considers to benefit the poor and their liberation. In summary, the socio-political context in the 1980s and 1990s can thus be said to confirm and deepen the methodological factors that Manzanera sketched already in 1978.

2.1.6 Intelligence of faith

In the first line of the first chapter of Teología de la Liberación, Gutiérrez introduces the concept of the intelligence of the faith as a definition of theological reflection:

The theological reflection – that is the understanding of the faith – arises spontaneously and inevitably in the believer, in all those who have accepted the gift of the Word of God. Theology is intrinsic to a life of faith seeking to be authentic and complete and is therefore, essential to the common consideration of this faith in the ecclesial community. There is present in all believers – and more so in every Christian community – a rough outline of a theology. There is present an effort to understand the faith something like a preunderstanding of that faith which is manifested in life, action and concrete attitude.

Intelligence of faith as an expression goes back to the medieval concept of intellectus fidei but perhaps even more important for Gutiérrez is the phrase by St Anselm, credo ut intelligam. In his characteristic way, Gutiérrez takes a well-known term, develops it and gives it a slightly different and new context.

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65 Spanish: ¿Dónde dormirán los pobres? The first time he uses this reference is in Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 265-269. See also the essay with the same title, Gutiérrez 1996e.
66 The expression inteligencia de la fé is often translated by ‘understanding of faith’ in the English translations of his books. However I prefer to give the expression a more active role, thus translating it ‘intelligence of faith’. It is not just a question of understanding the faith, but an interpretation of theology as subject to the result of an intellectual reflection of an experience of faith. This position has been confirmed by Gutiérrez in an email to me on 10 January, 2006, OK-A 9.
67 I would have preferred to say “intelligence of faith”.
68 Italics in the English translation.
69 I would have preferred “This is the intelligence of faith”.
70 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 67 (p. 47).
71 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 38 (p. 27), where Gutiérrez uses the phrase to stress that “the discourse about God comes second because faith comes first and is the source of theology”.

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Intelligence of faith is not only a theoretical concept, an affirmation of faith. It presupposes also “a commitment, an overall attitude and a particular posture toward life”.  

Manzanera points to a similar use of concepts in Karl Rahner who talks about theology as “science of faith”, but also stresses the differences. Rahner can be said to represent academic theology, which stresses the scientific character of theology, whilst the theology of Gutiérrez is less academic, “the strength of the theology of Gutiérrez […] lies precisely in the affirmation that the life of faith is both the starting and ending point of the reflection”. 

In a recent text Gutiérrez comes back to the theme and develops it further; theology as intelligence of faith must be elaborated from the point of view of the lives and urgencies of the poor. In this text the definition is slightly different, “theology is faith in search of intelligence”, according to Gutiérrez, referring to an expression by Jon Sobrino: “intelligence of the love for the poor (intellectus amoris) in history”. 

Pedro Trigo recently wrote about “theology as intelligence of compassion, of grace and of liberation” saying that it is crucial to understand that liberation theology is “another way of understanding theology that is not so much a question of intellectus fidei as intellectus misericordiae, which is intellectus gratiae and intellectus liberationis”.

2.1.7 Theological reflection and social sciences in Gutiérrez

Theology is also, according to Gutiérrez, a reflection of a concrete social process. In a text from the early 1970s, Gutiérrez explains how “involvement in the liberation process” requires new tools for doing theology in Latin America and that this already takes place. “Human sciences” have
opened “new dimensions of what it means to be a human being”. This challenges theology and requires a “rereading of the gospel”.

To realise this perspective permits, according to Gutiérrez, theologians to discover a new point of departure for theological reflection, implying that theology must take a new route.

Theology will thus liberate itself from a socio-cultural context that prevents it from working where the oppressed and despoiled of the world are battling to be accepted as human persons. Theology will be converted into a liberating and prophetic force, and be able to make a contribution to a global understanding of the word. […] This, and not simply affirmations, or ‘analysis models’, will deliver theology from all the forms of idealism that beset it.83

Social sciences become for Gutiérrez a necessary tool for the reflection of the church. “Theological reflection – even as it breaks new ground – retains all its validity and grows rich in its ongoing dialogue with the sciences.”84 Social sciences make it easier to understand the social reality and therefore better sketch the challenges that the socio-political context present to the church, its announcement of the gospel and, as a consequence, to its theological reflection.85 “Social sciences with all their limitations and ambiguities are necessary for a better understanding of the situation in which the poor live.”86 What it is all about is an analysis of social realities in order to better understand the challenges and possibilities that reality presents for the evangelisation task of the church.87

In order to make a theological reflection in a context of poverty and marginalisation it is necessary to carry out the analysis from a socio-political perspective and therefore appeal to corresponding disciplines. This marks the encounter between theology and social sciences where theology has to have a deep respect for the integrity of social sciences in order to properly make theological reflections.88

Yet Gutiérrez identifies limitations in social sciences. A sociologist can never detect what lies behind an unjust structure in society. For Gutiérrez it is obvious that sin is the ultimate cause behind the unjust structure which he calls “breaking of the relationship with God and therefore with others as well”.89

83 Gutiérrez 1979, p. 107 (p. 60).
84 Gutiérrez 1979, p. 101 (p. 57).
85 Gutiérrez 1986b, p. 79 (p. 55).
86 “Las ciencias sociales con todas sus limitaciones y ambivalencias, son necesidades para un mejor conocimiento de la situación que viven los pobres.” Gutiérrez in Campos 1984a.
87 Gutiérrez 1986b, p. 83 (p. 58).
88 Gutiérrez 1986b, p. 91 (p. 64).
89 Gutiérrez 1986b, p. 93 (p. 66). Gutiérrez refers to his contribution in a seminar at the CELAM office in Bogotá in 19-24 November 1973. The interventions from the seminar was published by CELAM in 1974 as Liberación: diálogos en el CELAM.
If a theology does not tell us this when it takes a social situation into account, then, in my opinion, theology is not reading the situation in the light of faith. Faith will not provide strategies, but it will indeed tell us, as Medellín says, that sin is at the heart of every breaking of brotherhood and sisterhood among human beings; will therefore call for particular behaviour and an option.

[After this quote from himself, Gutiérrez concludes:]⁹⁰ In my view, the requirements and tasks I have outlined here are fundamental for theology.⁹¹

Social sciences interpret the contemporary situation and provide theology with tools to understand the conjuncture (Spanish: coyuntura).⁹² But theology cannot stay there and only repeat what social sciences say. Theology must add a theological and pastoral perspective to what social sciences do. According to Gutiérrez this exercise should be based on the experience of faith in the Christian community.

Theology and social sciences are therefore complementary and the contribution of theology to the understanding of society depends on the way it interprets its role. If it does not go behind unjust structures and detect sin as a rupture from God and a rupture between people Gutiérrez considers that it is not making a reading out of faith. This is fundamental for our understanding of the interaction between the political event and pastoral theological reflection of Gutiérrez.

Social sciences thus play a decisive role for liberation theology.⁹³ In fact, social sciences can be said to be one of the factors that made the reflection of liberation theology possible; Teología de la Liberación can hardly be understood without its references to social sciences, especially the dependency theory and the writings of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1931- ) and Enzo Faletto (1935-2003).⁹⁴ This means that any analysis of liberation theology would be impossible without relating it to some methodology of the social sciences. The use of social sciences does not mean that Gutiérrez is less theological in his reflection, he is “insistent on the theological centrality in his enterprise [and] claims that the role of social theory in his theology is important and relevant but not foundational”. He “uses social sciences in order to get to know the situation to which his theology is addressed” but

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⁹⁰ This quotation is taken from the same seminar at the CELAM office in Bogotá in November 1973.
⁹¹ Gutiérrez 1986b, p. 93 (p. 66).
⁹² The Spanish coyuntura is an important concept for Gutiérrez. According to Real Academia Española it can mean “A combination of factors and circumstances that present itself within a nation in relation to a decision of importance”. (“Combinación de factores y circunstancias que, para la decisión de un asunto importante, se presenta en una nación”). http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=coyuntura; retrieved 15 July, 2009.
“his strictly theological work […] is not grounded in the social sciences”. Without being “foundational”, socio-political analysis is essential for liberation theology and a challenge to a permanent theological reflection when it is confronted with the challenges of contemporary society.

It is this interaction between analysis of the socio-political context and theological reflection that characterises Gutiérrez’ theology. This can be seen in his research on Las Casas. Las Casas’ credibility in his defence of the Indians and his critique of the Spanish colonial policy, according to Gutiérrez, was that he spoke out of his own experience of having been there. Las Casas was not just relating to second-hand facts, he had actually been there and had seen the living conditions of the Indians in the Americas. It was the Indian reality that struck him and made him talk about premature and unjust death among the indigenous population. Gutiérrez assumes that it was an experience “with traumatic characteristics” which made Las Casas understand what was at stake: it was a question of life for the Indians and their salvation, because the situation was about to result in death and perdition for them. Gutiérrez’ conclusion to this reference in another context is that “the situation plants a decisive option: The first human right is the right to life.”

To describe reality as it really appears, without avoiding its harshness, is thus a guiding principle for Gutiérrez. One source for this methodology is his interpretation of Mariátegui. To really understand Peruvian society, according to Gutiérrez, it is essential to read Mariátegui. Mariátegui’s analysis goes deep into the Peruvian reality but it is not just an academic exercise; he has an intention with his analysis, namely to transform society. Social analysis can never be a goal in itself, but as Gutiérrez interprets Mariátegui it is a means in a process of transformation. What really matters in this analysis is that it is based not only on facts but also on a living experience of these facts.

2.2 Gutiérrez in his societal context

For the editors of La República Gutiérrez was an important voice from the church that was able to orientate their readers. They kept their opinion pages open for his interventions. The interventions in the public political debate have no ends in themselves; what he writes about are themes that “history put on the agenda” both in society and in the church. His essays, articles and other kinds of interjections were important contributions to the debate in

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95 Martínez 2001, p. 223.
96 Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 32 (p. 17). See above, Chapter 1, p. 44.
99 Expression by Pedro Hughes from my interview with him 22 November, 2005, OK-A 15.
the specific moment but some were also later developed in his books and were very much present in his work as a priest. In principle his essays and articles should be regarded independent from his books, but viewing the interplay between them gives depth to the interpretation of his theological reflection.

There are many indications that his participation in public debate in Peru made an impact in Peruvian society. *La República* could, for instance, in its editorials on 25 December in both 1993 and 1994 (both published with the title *Otra Navidad en la crisis*) make references to what Gutiérrez had written in previous years: “Gustavo Gutiérrez, in a beautiful Christmas text that we always will remember, talked about ‘an old and rooted poverty, the worst and the most persistent pandemic that threatens the Peruvian people’. He added that this infuriated a situation that was already an outrage against the message of hope that is the content of the celebration of Christmas.”

Gutiérrez became a person of reference for many intellectuals in Peruvian society, not only people related to the political left. In 1984 *La República* declared him “Man of the year”. And he has been invited to preside over numerous ecclesiastical memorial celebrations during the difficult years of political violence in Peru. One can also mention various honorary doctorates at Peruvian universities or other distinctions of different kinds such as his incorporation in the *Academia Peruana de la Lengua* (Peruvian Academy of Language) in 1995.

Gutiérrez also became a point of reference for intellectuals in other parts of the world. One indication of this was that he was awarded the Honorary Legion in France in 1993 and above all in 2003 when he received the Prince of Asturias Award in Communication and Humanities in Spain, together with the Polish philosopher and journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski (1932-2007).

When it was made public that Gutiérrez was going to be awarded the Asturias prize a series of distinguished Peruvians immediately congratulated him on the same day that it was announced, among them president Alejandro

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100 “Gustavo Gutiérrez en un hermoso texto navideño que siempre recordamos, hablaba de ‘una vieja y arraigada pobreza, la peor y más persistente pandemia que amenaza al pueblo peruano’ y agregaba que esta situación sublevente atentaba contra el mensaje de esperanza contenido en la fiesta navideña.” *La República*, 25 December, 1994, the editorial; the wording in 1993 was just slightly different. References were repeated in the editorials on Christmas in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2007.


102 The first was at San Marcos University in Lima in March 1992 in the midst of the political crisis in Peru just some weeks before the *autogolpe* of president Alberto Fujimori on 5 April. Later he was offered an honorary doctorate at the *Universidad Nacional de Ingenieria* (UNI) in September 1993 and at the National University San Agustín in Arica in 1995.

103 It is true that Gutiérrez has been innovative in his use of the Spanish language; he is a master of style and invents new words. But the designation to the academy should first be interpreted as recognition of Gutiérrez’ position as an intellectual voice in the contemporary public debate in Peru.
Toledo and the Peruvian Congress;\textsuperscript{104} however an official acknowledgement from the Catholic church did not come until a week later with a statement from the Peruvian bishops conference.\textsuperscript{105} An editorial in \textit{La República} declared: “The Prince of Asturias prize which follows other recognitions comes at an appropriate time, when he is about to turn 75 years old. Without doubt this will contribute to the spreading of the works of this illustrious Peruvian, perhaps the one that has most influence at an international level these days”. \textit{La República} joined “the rejoicing occasioned by this so well-deserved distinction”.\textsuperscript{106}

Another indication of Gutiérrez’ significance in Peruvian society came in 2004 with the anthology \textit{Acordarse de los Pobres}, edited by the Peruvian Congress.\textsuperscript{107} The president of the Congress, Henry Pease, stressed in his presentation that Gutiérrez “today occupies an exceptional position in the contemporary debate”.\textsuperscript{108} The same year the \textit{Biblioteca Nacional del Perú} (National Library in Peru) published a bibliography of the writings by and about Gutiérrez. The director Sinesio López wrote in his introduction to the bibliography: “Gustavo Gutiérrez is one of the few universal intellectuals in Peru […] Gutiérrez is not only a theologian, he is an outstanding intellectual who administers various registers at he same time […] [he] is a humanist […] and like any humanist […] a thinker with a vision of an eagle, who loves synthesis and flies over the shoulders of the intellectual foxes in order develop a long-term perspective.”\textsuperscript{109}

In March 2007 came another designation for Gutiérrez. This time it was the Ombudsman’s Office which awarded him its medal.\textsuperscript{110} In the resolution that pronounced the designation Gutiérrez is heralded as a “notable Peruvian […] who through his life has taken a valiant attitude in defence of the poorest and excluded in society. His ideas and attitude have made him commit himself to the construction of a just society where human rights, freedom and democracy are the fundamental pillars for coexistence between citizens.

\textsuperscript{104} In most of the Peruvian newspapers, among them \textit{La República}, Escribano 2003.
\textsuperscript{105} Communiqué from the Peruvian bishops conference on 9 May, 2003.
\textsuperscript{106} “El premio Príncipe de Asturias que sigue a otros reconocimientos, llega en un buen momento – en la víspera de sus 75 años – y sin duda contribuirá a la difusión de la obra de este ilustre peruano, acaso el de mayor influencia a nivel mundial en nuestros días. \textit{La República} […] se suma al júbilo ocasionado por distinción tan merecida.” \textit{La República}, 3 May, 2003.
\textsuperscript{107} Gutiérrez 2004. The anthology was compiled by Rev. Andres Gallego with a presentation by Henry Pease and an introduction by Rolando Ames.
\textsuperscript{108} “[…] que hoy ocupa un lugar de excepción en el debate contemporáneo.” Pease 2004, p. xviii.
\textsuperscript{109} “[…] Gustavo Gutiérrez es uno de los pocos intelectuales universales del Perú actual. […] Gutiérrez no es solo un teólogo, es un destacado intelectual que administra varios registros a la vez: […] Es un humanista, […] Y como todo humanista, […] un pensador con mirada de águila que ama a la síntesis y que se sube sobre los hombros de los intelectuales zorros para desarrollar una perspectiva de largo aliento.” López 2004, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{110} Since 2006 the office has granted this medal to “personalities for their work for promotion and defence of the constitutional order and the validity of human rights”. 

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[...] His life is a lesson of commitment and of profound understanding of society and the condition of human beings.”

Even though Gutiérrez is in many respects a controversial person, he is also deeply respected in vast sectors both within the Peruvian church and the wider Peruvian society. From his position as a parish priest and chaplain for the movement of catholic professionals, he contributed to Christians’ reflection about their role and responsibility in a difficult situation. From the figurative pulpit of the pages in *La República* and other media, his reflections influenced groups far beyond his parish and the professionals’ movement. In a time when people desperately looked for somebody to listen to he was one of few Peruvians that people would take notice of.

Gustavo Gutiérrez gradually became pastor of the nation, pastor in the shadow of violence. In the following we will see how he exercised this position.

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111 “[...] un peruano notable [...] que durante su vida ha adoptado una actitud valiente en la defensa de los más pobres y excluidos de la sociedad. Sus ideas y actitud lo ha llevado a apostar por la construcción de una sociedad justa donde los derechos humanos, la libertad y la democracia sean pilares fundamentales para la convivencia de los ciudadanos. [...] Su vida es una lección de compromiso y de profunda comprensión de la sociedad y de la condición humana.” *Resolución defensorial No. 013-2007 DP*, dated 13 March, 2007.
Chapter 3

Gustavo Gutiérrez – a public pastor

Introduction

In Gutiérrez’ theology the socio-political context and his theological reflection dynamically interact: “An authentic theology always situates itself in the interaction between the Christian faith and the contemporary culture.”¹ This interaction is not just between context and theological reflection. It takes place within the Christian community where people in the community theo-logically reflect upon the context and then respond. Gutiérrez’ teaching and writing “are subordinate to his pastoral work”, according to McAfee Brown,² who quotes Gutiérrez’ declaration: “The pastoral work is what I enjoy most. That is my primary function as a priest […] I was ordained not to ‘do theology’ but to proclaim the gospel.”³

My intention in this chapter is to analyse the pastoral theological discourse as it can be read from Gutiérrez’ imaginary pulpit in La República. There is a rhetorical structure in the pastoral theological discourse that can be found in the different texts by Gutiérrez. I will start with his essays that are responses to political events, then analyse two of his homilies given at memorial services for victims of the political violence and, finally, assess his theological reflections on Christmas and Easter where the socio-political context becomes a necessary ingredient demanding a response.

Gutiérrez looks for God’s presence in the midst of the life of the country. This can be expressed as a way of condensing the Christian gospel from the density of the present situation, which is echoed in the title of a selection of essays, articles and lectures from the 1980s and early 1990s, Densidad del Presente.⁴ The introductory presentation by the editors from IBC and CEP illustrates this:

¹ “Una auténtica teología se sitúa siempre en la intersección entre la fe cristiana y la cultura contemporánea”. Gutiérrez in de Cárdenas 2002.
² McAfee Brown 1990, p. 46.
³ From an interview in Christian Century, October 19, 1983, p. 933; quoted in McAfee Brown, p. 47.
⁴ Gutiérrez 1996a. The essays Aún es tiempo (Gutiérrez 1986c), ¿Sin palabras? (Gutiérrez 1992c) and Vergüenza (Gutiérrez 1995b) like the reflection Como luciérnagas (Gutiérrez 1996b) are other reflections in this direction.
The follow up of the vicissitudes of the Peruvian and Latin American people and the accompanying of the Christian communities, inserted in solidarity with the poor of this people, make the theological reflection sensible to the human and salvific density of the present. [...] The themes treated remind us, in one way or another, what is the depth of the moment today of what the gospel of Luke says [...]. A present moment loaded with problems but also with promises. From this we should live our hope.  

In Martínez’ interpretation of Gutiérrez, the church cannot be understood as a self-centred reality but as a reality that lives to be a sign for the world. The church is grounded on the one hand in God and on the other hand “living for the world and in close relation of mutuality with it”. Gutiérrez puts it like this: “the Church must turn to the world, in which Christ and his Spirit are present and active; the Church must allow itself to be inhabited and evangelized by the world.” To Gutiérrez this is a consequence of the church being sacrament, as stressed in Vatican II, and thus the basis for the Catholic theological discourse.

This is why the capacity of the church to interpret the signs of the times is so important. The church must also politically read the signs of the world. To interpret the signs of the times is not only a call to intellectual analysis; it is above all a call to pastoral activity and commitment for others.

In an outline in Signos from 1990, Gutiérrez ends with two paragraphs that I consider programmatic for his position and that can be considered a pastoral platform:

Jesus’ reaction contains both firmness and welcome. The Lord knows that discipleship involves a process. We learn to be consistent rather than to profess one thing and do something else. It is not easy to put the gospel into practice, but it must be done and this is demonstrated in our works. [We live in a dramatic situation in our country these days,] the need to be consistent is [therefore] increasingly more urgent. Our solidarity with those who are suffering will prove our belief in him who has come that we “may have life and have it abundantly” [John 10:10]. [Once again it is repeated these days that the crisis affects us all. But we know very well that it does not to the same ex-
Discipleship is in Gutiérrez’ view a question of commitment and solidarity with the poor and those deemed insignificant by society, a commitment not limited to words but also action. The words in italics reflect the specific moment after the “fuji-shock”, which shows how important it is for Gutiérrez to relate the biblical message to what takes place in society.11

The interplay of the four discourses in Gutiérrez’ texts

In this chapter I will use the model with the four discourses that I introduced in the Introduction to analyse a selection of texts by Gutiérrez, before going on to see how these discourses interplay with each other in Gutiérrez’ reflection on the current socio-political context. None of the discourses are wholly independent and seldom does a discourse stand for itself. Normally they relate to each other in the texts and sometimes a single sentence can express more than one discourse. This shows how interdependent the four discourses are in Gutiérrez’ texts.

I have, with some exceptions, focused on his writings in La República. Even if people from lower sectors in society might read the newspaper, most of its readers come from the middle-class, intellectual groups with sympathies for the political left and people working within NGOs. Basically the readership favours the liberal political discourse in their analysis of the socio-political context and the political measures they would implement to establish democracy and respect for human rights in Peru. Many would also be open to a more radical political discourse as a forum through which it might be realised in political programme.

Most of the people who have considered themselves to be part of the liberation theology movement have been daily readers of La República. So in

10 Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 301 (p. 213). The outline is entitled Becoming a Disciple Again and is meant for the 22nd Sunday, 1st circle in the Roman Catholic lectionary for the liturgical year with the texts Jer. 20:7-9, Rom. 12:1-12 and Mt. 16:21-27. Words in italics come from the original outline in Signos, Gutiérrez 1990c: “Vivimos días dramáticos en nuestro país” and “Otra vez se repite en estos días aquello de que la crisis nos afecta a todos. Pero sabemos muy bien que no por igual, y incluso hay quienes se benfician de ella.”

11 This was written just after president Fujimori’s economic crisis proposal, the so-called “fuji-shock” in August 1990; see above Chapter 1, p. 63.
this respect, Gutiérrez’ collaboration with the newspaper fitted very well with the ideological positions of both its readers and its editors.

Gutiérrez is fully aware that the liberal political discourse, however indispensable, is not sufficient to bring about real transformation in society. The radical political discourse is not only complimentary, but one that conditions the liberal political discourse. There are constant references to the situation of the poor, both implicitly and explicitly, in all the texts that I deal with in this chapter. Justice is the concept par excellence in Gutiérrez’ texts; there will be no peace without justice. However, Gutiérrez clearly dissociates himself from those who advocated violent means to establish a just society. His critique of the revolutionary means of Sendero Luminoso and MRTA is, as we will see, forceful.

It is the liberal political discourse that dominates and is most developed in Gutiérrez’ texts, especially in the four essays in the first section of this chapter. This discourse focuses on democracy, human rights and peace during a politically difficult moment in Peru. The discourse favours political change and criticises the governments of different political ideologies, but it distances itself from groups that advocated more extreme political measures to bring about revolution, like Sendero and the MRTA. The political violence dominated the experience of almost every Peruvian and most of the Peruvians, from the poor to the ruling elites, wanted peace and a stop to the killing. In this sense, most of the population advocated some kind of liberal political discourse to establish peace. However, Gutiérrez’ vision of the liberal political discourse did not end there. For him respect for human rights, democratic structures, decent political structures, good leaders and, not least, ethical principles in politics were equally important. There are numerous examples of this in his texts.

Gutiérrez is convinced that the church has an obligation to contribute to the understanding of the present situation. The response of the church is taken from the Catholic theological discourse that serves as an efficient tool for Gutiérrez in his writings. This discourse says that the church has a role to play in society and can positively contribute to the public debate. One fundamental point of departure in this discourse is the deep respect for human life and dignity; human life is sacred. I will deepen this perspective in Chapter 4. For Gutiérrez this sanctity goes beyond an instrumental protection of life: life must be lived with dignity. We will see that the preferential option for the poor is a fundamental corrective in his interpretation of the sanctity of life. A second point is Gutiérrez’ use of biblical references. These references are both explicit and implicit. And finally a third point is his use of papal encyclicals, other doctrinal documents, like the CELAM documents, and statements by national bishops conferences.

Gutiérrez’ address is pastoral, which means that these three discourses never stand alone; they relate to the pastoral theological discourse. This discourse can be analysed from the pastoral model with the four elements...
that I introduced in the Introduction, comfort, teaching, admonition and encouragement. Focus on these dimensions varies from text to text, but the pastoral theological discourse in Gutiérrez’ texts can be summarised as being directed at providing reason for hope in a difficult situations and encouraging people to get involved in action as a consequence of their Christian faith. The pastoral theological discourse springs out of a synthesis of the other three discourses, but also gives new contributions to each one of them. The pastoral theological discourse is also a source for commitment to and action with those who suffer and thus represents a discourse where theology and politics meet.

3.1 Pastoral theology and the socio-political context

Introduction

From Gutiérrez’ perspective the political violence as it was manifested in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s had to have consequences for the way theology was developed. Theological reflection had to respond to what was taking place.

The first time Gutiérrez referred to the political violence in Peru in writing was in an essay in *La República* in September 1984. It was just a short comment where he stated that it is impossible to understand terror or any other form of violence without an analysis of what is the underlying cause. Among other things he said with what we might today call a prophetic perspicacity when we have seen what happened:

> By not wanting to see reality as it appears, we now face a situation of permanent and multiple violations of the most elemental human rights, which we cannot but reject with all our energy. Terrorism, whatever character it shows, is inadmissible. But if it is not focused on what originally produces it, it will be installed in the country as an endemic and degenerative disease. The blindness in front of reality will lead us into a species of collective suicide. We will not be liberated from this neither by empty words, nor by mutual accusations of the ‘forgotten terrorism’ when something deplorable has occurred, and definitely not by a ‘dirty war’ to combat Sendero’s terror in the name of law and democracy.

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12 Gutiérrez 1984b and c. The essay was written commemorating the 16th anniversary of Medellín. Gutiérrez comments that the ideas from Medellin can offer a guideline in order to confront the present situation.

13 “Por no querer ver la realidad tal cual es, estamos enfrentando una situación de permanente y multiple violación de los más elementales derechos humanos, que no podemos sino rechazar con toda energía. El terrorismo, cualquiera que sea su signo, es inadmisible. Pero si no se va a lo que lo produce en primera instancia, se instalará en el país una enfermedad endémica y degenerativa. La ceguera ante una realidad nos está llevando a una especie de suicidio colectivo. De él no nos librarian ni frases huecas, ni acusaciones mutuas de olvido del ‘otro
In these few lines, themes that will be developed in the following texts are indicated. Most of the text is part of the liberal political discourse as the political violence is in focus. Violations of human rights and terror were immediate threats to peace and harmony in Peruvian society and the risk of endemic violence was apparent. The liberal political discourse is not sufficient, however. Only a willingness to face reality as it is and focus on what produces the violent situation prevents the population from collective suicide. Therefore the radical political discourse is necessary as it argues that it is necessary to confront the root causes behind the present situation: poverty and unjust structures.

It is from this political analysis and in the light of the Catholic theological discourse that Gutiérrez formulates the pastoral theological discourse directed at the people of Peru in the critical moments of the last two decades of the 20th century.

3.1.1 There is still time to respond and act (June 1986)

Introduction
The prison massacres in Lima on 18 June, 1986 were undoubtedly one of the most controversial events during the 20 years of political violence in Peru.14 During the meeting of the Socialist International in Lima, a rebellion among senderistas in the prisons took place. The response from the Apra government was immediate and ruthless. Nearly 250 prisoners were killed. To a majority of influential moulders of opinion the response by the government was legitimate. Human rights activists were critical even though they did not advocate the means in Sendero’s armed struggle. In the public debate those who were critical of the government’s action were often accused of being supportive of the aims of Sendero. To openly criticise the government was therefore not without risks.

A week later, 25 June, Gutiérrez published an extensive essay in La República with the title Aún es tiempo.15 It was the first time he wrote an essay entirely dedicated to the political violence in Peru. In that moment there was a growing fear in vast sectors of Peruvian society about the situation and people began to think that there was nothing that could be done about the situation.

The impact of political violence on the Peruvian population was considerable in those days so the risk of getting desensitized to the situation was very real. People did not really know what to do and for many it was just a terrorismo’ cuando ocurre algún lamentable episodio, ni por cierto una ‘guerra sucia’ para combatir el terrorismo senderista en nombre de la ley y la democracia.” Gutiérrez 1984b.

14 See above, Chapter 1, p. 69.
15 English: ‘There is still time’. Gutiérrez 1986c and Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 397-403, which I will quote from.
question of adapting in order to survive. Voices such as Gutiérrez’ were important during these years with political violence and instability. Even though this and similar texts were not paid sufficient attention by society as a whole, they paved the way for the process that brought an end to the political violence.

**Summary of the essay**

The title of the essay gives a hint that Gutiérrez wanted to stress that there was still time to respond and for alternatives to be found; violence must not necessarily be met with more violence. For Gutiérrez it was a shady moment in Peru’s history. And his point of departure was, controversial in that moment, that all human lives (including those of the senderistas) have an indefinite value because human life is a gift from God.

Gutiérrez considered what had happened in the prisons a defeat for the nation that would in the long-run lead to a situation where the two violent poles, Sendero and the military, would remain as the only interlocutors in society and those who advocated democratic structures and respect for human rights would have no future. Gutiérrez pointed to the evident risk that people would get used to a situation where violence is the solution to everything.

For Gutiérrez the massacres were a demonstration that people in Peru were trapped in a spiral of violence and contempt for human life without respect for fundamental human rights. Sendero’s actions and the response by the government were characterised as barbaric. Behind this laid, according to Gutiérrez, a long history of marginalisation, oppression and contempt for the majority of the population; what the Latin American bishops in Medellín had called institutionalised violence. The massacres would only accelerate the spiral of violence. Poverty and injustice had to be rejected but also had to be recognised as a breeding ground for the violence.

However, this fact could never legitimise the violent means of Sendero. Gutiérrez’ rejection of the methods of Sendero was clear; they showed a cruel contempt for human life. Assassination can never been justified, not in the name of social justice nor as a supposed defence of legality and order. Therefore, the response by the Peruvian authorities should have been based on law and respect for human rights. What happened in the prisons needed to be investigated and legal actions against those responsible ought to have been taken.

Gutiérrez ends his essay by pointing to the need for both lucidity and courage to respond to the situation; lucidity to analyse the mechanisms responsible for the situation and courage because it would not be without risks to respond to the political violence.
Analysis

Gutiérrez is inclusive in this text, not only as he strives to include all Peruvians in the text, but also those who a majority of the population accused for being responsible for the violence: the senderistas. It is inclusive also in the sense that Gutiérrez includes himself as an agent for change; as he talks to his readers he assumes his own responsibility to act while there still is time: As Peruvians, “we are trapped in an infernal circle of violence […], one risk is that we get used to the situation […], we cannot adopt these attitudes […]. we may not give up” etc. Gutiérrez is thus not only addressing his readers but also himself.

Two concepts that I consider to be key not only in this text but in much of what Gutiérrez wrote in this period and that relate to one another appear already in the beginning of the text: caldo de cultivo, which I have chosen to translate with ‘breeding ground’, and institutionalised violence. Both these concepts are part of the radical political discourse.

The concept breeding ground is not common in Gutiérrez’ writings but it is definitely implied in most of his reflection on the political violence in Peru. Both these concepts and their interrelationship become a hermeneutical key for Gutiérrez in his interpretation of the political violence, not only in this essay but also in the others that we are about to analyse.

By combining these concepts Gutiérrez shows that for him the political violence cannot be understood if poverty and injustice are not considered to be the main factors behind it; this is precisely what provides a breeding ground for the violence. Here we can see how interwoven the liberal and radical political discourses are in Gutiérrez’ general discourse. Most people in Peru were concerned about stability and peace in society. The actions by Sendero constituted a threat against this, felt especially by upper and middle class people and thus those who belonged to the intellectual and ruling elite.

On the surface, the liberal political discourse dominates the essay. By stressing the respect for democracy, even if it is fragile, Gutiérrez discredits the violent methods of Sendero. But neither can the force that the Peruvian authorities used in these massacres be justified.

Concepts such as “democratic coexistence”, “democratic life” and “national coexistence” undoubtedly support the liberal political discourse. The massacres demonstrate that Peruvian society was trapped in a spiral of vio-

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16 “[…] estamos […] atrapados en un círculo infernal de violencia […] uno de los más grandes peligros del momento es acostumbrarnos a la situación […] no podemos adoptar esas actitudes […] no podemos resignarnos.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 398-402 Italics are mine.

17 It is not found in any of his books, just in the collection of essays and articles in Gutiérrez 1996a, where it is used six times (p. 231, 398, 434 (two times), 458 and 467). Three of these are taken from texts that I explicitly deal with in this dissertation, Gutiérrez 1986c (p. 398), 1994a (p.458) and 1995b (p. 467) and two from a text that I refer to, Gutiérrez 1993c (p. 434). It is also found in the fourth essay I deal with in this chapter, Gutiérrez 2003b (p. 8).
rence; the violence of both *Sendero* and the military threatened harmony in Peruvian society.

In Gutiérrez’ critique of the activities of *Sendero* and the response of the authorities there is an implicit and subtle critique that is based on the radical political discourse. The violent activities take attention away from what causes violence, the systems of institutionalised violence. As long as “hunger for bread” is a reality for the poor majority of the Peruvian population, Gutiérrez argued, “democratic coexistence” will be impossible. The unjust structures must be seen as the fundamental cause that provoked the activities of *Sendero*, who in turn used them to give legitimisation to their methods. Therefore it is useless to respond with more violence to a situation of violence that has its causes in something else. Such a violent response will only accelerate the spiral of violence as it adds more fuel to the brutal situation. Gutiérrez’ use of the radical political discourse points to the unjust structures in society, which provokes other kinds of violence.

Lucidity in this respect is required to interpret the situation in order to be able to act.

[W]e must understand that one inescapable condition for the establishment of peace is the construction of justice. The economic and political crisis of Peru is profound and hampers the political action, no matter its ideological orientation, beyond what is known from the public discourse. What is needed are titanic efforts to confront this crisis, as it is not a question about how to administer it but to forge it in the nation from the demands of the poorest of its citizens. Against the forces of death, we have to raise a clear option for life, which supposes the elimination of the iniquitous poverty in which the immense majority of our population lives – and dies. There will be no human and democratic coexistence if the hunger for bread18 does not disappear. [...] The evil has to be attacked at its roots.19

18 “Hunger for bread” is a concretisation of what poverty means and is a clear reference to the visit of the pope John Paul II to Peru 1985 when in his message to the population in Villa El Salvador the pope talked about “Hunger for God? Yes. Hunger for bread? No.” The expression was probably taken from the testimony of a Peruvian couple in Villa El Salvador, which the pope responded to and adopted. Gutiérrez frequently used this phrase by the end of the 1980s, for instance in Gutiérrez 1985b and Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 13-16. See Chapter 4 below, 215.

19 “[...] debemos entender que una condición ineludible del establecimiento de la paz es construir la justicia. La crisis económica y social del Perú es profunda y traba la acción política, cualquiera que sea su signo ideológico, más allá de lo que se reconoce en el discurso público. Se requiere un esfuerzo titánico para enfrentar dicha crisis, porque no se trata sólo de administrarla, sino de forjar la nación desde las necesidades de los más pobres de sus miembros. A las fuerzas de la muerte hay que oponer una firme opción por la vida, y ello supone la eliminación de la inicua pobreza en que vive -y muere- la inmensa mayoría de nuestra población. No habrá convivencia humana y democrática si el hambre de pan no desaparece. [...] El mal hay que atacarlo en la raíz.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 402.
Gutiérrez summarises here his position in which the liberal political discourse is conditioned by the radical political discourse; justice is a condition for peace.

Gutiérrez not only analyses the deep political crisis and the threat to stability that the political violence undoubtedly constituted for Peruvian society, he puts the situation of the poor as a hermeneutical principle for political action. The demands of the poorest, part of the radical political discourse, condition the efforts to overcome the political crisis and establish a sense of nation in the Peruvian society, an important ingredient in the liberal political discourse.

A third perspective in this passage is Gutiérrez’ stress on the option for life. This option is not instrumental, as it not only takes human life as something sacred into consideration, but to opt for life means above all to strive for human dignity and dignified living conditions for the majority of the population, the poor. As long as the root causes to the situation is not dealt with, no change will come about. We can here see how the three first discourses interrelate. The option for life springs out of the Catholic theological discourse and in this context can be seen as an important contribution from the church to efforts for creating peace and democratic standards. Option for life might in the Catholic theological discourse be limited to only protecting the individual life, like that of an unborn foetus. For Gutiérrez the option for life includes to struggle for living conditions that are worthy for all human beings; also the Catholic theological discourse in this respect presupposes the radical political discourse.

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. For all, and specifically for the sectores populares,20 the price was high to obtain this possibility.21 These efforts for justice and freedom, suppose a respect for human values that cannot be forgotten not even for those who violate them by spreading terror and death. Moral integrity and political creativity in front of the new and unexpected situation should impede that one falls in the inertia of indiscriminate reprisals and a cruelty to finish your adversary at any cost. Those who think that this is a position that corresponds to a vaporous idealism should be reminded that the most elemental ethics has never been more needed and efficient for a political behaviour as in Peru today.22

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20 This is a common designation on grass-root people living in poorer areas in Peru. It is almost synonymous with movimiento popular (see above Chapter 1, p. 48-51), but is used also of groups that are not organised.
21 That is the return to democratic rule 1980 as was sketched in Chapter 1 (p. 46-51); the costly price refers to the repressive response from the military government.
22 “La lucha por la justicia debe ser llevada a cabo, al mismo tiempo que se reivindica la libertad no de una minoría, o de una mayoría, sino de todos. Es necesario defender la vida democrática que por imperfecta y frágil que sea, hace viable la propuesta y la discusión de
Gutiérrez’ defence of democratic structures is not unconditional; it has to respect the rights of all, including those who themselves do not respect them, he says with a clear reference to Sendero. There is a strong emphasis on the radical political discourse in this passage. Most of the content, however, is part of the liberal political discourse, which is conditioned by the strong emphasis on the radical political discourse.

In this passage Gutiérrez is critical to both Sendero and the government, especially the government who is challenged to act with both moral integrity and political creativity. Lack of ethical perspectives is evident, according to Gutiérrez. If we relate ethics to the Catholic theological discourse, it is obvious that here this becomes an instrument that guides the content of the liberal political discourse.

One of the most evident risks that Gutiérrez identifies in his essay is that people might get used to the situation and think that nothing can be done about it. Another risk is that people accept the government’s response to the violence initiated by Sendero, of which the prison massacres would be an extreme example. Not least from a Christian point of view, Gutiérrez refuses such a position; the one who believes in “the God of life” cannot adopt these attitudes. Gutiérrez starts his argumentation in the essay from a general position of values that he shares with many people who strive for transformation and justice in Peru. Respect for human rights, democracy and justice from a humanistic perspective are values that are shared by many people. This is the ground upon which Gutiérrez begins his essay. He ends it with an exhortation to his Christian readers with a specific call to endure and not lose hope in this critical moment.

It is urgent to appeal to all sound forces in the country […] in order to reach a national consensus in refusing every form of inhuman violence in favour 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. In the faith in Christ, as John Paul II said in Central America, “we will experience the victory of life over death and love over hatred”.

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fórmulas alternativas para construir una sociedad distinta. A todos, y en especial a los sectores populares, les costó mucho lograr esta posibilidad, no podemos por ello permitir que se frustrre. Ambos esfuerzos -por la justicia y la libertad- suponen un respeto por los valores humanos que no pueden olvidarse ni siquiera ante quienes los violan diseminando el terror y la muerte. La entereza moral y la creatividad política frente a nuevas e inesperadas situaciones deben impedir que se caiga en la inercia de las represalias indiscriminadas y en la crueldad de terminar con el adversario a cualquier precio. A quienes piensan que esta postura corresponde a un vaporoso idealismo habría que recordar que nunca la ética más elemental ha sido más necesaria y eficaz para una conducta política como en el Perú de hoy.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 402-403.

23 “Urge apelar a todas las fuerzas sanas del país […] a fin de lograr un consenso nacional en el rechazo a toda forma de violencia inhumana y en favor de la vida y de la paz. Este compromiso no será fácil, la tarea por delante es inmensa y el costo personal puede ser muy
In these final words of the essay, Gutiérrez starts with a strong emphasis on the liberal political discourse appealing to sound forces in the country and a national consensus. A real contribution from a Christian to this common responsibility must, however, be sustained from the Catholic theological discourse. In this context Gutiérrez sustains his position in the belief of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Death, in so many different aspects, was so much a reality for people in Peru in those days that the powers of life were hardly seen. People needed to be reminded about the victory of life manifested in the resurrection of Jesus. This mainly Catholic theological discourse leads to the pastoral theological discourse. The message of Christ’s victory over death through the resurrection gives Christians a hope and a conviction that life in the long run is more powerful than death.

The pastoral theological discourse is not only something that is said to give hope in a difficult situation; it is also a call for action. Here it can be formulated simply as “Do not surrender!” Someone has to react and respond; if not there will be no future in the country.

The pastoral theological discourse contains many dimensions in this essay. There is plenty of teaching in the essay. Gutiérrez addresses the whole Peruvian population but there cannot be any doubt that it is above all a challenge to the church and to the Christians. One should expect a clear stand from a Christian, who faithful to the belief in resurrection should act.

As this essay is a response to a criticised event and a contribution to the public debate around it, Gutiérrez’ focus is on admonition. He emphasises to his readers that contempt for life can never be a guiding principle for the behaviour of society. He also admonishes his readers not to surrender in the face of political violence. He even warns of the consequences if actions such as the massacres should become a normal behaviour; it will mark the future for a long-time to come.

Comfort and encouragement can be seen in the fact that Gutiérrez stresses that there is still time to respond, a response that should be guided by both lucidity and courage. There are no guarantees that this will be easy and the cost might be high as can be seen with all martyrs in Latin America who have died in their commitment for the sake of the poor. Martyrdom is always a possible consequence for committed Christians in Latin America. But the paschal faith in resurrection reminds that it is life and not death that will have the final word in history. This is the foundation of the Christian hope that Gutiérrez intends to promote in his pastoral discourse; a hope that calls for action.

alto. Para el cristiano es claro, sin embargo, que la vida, y no la muerte y sus aliados, tiene la última palabra; eso hace viva nuestra esperanza y más fuerte el hambre de Dios. En la fe en Cristo, como decía Juan Pablo II en Centroamérica, ‘experimentamos la victoria de la vida sobre la muerte, del amor sobre el odio’. Gutiérrez 1996, p. 403.
3.1.2 The necessity to break silence and speak (July 1992)

Introduction
The political violence in Peru reached its climax in July 1992, in a situation that was critical and tense. A number of spectacular bomb attacks affected the country, Lima in particular, after president Fujimori’s *autogolpe* on 5 April. The parliament and the judicial system had been dissolved. More than half of Peru was under marshal law and the government was civil-military. The attacks from *Sendero* were a provocation for both the authorities and the Peruvian population.

On 16 July a series of car bombs exploded in different parts of Lima, around 30 people were killed and the material losses were considerable. The most spectacular bomb exploded on the Tarata Street in fashionable Miraflores where a complete apartment house was destroyed. People were terrified and felt a paralysing incapacity to respond to the gravity of the situation. It was difficult to find words for this response. TV channels had reported a story of a father in anguish who was shouting the name of his son outside the collapsed building in Miraflores. This became a symbol for the impotent grief and paralysing confusion of people who did not understand why they had been attacked. From Villa el Salvador images were transmitted of a young man whose commercial stall had been destroyed in the attack; he had lost everything. His reaction was exposed as if in a silent movie where the noise from the explosions made it impossible to hear what he was saying.

On 26 July, Gutiérrez wrote an article in *La República* with the title ¿*Sin palabras*? as a response to the attacks.

Summary of the essay
Gutiérrez began his essay with a reflection on the importance of words and how they can be both used and misused. The incapacity of the man from Villa el Salvador to express himself became symbolic for Gutiérrez: the man’s silence expressed what he would have liked to say. There were no words for what had happened. Sometimes words are missing when there is a need to say something, sometimes there are too many words, and sometimes words are manipulative when they come from the authorities. The destructiveness of *Sendero*’s attacks made it impossible to hear the words that were pronounced in protest against the violence. But this was not all. Other voices were not heard, such as voices protesting against what was wrong in the Peruvian society. Attention was only paid to what *Sendero* did and how the Peruvian authorities with military means responded.

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24 See above, Chapter 1, p. 71.
25 English: ‘Without words?’ Gutiérrez 1992c and Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 443-452, which I will quote from. The essay was dedicated to the five years old girl Vanessa who was injured by one of the bombs.
Again Gutiérrez pointed to poverty as a factor that reinforced the gravity of the situation. Poverty was not only described in economic terms but also in social and political terms. But he does not suggest that there was a mechanical relationship between poverty and the actions of Sendero, indicating that injustice and poverty do not necessarily have to be responded to with similar means.

In this situation the only solution for Gutiérrez was to unite forces and maintain a hope for change, knowing that these efforts would not be easy and not without risks. There was no other way out. But this national unity should not only be aimed to combat the violent actions of Sendero or the repressive violence of the authorities but above all to construct a just society with respect for human rights.

Against those who began to advocate the death penalty to confront terrorist attacks, Gutiérrez said that this would not be a solution. It would only create more resentment. And from a Christian perspective, the most important argument to reject capital punishment was that all human beings are children of God, even members of the two armed opposition groups. Finally, Gutiérrez invited his readers and particularly those who called themselves Christians to be audacious and to break their silence and speak.

Analysis
The previous essay was written after actions committed by the government; this was written after a series of actions carried out by Sendero. The focus is laid on Sendero but in the analysis by Gutiérrez they are not alone in their responsibility for the attacks. At the time of the event this was not a common position, very few voices were heard that spoke about the authorities’ responsibility for the situation.

If the introduction of the essay mainly deals with silence and a lack of words as a reaction to the attacks, the following section is more analytical of the role of the authorities with a focus on the use of language.

In Gutiérrez’ opinion those with influence in society often misuse words and tend to manipulate language. Their words are often empty rhetoric; to say something and act contrary to this causes language lose its value and become empty of content. The silence of the man that lost his stall made Gutiérrez reflect on words and their value:

The language is corroding from inside when it is used to cheat and falsify the reality, especially when this is done from high political, economic, judicial and moral authorities in the country. When it is used in one hand to give and in the other to take it back; to promise and then forget; to rob and then shout, “fetch the robber”; to talk about social justice and then insult the poor with an excessive luxury; to deny rights and then bring about alms; to say that one is combating terrorism and then in practice make it possible to strengthen it; to destroy the order and then nourish the profound causes of disorder; to pretend to not enter in the field of politics and then do it in an insolent form. These
social lies, the constant coming and going undermine the value of the words leading to people falling to pieces. With this, life in society is weakened, which impedes the society to respond to the enormous problems that we are facing. The result of all this will be that we will be converted into insular bodies with vain desires of self-sufficiency. This is something that we have to avoid at any cost. If this situation comes, human coexistence would not be possible and the country becomes ungovernable.26

Gutiérrez is clear and ruthless in this analysis. The use of language is the focus in his critique of those in power. It is striking that his critique of the Peruvian authorities is so strong in a text that had its origin in his response to the actions by Sendero. The authorities, and here Gutiérrez is not only thinking about the political authorities, are accused of systematically saying one thing and doing something completely contrary. Gutiérrez uses simple rhetoric with a series of binary oppositions. This technique is meant to disclose what in Gutiérrez’ opinion was the doubled standard of morality that characterised the authorities’ way of responding to the situation, a behaviour that he can only describe as “social lies”. The gap between the words of the authorities and their political action, especially in relation to the poor, is thus clearly exposed. This ambiguity in the language of the authorities is, according to Gutiérrez, one decisive element that makes the situation more difficult to be dealt with. The logic in Gutiérrez’ analysis is crystal-clear: social lies undermine the meaning of language, which weakens the societal structures and therefore makes it difficult to confront the crisis in society.

These binary oppositions are a strong ingredient in Gutiérrez’ use of the liberal political discourse. His primary concern here is to bring attention to the need to establish conditions for a development that will put an end to the violent situation in Peru and find a peaceful solution to the situation. His use of these strong words is intended to make his readers understand the gravity of the situation. The dichotomy exhibited in the attitudes expressed in this binary opposition constitutes for Gutiérrez a severe threat to the possibilities of finding a way out of the situation.

26 “El lenguaje es corroído asimismo desde el interior cuando es usado para engañar y falsear la realidad, sobre todo si esto se hace desde altas instancias políticas y económicas, judiciales y morales del país. Cuando se emplea para dar y retirar, prometer y olvidar, desvalijar a un pueblo y gritar ¡Al ladrón! hablar de justicia social e insultar a los pobres con un lujo desmedido, negar derechos y entregar limosnas, decir que se combate el terrorismo y hacer en la práctica lo posible para reforzarlo, declarar que se defiende el orden y alimentar las causas profundas del desorden, simular que no se entra en el campo de la política y hacerla en forma descarada. Las mentiras sociales, el constante ir y venir carcomen el valor de las palabras haciendo que se caigan a pedazos. Este tipo de corrupción aplicado -en ciertos casos- con precisión estudiada y dedicación tenaz agregan a la muerte y al miedo que ocasiona el terrorismo cruento la división entre peruanos. Se debilita así la vida en sociedad y se impide que ésta responda a los enormes problemas que enfrentamos. El resultado de todo esto será que nos convirtamos en entes insulares con vanos anhelos de autosuficiencia. Es algo que deberíamos evitar a toda costa; pero si esa situación llegara no habría convivencia humana posible, ni país viable.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 445.
One can see how Gutiérrez identifies ethical and moral elements that affect human values as important factors to add to the socio-political causes that he identifies in his interpretation of the political violence. In his understanding this threatens not only the daily interaction between Peruvian citizens, it is also a serious threat to the stability of the country as, in Gutiérrez’ interpretation, this makes the country impossible to be governed. Individuals will look after themselves and their own security. If the government and others with power cannot deal with the situation with moral integrity, why should the individual citizen bother? This response by many people is, for Gutiérrez, only a logical response to the authorities’ incapacity to face the deep crisis.

The century-old poverty of our people, the painful injustice it suffers from, the humiliation of the indigenous people and black population, the contempt for its cultural universe, the conviction without a sign of doubt that some are born to command and others to serve, the unheard blindness of those who possess privileges, the clumsy and arrogant selfishness of some; all this has not allowed us to constitute ourselves as a nation. That is, as the word indicates a land where people recognise to have been born, brought up and see their most vital and elemental rights to be respected. Our immaturity as a nation makes it difficult for us to effectively confront the present challenges; instead we are getting broken before its virulence.

A number of characteristics of poverty and injustice are presented and show that the liberal political discourse referred to here as the concept of constituting a nation is, for Gutiérrez, subordinated to the radical political discourse.

Poverty is not only an economic matter. Racism is a conspicuous phenomenon in Peruvian society and therefore ethnic discrimination is one important dimension in the interpretation of poverty. Sendero intended to utilize these circumstances for their purposes and the authorities tried to ignore them in their eagerness to create a sense of nationalism as a means to resist and respond to the terrorist activities.

The authorities refused to go to the depths of the situation and analyse the causes behind. Gutiérrez considered this to be equally fatal as the methods of Sendero. The unwillingness and incapability of the authorities to confront the institutionalised violence discredited their counterinsurgency strategy.

27 Gutiérrez refers to the fact that the words nación y nacer (‘to be born’) are derived from the same Latin word, see below, p. 142.
28 “La pobreza secular de nuestro pueblo, la dolorosa injusticia que padece, la humillación de las razas indígena y negra, el desprecio por su universo cultural, la convicción sin asomo de duda de que en el país unos han nacido para mandar y otros para servir, la ceguera inaudita de quienes gozan de privilegios, el torpe y arrogante egoísmo de unos cuantos, no ha permitido que terminemos de constituirnos como nación. Es decir, según la palabra lo indica, como una tierra en la que las personas reconozcan haber nacido, crezcan y vean respetados sus derechos más vitales y elementales. Nuestra inmadurez como nación nos hace difícil afrontar con eficacia los retos actuales, nos estamos más bien quebrando ante su virulencia.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 446.
From the radical political discourse, Gutiérrez judges the concept of being a nation to be premature in relation to Peruvian society. As a consequence of this he indicates that it will be difficult to respond as a nation and citizens to the actual crisis. The definition of nation belongs to the liberal political discourse, but without reference to the radical political discourse it will just be empty words.

Under the recorded circumstances it is not easy to maintain a hope for change. It is also risky as can be proven by all the threats and assassinations that some have been subjects to. It is also difficult to channel this hope in viable and effective projects and a daily commitment. There is, however, no other way out. But this requires not only to reject the worst of the moment but also to create different conditions of social cohabitation and democracy. It also requires giving space for a pluralistic dialogue without conditions that is truly attentive to others. National unity, yes, but not only combating the barbarity of terrorism but also dismissing the indiscriminate and unpunished repression and above all intently attacking the root of societal evils. The important thing is to construct a society where the rights of all to life and freedom are respected. It is obvious that only the moral authority that makes truth and honesty can corner the demented violence. This is the indispensable requisite for any concrete proposal for a solution, a solution that some stubbornly and blindly can see as being only military.29

Gutiérrez begins to call for action. This is part of the pastoral theological discourse that here circles around hope. This discourse comes out of an analysis of the present situation that is based on the liberal political discourse with references to democracy and national unity as indispensable ingredients for the construction of society. But once again we find the liberal political discourse subordinated to the radical. National unity cannot simply be obtained by military force against Sendero; the root causes must be attacked.

Human rights are important for the liberal political discourse. Gutiérrez does not deny this, but he says that the rights must be for all, including the poor; in other contexts he would focus more specifically on the poor. So the

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29 “No es sencillo en las circunstancias recordadas mantener la esperanza de un cambio. Es incluso riesgoso como lo prueban las amenazas y los asesinatos de los que algunos han sido objeto. Difícil también canalizar esa esperanza en proyectos viables y efectivos, en compromiso diario. Sin embargo, no hay otra salida. Pero esto requiere no sólo revertir lo peor del momento, sino empezar a crear condiciones distintas de convivencia social y democrática. Dar lugar a un diálogo plural, sin cortapisas, y realmente atento a las posiciones de otros. Unión nacional sí, pero no sólo para combatir la barbarie terrorista, sino también para desterrar la represión indiscriminada e impune, y sobre todo en vistas a atacar la raíz de nuestros males. Lo que importa es construir una sociedad en la que los derechos de todos a la vida y a la libertad sean respetados. Esta claro que únicamente la autoridad moral que da la verdad y la honestidad pueden arrinconar la violencia demencial. Este es el requisito indispensable a toda propuesta concreta de solución. De solución global a un problema que terca -y ciegamente- hay quienes se empeñan por ver simplemente en el ámbito militar.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 449.
radical political discourse is also present in his interpretation of human rights.

Without denying that “moral authority” can be traced to the liberal political discourse, it is likely that it for Gutiérrez rather belongs to the Catholic theological discourse. The population still held a great deal of trust in the Catholic Church and Gutiérrez expects that taken seriously their moral responsibility might be an important contribution to open up minds for new visions that could inspire the liberal political discourse to new initiatives.

In spite of all these references to the other three discourses and how they relate and influence each other, it is the pastoral theological discourse that is in focus in this passage. There is a desperate need for hope that change may come about in this situation. Gutiérrez does not deny the difficulties nor the risks in articulating this hope, but for him there is no other way out of the situation than to make hope real. Gutiérrez in this text both admonishes and encourages his readers to act, to make this hope real.

Let us remember once more that even if the emotions of these days make it difficult to understand it: the dead are not strangers in the country. They are all ours, people in the local neighbourhoods, popular leaders, members of the armed forces and terrorists. They all are our compatriots despite that it might be costly to call some of them this. They are all from a Christian perspective daughters and sons of God […]. Even if the claim for the death penalty is understandable, we should say, thinking of all this, that it is both ineffective and counter-productive.

This belongs to Gutiérrez’ argumentation against the death penalty as many thought that the death penalty could be a legitimate means in the counterinsurgency strategy against Sendero; Gutiérrez has to stress that “the dead are not strangers in the country”. He used this phrase for the first time in the roundtable discussion in December 1990 that I referred to above in the Introduction.

30 See above Chapter 1, p. 82.
31 “Recordemoslo una vez más, aunque las emociones de estos días hagan difícil entenderlo, no hay muertos ajenos en el país. Todos son nuestros, pobladores, dirigentes populares, ciudadanos comunes, miembros de la fuerzas armadas, terroristas. Todos son nuestros compatriotas, pese a lo que nos cuesta hoy llamar así a alguno de ellos. Todos son desde un punto de vista cristiano hijas e hijos de Dios […]. Comprendiendo el reclamo por la pena de muerte debemos decir, por todo eso, que ella es ineficaz y contraproducente.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 451.
32 Gutiérrez’ concern was to stress that every death, even the death of senderistas, was a tragedy. He found it “macabre” when someone commented protests against the death of someone saying: “but you didn’t protest against the previous [death]”. He found it very serious to take distance to certain deaths and not be concerned about them. To him “the dead are not strangers, all dead belong to us”. Oiga 1991, p. 20; see above p. 12. Gutiérrez developed this phrase on several occasions, for instance in the homily for the victims of La Cantuta, Gutiérrez 1994a, see below, p. 156-164.
Gutiérrez’ perspective is inclusive; leaders of the grassroots who were threatened by both the authorities and Sendero, and the senderistas who were considered to be opponents by most of the Peruvians, were considered to be compatriots. Gutiérrez was not alone in having this vision, but he belonged to a minority in the public debate and he had to fight for it in the roundtable discussion in 1990.

The profound basis on which Gutiérrez stressed this was the Catholic theological discourse; all human beings are from a Christian perspective considered to be children of God. But the opposition against the death penalty can also be traced to the liberal political discourse; that is why Gutiérrez emphasises that the death penalty is both ineffective and counter-productive.

From this argumentation Gutiérrez concludes his essay:

[Our] country is kept paralysed between an uncontrolled destruction and a mendacity that has corroded the confidence between Peruvians. We should lift up our national soul from the well from which we have lived a long time and that has worsened these days. Let us, in the midst of the blows that seem to be unloaded by “the hatred of God” to quote Vallejo, try to understand how to react as human beings who are searching justice for all and as Christians with audacity and imagination give testimony of love and our wish to defend life. Without words? Yes, in the sense that we will not keep silent. We, who believe in the Word that became flesh, are motivated and obliged to find the words that announce with historic efficiency its message about love for all.33

In this passage Gutiérrez starts in the liberal political discourse with his analysis of the actual situation. A contribution to overcome the situation, to lift the “national soul”, comes from the Catholic theological discourse, which talks about justice for all and giving a testimony of love.

From these two discourses Gutiérrez concludes in the pastoral theological discourse to articulate them into action and give reason for hope. As this was written in a deeply critical moment, his focus is on comfort and encouragement. He tries to respond to people’s fear and despair. The teaching element is as usual more implicitly present in the way he analyses the situation. And finally the essay concludes in some words of admonition where Gutiérrez invites his readers and particularly the Christians to be audacious and give

33 “El país se halla atenazado entre la destrucción desenfrenada y la mendacidad que ha corroído la credibilidad entre peruanos. Debemos “desempozar” el alma nacional de lo que vivimos desde hace tiempo, y que se ha agravado en estos días. Que en medio de los golpes que parecen descargados por “el odio de Dios” como diría Vallejo, sepamos reaccionar como seres humanos que buscan y quieren la justicia para todos y dar como cristianos, con audacia e imaginación, testimonio de su amor y de su voluntad de vida. ¿Sin palabras? En la medida en que nos callemos, sí. Los que creemos en la Palabra hecha carne, estamos motivados y obligados a encontrar las palabras que anuncien con eficacia histórica su mensaje de amor por todos.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 451-452.
testimony of love and to be ready to defend life; an invitation to break silence and speak out.

3.1.3 A moment of shame (June 1995)

**Introduction**

In its rhetoric the government tried to make the Peruvian people forget violations against human rights committed by the authorities as a prerequisite to moving forward, urging the victims to forgive and be ready for a process of reconciliation. The adoption in the middle of the night on 14 June, 1995 of the amnesty law for crimes committed by the armed forces in the counterinsurgency strategy against Sendero and MRTA can be seen to be logical in relation to this background. It was, however, a painful moment for the democratic forces within Peruvian society. Together with some other Peruvian intellectuals, Gutiérrez subscribed to a statement on 20 June, where the subscribers express their “vigorous protest” and “indignation” against this law because it “proposes us to forget what is unforgettable”. So they signed in order that “the remembrance may impede that the oblivion would commence.”

There was a general view that the objective of the law was to free those from the death squadron Grupo Colina that already had been condemned by a military court for the Cantuta case. After that trial there was hope also to have clarity about the Barrios Altos case from November 1991, where the same group was suspected to be responsible. With this new law, no trial for the Barrios Altos case was likely to be held and things were supposed that they would not to be cleared up.

All this stressed the gravity of the situation to which Gutiérrez responded in his *La República* essay entitled *Vergüenza* on 18 June, 1995. It is a vibrant and passionate essay in which Gutiérrez’ words are stronger than normal. Out of his critical analysis of the contemporary context he criticises in a for him extraordinary way legislation that he sees as catastrophic for the country. It is an emotional text that leaves few readers unaffected and Gutiérrez implicitly admits that the indignation he sensed after the adoption of the law was one ingredient in his writing. It was written in one of the most

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34 See above Chapter 1, p. 66-67.
35 Republished in *Signos* 11, 23 June, 1995, p. 6. The other subscribers were Monsignor José Dammert, Leopoldo Chiappo, León Trahtemberg, Max Hernández, Luis Jaime Cisneros, Salomón Lerner Febres (who later became the president of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission), Washington Delgado, Javier Mariátegui and Jorge Castro Morales.
36 See above Chapter 1, p. 69 and p. 71. Both these cases were essential in the trial against ex-president Fujimori; see above, p. 77.
difficult moments during the 1980s and 1990s. President Fujimori controlled all levels of society and it was almost impossible to see any solution to the political crisis.

Summary of the essay
To wake up on the morning of 14 June, was characterised by Gutiérrez to waking up to a nightmare. The promulgation of the law by the president the following day constituted for Gutiérrez a legitimisation of injustice where impunity “was disguised as reconciliation”. And the risk Gutiérrez foresaw was that this pretended pardon would open the way for new abuses and crimes; anything in Peru seemed possible in that moment.

As the law justified assassinations carried out “in the heat of battle” it paved the way, according to Gutiérrez, for a deep ethical and moral crisis in Peruvian society where the poor were those who would suffer most. For Gutiérrez this was an example of how ethics were removed from politics, which in his interpretation would undermine politics.

To fail to bring to court those responsible for the deaths of Cantuta and Barrios Altos was, according to Gutiérrez, the same as leaving tombs empty that must “be covered with earth”.

According to the government it was the methods of Sendero that demanded such a law. Gutiérrez criticised this view and called it an insult to the memory of those who died as a consequence of the political violence. By giving amnesty to the perpetrators Gutiérrez argued the government justified the means that Sendero used in their political struggle. So Peruvian society risked becoming a victim of what Gutiérrez called a mental senderisation, as people might think that physical violence is the only way of resolving conflict. This would lead to more hatred among Peruvians and also create a feeling of shame to belong to a society that does not respect human rights. And paradoxically this would, according to Gutiérrez, mean that the terror of violence would have “achieved its greatest and most perverse victory”.

Coming to the end of the essay, Gutiérrez developed his interpretation of reconciliation and clearly showed his indignation at the fact the government had used the deeply theological concept as a justification of the law. Instead Gutiérrez meant that what had happened must be investigated and the responsible prosecuted in order to achieve reconciliation. He also said that assassination is not only reprehensible when people are considered to be innocent, but that human life is sacred and any threat against human life and dignity is an attack against what is sacred; every human being is a child of God. In the end of the essay he said that it is not enough to only talk of pacification; real peace includes justice and that is what Peru required.
Analysis

One keyword that is found here is *impunidad*; repeated three times in the essay. The normal English translation is ‘impunity’;\(^{38}\) literally it can be translated as “absence of punishment” and is originally used in legal contexts where the individual is freed from penalty for illegal acts. The notion of impunity began to get another dimension in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s where military dictatorships committed a series of violations of human rights. In the process of returning to democratic rule, many governments adopted amnesty laws like the Peruvian one to free military from abuses against human rights.\(^ {39}\)

This was intentional from the Peruvian government as the law of amnesty as such implied impunity. Put into the liberal political discourse, impunity as Gutiérrez views it jeopardises harmony in society. Impunity and amnesty justify violations of human rights, which ultimately are examples of disrespect and contempt for life and human dignity. The law was thus also unacceptable within the Catholic theological discourse. Using the same reasons that Gutiérrez refutes terrorism, he rejected a legislation that justifies impunity.

Another keyword is *reconciliation*, which I will come back to. In this essay, Gutiérrez uses the concept in a different way from how he had used it before, and it is here part of the pastoral theological discourse. He will develop this in the essay on the report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.\(^ {40}\)

A third keyword, even though it only appears once, is the concept of *mental senderisation*, which is an invention by Gutiérrez himself. Out of the liberal political discourse, Gutiérrez defines what he means. It is an attitude or a mentality implying that violence would solve the problem with political violence. We have seen this argumentation in his previous essays; here Gutiérrez gives it a name.

*Truth* is a fourth keyword in the essay. Truth commissions had been set up in different parts of the world in this period and there were many advocates for this in Peru as well; however, in Peru it would take another six

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\(^{38}\) Unfortunately the English translator has chosen to translate it with ‘immunity’ (twice) and ‘exemption from punishment’.

\(^{39}\) An introduction to the concept of impunity can be found in Jacques 2004, p. 1-14. In this introduction Jacques quotes a definition by the UN special rapporteur on impunity, Louis Joinet, who says that impunity means “the impossibility, *de jure or de facto*, of bringing the perpetrators of human rights violations to account – whether in criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings – since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused, arrested, tried and, if found guilty, convicted, and to reparations being made to their victims”. The quotation is taken from Joinet’s final report (*Issues of Impunity for the Perpetrators of Civil and Political Human Rights Violations*) to the UN Sub-Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, 49th session, Aug. 1997, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/20, Jaques 2004, p. 3.

\(^{40}\) See below, p. 137-149.
years before the TRC was set up by the transition government after the fall of Fujimori. Gutiérrez refers to the statement by the Peruvian bishops’ conference and its affirmation that “only on the basis of truth, justice and mercy which God has put in the heart of human beings can we pour the foundations for an authentic reconciliation”.41

Truth is an essential element to establish order and harmony in society. Therefore, it was, according to Gutiérrez, absolutely necessary to establish what really had happened during the period of political violence. The implicit question is: can national harmony be obtained if truth is concealed and can it be obtained if the rights of all citizens are not respected? The amnesty law offered impunity to the military, which had been the rule so far in Latin America; a fact that would make it difficult to create conditions for a harmonious future. As we can see there is a strong emphasis on the liberal political discourse here that is sustained by the Catholic theological discourse with the reference to the bishops’ statement.

Much of Gutiérrez’ indignation in the essay comes from the Catholic theological discourse as he strongly opposes the way the law so apparently jeopardises Christian concepts such as forgiveness and reconciliation. The Catholic theological discourse is present above all through Gutiérrez’ stress on the respect for human life. Gutiérrez’ stress on the defence of life, even the lives of the senderistas, reflects his deep loyalty to fundamental Catholic doctrine; every human being is created as an image of God.

Shame, a deep and uncontrollable shame, is what we Peruvians are experiencing these days. Words of great human and Christian import, such as reconciliation and forgiveness, have been invoked to legalise and justify impunity from punishment42 for grave but common crimes, including wicked assassinations. With clear verbal excess, to say the least, these crimes have been characterised as “excesses” committed in the exercise of certain functions, functions which consist (though it sounds sarcastic to recall it) in protecting the life and rights of all citizens.43

This introduction to the essay sets the tone. Gutiérrez’ critique of the law is profound. The amnesty law as such was not just something to condemn and criticise in basis of the liberal and radical political discourses. People began to feel ashamed of belonging to a society that did not respect human rights. But the real offence of the law in Gutiérrez’ view can be traced to the Catholic theological discourse. The law was based on what can be called a perverse theological pastoral discourse where Christian concepts, such as forgiveness and reconciliation, had been used in a pretentious way to legitimise the new law. Simply to forget acts of cruelty can never be a sound pastoral

42 Spanish: impunidad; I would have preferred ‘impunity’ instead.
43 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 461 (p. 277).
discourse. For Gutiérrez this meant a devaluation of the values that lie behind these concepts. This perverse manipulation made Gutiérrez begin to explore the reconciliation concept from a theological point of view.

Gutiérrez is polemical in this passage as he sees the feeling of shame as the immediate and only possible psychological response to the measures taken by the Peruvian congress. To him the law defies all reasonable behaviour in responding to the actual situation. His irony is caustic as he reminds the readers that the idea of the role of the military in a constitutional state is to protect life and human rights. This belongs to the liberal political discourse and its sharpness is hardly to be found elsewhere in Gutiérrez’ writings.

Gutiérrez attacked the law both for its content and the way it was approved. He spoke of the integrity of politics, which, according to him, had been jeopardised by the law, as it was in his opinion an example on how politics had lost its ethical principles. The result of the legislation is said to poison the whole nation; the law in his opinion jeopardises the harmony in society.

One reason for Gutiérrez’ attack on this kind of amnesty is that he does not see any way of monitoring what is going on; it might benefit some interests, namely of the government and the military, but not society as a whole. Political manoeuvres are always manipulative, especially when they are meant to benefit a specific group. The adoption of the law took place in the middle of the night when the congress members were tired and not attentive enough and there was hardly any time to debate. The issue was not properly announced and some congress members were not even present. And for Gutiérrez this constituted a serious threat for the democratic principle in Peruvian society as ethics, in his view, were removed from politics.

Any attempt to remove ethics from politics goes against politics itself. In point of fact, politics takes place in the arena of the social life of free and responsible beings and is oriented to the common good. One of the essential aspects of the common good is respect for human rights, beginning with the first right of all: respect for life, a respect wounded by the law I am challenging. The ethical dimension is, then, constitutive of the person and his or her life in society. And with this reprehensible affair, we are fully involved in an ethical question even beyond political decisions. There is no way to mask this reality; certain attitudes during the debate in the Congress were significant in this respect. That was the reason for the indignation that people and institutions who have legitimate political differences among themselves on a number of subjects have begun to express. With this kind of tactic perhaps dark and petty political and personal interests may benefit, but not society as a whole. If someone were seeking to poison the life of the country in the present circumstances and to close off its future, they could not have chosen a better way to do it.44

44 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 463 (p. 278).
Gutiérrez does not hesitate to mention the indignation that he shared with other people for the way the legislation came about and it is possible that it was this indignation that made him write the essay. There is a strong emphasis here on the liberal political discourse, which is sharp in this passage. His focus is on the political system and how it should function in Peruvian society.

Gutiérrez’ support for a functional political system is one important component in the liberal political discourse. Gutiérrez shows a deep concern and respect for democratic political structures. For him a minimum of sound political practice from people in the government and the parliament is a necessary prerequisite for a democratic coexistence and national harmony. Gutiérrez often returns to the ethical question in his essays and stresses the role of ethics in politics.

From his theological and pastoral position this is his most important contribution to the debate. He defines the arena of politics and its final object as a focus on the common good of society indicating respect for human rights as one criterion of this. It is on this basis that he openly challenges the law. The ethical dimension is fundamental for the liberal political discourse and it is alimented by the Catholic theological discourse. When the ethical dimension is put aside, the ground for democratic principles is, according to Gutiérrez, threatened in its foundations.

Gutiérrez’ high esteem of politics explains why he considered the situation to be so dangerous in that moment. Politics are supposed to be oriented to the common good, where respect for human rights, with a focus on the right to life, is said to be one of its essential ingredients. As Gutiérrez considered that the law harms this fundamental right, he could not but criticise and condemn it, both as a committed citizen and a pastor and counsellor.

From this political perspective, Gutiérrez moves on to the core of the essay, where the Catholic and pastoral theological discourses are at the centre:

Reconciliation and forgiveness are two great human and Christian terms and themes. For that very reason we cannot trifle with them and besmirch them, grounding them in lies and injustice. If we do so, in the present instance, we will be supporting “a social countervalue: death and scorn for life” – the life of everyone but in particular the life of the poorest and most vulnerable. Indeed, this is what is at stake: the value which we give human life, to life in general, in the Peru of today. The same thing that leads us to reject from the very core of our being the crimes of terrorism prevents us now from endors-

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45 From the bishops’ statement, 15 June. Actually this is a quotation from the document Paz en la Tierra No 78 by the Peruvian bishops from December 1991. The statement continues, and I think it is worthwhile to quote it here: “When one condemns [these acts], one also affirms […] the respect for life, which reinforces the democratic institutions.” Signos 11 1995, p. 5
This passage springs out of the Catholic theological discourse where Gutiérrez defends the meaning of reconciliation and forgiveness from a Christian point of view. For this position he refers to the statement on the amnesty law by the Peruvian bishops on 15 June.

Gutiérrez had not worked on reconciliation so much in writing before this essay. There are a few notations on reconciliation in some of his books. But these few references are normally related to God’s reconciliation with humankind through Jesus’ death on the cross. In one case, however, in reference to Jesus’ preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth in Luke 4, when talking about reconciliation in its eschatological meaning as a “total reconciliation”, Gutiérrez indicates that eschatological promises can be given meaning also in contemporary life.

In this essay we find something different. The more traditional Christian understanding of reconciliation is still implicit. But Gutiérrez gives here elements for a more integral understanding of reconciliation. He focuses specifically on the need to establish justice in society and the need to start judicial processes against those who committed crimes against human rights. This would prevent impunity from remaining the norm in Peru as in other Latin American countries.

This deepening of the concept from the Catholic theological discourse offers a substantial contribution to the overall understanding of reconciliation. This means that reconciliation in this essay is also part of the liberal political discourse. The reference to the poor indicates that also this part is conditioned by the radical political discourse.

The theme of reconciliation began to be discussed in these days and Gutiérrez gives one contribution in his essay. He anticipated what was about to be treated by the Peruvian TRC. But in 1995 hardly anything pointed to such a process being likely; the government of Fujimori opted for impunity and oblivion. This position was highly criticised by Gutiérrez and others; one cannot build reconciliation on social lies. National reconciliation requires consensus that is based on democratic principles and respect for human rights where basic needs and human dignity for all is included. These principles are vital ingredients in the liberal political discourse.

46 Spanish: *impunidad*; therefore I would have preferred ‘impunity’ instead also here.
47 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 466 (p. 279).
49 “Christ does not ‘spiritualize’ the eschatological promises; he gives them meaning and fulfillment today […] but at the same time he opens new perspectives by catapulting history forward, forwards towards total reconciliation.” Gutiérrez 1988, p. 269 (p. 165).
The emphasis put on the value of human life is for Gutiérrez, as a theologian and a committed Peruvian citizen, part of both the Catholic theological and the liberal political discourse. This leads him to reject both the means of Sendero and the intention to establish impunity through the law of amnesty.

One important element in the reconciliation process is to search for the truth of what really had happened and to put those responsible for the violations of human rights on trial. Reconciliation has to go much further and presupposes a real repentance from the perpetrators.

National reconciliation is certainly a challenge. But it is also a process; it must be built by just and firm steps. To begin with, it requires a broad consensus based on a demanding democratic style in our shared life and not on inopportune means which block the road and move the goal even further away from realization. […] Reconciliation not only must be seen as a process of the convergence of wills in their respect for the rights of all. It requires time, but it also requires going to the roots of our social ills. The immense poverty of the Peruvian people does not justify in any way terrorist violence, but it is a breeding ground which must be eliminated because it can give rise to dangerous outbursts. National reconciliation happens through the effective recognition of the right of all to life, bread, housing, health, respect and a dignified existence.50

In the situation of violations of human rights, assassinations and disappearances in Peru during this period, the theme of truth came to be important, as people who were affected needed to know what really had happened. Gutiérrez and many with him were convinced that if this was not thoroughly examined, and if those who committed these excesses were not brought to judicial processes, there would be no way forward. Reconciliation must be based on justice and a willingness to deal with this. What had happened cannot just be forgotten. That is why truth becomes important in the process.

Most of this passage is part of the liberal political discourse where reconciliation is sketched as process and a national program in which Peruvians together construct something new in response to the political violence. But again, the liberal political discourse is conditioned by the radical political discourse. As long as the unjust structures are maintained in Peruvian society, they remain a breeding ground that will maintain the political violence as a persisting threat to society. Therefore reconciliation will be impossible to achieve as long as the unjust structures are present.

We need pacification, but above all we need peace. And we know that there is no true peace if it is not cemented in truth and in justice. To set out to procure it is to begin to lose the stifling feeling of shame that threatens to paralyze us.51

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50 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 467 (p. 280).
51 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 468 (p. 280).
There was much talk about pacification at that time in Peru. The government rather spoke of pacification than peace. For the government it was as a question of stopping violence without bothering about its roots. Gutiérrez did not object to the objective of putting an end to the political violence; to achieve harmony and peace in society is part of the liberal political discourse. But for Gutiérrez this talk of pacification had to be conditioned by the radical political discourse. Pacification would not be possible if real peace is not the goal and real peace can only be based on a willingness to go to the roots of the social problems and establish a society based on truth and justice.

The liberal political discourse talks generally about respect for human rights as one important ingredient. Gutiérrez does not contradict this but insists that focus should be laid on the right to life, a right that does not just mean not to be killed or to survive but to live a decent life with human dignity. The perspective of justice that the radical political discourse talks about must thus guide the human rights discourse as part of the liberal political discourse.

By this reference Gutiérrez once again referred to the fact that it was the poor that suffered most during the years of political violence in Peru, and of course all kinds of violence. Behind this statement one can hear the implicit rhetorical question: why were the rights of the poor not taken seriously? As we can see, the radical and liberal political discourses are combined here. Justice is a prerequisite for real peace; poverty and injustice will always be a breeding ground for myriad kinds of violence and will therefore be a possible threat against national harmony. As long as poverty and injustice exist, there will be a potential risk that similar things will happen and terrorist violence reappear. To make concessions before the demands of the military will ultimately result in an acceptance of the use of violent means, a mental senderisation within the people and make the country a less safe place to live in, which of course affects the harmony within society. Reconciliation must be linked to a wish for respect of human rights and a dignified existence for all.

Reconciliation is thus part of both the liberal and political discourses but it is ultimately based in the Catholic theological discourse. In my understanding, however, it is in his role as pastor that Gutiérrez writes; so also in this essay it is the pastoral theological discourse that is in focus and it represents a clear synthesis of the other three discourses.

In the pastoral theological discourse we can here identify all four elements. There are teaching elements in the essay, such as an intention to clarify the relationship between peace and justice; Gutiérrez’ interpretation of reconciliation is also example of his teaching. There is admonition in his appeal to those involved in politics not to remove ethics from politics and in the way he urges his readers to take action to revoke the law.

Also in this essay the pastoral theological discourse invokes action. Reconciliation presupposes a willingness by people to finally do something.
Only this willingness opens up a way forward; a willingness that might counteract the feeling of shame that threatens to paralyse the Peruvian population. Finally, Gutiérrez finds a sign of hope: the possibility to think that it is possible to diminish the feeling of shame is a sign of hope. This is the comforting and encouraging part of the essay.

3.1.4 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission – a process to reveal the truth (October 2003)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a unique process in Peruvian society. Its report was presented on 28 August, 2003. Human rights groups, church leaders (with some exceptions), intellectuals and politicians from centre/left welcomed it whilst it was criticised by the majority of the political parties, some medias and the military.

Gutiérrez followed the process carefully and some of the commissioners had close contacts with him throughout the whole process. He was invited to take part and contribute to a panel discussion in an international seminar at the end of the process in June 2003. People from the IBC and others related to Gutiérrez worked in the secretariat of the commission. Occasionally Gutiérrez participated in the public debate around the commission and he was present when the report was presented. The publication of Desenterrar la Verdad in La República a month later can be seen as a contribution in favour of the commission’s report in the midst of criticism. It is a long essay published over three consecutive days.

Summary of the essay

Gutiérrez gives his full support to the commission and says that the commission not only analysed the twenty years of political violence but also set the violence in relation to the history of Peru. It was necessary to “seek the truth under the earth” as many wanted to hide the truth; it was a question, as the title of the essay indicates, to disinter (to dig up) what had been hidden. The great merit of the report, according to Gutiérrez, is that it investigated the depths of what caused the political violence in the 1980s and 1990s. And not only this, by inviting the victimised to give testimony in public hearings it did not pretend to be the voice of the voiceless but rather offered the possi-
Gutiérrez gives credit to the commission for the quality and good intention of the report. Therefore he urges the legislators, Peruvian authorities and the population as a whole to take the report seriously and try to implement it.

The fact that 75 percent of the victims were Quechua speaking makes Gutiérrez focus on his most central concern, poverty, and he concludes that the years of violence “carry the mark of poverty”. But Gutiérrez also notes the elite’s widespread indifference to the situation of the poor majority in Peru as one contributing factor. He characterises Sendero’s actions to be messianic without respect for human life and therefore he holds Sendero responsible for the violence; the majority of the victims of Sendero’s actions were also found to be poor.

For Gutiérrez it is important to stress that what happened did not happen out of nothing; it can be described, analysed and understood. There are no predetermined laws that govern history. It is a process in which human beings make decisions according to their own intentions and thus become responsible for the consequences. The political violence in Peru was not merely a result of history nor can it be explained exclusively by circumstantial reasons or the “insane adventurism” of Sendero. Historical clashes, social inequalities, poverty and the unwillingness of people to see the poor and marginalised people, according to Gutiérrez, prepared the breeding ground for Sendero’s actions.

To those who reacted against the picture portrayed in the report of Peru as a divided country, Gutiérrez stresses that it is necessary to face reality as it appears. The report describes, according to him, Peru as a framework that carries the marks of discrimination and exclusion. And he finds this more serious than only to speak of fragmentation because it reveals a heavy responsibility for the privileged sectors in society; they did not do anything about it, but permitted the situation to develop. Gutiérrez refers to facts, but more concordantly to the concept of institutionalised violence, which he here relates to violations of basic human rights.

Gutiérrez realises that there were those who objected to the commission and its work because it could in their opinion unnecessarily open wounds within the country. Gutiérrez is eager to defend the report against these critics.

One reason for his strong defence of the report is his deep respect for the relatives of the victims; there is always a need for them to know what really happened to their loved ones. This need is illustrated by a comment by a relative of one of the victims from the massacre in Lucanamarca in Ayacucho in 1983 who after a memorial and funeral service in Lima in De-

56 This took place 3 March, 1983 when a column of more than 60 senderistas assassinated 69 people in the district of Lucanamarca in Ayacucho. Sixty-two of the bodies were found and
December 2002 where the coffins of the victims were present declared that the relatives now can live peacefully. The word ‘now’ shows how important memory is, even if it is about something that took place nearly twenty years before; with Gutiérrez’ words: “for them it was about this today that would permit them to pass on tomorrow”.

For Gutiérrez the report is a point of departure, not an end. It is essential for the future as it gives an analysis and interpretation of what took place. In order to move forward one has to understand the past. Gutiérrez sees a unique opportunity for Peru to start something new if the Peruvian authorities and the public receive the report in general with a real intention to do something.

Gutiérrez concludes the essay by reflecting on the fact that the years of political violence were dark years in Peruvian history, but he also points to its profound experiences; it was a time for commitment. Both individuals and institutions gave courage and hope to people in the midst of agony and despair. These experiences can serve as examples for the future as Peru enters a new life after the political violence. His concern is that this experience is not ruined. The essay ends with a wish that people understand that it was necessary to present the report in spite of all horrendous things that it brings to light and therefore the report has “put us on the route”.

**Analysis**

The titles of the three consecutive parts of the essay published in *La República*, gives an indication of the key concepts that Gutiérrez lifts up in the essay: Desenterrar la verdad, No hay reconciliación sin justicia and Un punto de partida, no de llegada.

The keyword *par excellence* in the essay is indicated already in its overall title: *desenterrar*. Gutiérrez is playing with the word and uses it in all its possible meanings. The most immediate association are the mass graves where bodies of people who had been assassinated had been buried anonymously. The truth about what had happened was about to be unearthed, “unburied”. Closely linked to this is, as the complete title indicates, the truth: to disinter or to unearth the truth.
Towards the end of the essay, Gutiérrez indicates what this really means:

By digging up the truth of the country starting from the truth of those two horrendous decades, the commission reveals evils to which we have persisted in closing the eyes and proposes us to look far away to see better, in perspective, the road that we have to travel along. It is an achievement of historic significance that [...] provides a valuable common property that should be studied and discussed with attention. To some extent only time will permit us to appreciate this contribution in all its dimensions. Only the fact that it has been produced is already good news for the country. Now it is a task for all of us Peruvians – and specifically political, military and religious authorities, civil society and media – to give thanks to this invitation to a conscious examination to recognise our mistakes and assume our responsibilities and tasks.60

Are the Peruvians willing to assume this task, to reflect upon the report and move forward with the report as a starting point? This is the big challenge according to Gutiérrez.

In this passage it is the liberal political discourse that is focused upon. The disclosure of the truth of what had happened is identified as a condition for the future development of the country. According to Gutiérrez, the report could be, if well received by the Peruvian society, the beginning of something new in Peru that would create a better understanding of the mechanisms in Peruvian society that would represent important steps in establishing harmony in society.

This call is specifically directed to the political, military and religious authorities; one might assume that Gutiérrez mentions the two first (political and military authorities) as some of the main actors in this process and the religious leaders as responsible for the moral and ethical perspective. By adding civil society Gutiérrez stresses that people in general also have a responsibility; they cannot just blame the authorities for their incapacity. Finally the reference to media is a way of stressing their importance and implicit responsibility in the reconstruction of the Peruvian society; the way the media reported the violence was crucial for how the violence was perceived by vast sectors of the population. By mentioning these categories, Gutiérrez indicates a responsibility of all sectors in Peruvian society for what took

60 “Desenterrando la verdad del país, a partir de la verdad de esas dos horrendas décadas, la comisión nos revela males frente a los que hemos persistido en cerrar los ojos y nos propone mirar lejos para ver mejor, en perspectiva, el camino que tenemos hoy por recorrer. Es una obra de trascedencia histórica que [...] proporciona un valioso acervo que debe ser estudiado y discutido con atención. De alguna manera, únicamente el tiempo nos permitirá apreciar este aporte en toda su dimensión. El solo hecho de que se haya producido es ya una buena noticia para el país, ahora nos toca a todos los peruanos – de modo particular a autoridades políticas, militares y religiosas, sociedad civil, medios de comunicación – agradecer esta invitación a un examen de conciencia, a reconocer nuestros errores y a asumir nuestras responsabilidades y tareas.” Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 13.
place; therefore it is a common task not only to recognise mistakes in the past but also to assume common responsibilities in the future.

And just a few lines further, Gutiérrez continues more specifically:

We will not permit for the truth remain concealed under earth in one of those mass graves that has hidden so many dead. If these years have been years of great sorrows and omissions, they have also been years of generosity from both civilians and members of the armed forces, but and also of firm and risky commitments of people and institutions in the defence of human rights for all and specifically for the weakest and insignificants of our society. These are facts and are likewise promises for the time that comes. We should never accept that these would be stolen or distorted from us. In these lie the best that is possible to offer us for the present moment. It is a richness that we never may ruin.61

In this passage the liberal political discourse focuses on the importance of not forgetting what took place. Oblivion is a serious threat to any effort to make an assessment of the past in order to move forward. The commitment of many individuals and institutions that advocated human rights is viewed as a resource that might enlighten future efforts.

The second key concept is taken from the title of the second part of the essay: reconciliation. In this essay Gutiérrez develops his view from the previous text. Here reconciliation is closely related to the theme of justice, justice in the sense of just trials in which those responsible are subject to judicial processes. But justice represents also social justice. So in this respect there is, as we will see, a clear interdependence between the liberal and radical political discourses; in the background the Catholic theological discourse is also present.

Gutiérrez refers to conclusion 170 of the report of the commission where it says that it “interprets reconciliation as a new and fundamental pact between the Peruvian state and society and between members in society”.62 According to Gutiérrez this pact implies a preference for the poor since they were those who suffered most from the violence. This can be seen as a gesture of solidarity, but this is not done as a favour; it is a question of justice:

61 “No permitamos que la verdad permanezca escondida, bajo tierra, ella también, en una de esas fosas que han ocultado tantas muertes. Si bien éstos han sido años de grandes penas y omissions, también lo han sido de generosidades, de civiles y militares; así como de firmes y riesgosos compromisos de personas e instituciones, en defensa de los derechos humanos de todos, especialmente de los más débiles e insignificantes de nuestra sociedad. Son hechos y son igualmente promesas para el tiempo que viene. No debemos aceptar que nos sean robados o distorsionados. En ellos late lo mejor que nos es posible ofrecer en el momento presente. Una riqueza que no podemos perder.” Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 14.
Reconciliation should be based on justice in all its different facets. It also implies society’s punishment on the authors of crimes and acts of violence with no concession what so ever of impunity.63

So in Gutiérrez’ view, reconciliation in this short passage is related to both the radical political discourse as it has to be based on justice and to the liberal political discourse as he mentions legal processes to avoid impunity for those who are responsible. Gutiérrez refers to the response from the permanent council of the Peruvian bishops to the commission’s report where it says that “Peru wants to know the truth, looks for justice and yearns for reconciliation”.64 Reconciliation must be based on both truth and justice; what really happened must be clarified in a process that also respects the need for justice. And the bishops continue saying that “reconciliation is neither synonymous with impunity nor ignores committed injustices”.65 To this Gutiérrez adds that reconciliation can only be based on the truth and agrees with the bishops when they point to forgiveness as an absolutely free, human and Christian attitude that in no way socially sanctions the crimes committed.

Gutiérrez’ interpretation of Peru as a nation has to be seen in relation to justice in the essay. He relates this to the fragmentation in Peruvian society that, according to him, becomes so obvious in the report of the commission. His understanding of justice is conditioning his view on Peru as a nation, the radical political discourse conditions the liberal one, as Gutiérrez severely criticises those who will not recognise this fragmentation in society:

“Institutional violence”66 is what the bishops’ conference in Medellín called this situation […]. Soon after this the great specialist in the peace thematic, Johan Galtung, called it “indirect or structural violence”.67 It is the daily violation of basic rights of the human being that causes most premature and unjust deaths as for instance the silent death of numerous children in our country. Its existence, without justifying any other kind of violence, has to be in mind if we want to understand at least a part of what took place. Different and distant, as Peruvians we still have the unsettled task of making our country a nation where all born in it – that is why we talk of nation68 – might find

63 “Sobre la justicia, en sus diferentes facetas, debe construirse la reconciliación. Ella implica igualmente el castigo de la sociedad a los autores de crímenes y violencias, sin ninguna concesión a la impunidad.” Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 11.
64 “[...] el Perú quiere conocer la verdad, busca la justicia y anhela la reconciliación.” Quoted in Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 12.
65 “[...] reconciliación no es sinónimo de impunidad ni de ignorar las injusticias cometidas.” Quoted in Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 12.
66 Gutiérrez here uses this form and not violencia institucionalizada.
67 See Galtung 1969.
68 This is an explicit play with words. The Spanish nación (‘nation’) comes from Latin natio that is derived from the verb nascere (‘to be born’; Spanish: nacer). Etymologically this means that all that are born within a country belongs to the nation.
their personal dignity, their cultural diversity and their most elemental human rights respected.69

We have already seen how important the concept of institutionalised violence is for Gutiérrez; to a large extent it is his basic hermeneutical tool for interpretation of the political violence. In this passage he juxtaposes institutionalised violence with violations of basic human rights that are the conditions needed for human life with dignity. No matter how horrendous the political violence might have been, the institutionalised violence still causes far more premature deaths. By stressing this, Gutiérrez again shows that the radical political discourse conditions the liberal political discourse.

However, we also see that the radical political discourse is not unconditional. The existence of unjust structures and institutionalised violence can never justify other kinds of violence. With this statement Gutiérrez repeats his dissociation with the means of Sendero. So for this reason the liberal political discourse is also present.

Gutiérrez’ discussion of creating conditions for a situation where all Peruvians will feel Peru to be a nation inclusive of all is part of the liberal political discourse. All that are born in Peru belong to the nation. But the liberal political discourse alone is not enough for this because of the deep fragmentation of the country. The radical political discourse expresses that personal dignity, cultural diversity and fundamental human rights must be respected for all. Only through this will true peace and harmony be able to be established in Peruvian society. Gutiérrez’ concept of nation is not based on ethnic principles but on a citizenship based human rights for all.

A third perspective is hinted at in the title of the final portion of the essay: the report is a point of departure, not an end. What Gutiérrez stresses here is that people should have the way forward in view. The commission had made an impressive effort to analyse what had happened and why during the twenty years of extreme political violence in Peru. As we have seen, Gutiérrez uses both the liberal and the radical political discourses to interpret this. People need to understand the past in order to move forward.

Gutiérrez has no illusions that this way forward will be easy. If people do not recognise what happened and work together to establish conditions for a society where human rights are fully respected “the enormous sufferings

69 “‘Violencia institucional’, llamó la conferencia episcopal de Medellín [...] a esa situación; poco después Johan Galtung, el gran especialista en temas de paz, la denominaría ‘violencia indirecta o estructural’. Es la violación cotidiana de derechos básicos de la persona humana la que más muertes prematuras e injustas produce, la muerte silenciosa de numerosos niños de nuestro país por ejemplo. Su existencia, sin con ello justificar ningún otro tipo de violencia, debe ser tenida en cuenta si queremos entender parte, al menos, de lo ocurrido. Distintos y distantes los peruanos tenemos todavía la tarea pendiente de hacer de nuestro país una nación en la que todos los nacidos en ella – por eso hablamos de nación – vean respetada su dignidad personal, su diversidad cultural, sus más elementales derechos humanos.” Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 8-9.
during these years would have left nothing but a trail of violent deaths, paralyzing fears, fratricidal hates and a corrosive scepticism in front of the possibilities that we have as a nation”. 70 In this sentence Gutiérrez simply contrasts the ideal of creating an understanding of Peru as a nation with the consequences of not taking the report of the commission into account. With these harsh words, he indicates that the liberal political discourse will fail completely if it is not driven by the radical political discourse.

The radical political discourse is strong throughout the whole essay, especially in its beginning:

It was necessary to go there, to descend we should say, in order to get to know the truth of what affected us during these years. From this horizon, without losing the sight of the cruelty and injustice of the time, we can better understand the reasons that led to the emphatic affirmation by Salomón Lerner71 in his outstanding discourse at the presentation of the report: “The report that we present today exposes a double scandal: that of assassination, disappearance and massive torture and that of indolence, ineptitude and indifference of those who could have prevented this humanitarian catastrophe and did not do.” The phrase is hard but the reality was even harder.72

Both the liberal and radical political discourses can be traced in this passage. The liberal political discourse is present in the sense that Gutiérrez agrees with the overall aim of the TRC to seek the truth of what had taken place in order to establish conditions for harmony and peace in Peru after the violent years. The “double scandal” that Salomón Lerner referred to is related to the liberal political discourse, people did not want to recognise the violations of human rights that had taken place and many of those who knew were indifferent and did not intervene to prevent it.

The reference to the radical political discourse is more implicit. From what we have seen in his other essays, we may assume that by referring to the search for truth Gutiérrez includes recognition of the causes behind the violence; injustice and the cruelty in the violent actions by both Sendero and the authorities.

70 “[...] los enormes sufrimientos de estos años no habrían dejado más que una estela de muertes violentas, miedos paralizantes, odios fratricidos y un corrosivo escepticismo frente a las posibilidades que tenemos como nación.” Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 12-13.
71 Lerner was the president of the commission; at that moment he was also rector of the Catholic University in Lima.
72 “Hasta allí era necesario ir – descender habría que decir – para conocer la verdad de lo que nos hería en estos años. En este horizonte, sin perder de vista la crueldad e injusticia de la coyuntura, se comprenden mejor las razones que conducen a la enfática afirmación de Salomón Lerner en el notable discurso de presentación de los trabajos hechos: ‘El informe que hoy presentamos expone, pues, un doble escándalo: el asesinato, la desaparición y la tortura masivos, y el de la indolencia, la ineptitud y la indiferencia de quienes pudieron impedir esta catástrofe humanitaria y no lo hicieron.’ La frase es dura, pero la realidad lo fue más todavía.” Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 7.
The reference to the Catholic theological discourse is also implicit. In a subtle way Gutiérrez combines the two political discourses with the Catholic theological discourse by using the word “descend” in order to get to the depths of what brought about the political violence. The use of “descend” is a deliberate reference to the passage in the apostolic creed, where it says that Jesus after his death “descended into hell”. In Christian belief this was the utmost consequence of the incarnation and an example of Jesus’ redemptive work. Figuratively this is meant as an exhortation for the Christian community to full dedication in the search for truth and as solidarity with the victims of the violence in order to find the truth.

Not taking into account the consequences, and its accumulation throughout the years, of the enormous historical clashes as well as the serious and unjust social inequalities that shape our country, is to deny to see face to face a present that implores us and strikes our consciences. A present with a deep hold in the time, the heart and the mind of many Peruvians that blinded them, and made invisible to their eyes the marginalized and poor. In this way a breeding ground for eventual conflicts and violence was developed, which if we don’t try to eliminate in the future can create conditions [...] that produce situations similar to those that we have lived through.

This passage is another example on how the radical political discourse conditions the liberal political discourse in Gutiérrez’ thinking. Not taking the historical clashes or the present unjust structures in society into consideration is paramount to refusing to recognise the situation of crisis in Peruvian society. It is not enough to merely talk about peace and harmony in society; in Gutiérrez’ interpretation Peru has suffered from the consequences of a society that does not want to consider the need for justice. He points to the historical roots of poverty and to the fact that people’s one-sided view of the situation makes the poor even more marginalised and therefore their situation is aggravated.

Again Gutiérrez refers to the unjust structures as a breeding ground for phenomena such as Sendero and the fact that poverty and injustice always might be a potential ground of legitimacy for revolutionary groups to appear. Liberal alternatives are not sufficient to build peace and harmony in society.

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73 Gutiérrez confirmed this interpretation to me in the interview on 1 February, 2008, OK-A 10d.

74 “No tener en cuenta las consecuencias, y su acumulación en el tiempo, de los enormes desencuentros históricos, así como de las graves e injustas desigualdades sociales que conforman nuestro país, es negarse a ver cara a cara un presente que nos interpela y golpea nuestras conciencias. Un presente con hondo arraigo en el tiempo, el corazón y la mente de muchos peruanos que los cegó, e hizo invisibles a sus ojos a las capas pobres y marginados. Se formó así un caldo de cultivo de eventuales conflictos y violencias que, si no buscamos eliminarlo, puede en el futuro, crear las condiciones [...] para que se den situaciones semejantes a las vividas.” Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 8.
The radical political discourse is needed as a guideline in order to avoid a similar situation to the violence of the past twenty years from appearing.

A little further in the essay Gutiérrez takes up the pastoral theological discourse. Many people live in accordance with the words of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) “Blessed are the forgetful”, an expression that according to Gutiérrez is full of sarcasm.75

“Blessed are those who mourn”, instead says Matthew [5:4], those who are compassionate, those who make others’ afflictions their own. It is a question about a gesture that the prophet Isaiah presented in beautiful and alarming words: “Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth.” [Isaiah 25:8]. Blessed and happy are those who do so. In the style of Luke and to better understand the prophetic text we might say: “Woe of those that one day are presented before the God of justice and mercy with dry eyes”?76 They did not know how to share their time, their concern and their sentiments with those who they saw having their dignity as human beings and daughters and sons of God be trampled, those who had suffered in silence and oblivion.77

This passage is an example of the pastoral theological discourse in this essay, where Gutiérrez focuses on Christian supportive attitudes with those who suffer. Against the Nietzschian attitude of forgetting and letting things just to be, Gutiérrez sets the attitudes: to mourn,78 to have mercy and to be compassionate. These are attitudes that are expected, at least from those who call themselves believers and want to meet the needs of the victims and are willing to work for something new in the Peruvian society. Tears are an indication of a deep commitment.

From the Catholic theological discourse, Gutiérrez takes three biblical references (Matthew, Isaiah and Luke) to enforce the pastoral theological discourse. In this passage its focus is on admonition and it is aimed at action.79

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75 Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 13. The quotation is found in two versions: “Blessed are the forgetful, for they are ‘done’ with their stupidities as well.” From Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (1886), Part seven, Our Virtues.
A more quoted version is “Blessed are the forgetful, for they get the better even of their blunders”.

76 Gutiérrez is paraphrasing Luke 11:42.

77 “Bienaventurados – dice, en cambio, el evangeli de Mateo – los que lloran’, los que se compadecen, los que sienten como suyas las aflicciones de los otros. Se trata de un gesto que el profeta Isaías presenta con términos bellos y estremecedores: ‘El Señor enjugará las lagrimas de todos los rostros y alejará de la tierra entera el oprobio de su pueblo.’ Bienaventurados, felices, los que proceden así. Al estilo de Lucas, y para una mejor comprensión del texto profética, podemos decir: ‘¡Ay de aquellos que un día se presenten ante el Dios de la justicia y la misericordia con ojos secos!’ porque no supieron compartir su tiempo, su preocupación y sus sentimientos con los que veían pisoteada su dignidad de seres humanos y de hijas y hijos de Dios, con aquellos que han sufrido en el silencio y en el olvido.” Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 13.

78 Or llorar (‘to weep’) as it says in the Spanish translation Gutiérrez uses.
The Christian response to those who suffer is not a theoretical attitude and cannot be exercised “with dry eyes”; it must be done with compassion and accompaniment with those who suffer. It implies a willingness to mourn or even weep together with those who suffer. The second beatitude, “blessed are those who mourn (or weep)”, therefore becomes for Gutiérrez a call for solidarity and deep commitment; a prophetic testimony in society. This is contrasted with a new “woe” as a way for Gutiérrez to argue that it is impossible to work for human dignity without being upset and feeling pain and compassion with those who suffer.

After this the attitude of consolation is introduced:

The Bible names this gesture consolation. But we have to be more precise. In the Bible the word console has a meaning not only of receiving and listening, but also and above all, of liberating from all that provoke an inhumane situation. It is appropriate to remember this thinking on what we already have said above. This is the guiding principle of the behaviour of one that believes in the God of life. It is impossible to put this into practice without remembrance. [This means] not to get stuck in the past, but, exactly, to surpass it, so that it will not become a cane among the legs in our walk, so that what we have experienced does not become a nightmare that impedes us to go toward a world in which those situations will not be repeated.

Based on the Catholic theological discourse that is rooted in biblical interpretation and sustained by the radical political discourse with reference to liberation from inhumane situations, Gutiérrez develops a pastoral theological discourse on consolation. I have emphasised how he stressed hope in his earlier essays and even more clearly in his preaching. In this essay, there is another focus. In most of his texts hope is part of the comfort and encouragement elements. Here focus is on admonition; he calls for action as he wants his readers to exercise the Christian attitude of consolation. One can see this as an implementation of his way of preaching hope in the midst of violence. Here we meet the pastor that realises consolation is a manifestation of the preaching of hope.

One aspect of consolation is to listen, but Gutiérrez adds another dimension; consolation also implies liberation. I will come back to this connection in my analysis of one of his homilies below. Here Gutiérrez refers to liberation from what provokes inhumane situations, but he also links it to the importance of remembering the past. One cannot get stuck in the past, but one

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79 “La Biblia llama a este gesto, consolar. Pero, precisemos, en alla consolar tiene el sentido no sólo de acoger y escuchar, sino también, y sobre todo, de liberar de todo lo que provoca una situación inhumana. Es oportuno recordarlo pensando en lo que hemos dicho anteriormente. Esa es la pauta del comportamiento del creyente en el Dios de la vida. Imposible ponerla en la práctica sin memoria. No para fijarse al pasado, sino, precisamente, para superarlo, para que no sea un bastón entre las piernas en nuestro caminar, para que lo vivido no se convierta en una pesadilla que impida ir hacia un mundo en el que esas situaciones no se repitan.” Gutiérrez 2003b, p. 13.
must be aware that it is impossible to put reconciliation and consolation into practice without remembering the past. For those affected by the violence, consolation is not a question of forgetting what happened but a question of how to respond to it and live with healed memories for the future.

This is, as we have seen, not the first time that Gutiérrez pointed to this; reflecting on the report of the commission makes him repeat this affirmation. He is convinced that if people do not recognise the injustice and poverty together with the reluctance to see poverty as the root cause to violent reactions, including terrorist actions, there is an immediate risk that what took place in the 1980s and 1990s might erupt again.

Gutiérrez’ concern for the poor and insignificants is indefatigable and he never misses an opportunity to stress facts that relate to this. But poverty and injustice are not only an economic issue. Social injustice precedes this for Gutiérrez; class comes before race and gender in his socio-political analysis. But ethnicity and culture are not unimportant to him; here he stresses the symbiosis between social injustice and ethnicity and culture.

Justice is a major concern for Gutiérrez. That is why it is so important for him to relate the striving for truth and reconciliation to justice. He is in full accord with the Peruvian bishops that truth, justice and reconciliation must relate to each other. His stress on reconciliation is much stronger than in his earlier writings and there are clear references to his essay *Vergüenza*.

We can thus see that in this essay the two political discourses dominate his perspective. First of all, use of the liberal political discourse by both Gutiérrez and the publishers of *La República* was intended to give support to the report of the commission and thus to strengthen and develop the fragile democratic initiatives in the country. But the radical political discourse is needed as a kind of corrective since a harmonic, democratic and peaceful development can never be constructed without a strategy to combat poverty and unjust structures in society.

Finally, for Gutiérrez the report must be seen as a point of departure for the future. It is true that it can be seen as putting an end to a both painful and shameful part of contemporary Peruvian history, but it cannot be seen as the final word. There are issues and perspectives that have to be dealt with in order for Peru to be able to move forward. Gutiérrez’ conviction is that the report has put Peru as a nation “on the route”.

To say that the report is a point of departure is both admonishing and challenging. It is a task for the Peruvian society, both the government and civil society, to learn from the painful past and take action. Not least it is important, according to Gutiérrez, to clarify what had happened and start judicial processes in order charge those who were responsible for the crimes that had been committed. The fact that the process is moving forward is encouraging.

The presentation of the report of the commission was a positive sign in that specific moment. Therefore Gutiérrez does not focus on encouragement
and consolation in the pastoral theological discourse in this essay. Instead his emphasis is on teaching and, above all, on admonition. The actions of the Peruvian people that led to the fall of Fujimori and the almost complete stop of terrorist actions were the result of a joint effort by committed people within the political parties and civil society, especially human rights groups, and paved the way for the TRC. This effort did not come out of nothing and some had paid a high price for it. What had been achieved could easily be spoiled if people did not recognise these efforts or were unwilling to take the result seriously; there lies the admonition Gutiérrez seeks to bring about in this essay.

3.1.5 Concluding remarks

The first three essays were selected as they represent important contributions by Gutiérrez in the critical moments of the 1980s and 1990s, while the fourth essay from 2003 serves to balance the two decades. They can be said to be programmatic for Gutiérrez’ theology as they focus on important issues in his theological reflection. However different in content, they show continuity in his reflection. The first three essays give examples of three perspectives of how Gutiérrez interprets Christian involvement in society.

The first essay’s contribution is included in the title: there will still be time. With this Gutiérrez wants to say that there is always time to do something. To say that it is too late leads to evasions and excuses. This position is based on Gutiérrez’ interpretation of Christian hope, which for him is based on the resurrection. As long as it is possible to do something, something should be done.

The second essay discusses the significance of words. Gutiérrez argues in this essay that it is sometimes difficult to find words and on other occasions words that are said are empty rhetoric. With this he wants to stress that people should try to find words in moments when it is necessary to speak and that it is important to focus on what to say and how to say it. The use of words and their value are important for Gutiérrez in his writings.

The third essay talks about shame. In my interpretation this indicates that the use of sentiments in commitment is also of importance for Gutiérrez. The willingness to transform society is not only an intellectual issue; there is a need to incorporate this willingness within the whole body. In a lecture about Mariátegui in August 1994, Gutiérrez talked about Mariátegui’s willingness to transform society. This willingness was based on knowledge of society, a knowledge that was aimed at transformation of the society. This knowledge was born out of an indignation about the unjust situation in Peru in the 1920s. The process starts with indignation, like the sensation of shame that Gutiérrez expressed in his essay, but the indignation has to be transferred

80 I have consulted my own notes from the lecture, OK-A 6.
into an intellectual analysis in order to be efficient as an instrument for transformation.

In other words the three essays remind its readers about that indignation is an important incentive for action if it is intellectually treated, that what is said and how it is said in a specific situation is important and, finally, that there will always be a possibility to act even if things look hopeless.

The fourth essay can be seen as a concluding essay that calls people to action in order not to spoil what has been achieved through the TRC and with this experience move forward.

3.2 Homilies on memorial services for victims of the political violence

Through his collaboration with *La República* and his contacts with Peruvian intellectuals and politicians Gutiérrez established a space in which he was a well-known representative of the church. In this capacity he was also asked to lead liturgical celebrations of different kinds outside his parish. In this section I will focus on two homilies that Gutiérrez gave in memorial services for people assassinated during the political violence. Both homilies were published in *La República*. The first from the memorial service for the general secretary of the *Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú* (CGTP), Pedro Huilca on 18 December, 1993 is not as well-known as the other from the memorial service for the victims of the Cantuta case a month later, 18 January, 1994.

3.2.1 The death of a union leader (December 1993)

**Introduction**

Unknown men assassinated Pedro Huilca 18 December, 1992. It was widely assumed that *Sendero* had killed him. The mouthpiece of *Sendero*, *El Diario*, recognised it to be an action committed by them.  

Huilca’s widow, Martha Flores Gutiérrez, however, was convinced that the actors had been the *Grupo Colina* acting on behalf of the government of Fujimori. The Huilca case was one of the seventy-three cases that the TRC addressed in its report.

83 TCR report (CVR 2003a), *Tomo VII*, p. 629-647. The Huilca case was also presented to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 1997. In September 1998 it released its report (No 55/98) stating that the case was admissible and that the report was about to be included in the annual report of the Commission to the General Assembly of the OAS.
The memorial service took place one year after Hulica’s death and Gutiérrez was invited to officiate at the service.\textsuperscript{84}

**Summary of the homily**

Gutiérrez started his homily with the assertion that it was the absence of someone that was always present in the struggle for justice that had brought people together that day. Pedro Huilca left a legacy to all sectors of the country without which it would be difficult to understand what was taking place in society. It was his disposition to strive for the most forgotten to be able to exercise their right to work, to be able to get bread to take to their homes and to affirm their identity as human beings and workers.

The first reading in the service was taken from Isaiah 65:20-21.\textsuperscript{85} This ideal is contrasted with the harsh reality in Peru. Justice should be constructed with respect of human rights for all. This reference to justice was related to the life of Huilca and his commitment to the workers’ rights that led him to be appointed general secretary of CGTP.

Gutiérrez also referred to the gospel reading from Mark 10:35-45, where the disciples were disputing over whom was going to sit together with Jesus in his glory. Jesus asked the disciples whether they were prepared to “drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with” (v. 38). The question Jesus raised to those who strived for the places in honour was about their willingness to give their lives for their brothers and sisters like he would.

The text from the gospel ends with the words: “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (v 45). Gutiérrez related this to the life of Huilca, who had held his position as a union leader with the same willingness to serve as mentioned in the gospel. The life of Huilca was described as a web of action with both achievements and failures. “What is there to stay is a far-reaching route designed so that the rest of us also can move forward through it”\textsuperscript{86}

The two readings reminded the congregation of the necessity to build justice in society. They were related to the situation of premature deaths as a reality in Peru and illustrated with facts about the high percentage of infant mortality and extreme poverty. Paradoxically, Huilca fought for life but


\textsuperscript{84} Gutiérrez 1993d. Published 25 December, 1993. As far as I know it has not been published elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{85} “No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.”

\textsuperscript{86} “Lo que queda es una amplia ruta trazada por la cual los otros podíamos avanzar.” The title *La República* chosen for the homily, “Una amplia ruta para nuestra historia”, refers to this passage.
found a cruel death; he was a threat to both the ruling classes and to the armed opposition groups.

On the one hand the assassination was sad news, but paradoxically on the other hand, Gutiérrez said, Pedro Huilca’s life would still be great news for the Peruvian population. Somebody had assassinated Huilca and undoubtedly, according to Gutiérrez, this was a great loss for those who strived for democracy and social justice. But what was needed now was to learn from what Huilca had fought for in future efforts to obtain democracy and social justice. If this comes to fruition and people should be inspired by his example, Huilca had not died in vain, Gutiérrez concluded.

Analysis

The homily is thoroughly tinged by its *sitz im leben* and therefore part of the pastoral theological discourse with elements of the other three discourses. Gutiérrez as pastor directs himself to a family and to people committed to the struggle for the rights of the workers who a year after Huilca’s death were still mourning for a man that no longer was present among them. Implicitly Gutiérrez addresses not only those attending the service but the entire Peruvian population.

That is why even if we in this mass remember someone that is absent, someone that physically is not with us, we should above all remember a presence that in many ways fills us, and demands and appeals to us. This is why we are here this afternoon, certainly to remember with pain that he is not here, but also to remember with joy what he gave us, to remember with gratitude someone that knew [...] how to give testimony of justice, love and life. I wish that for all of us that are here Pedro Huilca will never be converted only to a memory but will always challenge us.87

The whole homily is built on the dichotomy of absence and presence. Huilca was absent, but still present in people’s memories and through his life and testimony. There is a long tradition within the Peruvian *movimiento popular* to manifest, especially at the funeral or other ceremony for a prominent leader that had died, that he or she is still present in the minds of the people.88 Gutiérrez refers to this vocabulary in his words about absence and presence. The absence of a leader can be replaced by the presence of his

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87 “Es por eso si bien en esta misa recordamos a un ausente, a alguien que no está físicamente entre nosotros, debemos recordar sobre todo una presencia que nos llena de muchas maneras y nos llama y nos exige y nos interpela. Es por eso que estamos acá esta tarde, ciertamente para recordar con pena que no está, para recordar también con alegría todo lo que nos dió, para recordar con agradecimiento a alguien que supo [...] dar testimonio de justicia, de amor y de vida. Ojalá para todos que estamos acá Pedro Huilca no se convierta nunca en un recuerdo sino que sea siempre una interpelación.” Gutiérrez 1993d.

88 Somebody says the name of the deceased leader and then the crowd replies: “Presente”. This action or expression becomes of course more powerful when the leader has not died a natural death.
ideas. It was a painful moment and people were allowed to express this, but at the same time Gutiérrez tries to make his audience think about what Huilca really had strived for and thus he had become an example for those who strive for justice. This short notion of justice belongs, as in Gutiérrez’ other texts, to the radical political discourse, but on the whole this passage is part of the pastoral theological discourse. Here he speaks words of comfort to the relatives while at the same time he speaks words of admonition with an exhortation for people to embrace Huilca’s commitment and take part in striving for justice.

The concept of justice is another underlying theme in the homily, which signals that the radical political discourse is present. The utopian vision of justice in the first reading from Isaiah 65 is a guiding principle throughout the whole homily:

[Isaiah] talked to us about a world where justice should reign and where nobody should live from others’ work. We all know how far away we are in our country from this situation. This text from Isaiah said that we have to walk a moment with the children in which the human beings do not die at too early an age. In [that moment] to live 100 years, as the Isaiah text said, would be a grace from the Lord and the painful and horrendous experience of these last years makes this search much more urgent.89

Gutiérrez interprets Huilca’s struggle for justice as an example for those who had come to the service. Children should not die in infancy; people should not die a premature death. This is a statement about the conflictive situation in Peruvian society. Economic and political interests of those in power made them act without respect for the individual and they did not hesitate to impose conditions for their own benefit. In all its simplicity Gutiérrez sketches a vision about justice. Isaiah’s vision is contrasted with the harsh reality of Peruvian society in the 1990s. The radical political discourse is here constructed on the basis of the Catholic theological discourse, as it is the vision in Isaiah that is the guiding principle for Gutiérrez in his assessment of the present situation.

With soft ironic words Gutiérrez continues his homily in an intermingling of the liberal and radical political discourses:

One of the shortest ways of finding death in our country these years is to be a person tied to the world of the poor, to the marginalised, to be of those who struggle for their dignity and the dignity of their families. One of the shortest

89 “Nos hablaba de un mundo donde debía reinar la justicia, en el que nadie vivía del trabajo del otro. Sabemos lo lejos que estamos en nuestra patria de una situación así. Ese mismo texto de Isaías decía que tenemos que encaminarnos a un momento en el que los niños, en el que los seres humanos no mueran a temprana edad. En el que vivir 100 años, decía el texto de Isaías, será una gracia del Señor y la dolorosa y horrenda experiencia de estos últimos años hace esta búsqueda mucho más urgente.” Gutiérrez 1993d.
ways towards death has been being a people’s leader that is close to one’s comrades of class, population, race and culture. Towards the end of the homily, Gutiérrez stresses that the death of Huilca could hardly be said to have been a complete surprise to people.

We were all shocked by his death, but honestly we cannot be surprised that people like Pedro Huilca are uncomfortable for those that at any price want to keep their economic, social and political privileges or those who without respect for the individual or the people want to impose their pretended conditions.

Huilca’s dedication as union leader was a consequence of his use of a radical political discourse on justice that is similar to how Gutiérrez formulates the radical political discourse. Huilca had challenged those in power with his committed struggle for dignity and human rights for the poor and marginalised. To exercise this commitment in society is part of a liberal agenda as it is a way to construct harmony and stability, even if this effort provokes strong reactions from those in power, who would say that it undermines stability in society.

This was dangerous in Peruvian society in the 1980s and 1990s. This position was not simply to express a personal opinion about the rights of the workers; it was an attitude that deeply questioned the political system in Peru. But it not only provoked those in power; it also provoked Sendero as they looked upon Huilca and other union leaders as counter-revolutionaries. The last passage refers to Sendero. That was one reason why people did not know if the death of Huilca was caused by Sendero or by the authorities; both had reasons to eliminate him.

Gutiérrez does not explicitly compare Huilca’s death with the Christian martyrs in contemporary Latin America but indicates that there are similarities. The striving for life and justice that could result in being killed is a common characteristic for many of the Christian martyrs.

There can be no doubt for Gutiérrez that Huilca was very much aware of the danger of committing himself as a union leader. But Huilca saw no other

90 The Spanish term used here is compañero, which was a designation within the IU and Apra; Sendero used the term camarada.
91 “Uno de los caminos más cortos para encontrar la muerte en nuestro país en estos años ha sido una persona ligada al mundo de los pobres, de los marginados, de quienes luchan por su dignidad y por sus familias. Uno de los caminos más cortos a la muerte ha sido ser un dirigente popular cercano a sus compañeros de clase, de población, de raza, de cultura.” Gutiérrez 1993d.
92 “A todos nos chocó su muerte, pero, digamoslo así honestamente: no nos sorprendió que personajes como Pedro Huilca sean incómodos para quienes quieren conservar a todo precio sus privilegios económicos, sociales y políticos en este país como también para aquellos que quieren imponer por la fuerza, sin respeto a la persona ni a este pueblo, sus pretendidas condiciones.” Gutiérrez 1993d.
option and he distanced himself from both Sendero and the unjust structures that were created by the political leadership.

Pedro Huilca was not afraid to confront these powers coming from two angles. He rejected a cruel and inhuman terrorism as he also rejected the conditions that our people have been used to and still are being exposed to. That is why this afternoon, even if the anguish above all within the family is present in their hearts, I almost permit myself to ask for the favour of the family to say to them that this is more than just a requiem mass [...] I would like to call this mass a mass of gratitude for a life.93

The Catholic theological discourse is concretised in the two biblical readings (from Isaiah and Mark) that Gutiérrez had chosen and in his exegesis of them, along with his stress on the example of Jesus as a servant. By this choice, he sustained both the liberal and the radical political discourse with the Catholic theological discourse.

I consider the passage above to be the central part of the homily. It is here we meet Gutiérrez as pastor not least in relation to the Huilca family. We can see how the pastoral theological discourse synthesises the other three discourses. The liberal political discourse focuses Huilca’s rejection of Sendero’s actions; the radical centres on rejection of the unjust conditions of the poor; and the Catholic thematically frames gratitude for life.

In this homily we meet Gutiérrez as the pastor, who directs himself to Huilca’s family, his friends, political allies and ultimately to the Peruvian nation. Of the four elements in his pastoral discourse, Gutiérrez’ stress is on comfort and encouragement for the Huilca family; both teaching and admonition are present, but more implicit. It is natural for the pastor to meet the family in their grief, even if one year had passed since the assassination. Gutiérrez encourages them to keep Huilca present in their hearts and be grateful for what he did both as a husband and father, as well as a union leader. As consolation Gutiérrez stresses that Huilca did not die in vain. Instead his death will be converted into a force that inspires people to counteract those forces that wanted to see Huilca dead. The homily invited people to remember Huilca’s life and his testimony.

93 “Pedro Huilca no tuvo temor de enfrentar a estos poderosos provenientes de dos esquinas, rechazó un terrorismo cruel e inhumano como rechazó también las condiciones que se hacían y que se hacen todavía a este pueblo; por eso es que esta tarde aunque la congoja, sobre todo de los familiares, esté presente en sus corazones casi me permitiría pedir el favor a sus familiares de decirles que más que una misa de difuntos [...] me gustaría llamar a esta misa una misa de agradecimiento por una vida.” Gutiérrez 1993d.
3.2.2 The dead are not strangers (January 1994)

**Introduction**

The symbolic significance of the Cantuta case can hardly be overemphasised. It became a symbol for the violations of human rights during Fujimori’s government and finally one of the charges that Fujimori had to respond to in the judicial process against him that sentenced him to 25 years in prison.

As was related in Chapter 1, nine students and their teacher from the University of Education in Cantuta disappeared the day after attacks by *Sendero* on 16 and 17 July, 1992. A year after their disappearances the charred remains of human bodies, supposedly of those who had disappeared, were found buried in small holes in a place outside Lima. In November 1993 after a tip from an opposition group within the army what was supposed to be the crime scene and the place where the bodies first were buried was discovered. Gutiérrez presided over a celebration a few days later where he blessed the place with holy water and said the following words expressing what many felt in that moment: “Now we are here, where their remains have been found. And precisely here we have wanted to hold this intercession. It is not a cemetery because they did not die a natural death. It is terrible to be obliged to come to such a place, a place where they were not buried but hidden.” Gutiérrez declared that this should be viewed as a sacred place.

In the memorial service on 18 January, 1994 Gutiérrez preached on what can be said to be his motto at that time, “The dead are not strangers, they all belong to us”. His concern was to stress that every death, even the death of *senderistas*, is a tragedy.

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94 Possibly the Cantuta case can be seen to be the most symbolic and tense event during the first half of the 1990s. We saw in Chapter 1 above (p. 66-67 and 71-71) the controversy that it provoked and all the political manoeuvres that followed. And we noted that also in this case was presented to the Inter-American court of human rights, which declared the Peruvian state responsible for the assassinations.

95 The Spanish word for bury is *enterrar*, which literally means ‘put to the earth’. Gutiérrez played with these words in the essay *Desenterrar la verdad*, Gutiérrez 2003b, (see above, p. 139-140). The concealing of the remains of the bodies of the victims from Cantuta and the need to clarify what had happened came to be a symbol for all that had transpired during the years of political violence in Peru.

96 “Ahora estamos acá, donde sus restos fueron encontrados y hemos querido precisamente acá hacer este responso, no es un cementerio porque no han fallecido de una manera normal; es terrible tener que venir a un lugar asi, a un lugar en donde no fueron enterrados sino escondidos.” Quoted from Villarán 1994, p. 1.

97 Gutiérrez 1994a.

98 Spanish: *no hay muertos ajenos, todos los muertos son nuestros*. The homily was published with the title *No hay muertos ajenos*. I will use and refer to the text in Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 453-459, but will however indicate the alterations in the text when it was redacted in Gutiérrez 1996a.
Summary of the homily

Gutiérrez directed himself first of all to the relatives but then also to all Peruvians. His pastoral care was not just a private matter for the relatives; it involved all people living in Peru. The homily started with a reference to Matthew 2:18. Rachel who mourned for her children represents for Gutiérrez a whole nation that mourns. This grief and mourning had united those who took part in the service. Eighteen months after their death had not diminished the grief of the relatives of these unjust and horrific deaths. On the contrary, the wounds were still open.

Psalm 85 was also read in the service. According to Gutiérrez the psalm indicates that there will be no peace without justice; justice is marching ahead. In correspondence with this Gutiérrez expressed his wish for justice to lead the nation of Peru in the same way and that an authentic peace will mark the way forward. What people expressed in the service was not just legitimate grief but also a genuine desire for justice.

Gutiérrez reflected on the overall situation in Peru. All those who had died so far during the fourteen years of political violence, regardless if they were students, peasants, senderistas or members of the armed forces, were “all ours”. In the light of the gospel all are human beings, brothers and sisters; “the dead are not strangers”.

The victims of Cantuta had been kidnapped and assassinated on vague suspicion. It was not a question limited to these ten persons and their relatives. Similar events occurred in many other places in Peru where the authorities refused to assume their responsibility. What really annoyed Gutiérrez here was that what had happened was well documented. The remains of the victims, the place where they were assassinated and their belongings had all been found; still some people denied these facts. So if these occurrences were not recognised and sanctioned it would, according to Gutiérrez, be impossible to establish authentic justice and peace. It was not a question of revenge but an expression of a desire for justice. It was impossible “to

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99 “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.” The nearness to Christmas might be one reason for him to choose the cry of Rachel as a starting point for his homily; the mourning of the relatives is related to the mourning of Rachel. The celebration of Holy Innocents Day (28 December) indicates that for Gutiérrez the theme of martyrdom is also part of the celebration of Christmas. Focus in this homily is the deaths of the students and their teacher as well as their relatives and the biblical texts are chosen to enlighten this. In a reflection for the midnight service on Christmas day, Gutiérrez again refers to this verse, saying the following: “The loud wailing of Rachel weeping for her children continues to be heard today. It is the clamour of the mothers of the hundred children dying for every thousand born; it is the lament of the mothers of the thousand “disappeared” (a cruel current phenomenon in several countries of Latin America); it is the complaint of mothers seeing their children grow up in the midst of malnutrition and sickness.” Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 46 (p. 24).

100 The evidence was quite compelling. For example, the keys belonging to one of the victims had been found where they were assassinated; yet congress members of Fujimori’s party refused to acknowledge this.
build a nation upon cadavers, kidnapings, bodies that are torn apart and clandestine burials". Even the military had nothing but to win if these events would be cleared up.

The whole homily developed into a defence of the right to life of all human beings. When this right is threatened it is the obligation of the church to bolster its defence of this fundamental right. Gutiérrez rejected every kind of “unjust death”. He interpreted the defence of this right to life for all as the main concern for those who had come to this celebration, which did not mean that they supported the violence of Sendero.

What happened to the students and their teacher was said to be a symbol for what was going on in Peru. Therefore it was not only a concern for the relatives but for all Peruvians and the memorial service could not be just private.

Gutiérrez could not find any easy words of comfort for the relatives; words can easily be experienced as empty. The relatives had the right to ask for justice because this is a prerequisite for consolation; a consolation that with a reference to Isaiah also means liberation. The homily concluded with an invocation to prayer that people will not stop searching for truth and justice.

Analysis
Three concepts are crucial in this homily. The first is indicated in the title of the published homily, “the dead are not strangers”; the second focuses on peace and justice; and, the third deals about the relationship between consolation and liberation.

The strong emphasis on the theme that the dead are not strangers shows how far Gutiérrez is prepared to take the liberal political discourse. Implicitly it is a profound critique of the gradation of human value and upon claims that the lives of the senderistas are of lesser or no value. Gutiérrez argues it is impossible to advocate peace and harmony in society if some people are excluded. One can trace an influence from the Catholic theological discourse motivating this position.

There is a strong emphasis on the relationship between peace and justice throughout the whole homily; there is also a deep interdependency between the liberal and the radical political discourses which has been identified in some of Gutiérrez’ other texts. Justice is not only understood here in relation to Gutiérrez’ interpretation of the radical political discourse, but also from his interpretation of the liberal political discourse as he points to the impor-

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102 Gutiérrez does not give any reference here but does often refer to Isaiah 40-55, which is called the Book of Consolation – specifically chapters 41 and 43.
tance of finding out what took place and bringing those who committed these crimes to court in order for them to face justice.

By referring to the relationship between consolation and liberation, Gutiérrez points to the interdependence between the radical political discourse and the pastoral theological discourse. He implicitly conditions the pastoral discourse with the radical political discourse; without justice there will not be any real consolation. I will come back to this below.

Human rights and justice were not always viewed as being together and people often did not see that they were two sides of the same coin. So Gutiérrez tried to highlight this tension in the beginning of his homily:

What has happened during these last years in our country is very sad. Every time justice is claimed and human rights are defended, there is someone who tells us that we forget the rights of other people that we also have to respect and that it is necessary to have other aspects of justice in mind. And so we are caught in a terrible gambling of rights that are opposed to each other; sometimes they even attack each other, each one considering one’s own to be the most important if not the only one.103

The liberal political discourse in this passage talks about the importance to defend human rights. Respect for human rights is for many seen as one important element of sustaining harmony in a democratic country. The problem that Gutiérrez notices is that it is easy to oppose different rights against each other. There is an obvious risk of a fruitless tension between the liberal and the radical political discourses here that threatens to paralyse the work for human rights. Some people argue that civil and political rights are more important while others say that social and economic rights are more important. Gutiérrez opposes what he considers to be an artificial tension or opposition and calls it “a terrible gambling about rights”. He even considers this to be one factor that increases the violent situation in Peru.

Gutiérrez’ way of focusing on the right to life and the right to freedom is one way of handling this situation. For him it is not possible to understand what had happened without an analysis about poverty and the unjust structures within Peruvian society. One has to understand institutionalised violence as a breeding ground for the political violence in order to be able to respond to movements such as Sendero.

103 “Ocurre algo sumamente triste en este país en estos últimos años, cada vez que se reclama justicia, que se defiende los derechos humanos [originalmente: ‘que se reclama por derechos humanos’, Gutiérrez 1994a, p. 82], hay alguien que nos dice que olvidamos los derechos de otras personas que también deben ser respetados y que es necesario tener en cuenta otros aspectos de la justicia [originalmente: ‘hay alguien que nos dice que hay otros derechos que hay que respetar también y otros aspectos de la justicia a tener en cuenta’]. Entramos así en un terrible juego de reivindicaciones [originalmente: ‘derechos’] que se oponen y que por momentos se atacan [originalmente: ‘insultan’] mutuamente porque cada una se considera la más importante si no la única [originalmente: ‘porque se consideran los más importantes si no los únicos’].” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 454.
There is therefore need for both a liberal political and a radical political discourse. Justice should, according to Gutiérrez, be the guiding principle that secures human rights for all, which in his interpretation gives priority to the right to life for all and especially for the poor.

In the following passage we can see that the liberal political discourse also guides the radical political discourse in Gutiérrez’ interpretation:

To claim the right to life and to claim justice is a claim for all. It means to reject to support any unworthy act, wherever it comes from. A society does not have the moral authority to reject this bloodthirsty terrorist violence that we have experienced and still experience in the country if it is not capable of making people respond with basic human and ethical principles. Only a society with a moral prestige can be in condition to not only defeat terrorism militarily, but also combat it with efficiency. This presupposes also to look for other forms of justice, [such as to] eliminate the extreme poverty, which is a breeding ground for so much violence in our fatherland.104

To stress the interrelationship between human rights and justice is part of the radical political discourse. In this passage the liberal political discourse focuses on what Gutiérrez considers to be necessary attitudes from a society, which needs energy to confront a difficult situation such as the one in Peru. “Moral authority”, “ethical principles” and “moral prestige” belong to the liberal political discourse, but it presupposes elements from a radical political discourse: to look for other forms of justice and to eliminate extreme poverty.

In that specific moment this passage was politically extremely controversial. Gutiérrez is not only criticising the military focus in the government’s counterinsurgency strategy, he implicitly says that the actual government is immoral and lacks humane and ethical principles in its way of dealing with the situation.

With all this stress on liberal and radical political discourses one may wonder how Gutiérrez addresses the relatives of the victims. We can see the Catholic theological discourse present as an underlying perspective that stresses a deep respect for human life and represents a faithful interpretation of the biblical texts read in the service. But his way of addressing the relatives is mainly pastoral and we can find several expressions of the pastoral

theological discourse here. One example comes out of the need to establish what had happen and Gutiérrez continues:

It will not give the life back to those who so brutally were assassinated. That is why the cry of Rachel, which the text from the gospel in Matthew reminds us about, will stay within the heart of each of their relatives. But, simultaneously, and this is what the text in the gospel makes clear, we cannot remain just in grief. This outcry demands behaviour, in this case all over the country, an ethical attitude, which permits us to live as human beings.105

In this passage Gutiérrez recognises the relatives’ need to grieve. According to him they will and should always remember what had happened. This is stated in total disagreement with the authorities’ intention to make the relatives forget their grief in order to make it possible for both them and Peru as a nation to move forward. The pastor understands the need for people to mourn and handle the grief before they can move forward.

Even though these were consoling words, it is not the comfort element that is in focus here, rather the encouraging and implicitly the admonition element. The relatives cannot remain in grief. People cannot bear the pain forever. To obtain some kind of legal justice would certainly not restore the lives of those who were assassinated, but it would permit both the relatives and Peruvians in general to move forward. Legal justice and judicial processes are important ingredients in the liberal political discourse, which means that for Gutiérrez this discourse sustains the pastoral theological discourse.

An important prerequisite for this to happen is a willingness from the whole of Peruvian society, not least the authorities, to recognise the need for a new behaviour based on ethical principles that respects the right to a decent life for all. Truth about what had happened was important to move forward and leave behind what took place. This is what the gospel demands in order to make people being able to live as human beings. In this way the Catholic theological discourse becomes an important complement to the liberal political discourse.

Gutiérrez recognises the need to bring to trial those who had committed the assassinations of the students and their teacher and also the need for their punishment. This is not only part of the liberal political discourse; in this situation it must also be seen as part of the pastoral theological discourse. People need not only to know what had happened in order to move forward,

105 “Ciertamente eso no va a devolverle la vida a quienes fueron tan cruelmente asesinados y por eso ese grito de Raquel, que el texto del evangelio de Mateo recuerda, seguirá en el corazón de cada uno de sus familiares. Pero, al mismo tiempo, y eso es lo que el texto del Evangelio deja abierto, no podemos quedarnos únicamente en el dolor. Este clamor exige un comportamiento, en este caso, de todo el país, una actitud ética que nos permita vivir como seres humanos.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 457.
they also need to be sure that those responsible will be brought to trial and condemned for what they did.

There is comfort for the relatives in this. Their loved ones had not died in vain. The dimension of comfort is important in this homily as in any other homily in a memorial or funeral service. There is a need for consolation for those who are mourning for the lives that had been taken away from them. Gutiérrez refers to Isaiah where consolation is closely related to liberation and then continues:

> When we liberate ourselves from what impedes us to live with serenity, namely poverty, selfishness, injustice and mistreatment; when we liberate ourselves from every kind of injustice made from those in power; this is the moment in which we really are consoled and liberated. I would like to take this understanding of the word consolation to the relatives to whom many in our country owe a deep gratitude for their struggle and their persistence, for how hard this demand for justice has been and unfortunately will be in the time to come. By doing so, they have left a great example for all Peruvians.  

Liberation means two things for Gutiérrez in this context: firstly, it is liberation from what impedes people to live a decent life with dignity and, secondly, it is liberation from the injustice exercised by those in power. It is likely that Gutiérrez referred to both those who exercised political power and those who had the economic power. This echoes the three dimensions of the concept of integral liberation that Gutiérrez developed after Medellín and later was sustained by the bishops in the Puebla document. And these three dimensions relate to three of the discourses in Gutiérrez’ theology: the “political liberation” relates to the radical political discourse, the “human liberation” to the liberal political discourse and the “religious liberation” to the Catholic theological discourse.

We notice that the verb is written in its active form and in first person plural: *nos liberamos* (‘we liberate ourselves’). We notice once again that Gutiérrez is inclusive in the meaning that he purports by using the first person which includes himself as part of this process. His view of liberation presupposes an active participation of people; it is not something that is just handed over to people. Organised people become, as Gutiérrez often repeats, agents of their own destiny or subjects of their own liberation. This was the

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106 “Cuando nos liberamos de aquello que no nos permite vivir con serenidad; es decir, de la pobreza, del egoísmo, de la injusticia, del maltrato; cuando nos liberamos de toda forma de injusticia hecha desde el poder, en ese momento estamos realmente consolados y liberados. Me gustaría tomar de este modo la palabra consuelo hacia los familiares a quienes muchos en el país les debemos un hondo agradecimiento por su lucha, por su persistencia, por lo duro que ha sido y será todavía desgraciadamente en el tiempo que viene este reclamo de justicia. Al hacerlo, nos han dado un gran ejemplo a todos los peruanos.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 458.


consolation people should hope and pray for, according to Gutiérrez. In this sense the pastoral theological discourse is based on both the liberal and radical political discourses.

Gutiérrez’ wish was that the courageous example of many relatives of the victims of the political violence in Peru would inspire the rest of the Peruvian population to respond to the actual situation of political violence. They are used as a symbol and an example for those who take an active part in the struggle against all that threatens life. In this way the experience of the relatives contributes to the way Gutiérrez formulates the pastoral theological discourse for the Peruvian population in general.

From this experience Gutiérrez gives expression to an expectation that their example would contribute to the establishment of peace and justice in Peru:

> Hopefully we can respond to this painful and courageous testimony, to this claim for justice after these horrendous assassinations of their relatives and for all assassinations that we had in Peru during these years. And let us hope that thanks to this courage we may obtain a situation of peace, a peace that, as we said a moment ago, will not be solid, will not anchor neither will throw root in the land if that is not settled in justice.109

With these words from the pastoral theological discourse, Gutiérrez shows how interwoven the four discourses are as he takes the testimony of the relatives to also be part of the liberal political discourse about peace in Peru. This is a peace that is conditioned by justice, which means that the radical political discourse is also present. And finally the Catholic theological discourse is also present as Gutiérrez’ concept of peace is based on his interpretation of the Old Testament concept of *shalom*.110

For Gutiérrez theology can be seen as a language, a language that tries to say something about God.111 Gutiérrez talks about two different kinds of language: the language of contemplation and the language of prophecy. The language of contemplation recognises that “everything comes from the Father’s free and unmerited love” and the language of prophecy “denounces the situation (and its structural causes) of injustice and despoliation in which the poor of Latin America are living”.112 In the concluding passage of the homily below we can see how interwoven these two languages are. The

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109 “Ojalá podamos corresponder a ese doloroso y valiente testimonio, al reclamo de justicia por el horrendo asesinato de sus familiares y por todos los asesinatos que - desde diferentes anguloss - hemos tenido en estos años en el Perú. Y ojalá, gracias a ese coraje, podamos llegar a una situación de paz, a una paz que, como lo hemos recordado hace un momento, no será sólida, no anclará ni echará raíz en la tierra si es que no está afincada en la justicia.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 458.
110 See, for instance, Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 246-251 (p. 126-128) and Gutiérrez 1994b. I will develop this below, p. 199-200.
111 Gutiérrez often refers to this; for instance in Gutiérrez 1986a, 1994c and 1996c.
112 Gutiérrez 1986a, p. 81 (p. 56).
prayer that concluded the homily represents an example of the language of contemplation and much of its content corresponds to the language of prophecy.

We pray that the Lord who has invited us to this Eucharist will give this liberating consolation to the relatives and that he teaches us to a better understanding of our responsibilities and not to hide when we face situations like these. We pray that the Lord will give us the gift of his peace. When Jesus was among us, he was once asked about where he was living and Jesus answered: “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head”.113 Let us pray to the Father that he does not give us rest in the search for truth and justice but that he gives us his profound peace; that peace, which Rachel reclaimed.114

These concluding words that invoke prayer are above all part of the pastoral theological discourse; it is the pastor who directs himself to both the relatives and the Peruvian public in general. It is a prayer for the relatives that they will be consoled. It is also a prayer for the Peruvian population to have a better understanding of their responsibilities and not to hide when they face situations like these.

His words for the relatives contain words of comfort and encouragement, which they need in order to respond to their grief and move forward. His words for the public in general are more an admonition that they ought to respond to what is expected of them.

It is also a prayer for the gift of peace. Gutiérrez refers to Jesus’ words in Matthew 8 about the living conditions of the Son of Man. Here Gutiérrez is, as in so many other cases, playing with the words and makes unexpected use of biblical references. Just as the Son of Man did not have time for rest (he “has nowhere to lay his head”), so too committed Christians may not rest in the search for truth and justice. Implicitly this should be interpreted as a search that really would lead to real peace, which in the final analysis means as we have seen above, justice. In Gutiérrez’ vision of peace based on the concept of shalom, all four discourses interrelate. This peace was what the relatives, and in fact all Peruvians, asked for; the same kind of peace that Rachel once claimed.

113 Matthew 8:20b.
114 “Que el Señor que nos convoca en esta Eucaristía, dé ese consuelo liberador a los familiares y a todos nos ayude a comprender mejor nuestras responsabilidades, a no escondernos cuando hay que enfrentar situaciones como éstas. Que el Señor nos dé el don de su paz. Cuando Jesús estuvo en medio de nosotros en una ocasión le preguntaron por el lugar donde vivía y Jesús respondió diciendo: ‘El hijo del Hombre no tiene donde reposar su cabeza’, pidámosle al Padre que no nos dé reposo en la búsqueda de la verdad y la justicia, pero que sí nos dé su paz profunda. La paz por la que clamaba Raquel.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 459.
3.3 Liturgical year and socio-political context

From the early 1980s until July 1993, Gutiérrez presented a reflection or rather an outline for a homily on the texts for the present Sunday in the bulletin *Signos*. Being centred in the biblical texts, these outlines were situated with comments on the contemporary political moment. Some of these were also published, especially for Christmas and Easter, in *La República* and most of them were collected and supplemented with new outlines to complete all three lectionary cycles for the Sundays and holidays in the Roman liturgical year in *Compartir la Palabra*.115

Both Christmas and Easter are essential Christian festivals for Gutiérrez and for him it would be unthinkable to celebrate them outside Peru. His celebration of the Eucharist every 25 December and every Easter night, together with the Catholic movement of professionals (MPC), are important moments in his role as pastor.116

From the midst of the 1980s to the early 1990s Gutiérrez published a reflection on Christmas almost every year in *La República*, reflections that later editorials of the newspaper refer to on Christmas. His collaboration on Easter has not been as frequent, but there are some examples of this. Some of these reflections were originally outlines for *Signos* (or on some occasions for *Páginas*), while some were specifically written for *La República*. To these can be added some interviews with Gutiérrez published in *La República* in relation to Christmas or Easter, which I will refer to.

In this section I will present one outline for Easter Sunday from 1991 published in *Signos* introduced with some notions on the significance of resurrection for Gutiérrez. This text is characteristic for how Gutiérrez works with the biblical texts in the liturgical year and how he relates them to the contemporary socio-political context.

On some occasions the interaction between the socio-political context and Gutiérrez’ theological reflection becomes especially clear and almost completely interwoven. I have chosen two specific reflections in relation to Christmas and Easter published in *La República* to exemplify this. They were written in two completely different political contexts. The first was written for Christmas when the critical year 1992 was coming to its end and the other for Easter 2001 after a politically disturbing year, 2000, which rather surprisingly finally brought an end to the Fujimori regime.

115 Gutiérrez 1995a. To make a comprehensive study of this collection would in itself be interesting, but this lies outside my primary concern for the dissertation; I will only make some references to a few of these texts in the following. One can notice that the original text in *Signos* many times has been redacted in the collection and thus lost some of its freshness relative to the specific moment.

116 As a family we could take part in these celebrations from 1989 to 1995 and on our visits to Peru for Christmas in 1999 and 2006.
The socio-political analysis is a presupposition for Gutiérrez’ reflection. It is less apparent in the text from 1992 where he writes in favour of democracy and criticises the political measures of the government, particularly the witch-hunt directed at the political opposition. In 2001 it was more open as democratic space in Peru had widened considerably. Still democratic achievements had to be defended in order to maintain what had been achieved. The political violence was far from being overcome in 1992, but in 2001 the violence from the 1980s and 1990s was not likely to reappear to the same extent.

Hope was one of the central themes for both Christmas and Easter; it was something to gain strength from in order to overcome the despair in 1992; in 2001 there were many reasons for hope due to the political development.

In a critical moment such as in 1992, Gutiérrez focused on comfort and encouragement. In a more favourable moment, such as in 2001, his focus was more on admonition. The positive signs in 2001 had not come out of nothing; it was the result of the efforts of many Peruvians to work for a more democratic society wherein many church-related people had also taken an active part. As this could easily be lost, there was a need for Gutiérrez to stress the responsibility of all to remain committed and to be vigilant in order that what had been achieved should not be lost.

3.3.1 To live with the indicative and the imperative (March 1991)

Introduction

In the interview in La República on Good Friday 20 April, 1984, Gutiérrez was asked whether Good Friday is more important than Easter Sunday, as the journalist asked if the death of Jesus was more important than his life. In his answer Gutiérrez tried to meet the straightforward question by saying that it is appropriate to ask such a question on Good Friday and continued:

The great Christian celebration is the Resurrection, Easter. The meaning of Easter is to take the step from death to life. Only a Good Friday that is illuminated by the Paschal light of the resurrection enters the framework of the evangelical message. To believe in Christ’s death and resurrection means to believe that life and not death gets the final word in history. And that is why all that symbolises death to our people – malnutrition, diseases, exploitation, repression, terrorism and any kind of selfishness – is not the definite and final result. All this should be overcome by the will of love and solidarity through God in our lives. Even though it is important that we day by day become

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117 Campos 1984a.
118 Gutiérrez plays with the words. The Spanish word for ‘step’ is paso, which Gutiérrez wants to relate to the Spanish word for Easter, Pascua, which is close to the Hebrew Pesach, to pass.
more aware about the elements of death present in the daily lives of the poor in our country, I think that we commit a serious mistake if we do not also see the aspects of life that exist in the same people.\(^{119}\)

Gutiérrez touched upon several themes that are frequent in his preaching on Easter through these years. He stressed two things here. Firstly, Good Friday must be seen in the light of resurrection; what seemed to end as a defeat on the cross was not the end. Gutiérrez writes in another reflection on Good Friday that although Jesus was “seemingly vanquished, John presents him as standing tall and victorious”.\(^{120}\) Secondly, Easter and resurrection must be seen and understood against all that symbolises death for people in contemporary Peru.

The elements of death are present in the lives of the poor. These are, according to Gutiérrez, facts that cannot be overlooked but must be analysed and taken into consideration. Here he depends on the radical political discourse. But the situation of death is not the end. Gutiérrez also stressed the need to be aware that there are elements of life in the daily existence of the poor. To recognise this is to see signs of resurrection. It is easy to see the presence of the forces of death in the Peruvian context, but not as evident to see the forces of life and resurrection present in the contemporary situation.

To believe in resurrection, which for Gutiérrez is to believe in the strength of the forces of life, makes it possible to confront the forces of death, relying upon the conviction that life and not death gets the final word in history. This expression constitutes the main perspective of Gutiérrez’ interpretation of the resurrection. Without doubt the violent socio-political context reinforced this and can be said to be a characteristic of his entire theological reflection as he frequently repeats the phrase in other contexts.\(^{121}\)

As a conclusion to his answer to the interviewer’s question, Gutiérrez described Holy week as an opportunity to reflect in the light of the Christian faith, highlighting three areas: “the powers of death”, “the presence of elements of life in the daily existence of the poor and marginalised” and, fi-
nally, a call to “our commitment as Christians” and an evaluation of whether this commitment corresponds with “Jesus’ message of life that nobody can escape from”. These elements are also important in the overall theological reflection of Gutiérrez.

Without escaping from the harsh reality or leaving the essence at the centre of the gospel, that is the resurrection, Gutiérrez can say something that creates hope in a difficult situation: life and not death gets the final word in history. This is part of the pastoral theological discourse with an emphasis on comfort and encouragement that responded to the great uncertainty in that moment.

Since resurrection, as any other theme in the Christian doctrine, must relate to what takes place in the immediate moment, it is not possible to preach about resurrection without referring to the socio-political context. In a time of mass graves, even the dead body of Jesus must be referred to as a *cadaver* just as any other dead body. Resurrection cannot be proclaimed without an urgent request for commitment to defend life, as expressed in the following passage that was written for the 32nd Sunday of the Ordinary Time:

> Faith and hope in the resurrection must be translated into a commitment to defend life. We know what this implies today in Peru where the powers of death (the different types of violence present among us) seem to torture the people, especially the poorest and the oppressed. Faith in resurrection does not take us out of history; on the contrary, it makes us incarnate ourselves in it with the conviction that its ultimate meaning is in life. […] Believing in the God of the living makes us reject the premature and unjust death inflicted upon so many of our contemporaries.

Defending life turns out to be the most important Christian responsibility in the specific context of political violence in Peru. Gutiérrez does not hide what is taking place: the situation is critical and must be described as such. That is why he uses drastic words. Contrary to what many might think, for Gutiérrez resurrection is closely related to real life; so in his opinion faith in resurrection does not alienate people from history.

To speak about the struggle between life and death is not figurative discourse; it is indeed literal. Gutiérrez’ consequent upholding of the forces of life with all its biblical references in a context marked by so much violence

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122 “las fuerzas de muerte”, “la presencia de elementos de vida en la existencia diaria de los pobres y marginados”, “compromiso como cristianos” and “al mensaje de vida, al que nadie escapa, de Jesús”. Gutiérrez in Campos 1984a.

123 From a sermon on Easter eve in the beginning of the 1990s. When I asked about it in the interview 23 April, 2003, Gutiérrez confirmed that he deliberately used this vocabulary, OK-A 10b.


125 For instance Deut. 30:15, 19c (“See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. […] Choose life so that you and your descendants may live”), John 10:10b: (“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”) and 1 Cor. 15:55 (“Where, O death is
and death made an encouraging impact on many Christian communities. To believe in the God of life means to reject what Gutiérrez calls, paraphrasing Las Casas, the premature and unjust death. For Gutiérrez resurrection is the core of the Christian faith and therefore a model for our behaviour. But celebration of Easter does not take place in a social and political vacuum.

The text that I will examine here was originally written for the bulletin Signos in March 1991. This was a moment when the political violence was increasing dramatically, the number of deaths in 1990 had reached similar levels to those in 1984 (according to human rights organisations almost 3,500 died as a consequence of the political violence). The political crisis was deepening. It was obvious that president Fujimori, without sufficient support in parliament or from the political parties, had opted to rely upon the military to support his government and his ambition to lead the country and to sustain the counterinsurgency response to Sendero Luminoso. The actions by Sendero increased and the civil population suffered in the crossfire between Sendero and the military.

Summary of the reflection

Gutiérrez starts with a rhetoric question that reflects the dramatic moment: “How can we celebrate the paschal joy with all the pain and in a tunnel that never seems to end?” This question is to situate the celebration of Easter in the specific moment. He then moves on to stress that the paschal vigil contains the core of Christian belief; one indication of this for Gutiérrez is that in Spanish the word *pascua* is not only used for Easter but for every Christian festival including Christmas and Pentecost.

Gutiérrez stresses that it was women who were the first to see the empty tomb; it was marginalised people who were the first to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared. Thus Gutiérrez concludes that “the proclamation of life starts with the very persons who are marked by death, marginalization and mistreatment.”

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your victory? Where, O death is your sting?”); just to mention some references frequently used by Gutiérrez. See below, Chapter 4, p. 202-206.

126 Gutiérrez 1995a, p 125 (p 86).

127 Gutiérrez 1991a. The reflection is based on readings from Acts 10:34a, 37-43, Col. 3:1-4 and John 20:1-9. It was later rewritten and published in Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 124-125 (p. 85-86). Even though the later version is faithful to the original, it has lost its freshness from the specific moment when it was written.

128 “Cómo celebrar la alegría pascual en medio de tanto dolor y dentro de un túnel que no parece terminar nunca?” I will comment below p. 177 the concept of the light in the tunnel in another of Gutiérrez’ texts.

129 When this reflection was republished a few years later in Gutiérrez 1995a, he omitted these lines and started with a more general question: “How are we to celebrate Easter joy (Spanish: *gozo*) with all the human suffering, especially of the poor and the have-nots, which seems to choke our shouts of joy (Spanish: *alegría*) in our throats?” Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 124 (p. 85).

The experience of resurrection started with the women’s and the disciples’ perceptions of the empty tomb. Gutiérrez speaks of the absence of the body of Jesus and uses terms that easily could be related to the absence of the victims of the political violence, both the dead and those who disappeared. From this absence a new presence is born, “the presence of the Lord who has overcome death and who gives us life”.

Gutiérrez hints that because of the experience of unjust death, Latin America probably has a lot to contribute to the general understanding of resurrection and overcoming unjust death. Concluding his reflection, Gutiérrez invites action. As people responded to Peter’s first preaching on resurrection in Acts 2 with the question “what should we do? (2:37), Gutiérrez invites his readers to raise the same question for themselves; to believe in resurrection means to give testimony to the resurrected Lord in deeds.

Analysis

In this specific moment, Gutiérrez says that the real challenge for the church is to speak of the paschal joy without alienating people and instead to try to relate this joy to the difficult situation that many people face as victims of violence that is both institutionalised and the result of terror and repression:

Believing in the resurrection means bearing witness to him who is “judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42). We will experience paschal joy only if, like the Christ of our faith, we are life-giving.

This passage comes towards the end of the reflection, but nevertheless constitutes a key of how Gutiérrez relates the biblical texts to the present situation. The paschal joy becomes for Gutiérrez both a vocation to solidarity with the poor and a motivation for their own efforts to defend their rights and strive for a better life. A church that does not reflect upon peoples’ daily suffering and premature death on Easter and does not relate this to the meaning of resurrection loses, according to Gutiérrez, all its credibility; preaching then becomes nothing more than empty rhetoric.

In a text like this it is not surprising that the Catholic theological discourse and, above all, the pastoral theological discourse are dominating. The reference to the liberal political discourse is implicit in the sense that the committed Christian must be “life-giving” and bearing a testimony that gives a contribution to uphold harmony and peace in Peruvian society.

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131 Gutiérrez has developed the theme of the empty tomb in other reflections, as for instance in Gutiérrez 1995a, p 120-121 (p. 79-81).
132 This is a motif that Gutiérrez used in his homily in the memorial service for Pedro Huilca, Gutiérrez 1993d, that I analysed above p. 150-155.
ing, which ends the text: “In the midst of difficulties and problems, many people seek to express their solidarity with the neediest who, in turn, organize themselves to defend their rights and alleviate their suffering. Many of them do this prompted by their faith, and the Easter joy gives vitality and meaning to their testimony.”

The radical political discourse is the foundation for the necessary socio-political analysis, which here is supposed to lead to expressions of “solidarity with the neediest”. According to the Catholic theological discourse in this passage, belief in the resurrection is related to Christ as “judge of the living and the dead”. From this position Gutiérrez constructs the pastoral theological discourse, which above all calls for action with a strong emphasis on an admonition that is based on the encouragement that Christians can get from “the Easter joy”. To be “life-giving”, to express solidarity and to give testimony are all attitudes that are valuable contributions from committed Christians in a situation where many people feel despair and uncertainty. What Gutiérrez wants to stress is that this is not only a strong commitment; it is “prompted” by the faith that gets its meaning from the Easter joy.

This wording reflects one of Gutiérrez’ basic elements in his theological reflection, namely that solidarity with the poor ultimately is not a moral or ethical option but is precisely “prompted”; it is, in his wording, theocentric. With this he wants to say that it is something that comes out of the Christian life. It is theocentric because this solidarity is how God acts; it was the way Jesus acted.

A homily on Easter can easily develop into empty words. By stating how this can be avoided, Gutiérrez develops what is the centre of his reflection as it is reflected in its title:

If so many texts and discourses on the resurrection sound hollow to us, it is because their authors have not experienced unjust death. This may be why in Latin America the resurrection is charged with energy and it reaches a new depth. This enables us to have a better understanding of Paul’s text. The indicative which recalls that we “have been raised with Christ” is followed by the imperative: “Seek the things that are above” (Col. 3:1). The resurrection is the core of our faith and, therefore, the great model of our behaviour.

Almost by definition, according to Gutiérrez, a homily on Easter must take into account premature and unjust death in order to grasp the dynamic power of resurrection in the gospel. This is fundamental for Gutiérrez. The death of

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136 Gutiérrez 2002b. Susana Villarán wrote in an article for La República in honour of Gutiérrez’ 80th birthday: “It is a Christocentric option: to love the poor because the Lord loves them in a preferential way.” (“Es una opción cristocéntrica: amar al pobre porque el Señor los ama de manera preferente.”) Villarán 2008.
137 Col. 3:1-4.
Jesus was not a natural death; it was a death that was imposed. The resurrection of Jesus was thus a resurrection of someone whose death had been premature and forced. That is why Gutiérrez can stress that resurrection is not only a victory over physical death, but above all a victory over everything that produces death: injustice and ultimately sin. And Gutiérrez hints that the suffering in Latin America and the experience of unjust death might enrich the understanding and celebration of resurrection and Easter in other parts of the universal church.

In this passage there is a direct link from the radical political discourse to the pastoral theological discourse. Without idealising injustice, Gutiérrez states that the experience of injustice is a prerequisite in order to preach on resurrection in all its dimensions. What is “indicative” in the text is part of the Catholic theological discourse, here related to the text in Colossians that the Christians “have been raised with Christ”; while the “imperative” clearly relates to the pastoral theological discourse, it is as the word indicates, a call for action. The biblical reference might surprise us (to “seek the things above”), but later in the text Gutiérrez explains what he means. The things above refer to what belongs to God. What relates to God is above all what is related to life, according to Gutiérrez. And from there he talks about action and giving testimony about him who is the “judge of the living and the dead”.

The reflection ends with a passage in which Gutiérrez clearly indicates what being “life-giving” implies in that specific moment:

This implies in these days in Peru not to be afraid of speaking from the Gospel about how the poor live, their hunger, their miserable salaries, their unemployment, evictions from their houses or huts and their unjust deaths that lie in the hands of terrorism and repression. This means that it is necessary to enter in their universe and from there pray and together with them go to the Father.

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139 In a reflection on Ascension, Gutiérrez comes back to this interpretation. When the disciples look up to the sky after Christ ascended the messengers of God corrects them (Acts 1:10-11) and in Gutiérrez’ interpretation implicitly tells them to look around them instead “to look toward the earth, history, the place where they must be witnesses of the risen Christ. We have to proclaim life in the midst of situations of longstanding and increasing injustice, of different types of violence trampling upon basic human rights.” Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 159 (p. 110).

140 “En el Perú de estos días ello implica no tener miedo a hablar desde el Evangelio sobre lo que viven los pobres, su hambre, sus miserables salarios, su falta de trabajo, los desalojos violentos que sufren, las muertes injustas que encuentran en manos del terrorismo y la represión. Supone entrar en su mundo y desde allí orar y dirigirnos juntos al Padre”. Gutiérrez 1991a. This passage was omitted when the reflection was published in Gutiérrez 1995a, which instead ends as already has been quoted: “In the midst of difficulties and problems, many people seek to express their solidarity with the neediest who, in turn, organize themselves to defend their rights and alleviate their suffering. Many of them do this prompted by their faith and the joy of Easter gives vitality and meaning to their testimony.” Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 125 (p. 86).
This passage is part of the pastoral theological discourse and has a specific notion of admonition. Here the link to the radical political discourse is not only implicit, it is crystal-clear. Commitment to the poor presupposes an analysis of the socio-political context, which means that the radical political discourse in this situation becomes a criterion for the pastoral theological discourse. The pastoral theological response, however, is also as this reflection shows, a result of faith. Easter joy must, not least in this difficult moment, be connected to the situation of the poor which is, according to Gutiérrez, aggravated by the actions of Sendero and the repressive counterinsurgency response by the authorities. The church should not hesitate to speak about the situation of the poor with the Gospel as an interpretative tool.

Gutiérrez’ contribution to the liberal political discourse gets in this reflection its elements from the radical political discourse and the pastoral theological discourse.

The final words indicate that commitment is not only a question of solidarity or speaking about the situation of the poor; it is from the suffering of the poor that the church is supposed to preach the gospel of resurrection. By using these expressions Gutiérrez makes the poor subjects of their own destiny. The readers are invited to be part of this initiative of the poor, an experience that Gutiérrez names as entering into their universe.\footnote{This echoes a passage in Gutiérrez 1983a, where Gutiérrez speaks about commitment to the poor as entering into their universe: “Commitment to the poor means entering, and in some cases remaining in, that universe with a much clearer awareness; it means being one of its inhabitants, looking upon it as a place of residence and not simply of work.” Gutiérrez 1983, p. 186 (p. 125).}

3.3.2 Glow-worms that give hope (December 1992)

Introduction

In Chapter 1 I sketched the dramatic year of 1992. There can hardly be any doubts that this was the most difficult year in the whole period I am dealing with. The first seven months were characterised by accelerating attacks from Sendero Luminoso and violent responses from the Peruvian authorities. The political violence gradually reduced after the capture of Sendero’s leader Abimael Guzmán in September 1992, but the political crisis was profound after the autogolpe of Fujimori in April the same year. The political crisis made it almost impossible for people to look forward or find a way out of their despair. In this situation Gutiérrez tried to give reason for hope in a desperate situation in a text at Christmas time that is guided by the pastoral theological discourse.
His reflection that was published in *La República* 24 December, 1992 was titled *Como Luciérnagas*.\(^{142}\) It is a good example of how Gutiérrez uses bibl-
ical reflections in critical moments.

**Summary of the reflection**

Would it be possible to celebrate Christmas with joy in the midst of political instability and political violence? This was the implicit question that Gutiér-
rez tried to answer in his reflection.

Gutiérrez referred to the well-known Christmas text of Isaiah 9 in his re-
fection: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (9:2). This was a massive experience for many in Peru so Gutiérrez wondered if the great light is more than just an illusion.

It was difficult for people to understand the chaotic situation with daily anguishing problems and violence that could emerge any time as well as lies from the authorities for obscure reasons. It was a situation that impeded peo-
ple from seeing things as they really were. Gutiérrez warned of conse-
quences that might be monstrous and irreversible, something that might lead to political apathy which would undermine the people’s capacity to respond; a situation that would undermine “the vital webs of the nation”.\(^{143}\)

Gutiérrez said that the Peruvian authorities had not been able to respond to this in a proper manner; human rights had not been fully respected.

In this situation Gutiérrez made a metaphor of the spark of a lighted match that like glow-worms lights up the darkness. Figuratively these are people who had given reason to hope about solidarity and courage through their example. They are often anonymous and many are women. Some of them had created organisations for survival like cooperative caterings, soup kitchens, and women’s clubs. They had never been on the front pages of the newspapers. Through these groups it was possible to detect people who searched for an alternative society. The existence of these people, carried by solidarity and a disinterested commitment for the country and its people, was one important reason to sense hope in the midst of despair and political darkness; their example inspired others.

Even in the deepest darkness a small spark lights up its environment. In the same way all these initiatives lift up people’s hope, and hope was what people in Peru needed in that moment. New possibilities might be created and for a moment people can see one another’s faces and feel less depressed.

\(^{142}\) Gutiérrez 1992d and in Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 427-430, which I will quote from. Some of these passages have been used in his outline in Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 47-49 (p. 25-26); this was a text that also was sent to the Church of Sweden as a Christmas greeting in 1994. The Spanish word *luciérnagas* means ‘glow-worm’ or ‘firefly’ (see the English translation of Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 25). The Latin American glow-worm (fam. Phengodidae) is a beetle whose larvae and females have bioluminescent organs. Glow-worms glow in the dark and like ter-
mites they figuratively undermine the structures that prevent people to hope for a better fu-
ture.

\(^{143}\) “los tejidos vitals de la nación”. Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 428.
and fearful, which can create opportunities to dialogue and collaborate, thereby breaking the lack of communication between Peruvians.

The reflection ended with an invitation to the readers to become part of this movement and establish it as prerequisite for the celebration of a true Christmas in Peru in that critical situation.

Analysis

Gutiérrez focuses on four areas in his reflection on the current situation in 1992; all of them belong to the liberal political discourse: 1) the political violence was, in spite of the capture of the leadership of Sendero Luminoso, far from coming to its end; 2) the political measures of the government, with a reference to the labour market policy as one alarming example; 3) the beginning of witch-hunt against the political opposition, particularly the political left, NGOs, and human rights organisations, that were all accused of supporting terrorism; and finally 4) people’s indifference; many people simply did not care about the situation or did not want to know what was happening.144

With this Gutiérrez develops and sharpens his political analysis in which poverty was stressed and described as the root cause of the problems. With his typical irony Gutiérrez literally states that these factors “have sharpened the capacity to shorten lives”; the harsh reality is sketched with a euphemism to underline the gravity in the situation.145 Gutiérrez starts with the liberal political discourse, but introduces almost immediately the radical political discourse:

To an old and deep rooted poverty, the worst and most persisted pandemic that afflicts the Peruvian people has been added factors that have sharpened the capacity to shorten lives. For several years, and particularly during the last two years, millions of Peruvians have been hurled out to abysmal forms of misery that were unknown to them and a bloodthirsty and unjustifiable terrorism has ruined lives with an unimaginable cruelty. This has created an intricate situation where the society has not always been able to respond with full respect for neither human rights nor politicians with necessary disinterestedness or a minimum respect for the truth.146

144 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 427.
145 In Gutiérrez 1995a, Gutiérrez is even more expressive in his interpretation of poverty when he clarifies the relation between poverty and injustice: “To speak of poverty is to describe how things are; to speak of injustice is to evaluate this state of affairs morally.” Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 48 (p. 25).
146 “A una vieja y arraigada pobreza, la peor y más persistente pandemia que azota al pueblo peruano, se han sumado factores que han afilado su capacidad de cercenar vidas. Desde hace años -en particular los dos últimos- millones de peruanos se han visto arrojados a abismales formas de miseria que les eran desconocidas y un sanguinario- e injustificable terrorism ha segado vidas con una crueldad inimaginable. Esto ha creado una intrincada situación en la que la sociedad no ha sabido responder siempre con pleno respeto por los derechos humanos, ni muchos politicos con el desinterés necesario o con el mínimo de respeto por la verdad.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 428.
The radical political discourse centres on poverty and unjust structures as root causes that are seen as pandemic. In itself this causes premature deaths among the Peruvian population. Gutiérrez points to two factors that have contributed to the worsening situation in recent years. The first factor is related to the radical political discourse as Gutiérrez refers specifically to the last two years, possibly thinking of the fuji-shock from August 1990¹⁴⁷ and the government’s neoliberal policy. The second factor is related to the liberal political discourse that puts Sendero’s activities in focus and implicitly the repressive counterinsurgency response.

These two factors create a situation in which consequences are judged from the liberal political discourse, where the society and Peruvian authorities are criticised. They had not been able to respond to the situation in a proper manner: human rights had not always been fully respected nor were the politicians guided by disinterest or minimum respect for the truth. These are understatements so typical of Gutiérrez which fully indicate his opinions regarding the policy of the Fujimori government. He is not explicitly accusing the government of violating human rights, benefiting from the turmoil or lying; it is up to his readers to read behind the lines.

It is against this background that he finds reason for hope from the Catholic theological discourse through his reading of the texts for Christmas. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Gutiérrez wants to remind his readers that there are forces within Peruvian society that try to do something about the situation. It was important to recognise these efforts and their potential power to transform the despair of the moment to something hopeful. The Catholic theological discourse becomes decisive in the pastoral theological discourse in this text.

By their commitment and dedication, they are small but contagious lights, which bring a ray of light in the thick of the night. The light is not at the end of the tunnel; it is in the tunnel itself, in the people who journey through it. Their role is to bring light in the tunnel and even more to bring down walls and ceiling so that it may cease to be an obligatory hemmed-in path and become a wide, open, luminous, and free avenue leading us “with justice and with righteousness” and preparing us to welcome the “prince of peace” (Is 9:6-7): Jesus from Nazareth.¹⁴⁸

Gutiérrez develops his reflection towards its crescendo in the last two paragraphs of which the one quoted above is the second to last. It is permeated

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter 1 above, p. 63.
¹⁴⁸ “Son las pequeñas, pero contagiosas, luces que alumbran con su entrega y generosidad una espesa noche. La luz no está al final del túnel, se halla en el mismo túnel, en las personas que transitán por él. A ellas les toca iluminarlo; más aún, hacer caer sus muros y su techo, para que deje de ser un encajonado y obligado camino y se convierta en una ancha, franca y luminosa avenida que nos conduzca a ‘la equidad y a la justicia’ y nos prepare a recibir al ‘príncipe de la paz’ (Is. 9:6-7): Jesús de Nazaret.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 429.
by the pastoral theological discourse, which here focuses on giving reasons for hope. Gutiérrez focuses on those people whose example will encourage others to resist moments of hopelessness and despair. Their example lights up a dense night.

People were at this moment desperately trying to look for the light at the end of the tunnel. And when they could not see it, despair was deep. People are encouraged to change perspectives: if the light at the end of the tunnel cannot be seen, try instead to see the lights within the tunnel itself; a light that could be exemplified with the various initiatives of those people he referred to. These people were called to give light in the tunnel, but not only that; with their example they were like termites undermining the whole system that kept people in despair, so that the tunnel could be cracked down and transformed to a wide, open and luminous avenue that both leads to justice and good order and prepares for a real encounter with Jesus, the prince of peace in Christmas. With these references to the text from Isaiah, Gutiérrez makes use of the Catholic theological discourse.

Gutiérrez tries to rescue the vindications the social movements had achieved in decades before. Through their experience an alternative way of interpreting the situation was presented, thus opening new possibilities. An experience that is built on the radical political discourse shows that this also had consequences for the liberal political discourse. The conquests of the grassroots movements were converted into political initiatives for democracy built on just structures in society.

The last paragraph is also part of the pastoral theological discourse that calls people to action. People are called to be part of this moment and this commitment is linked to the coming celebration of Christmas in this highly critical year 1992:

If the coming of the Lord sets our hearts on fire and if we respond by our commitment and solidarity to the gift of love, which God gives us in his Son, we will become the glow-worms that with the power of the Holy Spirit constitute “a vast multitude” (Ez. 37:10). This will transform the threatening darkness into a human and peaceful night. If we do this, it will be one more Christmas in which our hope will grow. If we withdraw out of selfishness or simply out of fear, it would have been one Christmas less in our lives.

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149 It is interesting to see how Gutiérrez developed this idea; only a few years before he was himself talking in terms of looking for the light at the end of the tunnel. See for instance the previous reflection above, p. 169 and below, Chapter 4, p. 214.

150 “Si la espera del Señor enciende nuestros corazones, si respondemos con nuestro compromiso y solidaridad al don del amor que Dios nos hace en su Hijo, nos convertiremos en luciérnagas que constituyéndose, con la fuerza del Espíritu, en “una muchedumbre inmensa” (Ez. 37,10) harán de las tinieblas amenazantes una noche humana y reposante. Si lo hacemos, esta habrá sido una Navidad más, en la que nuestra esperanza crecerá. Si nos replegamos por egoísmo o simplemente por miedo, esta será una Navidad menos en nuestras vidas.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 429-430.
In this passage that calls for action, Gutiérrez is once again inclusive in the sense that he includes himself, by using first person plural: “our hearts”, “we respond”, “our commitment” and “we will become glow-worms”. The celebration of Christmas is conditioned by “our commitment”. Hope is nothing that is just given to people; it is conquered by people’s own commitment.

To celebrate Christmas in Peru in this moment presupposes, according to Gutiérrez, solidarity and commitment. His conviction was that this would lead to a transformation of the darkness that was so heavily present. This was the option that Gutiérrez set up: if people responded in this way Christmas would be a celebration where Christian hope would increase. If not, celebrating Christmas did not really make any sense to Gutiérrez, particularly not in this crucial situation.

The pastoral theological discourse synthesises the other three discourses also in this text. It was an encouraging message to receive in that critical moment. It focused the readiness of its readers to see and identify these often small lights in the tunnel and see them as signs and witnesses of the great light that Isaiah had talked about.

The focus of the pastoral theological discourse is on comfort and encouragement. People needed this in order to endure that specific moment. But there are also elements of admonition in the sense that people must come out of the indifference of often resulting resignation in order to be able to commit themselves to solidarity to overcome the situation.

3.3.3 Hope and vigilance (April 2001)

Introduction

The year 2000 was, as we saw in Chapter 1, a decisive year in Peru that finally put an end to the Fujimori regime. The transition government led by President Valentín Paniagua was installed in November and began to reconstruct the democratic rule and institutions of the state. For people with a democratic commitment, things were really improving. General elections had just been held on 8 April, 2001 and the country was waiting for the second round of the presidential election when Gutiérrez wrote his reflection Esperanza y Vigilancia, published in La República on Easter Sunday 15 April, 2001.151

Like the previous reflection, this piece is a reflection in which the theological reflection and the political analysis are intimately interwoven. Gutiérrez might appear to be harsher than normal, which could be seen to be unnecessary in a time when the political crisis seemed to have been overcome. I cannot interpret this other than that Gutiérrez found it necessary to stress his concern and his position in a time where it might be tempting to relax

151 Gutiérrez 2001a.
and think that as the political crisis was over there would be no need to con-
tinue the vigilance in political development; the title of the article is an indi-
cation of this.

There was still a great uncertainty in Peru, but people began to feel re-
lieved. The 1980s and 1990s had been disastrous for the Peruvian population
and with the fall of Fujimori the political crisis seemed to be over. But it was
impossible to know what would happen in the near future.

**Summary of the reflection**

Gutiérrez emphasises that the celebration of Holy week that year took place
after one of the most painful periods in Peru’s history. He starts his reflec-
tion with a theological interpretation of the political context that took Jesus
to the cross. Gutiérrez interprets this as the ultimate consequence of incarna-
tion, illustrated here by the extradition to the political power that would take
Jesus to his death on the cross and the abandonment of his friends. This indi-
cates for Gutiérrez that resurrection can never be isolated from Good Friday:
resurrection is consequently not a happy end that eliminates Good Friday.
This makes resurrection even more powerful as it is “the affirmation of a life
that no kind of death can extinguish”.152

From this understanding of the suffering of Jesus on the cross, a seed of
hope springs out in favour of life. Out of this spiritual interpretation of the
death and resurrection of Jesus, Gutiérrez makes a political analysis of what
had taken place in Peru. After the fall of Fujimori many people in Peru, in-
cluding Gutiérrez, saw a possible return to democracy. But he stresses that it
is essential to analyse what had happened and why. It is not correct to think
that what happened was only something in the past; Gutiérrez says that it
might happen again if things are not cleared up. This experience cannot but
be related to the celebration of the paschal mystery. Gutiérrez says that the
remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus is a source for hope and
relief in this difficult situation.

During the difficult years of violence, some people had shown both cour-
age and lucidity when they confronted the different forms of violence and
sometimes even gave their lives. Gutiérrez explains this commitment, dem-
onstrated by their deep dedication to protect life, as the connection to the
celebration of the paschal mystery. People committed to justice had given
signs of justice and fraternity and respect for human rights. Now, Gutiérrez
says, committed Christians have a responsibility in the construction of some-
thing new, a commitment that is a condition for the process. It is in this con-
text that Gutiérrez introduces vigilance as a Christian virtue.

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152 “[..] la afirmación de una vida, que ningún tipo de muerte puede extinguir”. Gutiérrez
2001a.
Analysis
Gutiérrez starts with the Catholic theological discourse reflecting on how the theme of incarnation relates to the paschal drama and the resurrection. Implicitly he lets the Catholic theological discourse interplay with both the liberal and the radical political discourses:

In the suffering and agonising body of the one that is hung on the cross there is a seed of hope and communion that calls us to life. But it does not forget that you cannot gain access to this without a step [Spanish: paso], a Passover. In many ways, we are in our personal and collective existence called to make a similar journey. But this will only be similar if we are inspired by the conviction that life is more powerful than death.153

There is nothing strange in this interpretation of the Catholic theological discourse, from which Gutiérrez formulates aspects of the pastoral theological discourse that are directed to committed Christians in the contemporary Peruvian context: Christians today are called to make a similar journey as the suffering Jesus. It does not necessarily mean that everyone has to become a martyr, but his or her commitment might very well result in martyrdom. Gutiérrez sets up a condition for this discipleship: one has to be led by the conviction that life is more powerful than death. This is part of a very high emphasis on the admonition element in our model that will be a guiding principle in this reflection. The political situation made Gutiérrez pay less attention to the comfort and encouragement elements in this reflection and to focus on admonition instead.

From this theological reflection, Gutiérrez comes to his political analysis of the actual situation. The theological reflection in this situation also becomes a contribution to the political analysis, which is basically founded on a general liberal political discourse from which Gutiérrez makes an assessment of what had happened in recent years before the present situation. His analysis of the political situation is fundamental for how he formulates the liberal political discourse:

On this occasion we have reached a terrible combination of merciless terrorist violence which was responded to [by the Peruvian authorities] with similar methods; systematic and cunning lies; destruction of democratic institutions and a cynical and planned corruption; and finally contempt for human life from those who after hard pressure returned to their families the remains of

153 “En el cuerpo sufriendo y agonizando de aquel que está colgado en la cruz, hay una semilla de esperanza y de comunión que nos convoca a la vida, pero que no olvida, que no se accede a ella sino a través de un paso, de una Pascua. De muchas maneras, en nuestra existencia personal y colectiva estamos llamados a hacer un recorrido semejante; pero sólo será semejante si nos anima la convicción de que la vida es más fuerte que la muerte.” Gutiérrez 2001a.
the cadavers of the students from Cantuta in boxes from the company *Gloria*\textsuperscript{154} \textsuperscript{155}

According to Gutiérrez, the political crisis in Peru that was just about to be overcome in that moment was the result of the combination of five factors: the terrorist and repressive violence, the systematic lies in society, the destruction of democratic institutions, the growing corruption and the contempt for life. The first four factors are part of the liberal political discourse, whilst the fifth can also be traced to the Catholic theological discourse. The gravity of these factors had, according to Gutiérrez, been a serious threat against the liberal political discourse. Now, after the fall of Fujimori and a possible return to democratic structures, nobody could possibly call this analysis into question. One reason for the wording in this reflection was to make the readers aware of their responsibility to secure a future democratic development and reduce the risk that the tragedy would be repeated, which means that it also is related to the pastoral theological discourse.

The profound political crisis in combination with the situation of poverty had, in Gutiérrez' own words, put Peruvian society “on the border of the abyss as a nation”\textsuperscript{156} For Gutiérrez it is not just a question of political crisis but also, and perhaps above all, a question of essential values. For him the very first of these was of a profound respect for human life. In his view this must be the platform for the Truth Commission that was being advocated from so many sectors in Peruvian society and the transition government that was about to be installed a few months later.

Gutiérrez develops the liberal political discourse further. Even if things had changed for the better, it is necessary to reflect upon the mechanisms that caused the political crisis. It is not possible to pretend that it was only something in the past. It is absolutely necessary to deal with how it had happened.

If we could refer to this period as only something in the past, even if it was horrible, we could sense a relief that in spite of it all we might permit ourselves to talk with certain tranquillity and distance. Unfortunately this cup must be drunk to its ultimate consequences, is it not so? This does not simply belong to an earlier phase. From this arise some questions: To which stage has the destruction of the fundaments of social cohabitation in our society really reached? How serious is the fracture of credibility between Peruvians?

\textsuperscript{154} The Peruvian company *Gloria* produces mainly dairy products: these boxes with the remains of the victims from Cantuta had contained tins of condensed or evaporated milk.

\textsuperscript{155} “Pero en esta ocasión habíamos llegado a una terrible combinación de violencia terrorista despiadada, a la que se respondía con métodos similares; de mentira sistemática y artera; de destrucción de las instituciones democráticas y de cínica y programada corrupción; del desprecio por la vida humana de quienes, después de una gran presión, devolvían a sus familiares los restos de los cadáveres de los estudiantes de La Cantuta en cajas de leche *Gloria*.” Gutiérrez 2001a.

\textsuperscript{156} “[...] al borde del abismo como nación.” Gutiérrez 2001a.
Can we again begin to place confidence in each other or do we live in a country that is ruled by the attitude of “save oneself he who can”?

The liberal political discourse is strong in this passage. It constitutes an extremely critical assessment not least of the Fujimori governments. It would be a temptation, according to Gutiérrez, to only feel relief after the difficult past and believe that everything had been settled. On the contrary, it is now that it starts. To stress the gravity of the situation Gutiérrez makes a reference to one of the key texts of Holy Week: “this cup must be drunk to its ultimate consequences”. This means that he sustains his view with the Catholic theological discourse.

Out of the liberal political discourse, Gutiérrez formulates these sharp rhetorical questions about the possibilities to create, not only to reconstruct, basic democratic principles and foundations for “social cohabitation” in society, but also trust and mutual confidence between all sectors in Peruvian society; implicitly he asked if the possibility to create a sense of being part of the same nation would be valid for all Peruvians.

Undoubtedly this passage has the form of being part of the liberal political discourse, but the formulated questions imply that it is also part of the pastoral theological discourse. It is an address to committed Christians and Peruvians in general to reflect upon the actual situation and their own responsibility in constructing a democratic society in solidarity with the poor.

Based on the liberal political discourse, Gutiérrez formulates the following statement that evidently not only is a part of the liberal political discourse, but also constitutes part of the pastoral theological discourse since it both admonishes and encourages his readers to commit themselves to taking responsibility in the process of reconstructing democracy and trust in society:

Let us not be won by scepticism in response to the need for personal changes and the possibility to construct a just and human society in which all will have a decent room; the need to learn to be alert so that moments like those we have gone through will not be repeated; the need to be conscious of what the responsibility of our own carelessness and blameworthy withdrawal have been able to give us in these events. These are today indispensable conditions for us.

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157 “Si pudiéramos referirnos a ese periodo sólo en el pasado, con ser horrible, experimentaríamos un alivio que, pese a todo, nos permitiría hablar de él con cierta tranquilidad y distancia. Desgraciadamente, hay que beber ese cálcis hasta el fondo, no es así; no pertenece a una etapa anterior, no del todo, por lo menos. Algunas preguntas nos asaltan: ¿hasta dónde ha llegado la destrucción de las bases mismas de la convivencia social de nuestra sociedad? ¿Qué gravedad tiene la fractura de la credibilidad entre peruanos? ¿Podremos volver a confiar los unos a los otros, o viviremos en un país regido por el ‘salvese quien pueda?’” Gutiérrez 2001a.

158 “No dejarnos ganar por el escepticismo frente a la necesidad de cambios personales y a la posibilidad de construir una sociedad justa y humana, en la que todos tengan un lugar digno,
In this passage one can see how the different discourses in Gutiérrez’ reflections interact. The Catholic theological, the liberal and the radical political discourses one by one give essential contributions to the analysis of the current political situation and together they form a synthesis that is the pastoral theological discourse. People are called to action, to take part in the reconstruction of society; Christians do it, as Gutiérrez says in other contexts, “prompted” by their faith.

In this part of the pastoral theological discourse Gutiérrez admonishes and encourages his readers to avoid being trapped by a scepticism that would be so logical after all that Peru had gone through during the 1980s and 1990s, when positive signs were now finally able to be seen. People would feel the sense of being able to breathe again and hope for a more democratic development in the country. In this context a small reference is made to the radical political discourse as Gutiérrez stresses the need for a just society where all human beings should have “a decent room”.

In the liberal political discourse Gutiérrez warns of the fact that things might repeat themselves and therefore urges people to be alert and learn from the painful past. Being alert and learn from the past are indispensable conditions for something new to take place in Peru.

According to Gutiérrez, history will continue to be ambiguous. In spite of all that happened, he says, people committed to justice had given signs of justice and fraternity (the radical political discourse) and respect for human rights (the liberal political discourse). In this context, vigilance is introduced as a Christian virtue and here Gutiérrez makes use of the pastoral theological discourse:

In order for these [justice and fraternity] to be found, we have to be vigilant. In the Bible vigilance is a component of hope; the watchman is the one that sounds the horizon. When we renew our hope in the paschal mystery, we simultaneously renew our capacity to be attentive to all that harms human beings who are, for the believer, images of God that Jesus gave his life for.\(^{159}\)

In the passage that concludes the reflection, Gutiérrez starts in the Catholic theological discourse with reference to one of the aspects of the celebration of Easter: to renew the meaning of being baptised. People renew their reason for hope in the celebration of the Eucharist in the midnight mass. Immedi-

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159 “Para que ellos se hallen presentes habrá que estar vigilantes; en la Biblia la vigilancia es un componente de la esperanza, el que vigía es el que ausculata el horizonte. Al renovar nuestra esperanza en el misterio pascual, renovemos igualmente la capacidad de estar atentos a todo lo que vulnere a los seres humanos, imágenes de Dios para un creyente, por quienes Jesús entregó su vida.” Gutiérrez 2001a.
ately this is transferred into the pastoral theological discourse that has a sin-
gular focus on comfort and encouragement, which is the basis for the other
focus: action. This is the admonition; people are called to be vigilant. This is
Gutiérrez’ way of saying that nothing in the political development in Peru
can be taken for granted; people have to monitor and be vigilant so that the
authorities fulfil the good intentions to create something new. In this way,
the pastoral theological discourse becomes a contribution to a new liberal
political discourse as Christians are invited to use their capability in recon-
structing of society and restoring people as images of God.

Gutiérrez describes vigilance as a Christian virtue that is linked to hope.
In correspondence with this, to renew hope and willingness to live as Chris-
tians in the celebration of the holy mass of Easter is also a renewal of the
capacity to be attentive to all that might harm the human being. It is impos-
sible for Gutiérrez to separate Christian faith in the resurrected Christ from
the commitment of Christians to be responsible for hope and vigilance in
society. The capacity to be attentive is an ability that needs to be developed.
Its guiding principle is not to harm other human beings; an attitude that for
Gutiérrez is based on the fact that every human being is created in the image
of God. In Easter time it is necessary to remember that Jesus gave his life for
all people.

To celebrate Easter, the great festival of resurrection, in this context was
for Gutiérrez a moment of respite; a time to rest in a situation that could be
chaotic in order to reflect upon what was going on and, as committed Chris-
tians, to be attentive to what such a commitment would demand. It was a
moment to reflect on the gift of life in the midst of despair; it is life, not
death that will get the final word in history.

3.4 A theology of hope as a pastoral response

In this chapter we have met Gutiérrez as pastor where, through the pastoral
theological discourse, he speaks to the Peruvian population in critical mo-
ments during the two last decades of the 20th century. This discourse turns
out to be a synthesis of a Catholic theological, a liberal and a radical political
discourse that Gutiérrez uses to formulate his message. One fundamental
question that the pastoral theological discourse tries to respond to is how it is
possible as committed Peruvian Christians to speak of joy and the love of the
God of life in the midst of a deep crisis.

In order to formulate the pastoral theological discourse Gutiérrez needs
the two political discourses to describe the contemporary situation. This
situation is described in terms of a deep political crisis with distrust between
Peruvians in general and between the population and the authorities in par-
ticular. The political violence aggravated the situation, according to Gutiér-
rez. The radical political discourse is needed to explain the root causes be-
hind the crisis, where poverty and unjust structures in society are called institutionalised violence which Gutiérrez identifies as the breeding ground for the political violence. The liberal political discourse points to possible solutions and offers non-violent methods to reach a political solution. The two political discourses correspond to the first step in the see – judge – act model. Together these two discourses give an indication of what takes place in society and why. The Catholic theological discourse presents doctrinal criteria according to which the present situation can be judged.

The pastoral theological discourse, finally, intends to respond to the readers’ need for pastoral orientation both with comfort and encouragement on the one hand, and teaching and an invocation to admonition that calls for action on the other. The latter corresponds without doubt to the third step in the model.

In this concluding section of Chapter 3, I will focus on the dimension of hope in the pastoral theological discourse in Gutiérrez’ writings. The title of the last text examined here, Esperanza y Vigilancia, can summarise this discourse in the portions where Gutiérrez approaches the situation in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s. To 1) give reasons for hope in a difficult situation and 2) encourage people to be vigilant and willing to act as committed Christians are two of the driving forces in his writing.

We have seen in the texts examined in this chapter that to raise hope in an extremely difficult situation was one of the most important tasks of Gutiérrez as pastor and, therefore, one of the essential ingredients in the pastoral theological discourse during these years. Therefore, it is not surprising that the word ‘hope’ (Spanish: esperanza) is one of the most frequently used words in his theological vocabulary, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. The verb in Spanish (esperar) means to hope, to wait and to expect and this multiple meaning is something that Gutiérrez uses in order to deepen his reflection.

For Gutiérrez theology can be seen as a hermeneutic of hope. In an interview Gutiérrez explains what theology as a hermeneutic of hope means: “to proclaim hope today requires historic lucidity, firmness in the commitment and courage in front of the difficulties.” In another context he puts it like this: “to give reason for hope is an essential part of the Christian testimony. Theology is put into this field; theology is always an interpretation of the motives we have to hope.”

It is a hope that is not an “easy” hope, but a hope which despite being fragile “is capable to sprout roots in the world of social insignificance, in the world of the poor, and get excited (literally ‘to catch fire’) even in the midst

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160 Gutiérrez 2006b, p. 16 and 21.
of the difficult situations and thus keep going, alive and creative”.\textsuperscript{163} Yet to hope is not the same as just to wait for something to happen, “it should direct us to actively forge reasons for hope”.\textsuperscript{164}

This reflects how Gutiérrez reads the German philosopher Ernst Bloch (1885-1977) in his main work, \textit{Das Prinzip Hoffnung}.\textsuperscript{165} Bloch is the most quoted Marxist writer in \textit{Teología de la Liberación}\textsuperscript{166} and his influence on Gutiérrez, especially when he develops his view on hope, is considerate.\textsuperscript{167} “For Bloch man is he who hopes for and dreams of the future; but it is an active hope which subverts the existing order.”\textsuperscript{168} According to Curt Cadorette, by using Bloch’s thinking Gutiérrez overcame the dichotomy between the social and personal characteristics of hope. Even though hope is something that exists within the human being and thus is unable to be reached, hope has the capacity to influence the structures in society. This insight, continues Cadorette, allows Gutiérrez to avoid both “the vulgar materialism of certain Marxists” and “the idealism of certain Christian theologians who refuse to take society seriously”\textsuperscript{169}.

Gutiérrez identifies two affections in Bloch’s thinking, those relating to satiety (envy and avarice)\textsuperscript{170} and those relating to expectation, one of which is hope (anguish and fear are the other two). Gutiérrez concludes that those affections relating to expectation anticipate the future of which “hope is the most important as well as the most positive and most liberating”. Quoting Bloch in \textit{Das Prinzip Hoffnung} Gutiérrez says: hope is “the most human of all emotions and only men can experience it. It is related to the broadest and most luminous horizon.”\textsuperscript{171}

Gutiérrez views hope as “a ‘daydream’\textsuperscript{172} projected into the future” and sees hope as something that “assumes a concrete utopic function, mobilizing

\textsuperscript{163} “[...] es capaz de echar raíces en el mundo de la insignificancia social, en el mundo pobre; y encenderse, aun en medio de situaciones difíciles, y de mantenerse viva y creativa.” Gutiérrez 2006b, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{164} “[...] debe llevarnos al empeño de forjar activamente razones de esperanza”. Gutiérrez 2006b, p. 16.


\textsuperscript{166} Löwy 1996, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{167} See for instance Cadorette 1988, p. 98 and Manzanera 1978, p. 231. According to Cadorette, Bloch is the most important theorist for Gutiérrez’ interpretation of hope.

\textsuperscript{168} Gutiérrez 1988, p. 323 (p. 201).

\textsuperscript{169} Cadorette 1988, p. 99-100.

\textsuperscript{170} The English translation of Gutiérrez’ text made a mistake here as it has ‘society’ (Spanish: \textit{sociedad}), whilst the Spanish original has \textit{saciedad}, Gutiérrez 1988, p. 324 (p. 201).

\textsuperscript{171} From \textit{Das Prinzip Hoffnung}, p. 82, quoted in Gutiérrez 1988, p. 324 (p. 201).

\textsuperscript{172} This is an expression that Gutiérrez borrows from Bloch. “Bloch argues that the daydream is not a recollection of the past but an anticipation of the future. Such anticipation reveals not the unconscious, or even present consciousness but, rather, what Bloch calls the ‘not-yet’ conscious. The ‘non-yet’ conscious is directed at what has ‘not-yet’ become, at was is dawning or coming to be, at what Bloch calls the ‘Novum’; it is the mode of consciousness associated with youth, creativity, the production of the new, and revolution.” Roderick 1987.
human action in history”. And therefore, he continues, hope “emerges as the key to human existence oriented towards the future, because it transforms the present”.

So when Gutiérrez is about to address Peruvian society as pastor he has a theoretical platform of the concept of hope as something that is both comforting and transformative. And this concept of hope has in his opinion something to say to a people in anguish.

The significance of the time of Advent as a preparation for the celebration of Christmas becomes a useful metaphor for Gutiérrez: “Advent is a time of vigilance as we wait [esperamos] for God’s coming in our history”, which means “a time for strengthening hope” [esperanza]. This hope is, for Gutiérrez, one of the most important themes of Advent, a hope that is a fundamental attitude in order to receive Jesus at Christmas.

Gutiérrez neither neglects nor reduces the daily problems of the people, but he reinforces that they are possible to overcome. By this he stresses the initiative of every person; people cannot just wait for somebody else to intervene in order to improve their situation.

To Gutiérrez Christian hope can never be an illusion or escapism, as it is based on a continuous vigilance for what takes place and is linked to the message of the gospel. Hope starts in reality, what takes place. And from this reality hope intends “to construct something better and different based on justice, peace and love”. Gutiérrez tries to find a sign of hope even in the most difficult situation. In a situation marked by poverty and premature death, Christian hope is for him a force that can contribute to constructing something better that is based on justice, peace and love: “if this situation is a source of preoccupation and anxiety, I would like to say that it is simultaneously a source for a profound hope. This hope is not an illusion since I am convinced of the enormous capacities and possibilities of the poor in our country. It is this hope, solidly sustained, that nourishes my life.”

Jürgen Moltmann (1926-) and Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-) are two European theologians that also have influenced Gutiérrez’ reflection on theology as a theology of hope. They can both be said to have deepened Bloch’s
philosophy of hope. Gutiérrez recognises that Moltmann’s theology of hope is also a theology of resurrection, but finds a limitation in Moltmann’s reflection as Moltmann has a difficulty “finding a vocabulary both sufficiently rooted in man’s concrete historical experience, in his present oppression and exploitation, and yet abounding in potentialities – a vocabulary rooted in his possibilities of self-liberation”. We have seen above that the resurrection is also important for Gutiérrez in his reflection on hope. In a recent reflection on Easter, Gutiérrez asks the question if the death of Jesus on the cross was a sign of resignation. His answer is a forceful no. It is something completely “different and demanding”, it is “a painful but convinced and splendid acceptance of the cost that is implied in the mission to announce the reign of God, a reign characterised by life, love and justice”. This was why Jesus had come. Gutiérrez stresses the readiness of Jesus to accept this mission by quoting John 10:18 (“No one takes it [that is his life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.”). The death on the cross was, in Gutiérrez’ interpretation, not imposed on Jesus.

According to Gutiérrez, Jesus was consistent in his mission. This consistency created conflict and made him dangerous for those in power; a conflict that Jesus knew would take him to the cross. Jesus faced the suffering and the unjust and disgraceful death with open eyes; he knew that this would happen. For Gutiérrez this is a strong exhortation to Christians in our time to behave with the same consistency as Jesus in their solidarity with the poor.

Closely related to the constancy of Jesus is an attitude that Gutiérrez names terquedad, which he in a lecture in February 1990 called a Christian virtue. Terquedad can be seen as “the expression of a profound fidelity that does not bow to difficulties and obstacles”. It is also “the steadfastness of those who are convinced, those who know what they want, those who put their trust in the Lord and devote their lives to others”. Hope is, for Gutiérrez, intimately related to terquedad; it is hope that is its origin.

180 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 327 (p. 202)
181 “diferente y exigente”, “una aceptación dolorosa, pero convencida y lúcida, del costo implicado en la misión de anunciar el reinado de Dios, reinado de vida, amor y justicia.”
182 Gutiérrez 2005b.
183 This word is normally translated ‘stubbornness’, but Gutiérrez gives it a far more positive connotation as he relates its meaning also to ‘firmness’, ‘endurance’ and ‘persistence’. I will use the Spanish word in italics in the following. A short passage in Gutiérrez 1983, Coherencia y terquedad, p. 158-160 (p. 104-106), gives us some clues as to what he means.
184 Gutiérrez in OK-A 2.
187 Gutiérrez 1983, p. 158. A search on la terquedad de la esperanza on Google gives a lot of interesting hits. Some of these are related to contemporary Latin American politics with a clear orientation to the political left, whilst a few relate to Latin American liberation theology.
The attitude of *terquedad* is important for Gutiérrez in any socio-political context, but specifically in the time of political crisis and violence in Peru around 1990. Linked to the signification of *terquedad* are attitudes such as loyalty and fidelity, which make it possible to maintain hope in a desperately difficult situation.\(^{188}\) The attitude of *terquedad* means, for Gutiérrez, “to know how to endure standing firm on foot, because we do not know what might happen”. The vision in Revelations of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21:1) is a guiding principle “that always has maintained hope within the [Christian] community”.\(^{189}\)

In another context Gutiérrez is even more explicit when he reflects on the interpretation of the final verses of 1 Cor. 15. People are invited to “flout death”\(^{190}\) and then he continues:

Paul invites the Corinthians and he also invites us “to be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord” (v 58). Steadfastness in our practice, even in difficult and disconcerting times, builds up that moral authority so characteristic of Jesus. It is also required today to encourage and sustain those who weaken and succumb in the face of the apparent power of death. As believers in Jesus Christ’s victory over death, “knowing that in the Lord our labor is not in vain” (v 58), we owe a testimony of steadfastness and hope to society as a whole and especially to the most forsaken.\(^{191}\)

Here it is obvious that the resurrection for Gutiérrez is not only a source for an overwhelming joy, but also a powerful force to confront the power of death. Paul’s strong words, “never admit defeat”, make Gutiérrez stress the need for firmness (or *terquedad*) as a basic Christian attitude or virtue in the service of life. This attitude is desperately needed in this context to encourage people. Therefore, for Gutiérrez, it is not so much a challenge as a command for the church to commit itself to giving a testimony of firmness and hope to the most defenceless; it is something that the followers of Jesus owe society. This way of formulating the task of being witnesses is a response to an expectation from society for action from the church. Gutiérrez takes this task seriously in his participation in public debate.

Gutiérrez has a sense of humour and irony that can be noted in his writings.\(^{192}\) I believe that his sense of humour and irony saved him from becoming

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The concept of *terquedad* is also related to the expression “the defiant hope” that can be found in several theologians, particularly Protestants.

\(^{188}\) This is a perspective that Gutiérrez developed in a retreat in Lima in January 2000 around the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. In the retreat he suggested that even a ninth Beatitude was implied: “Blessed are the tercos [adjective for *terquedad*], the kingdom of Heaven is theirs”.

\(^{189}\) “Saber agunatar a pie firme, qué pasará, no lo sabemos.” “Es el que siempre ha mantenido la esperanza en una comunidad.” Gutiérrez in OK-A 2.


\(^{192}\) Gutiérrez loves irony, but a “fine” irony and one of the reasons why biblical books like the book of Job and the gospel of John becomes so important for his theological reflection is precisely their use of irony; “the Johannine irony” is well known and documented among
ing cynical during the two decades of political violence in Peru. In the same lecture from February 1990, where Gutiérrez developed some ideas on the attitude of terquedad, he also touched upon irony as an instrument for enduring a difficult situation. He pointed to the fact that Jesus, especially in the gospel of John, in the midst of the controversies with the Jewish leaders made use of his sense of irony:

The Lord […] maintains a certain level of humour as the sense of humour permits us to take distance from the situation and also helps us not to take ourselves too seriously. So therefore we should not reduce the value of irony and think it is not a good reason for laughing; it is also a way of giving us more freedom in relation to what happens. […] We have to know how to maintain this distance […] [and for this] there is an attitude of irony, which I believe is an expression of freedom. In a way, by maintaining this humour we will be able to maintain the freedom, which makes it possible to better confront what happens in our surroundings.193

Gutiérrez concluded his homily for the victims of Cantuta with a prayer about having peace, a peace that is seen as a result of a search for justice. He connects this striving for justice with hope that can be traced to the resurrection. This hope is what gives people reason to live, but is also a task:

The peace which the risen Lord brings us also entails a task, a mission inspired by “a living hope” (1 Pet. 1:3), the responsibility to communicate and to share that hope. When hope dies in a person or a people, only darkness and sadness are left. The resurrection can only be proclaimed in joy, a joy which forgets neither the presence of afflictions and trials (1 Pet. 1:6) nor the signs of life which many followers of Jesus are giving.194

This is a passage that shows how closely interrelated hope and action are in Gutiérrez’ reflection. Hope gives reason to live, perhaps most importantly, in difficult situations. To give reason for hope is the main objective for Gutiérrez in the pastoral theological discourse in Gutiérrez’ writings. He sketches the socio-political context and relates it to the biblical message and the doctrine of the church through the other discourses for which the pastoral theological discourse is a synthesis.


193 “El Señor […] mantiene un cierto sentido de humor, porque el sentido de humor nos permite tomar distancias frente a la situación y además nos ayuda también a no tomarnos demasiado en serio. Y por lo tanto no desvaloricemos o no pensemos simplemente que es un buen motivo para reír, la ironía, sino que tiene un sentido de darnos mayor libertad frente a lo que sucede. […] Hay que saber mantener de alguna manera estas distancias […] hay una actitud irónica muy grande y creo que es una expresión de libertad. Es que de alguna manera mantiene humor, mantiene una cierta libertad, que la hará enfrentar mejor lo que pasa el alrededor nuestro.” Gutiérrez in OK-A 2.

194 Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 127 (p. 87-88).
Hope gets its nourishment from elements of comfort and encouragement in the pastoral theological discourse; elements that Gutiérrez in specific moments found necessary to emphasise.

But hope also implies, in line with Bloch, to be proactive; “it is an active hope which subverts the existing order”. The dimensions of teaching and admonition are aimed at a call for action for those who read and listen to Gutiérrez. This call can, with relation to three of his essays, in crucial moments be summarised as this: to speak out when others are silent while there still is time and to permit the action to be founded on a reflection that springs out of sentiments that are converted into a willingness to transform.

Ultimately, the foundation for Gutiérrez’ reflection comes from his conviction of the sanctity of life, which I will develop in the next chapter. From his faith in resurrection springs his conviction that it is life and not death that will get the final word in history. This is what motivates him as a pastor in the shadow of violence and what he intends to convey through comfort, teaching, admonition and encouragement in the pastoral theological discourse.
Chapter 4

“Choose life so that you and your descendants may live” – a reading of Gutiérrez’ theology as a theology of life

Introduction

In the previous chapter we met Gutiérrez as pastor in essays and theological reflections in specific and critical moments. Gutiérrez’ intention was to give reason for hope in critical moments. It is a hope that he founded on faith in resurrection, indicating that it is life not death that will have the final word in history. Given their specific characteristics as texts, born in specific critical moments, there is an emphasis on comfort and encouragement.

In this chapter I will sketch how Gutiérrez develops these perspectives in his books. He is less specific in his books, but still the books reflect the critical contemporary moments in Peru. The emphasis is slightly different; there is a greater degree of admonition and teaching in the books and this is possibly the impression a more international audience will formulate of Gutiérrez as his books have been translated into English and other languages.

My reading of Gutiérrez’ books for this dissertation is thus not a general reading but a reading that reflects the violent context of the 1980s and 1990s in Peru. This reading supplements the reading of the essays analysed in the previous chapter and presents what I characterise as a theology of life in which the poor’s right to a decent life is in focus. In order to get a more comprehensive picture of Gutiérrez’ theology of life, I have chosen also to refer to some other essays not addressed in the previous chapter.

If giving reason for hope was his primary concern in the essays and reflections analysed in the previous chapter, in his books he sustains this hope on the God of life and the holiness of life.¹ It is important for Gutiérrez to stress this because, according to him, premature and unjust death is so deeply present in the Latin American context. The respect for human life is

¹ Rieger makes a short analysis of Gutiérrez’ theology of life (5.4.2 The God of Life), but he does not relate it to the context of political violence in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s, Rieger 1994, p. 339-344.
based on a deep conviction about the sanctity of life. This conviction is contrasted to an instrumental view of human life, where its value was reduced not only by Sendero Luminoso, MRTA and the governmental counterinsurgency policy, but also within numerous sectors of Peruvian society.

The sanctity of life gets its theological foundation from the Catholic theological discourse. But for Gutiérrez the sanctity of life is not instrumental or an end in itself; he relates it to a life with human dignity. This means that for him the radical political discourse is essential for the interpretation of the God of life and the sanctity of life.

Gutiérrez’ theological reflection is formulated against this background of premature and unjust death. In the interview in La República from April 1984 already referred to, Gutiérrez made the following comment. Many years earlier he had read a comment in a biography that a certain person “died at the end of his days”. Gutiérrez reflected: “what then to me appeared to be an expression with a sense of humour today expresses a cruel reality: In our country people do not die at the end of their days, but at the beginning of their days”.

One can clearly trace Gutiérrez’ reading of Bartolomé de Las Casas here. According to Gutiérrez in his interpretation of Las Casas, the only expression that can describe what really took place in the Americas was destruction:

“Destruction” here means principally the premature, unjust death of the Indians and the depopulation of entire localities – in a word, the ruin of a people. But it also implies the annihilation of autochthonous cultures and the laying waste of the world of nature. The defense of life on these three levels – which, as it happens are interdependent – constitutes one of the great motivations of Bartolomé’s struggle.

In Gutiérrez’ interpretation this leads him to say that defending the lives of the Indians for Las Casas was the same as proclaiming the living God; to

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2 There is no reason to believe that Gutiérrez diverges from a traditional Catholic view on the sanctity of life, but when he writes about the right to life his concern is, as we will see, on the quality and dignity of people’s lives, especially the poor. His view coincides with the perspective in the UN declaration on human rights, where it says in the first article that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and in the third article that “everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”. Important for Gutiérrez are also the articles in the UN declaration that talk about social and economical rights further on in the declaration. Gutiérrez has publicly, on various occasions, pronounced himself against the death penalty but never on abortion or other issues that concern the so-called pro-life movement.

3 “Lo que me pareció una expresión de humor en ese entonces, expresa hoy para mi, una cruel realidad. En nuestro país, la gente no muere al final de sus días, sino al comienzo de sus días.” Gutiérrez in Campos 1984a.

4 Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 90-91 (p. 59); the title of one of Las Casas’ most famous book is precisely Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias from 1552, Las Casas 1987.

5 Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 91 (p. 59).
love Christ implies to support the liberation of the Indians and hinder their premature death.⁶

There can be no doubt what was at stake:

Las Casas has an in-depth, firsthand knowledge of something that will mark his life and lead him to definite options. That something is the untimely and unjust death of the dwellers of these lands. It sets him directly before a terrible dilemma, which shows him what is at stake in these regions. [...] Life and salvation, or death and perdition: this is what is at stake.⁷

This perspective reminds Gutiérrez of Deuteronomy 30:15-20: “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity” (v. 15). “Choose life so that you and your descendants may live” (v. 19b).⁸

In Gutiérrez’ view two perspectives can summarise the theology of Las Casas: the right to life and the right to freedom. The right to life is sketched against the background of the European conquest of the Americas and the situation of death, the consequence of conquest for the Indians being, with the words of Las Casas, a death “before their time”.⁹ The right to freedom corresponds to how deeply Las Casas respected the right of the indigenous population of the Americas to freely choose which religion they would like to practice; that religious freedom is their right.

Institutionalised violence – a hermeneutical tool to interpret the political violence

Gutiérrez’ understanding of life and his theology of life have to be understood against the background of violence in the history of Latin American and in the present. Gutiérrez’ theology of life refers to the situation of death and violence that still characterises the reality of the poor. To him it is impossible to speak about peace and life without referring to violence and death as part of the daily life of the poor. Therefore the Medellín document on Peace is fundamental for his interpretation.

To Gutiérrez the bishops’ notion on institutionalised violence in the Medellín document “is not merely a phrase mentioned in passing; the whole document is constructed around this focus”.¹⁰ Institutionalised violence becomes a hermeneutical tool for Gutiérrez both in his socio-political analysis and his theological reflection. Normally institutionalised violence is related to poverty: “Latin American reality is characterised by a poverty”, which

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⁶ Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 93 and 95.
⁸ Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 32 (p. 18).
⁹ Gutiérrez quotes Las Casas in Las Casas 1992b, p. 270: “[...] quitando las vidas antes de tiempo.”
“represents [...] a situation of institutionalised violence”. The unjust situation, according to Gutiérrez, is not a new phenomenon in Latin America. It has its roots in the European conquest of the 15th and 16th centuries: “Injustice and pillage are erected into an economic and social system, and they forge a legal apparatus for their justification. It is the inauguration of what the bishops at Medellín will call, centuries later, ‘institutionalised violence’ and Puebla ‘institutionalised injustice’.”

The four discourses used to analyse the essays and theological reflections can also be found in his books. To use institutionalised violence as a hermeneutical tool indicates that it is the radical political discourse that conditions the liberal political discourse and that it is also an important criterion for the Catholic theological discourse.

In the 1970s Gutiérrez did not make so many references in writing to the concept of institutionalised violence. The analysis of poverty in this context was something taken for granted. When the political violence in Peru broke out in 1980 things began to change. Violence, especially the revolutionary violence conducted by Sendero and later MRTA, was brought into the agenda of Gutiérrez and he found it necessary to relate their violence to injustice, poverty and institutionalised violence. However, he always stated that unjust structures can never justify violent means. In the introduction to the new edition of Teología de la Liberación, the “unacceptable violence of terrorism and repression” are added as factors to poverty and unjust structures, constituting institutionalised violence:

In the final analysis, poverty means death: lack of food and housing etc. [...] Poverty is a situation that destroys peoples, families and individuals; Medellín and Puebla called it ‘institutionalised violence’ (to which must be added the equally unacceptable violence of terrorism and repression).

What Gutiérrez thus suggests is that it is not possible to understand any kind of violence, not even that kind of lethal violence that Sendero provoked in Peru for two decades, if it is not related to the concept of institutionalised violence.

In April 1993, Gutiérrez was invited to give a lecture on human rights at Instituto Peruano de Educación en Derechos Humanos y la Paz (IPEDEHP). Gutiérrez tried in his intervention to make a summary of the political violence in Peru. He said that it would be a dangerous illusion to believe that violence in Peruvian society would end as a result of the capture

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13 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 17 (p. 11).
14 This lecture without title was never published but has been given to me via email. It took place about half a year after the capture of the leader of Sendero Luminoso, Abimael Guzmán in September 1992. However the content of the lecture indicates that it originally was written just a few days after the capture of Guzmán. OK-A 4.
of Abimael Guzmán and he pointed to some important experiences as indicative for the future. Even if the political violence had been cruel for many it had shown how important human life is, therefore life, according to Gutiérrez, is the first human right. The defence of life was a uniting force for many of those who worked for the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy. This was a struggle which was a protest against the violence that provoked “cruel, premature and unjust death”. Gutiérrez stressed this with words that he often used, for instance in his homily for the Cantuta victims: “the dead are not strangers; in our country they are all our compatriots and neighbours”.15 He also refused to grade different kinds of death. It is not possible to justify one death before another. It would be tragic, he said, if this “effort of creativity and courage to struggle for life” would disappear in a situation where the political violence is decreasing. And it would be alarming if people only reacted to immediate and urgent matters when “we don’t know how to bend our bow pointing at a permanent situation that continues: the violence represented by poverty”.16

This position was not common in Peru during the decades of political violence as the majority of the population was so alarmed and paralysed by the violent actions of Sendero, and MRTA and repressive violence of the counterinsurgency strategy of the military and paramilitary groups. The concept of institutionalised violence from Medellín gave Gutiérrez an intuitive key of interpretation for his theological understanding and reflection on the socio-political context, which was manifested through his consistent interpretation in his public interventions of what really happened in Peru. This can be noted in all his interventions from his first reference to the political violence in 198417 until the present.

The concept of institutionalised violence is behind most of what Gutiérrez writes about poverty and is his guideline when he reflects upon the right to life. Justice, peace and human rights are for him intimately connected; the radical political discourse conditions the liberal political discourse. For instance, as he said in his homily in the memorial service for the victims of Cantuta: “There will not be peace without real justice, that is respect for the most fundamental human rights and the first of these, which is the right to life.”18 According to Gutiérrez, peace can never be isolated from justice. Without justice, peace will just be a fiction. This perception of peace re-

16 “el esfuerzo de creatividad y de coraje para luchar por la vida” […] “no sepamos también tensar nuestro arco frente a una situación permanente que continúa: la violencia representada por la pobreza.” Gutiérrez in in OK-A 4.
17 Gutiérrez 1984b and c, see above, Chapter 3, p. 113-114.
18 “No habrá paz si no hay realmente justicia; es decir, el respeto más elemental por los derechos de las personas y, entre ellos, el primero de todos que es el derecho a la vida.” Gutiérrez 1994a (Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 454); see the analysis of the homily in the previous chapter, p. 156-164.
quires a respect for people and the recognition of their rights. Peace and justice are interrelated, they cannot be separated and justice cannot be reduced to peace or peace reduced to justice:

We believe in a form of peace, which before anything else implies respect for people. This is a very concrete problem in Peru, this relationship between peace and justice. The more you talk about justice, the more people will say that you are against peace, because peace, as they understand it, is the absence of problems. Nevertheless, the peace that we are talking about is a peace that implies the recognition of human rights. Thus we do not believe that there is such a thing as peace without justice.19

Gutiérrez often refers to the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, and its real meaning.20 *Shalom* is “a condition of life that is in harmony with God, other people and nature” and it is “opposed to all that militates against the well-being and rights of persons and nations”.21 One of Gutiérrez’ biblical references for the interrelation between peace and justice is taken from Psalm 85:11 (“Justice and peace have embraced”, although the Spanish translation Gutiérrez uses says “have kissed”). Justice and peace are denied to the poor. That is why these words are specifically addressed to “those robbed of life and well-being”.22

In Medellín the bishops said that peace is not something that can be found, but something that is constructed.23 The biblical reference for this idea is taken from the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the peacemakers [or ‘artisans of peace’], for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Peace is thus not just considered something that is given; one has to work for it. It is not just a question of a guiding principle; it must be converted into action: “If we are convinced that peace indeed supposes the establishment of justice, we cannot remain passive or indifferent when the most basic human rights are at risk.”24 From this perspective Gutiérrez reflects what this means in the Peruvian situation in a text from 1994:

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19 Gutiérrez 1993a, p. 67 (p. 182).
20 For instance in Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 246-251 (p. 126-128) and Gutiérrez 1994b.
23 Medellín 2:14b. Here the bishops say: “Peace is not found, it is built. The Christian is the artisan of peace.” This is an important perspective for Gutiérrez. He recognises the capacity of every human being to be both subject to and an agent of his/her destiny. Therefore nothing in human life is just given to people. One has to strive for it. And peace is no exception; one has to struggle for it. A parallel to this perspective can be found in Gutiérrez’ installation lecture when he was awarded an honorary doctorate at the Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (UNI) in September 1993. It was an expose about the contemporary situation in Peru, with specific attention to an analysis of the social tensions in Peruvian society and the need to respond to the consequences of the institutionalised violence in order to overcome these tensions. He titled his lecture *El Futuro no llega, se construye*, Gutiérrez 1993c.
In these days, we in Peru are in urgent need of an authentic peace that is constructed upon nothing else but justice. This means respect for the right of all to live with dignity and freedom. That is why we oppose every kind of unjust death (poverty, terrorism, indiscriminate repression) [...] Shalom is possible, in this we can agree with people from different spiritual families in Peru.25

Authentic peace must be based on justice, which implies the right to live with dignity and freedom. Gutiérrez found it necessary to stress this perspective in the political context a year and a half after the captures of Sendero and MRTA leaders. The immediate political violence was not as threatening as before for the population, but the authoritarian civil-military government of Fujimori had full control of the situation. Yet, according to Gutiérrez, nothing had really changed; the unjust situation was still creating poverty. Since the problems of Peru did not start with the activities of Sendero in 1980, peace would not come just as a consequence of their capture.26

Authentic peace or true peace cannot, according to Gutiérrez, be achieved without confronting the causes of violence. True peace is related to the biblical notion of shalom. In a reflection twenty years after Medellín,27 Gutiérrez touched upon this before continuing:

The bishops at Medellín were grounded in a profound biblical perspective when they said that a situation of disregard for the right to life of persons is in the last analysis a rejection of God. Peace based on justice is an aspect of the liberation to which the poor aspire in Latin America. This call to truth made at Medellín blows forcefully against the storm of accumulated social lies gathering in Latin America, attempting to hide the real conditions of life and death experienced by the poor.28

These are clear but provoking words. According to Gutiérrez, the bishops pronounced themselves with a clear support from the biblical message; in Gutiérrez’ interpretation to despise the right to life is equal to rejecting God. True peace stands in opposition to this rejection, which manifests itself in unjust structures that oppress the poor. That is why this peace is one of the crucial aspects in the Latin American interpretation of liberation. To relate the struggle for liberation to peace and justice challenges Latin American society in its very foundations. To avoid speaking of injustice as the root

25 “Urgidos estamos en estos días en el Perú de una auténtica paz que no se edifica sino sobre la justicia, es decir el respeto por el derecho de todos a vivir dignamente y con libertad. Por eso nos oponemos a todo tipo de muerte injusta (pobreza, terrorismo, represión indiscriminada), [...] El shalom es posible, en él podemos coincidir de diferentes familias espirituales en el Perú.” Gutiérrez 1994b, p. 37; italics are mine.
26 This is a position that Gutiérrez presented both in Gutiérrez 1993a and in Gutiérrez in the above mentioned lecture at IPEDEHP 1993, OK-A 4.
27 This was originally a lecture during the summer course organised by the Catholic University in Lima in February 1988 that later was published as Gutiérrez 1989c and in Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 105-162.
28 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 147 (p. 90).
cause of poverty and oppression is part of the social lies that characterise Latin American society’s incapacity to create conditions for a human life in dignity, even for the poor. Medellín profoundly and forcefully questioned the present situation, which Gutiérrez compared with the force of the wind blowing over fallen leaves.

During the time of political violence in Peru 1980-2000, Gutiérrez never forgot to stress that striving for justice is essential; institutionalised violence causes more deaths than the violence caused by Sendero and MRTA or the repressive counterinsurgency strategy. Gutiérrez characterised these years in Peru as being marked by “a hellish circle of different kinds of violence”: institutionalised violence, “the most murderous kind of violence, the one that kills most children”; “the unjustifiable violence inflicted by terrorists of varying tendencies, which continues to fill us with horror and revulsion”; and, the “repressive violence that violates human rights” which “is unacceptable and particularly scandalous since it claims to be defending the human values of our society”.

In the short introduction to the section Años difíciles in the collection Densidad del presente Gutiérrez systematises how he perceived this period as follows:

These years that we have lived through, and to some extent still experience, have really been difficult. To the inhuman poverty of the majority of the Peruvian (and Latin American) people we have to add the bloodthirsty and unacceptable terrorism. This exacerbated a repression that in many cases has showed itself not less disrespectful of the right to life, the first human right. In this infernal circle of violence that strikes above all the poor, the population found itself trapped between uncertainty and fear, between grief and horror. The feeling of insecurity surpassed the personal borders and lead to a questioning of the viability of the country.

30 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 385-468. This section is not included in the English translation. Several of the texts that I analysed in the previous chapter are published in this specific section: Gutiérrez 1986c, 1992c, 1992d 1994a and 1995b,
31 “Años difíciles en verdad los que hemos vivido – y en cierto modo seguimos viviendo – entre nosotros. A la secular e inhumana pobreza de la mayoría de la población peruana (y latinoamericana), se añadió un sanguinario e inaceptable terrorismo. Esto exacerbó una represión que se mostró en muchas ocasiones no menos irrespetuosa del derecho a la vida, primer derecho humano. En ese infernal círculo de la violencia, que golpea sobre todo a los más pobres, la población se encontró atrapada entre el desconcierto y el miedo, el dolor y el horror. La sensación de inseguridad rebasó los linderos personales y familiares para cuestionar la viabilidad misma del país.” Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 387. This section has a parallel in the anthology of selected texts by Gutiérrez, Acordarse de los Pobres, edited by the Peruvian congress in 2004. The appearance of these sections indicates that both Gutiérrez and the compiler of Acordarse de los Pobres, Andrés Gallego, find it essential to demonstrate that these years in the contemporary history of Peru made lasting impressions on the minds of the Peruvians and consequently on the theological reflection. The section is named Discernir el tiempo and some of the texts are repeated. Gutiérrez 2004, p. 423-466. The section is introduced with the following words: “Toda teología es una reflexión de la fe desde una situación determinada social y culturalmente. La teología de la liberación ha tomado clara
Gutiérrez thus indicates that the most difficult years had passed even though he expected some difficult years ahead. After 1980 it was not enough to speak about poverty and institutionalised violence; something had to be added about the actions of Sendero and MRTA. For Gutiérrez this is primarily not an assessment just an assertion. The repression that this elicited must be assessed with the same terminology as all these examples of violence are considered violence against people’s right to life. The infernal circle of violence was an experience that all in Peru experienced, and as such it was also something that affected the whole of Peruvian society. As we saw in the previous chapter, Gutiérrez’ discourse is a pastoral theological discourse based on a socio-political analysis that is expressed through the liberal and radical political discourses, and the Catholic theological discourse where he refers to Roman Catholic doctrine.

4.1 Proclamation of the God of life in a context of unjust and premature death

In the introduction to the new edition of Teología de la Liberación, Gutiérrez says that the church, “the assembly of the disciples of Jesus”, “must proclaim his resurrection to a continent scarred by ‘inhuman’ (Medellín, Poverty 1) and ‘antievangelical’ (Puebla 1159) poverty”. We have seen this stress on resurrection in the previous chapter. For Gutiérrez this is the foundation for liberation theology: “Liberation theology had its origin in the contrast between the urgent task of proclaiming the life of the risen Jesus and the conditions of death in which the poor of Latin America were living.”

4.1.1 The dialectic life – death

Gutiérrez does not hesitate to call the unjust and premature death caused by poverty that marks Latin American reality, “a seal of Latin American life”.

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32 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 40 (p. 29).
33 “[…] un sello de la vida Latinoamericana […].” For instance said in a conversation with missionaries of the Church of Sweden in Lima, September 1991, OK-A 3.
The gospel of God who liberates and gives life is proclaimed from the experience of the death of the poor. There is a dialectical relationship between life and death in Gutiérrez’ theological reflection, which can be seen as one key to grasping his entire theology.

One of Gutiérrez’ biblical references that illustrate this is, as has already been mentioned, taken from Deut. 30:15-20. This is the concluding part of the final speech of Moses to the Israelite people just before they were about to cross the River Jordan and enter into the Promised Land. The speech can be seen as Moses’ last will and testament. After reflecting on the long pilgrimage through the desert, Moses is clear about the options of the Israelites: “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity” (v. 15). “Choose life so that you and your descendants may live” (v. 19b).

For people living in Peru during the 1980s and 90s there was no doubt about the relevance of this biblical text. To live in Peru meant to face that option in daily life. The committed Christian lived in a decisive moment where neutrality, according to Gutiérrez, was not an option: “When we are confronted with the violations of the most basic human rights, it is impossible to be merely spectators. Either we opt for life, beginning with the lives of the least and most insignificant people, or we are accomplices of death.”

But if one goes deeper into the texts of Gutiérrez it becomes obvious that there is hardly any option because to believe in God implicitly means to choose life.

Another biblical reference for Gutiérrez is 1 Cor. 15, especially verses 54-58. Here Gutiérrez notes that Paul encourages the Corinthians to “flout death”: “Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55).

For Gutiérrez the reflection on life deepened and became more and more important in the 1980s, which can be noted in most of his writings and theological reflections. One indicator is the way he dedicated the majority of his books to people who died giving testimony of the God of life. This perspective was not particularly treated in the first years of liberation theology; consequently the stress on life was not as explicit in Gutiérrez’ early writings.

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34 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 21 (p. xv).
35 Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 264 (p. 186).
36 Gutiérrez 1995a, p. 205 (p. 142).
38 Gutiérrez 1983 is dedicated to the Peruvian bishops Luis Vallejos and Luis Dalle, who “devoted their lives to sharing the faith and hope of the Andes”; Gutiérrez 1986a to “the people in Ayacucho, who […] suffer unjustly and cry to the God of life”; Gutiérrez 1989a to Vicente Hondarza “and all those that were born in Spain and came to live and die in the Indies in solidarity with the poor”; Gutiérrez 1989b to Monsignor Oscar Romero (the English edition adds Sr Maria Agustina Rivas and Sr Irene McCormack, who were assassinated in 1990); Gutiérrez 1992a to Vicente Hondarza and Ignacio Ellacuria “and in them to all those who, born in Spain, have come to live and die in the Indies in search of the poor of Jesus Christ”; Gutiérrez 1996a to María Agustina Rivas and Irene Mc Cormack “and to those like them who have given and continue to give their daily lives.”
as they were after 1980. But it was still there. A hint can be found in the fact that one of the persons to whom Gutiérrez dedicated *Teología de la Liberación* was a Brazilian priest, Henrique Pereira Neto,39 who was assassinated in 1969 as a result of his commitment to the poor and became one of many Latin American martyrs during the struggle for the poor and for human rights in Latin America.

The assassination of Monsignor Oscar Romero in San Salvador in March 1980, the deaths of two Peruvian Andean bishops in the early 1980s40 and the outbreak of the political violence in Ayacucho 1980 are important events for Gutiérrez’ reflection on life. In 1981 the theme for the summer course organised by the Catholic University in Lima was *Dios de la Vida* and in his lectures during the course Gutiérrez developed the ideas that can be found in his book *Dios de la Vida*.41

When Gutiérrez reflects on life and its inestimable value’, he makes use of his earlier writings and also of the Medellín documents. He also makes biblical references, as we have seen in his use of Deut. 30 and 1 Cor. 15. Another reference is John 10:10b (“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”).42 The notion of abundance indicates that life is something that is overflowing; there are no limits for this as there are no limits for the grace of love. One of Gutiérrez key concepts is that of gratuitousness (Spanish: *gratuidad*). God does not act with us according to what we deserve but out of gracious love.43 Abundant life therefore indicates that life and the forces of life have no limits; according to Gutiérrez it is something that is given by grace.

To these perspectives one has to add Gutiérrez’ understanding of resurrection, which I addressed in the previous chapter; his paschal proclamation became deeply influenced by the political violence of Peru. He is consistent in this reflection and always stressed the perspective from Medellín that institutionalised violence and the role of poverty are the main causes of pre-

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39 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 5; Pereira Neto was working for Dom Helder Cámara. The book was also dedicated to José María Arguedas.

40 Monsignor Luis Vallejos (1917-1982), archbishop in Cuzco and Luis Dalle (1922-1982), apostolic administrator in Ayaviri. Both were committed to the preferential option for the poor and both died in traffic accidents under dubious circumstances.

41 The book was not published until 1989, developed from a preliminary version from 1982, Gutiérrez 1982a, and was based on lectures from 1981 that were developed in an essay in *Páginas*, Gutiérrez 1981.

42 People that advocate a theology of prosperity also frequently use this verse. Abundance is then interpreted to mean a life in material affluence. Gutiérrez’ position is completely different. For him abundance has a utopian meaning in which abundance is contrasted with the harsh reality of the poor.

43 Gutiérrez develops the concept in most of his books, perhaps most exhaustively in Gutiérrez 1986a. One of the basic ideas here is precisely *gratuidad*. See for instance p. 151-161 (p. 67-72), p. 179-202 (p. 82-92), which deals with how justice and gratuitousness relate to each other and the conclusion of the book, p. 203-226 (p. 93-103).
mature and unjust death of the poor. The following passage synthesises these perspectives:

Besides a gift from God, life is also the first human right. Poverty and the insignificance in which many of our contemporaries live assault life. Poverty indeed ultimately means death; a premature and unjust physical death caused by a lack of the most elementary means for their vital necessities. But I am also referring to what could be called a cultural death that is expressed through contempt and discrimination of people for racial, cultural or gender reasons. Theologically speaking, poverty is the negation of the meaning of creation, contrary to the will of God the creator who ratifies his plan through the resurrection of Jesus. Expressing it in this way does not mean to remove its economic and social dimensions or its mechanisms of oppression or marginalisation as its consequence. It is just a question of sensing and understanding its cruel and profound meaning. This makes us understand its radical refusal of God’s will for life as it is manifested in the narration of the creation.44

The dichotomy in this passage is evident: life is a gift of God while poverty is the result of the negation of the meaning of creation and is thus contrary to the will of God. Ultimately poverty means death; in another context Gutiérrez says that poverty in Latin America and in other parts of the world “is death-dealing and denies the basic human right to existence and the reign of life”.45 Death is described above as premature and unjust. Gutiérrez also talks about cultural death, thus indicating that death is not just a question of physical death.46 Implicitly this means that a life with human dignity is, for Gutiérrez, the criteria for a life according to God’s will and that its negation results in death: whether it is premature, unjust or cultural.

This dichotomy is essential for Gutiérrez’ understanding and interpretation of the socio-political context and how he as a pastor shall respond to this. It is also essential for his proclamation of the gospel of resurrection, where the socio-political context of a situation marked by death is always

44 “Don de Dios, la vida es también el primer derecho humano. Contra él atenta la condición de pobreza y de insignificancia en la que viven tantos de nuestros contemporáneos. En efecto, la pobreza, en última instancia, significa muerte; muerte física temprana e injusta, por carencia de los medios más elementales para sus necesidades vitales; pero, igualmente, la que podemos llamar muerte cultural, que se expresa en el desprecio y discriminación de personas por razones ya mencionadas de raza, cultura o género. Teológicamente hablando, la pobreza es la negación del significado de la creación, contraria a la voluntad del Dios creador que ratifica su designio con la resurrección de Jesús. Expresarse de este modo no es obviar sus dimensiones económicas y sociales o los mecanismos de opresión y marginación que la producen, se trata simplemente de palpar su cruel y hondo sentido. Ello nos hace comprender su radical rechazo a la voluntad de vida del Dios, tal como ella se manifiesta en la narración de la creación.” Gutiérrez 2003a, p. 35-36.
46 Already in Gutiérrez 1983 he points to cultural death in relation to physical death; p. 21 (p. 10)
necessarily referenced to in relation to the resurrection as the victory of the forces of life over the forces of death.

4.1.2 To be a friend of life

On several occasions Gutiérrez stresses that it is not God who causes death and injustice and refers to a passage in one of the deuterocanonical books in the Bible, Wisdom of Solomon 1:12-13 (“because God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living”, v 13).47 Today, according to Gutiérrez, this implies a challenge to transform the structures that create these circumstances: “There is no room, then, for any easy resignation that seeks reasons, including religious reasons to hide our cowardice.”48

According to Gutiérrez, God has created everything and wants to maintain life; the earth was aimed to provide the needs for all living things. This implies, according to Gutiérrez, that when peasants in Latin America reclaim land to which they had historical rights “they are not seeking to have their names entered in the public record books of the country; they are asking only to exercise their right to life. The domain of Hades,49 the world of darkness, does not control and ought not to control the earth and the life it sustains.”50

The Wisdom of Salomon points to the close relationship between death and the godless, a theme that is crucial for Gutiérrez:

The author is not speaking simply of occasional misdeeds; the matter is far more serious: those who “knew not the hidden counsels of God” (Wisd. 2:22) make a pact with death, a kind of countercoeval. The covenant with Yahweh, the God of life, turns its signatories into defenders of life within history. Those, on the contrary, who enter in an agreement with death form a party of assassins and try to give death the last word in human history. As in so many other books of the Bible, life and death are here opposed. Deuteronomy told us we must choose between the two (see Deut. 30:15).51

People can, according to Gutiérrez, either make a pact with death whereby they move away from God or they can make a pact with the God of life. Making a pact with the God of life is followed by a promise: “You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living” (Wisd 11:26). The Spanish translation Gutiérrez uses has the expression ‘friend of life’ (amigo de la vida). This expression is important for him and he makes frequent use of it. “To believe in God is to be, like God, a lover of life [or: ‘a friend of life’], in contrast to the companions of the way of death.”52 Libera-

47 For instance, in Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 56-62 (p. 15-19) and Gutiérrez 1990b.
48 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 57 (p. 16) and Gutiérrez 1990b p. 110.
49 Instead of “the domain of Hades”, the Spanish original has ‘el abismo’ (‘the abyss’).
50 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 58 (p. 16-17) and Gutiérrez 1990b, p. 110.
51 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 59 (p. 17) and Gutiérrez 1990b, p. 111.
52 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 61 (p. 19) and Gutiérrez 1990b, p. 111.
tion is, for Gutiérrez, in this context a desire for life: “by liberating us God is shown to be a liberating God, a living God, and the friend of life. To be a Christian is to be a friend of the author of life, Jesus the Christ”.53

4.1.3 Creation – incarnation - eschatology

The theology of life for Gutiérrez springs from what can be called a dialectic relation between creation, incarnation and eschatology. Life as an expression of the will of God is, according to Gutiérrez, manifested in creation; poverty, ultimately understood as “physical, premature and unjust death”, is seen as a negation of the meaning of creation and contrary to the will of God the creator.54 God is incarnated in this world through Jesus in order to live in solidarity with all human beings, especially the poor. The meaning of the resurrection of Jesus, seen as a ratification of God’s plan with creation, opens up the eschatological perspective. The right to life is thus based in creation where the will of God the creator is manifested and confirmed in an incarnation wherein God chooses to become human in Jesus who came “that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10b). Resurrection opens the horizon towards the future and implies that it is life, not death, which will have the last word. In the midst of unjust and premature death caused by institutionalised violence the forces of life are actively present and offer support to those who defend life and people’s right to life.

In order to be able to speak about life, especially in the Latin American context one has to, according to Gutiérrez, go through an experience of premature or unjust death. A proclamation about life and resurrection that does not reflect this context will be neither relevant nor understandable for people living in this situation. Therefore liberation theology is situated in “the dialectic between faith and the life of the body, between faith in the resurrection and our temporal death.”55 Faith is related to the physical conditions people, especially the poor, live in and resurrection is related to the physical death of all human beings.

Gutiérrez is eager to talk about Latin America as a land of “an even stronger assertion of the right to life and to the joy of Easter”.56 Therefore it is not possible for him to separate these perspectives; premature death, defence of the right to life and paschal joy are intimately interrelated. Gutiérrez’ reflection on resurrection and Easter is profoundly marked by this perspective. Resurrection becomes specifically important in the Latin American context with its experience of being very close to a situation of death. Resurrection, for Gutiérrez, ultimately means victory over death and to believe in

54 Gutiérrez 2003a, p. 35.
55 Gutiérrez 1979, p. 156 (p. 90).
resurrection means to believe that it is life and not death that will get the last word in history.

4.2 The Right to life according to Gutiérrez

Gutiérrez’ view of life is taken from his dialectic understanding of life in a context characterised by premature death previously analysed in this chapter. The right to life is not just formulated by him as a response against circumstances that provoke premature deaths. The right to life is not just a question of survival. It is also a question of the right to a decent life, a life with human dignity.

One of the first times Gutiérrez makes use of the term ‘right to life’ is in a text from 1978.57 The perspective is historical and has been developed from his reading of Las Casas. The right to life for Indians is negated and therefore they die “before their time”:

Bartolomé de Las Casas and a number of other remarkable figures of sixteenth century in Latin America constitute an exception to the bloody beginnings of the path of murder and death that is the saga of colonial domination in Latin America. […] Prophetically they denounced the brutal exploitation of the hapless Indian masses and their “death before their time”. From the very beginning, it was always cut off in midcourse. And, be it noted, this was an essential component in the social order then being built at their expense. Today that same basic element of Latin American colonialism continues its ravages, assaulting what Pedro de Córdoba, another noble spirit of those times, called “the life and temporal increase” of the poor. With great difficulty, the Indians were converted to Christ. But down across the centuries, out of the mouths of only a few protesting Christians resounded a protest to their murder, to the denial of their elemental right to life. Oppression ever ancient and ever new! It wears new guises today. But still it persecutes to the dust the ones who dare to raise their hand against it.58

In this text we can see how Gutiérrez traces today’s situation in Peru and Latin America to its historic roots: neither Las Casas nor Gutiérrez regard this as a deplorable exception but instead a component in the social order, indicating that the death was the price that the Indians had to pay for the European conquest, the same price that the poor have to pay in today’s Latin America. In a recent article Gutiérrez declares: “Poverty is not a fate, it is a condition. It is not a misfortune, it is injustice.”59 The historic parallel from

57 The text was first published as an introduction to CEP 1978, with the title “La fuerza histórica de los pobres”. This essay became one chapter in the book with the same title, Gutiérrez 1979.
the 16th century is relevant for how Gutiérrez interprets the present situation. What took place 500 years ago still happens in our time; Gutiérrez’ reflection is highly influenced by his reading of Las Casas. In his monograph on Las Casas, Gutiérrez synthesises Las Casas’ view and gives it a methodological interpretation which has guided my own reading of Gutiérrez. For Las Casas, says Gutiérrez, it becomes obvious that:

[I]n the Indies, what he regards as the two fundamental human rights are being violated: the right to life and the right to liberty. All of his work turns upon the defence of these two basic claims. […] This is where Las Casas will develop an approach of his own, whose focus we might call methodological. He strives to understand the events of which he is a witness by seeking to take on the viewpoint of the Indians themselves. The demand of evangelisation, the right to life and freedom, and the adoption of the perspective of the native, constitute, it seems to us, Las Casas’s basic intuitions.60

The only justification for the European presence in the Americas, according to Gutiérrez’ reading of Las Casas, was that the gospel be proclaimed to the Indians. This proclamation should be based on respect for the Indians and their human rights. The defence of the right to life and the right to freedom therefore became something implicit in that proclamation. And the perspective should obviously be from the indigenous peoples themselves. Travestying Gutiérrez’ summary of the basic intuitions of Las Casas, it is probably correct to say that the need to proclaim the gospel and defend the right to life and freedom from the perspective of the poor also constitute the basic intuitions of Gutiérrez himself.

Among the main objectives for Gutiérrez’ participation in the public debate are to give reason for Christian hope and to hinder people from falling into resignation. According to my understanding of Gutiérrez, he saw the defence of life as one essential element of the church’s task of giving reason for hope in that specific context.

In my understanding of how Gutiérrez perceives the theological basis of this defence of life, his interpretation of the right to life is one of the fundamental human rights. This is a theme that Gutiérrez has developed in different contexts and expressed in theological reflections, essays, articles and in his preaching. My intention here is to systematise different aspects of his thinking on the right to life. In this analysis I primarily refer to his books, but will supplement the picture with references to some of his essays.

His interpretation of the God of life in his writings has created a solid base for his reflection that he can use for his interventions in particular moments. His intention is pastoral and a pastoral theological discourse is sustained by the Catholic theological discourse. For the socio-political analysis, the radical political discourse is essential, whereas the liberal political dis-

course is less developed in his books than in his essays and reflections, which were analysed in the previous chapter.

The right to life has many dimensions in the writings of Gutiérrez and each of them says something about how he perceives it. I have grouped these dimensions as follows:

- Life is a gift from God
- Death is a negation of the poor’s right to life
- The right to life is proclaimed from a situation marked by premature and unjust death
- The struggle of the poor for liberation is also a struggle for the right to life
- The right to life must be seen from a perspective that intends to see Christ in the poor
- Respect for the right to life supposes commitment to the poor
- Martyrdom can be seen as a manifestation of the struggle for the right to life

4.2.1 Life is a gift from God

For Gutiérrez, life is above all a gift from God because God is the God of life.61 Christian faith above all means to believe in the God of life: “A profession of faith in that God implies a rejection of this inhuman situation; conversely, this situation gives content and urgency to the proclamation of the God of life.”62 Gutiérrez describes Las Casas’ theology of grace as “a theology of life, a life that embraces the temporal and the spiritual alike”.63

Being a gift from God, life is more than just a question of survival; it is a question of life with human dignity. What characterises the situation of the poor is, according to Gutiérrez, precisely the failure to recognize their human dignity and their condition as being children of God. This can be a result of economic, gender, cultural or religious causes.64 The view that life is a gift of God implies also that the right to life is a gift of God. In a context where Gutiérrez refers to the church fathers he stresses the right of the poor is “the right to life, which is God’s gift”.65 Gutiérrez’ frequent references to John 10:10 underline this perspective. So Gutiérrez says that the poor not only reclaim their right to life, but also their right to dignity.66

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61 Gutiérrez has explored this theme in various writings, perhaps most elaborately in Gutiérrez 1989b.
63 Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 33 (p. 18).
64 Gutiérrez 2005a, p. 13.
Linked to this perspective is the concept of justice. The right to life is the foundation of all reflection on justice, which echoes the radical political discourse. There is a promise of life from the God of life which “should even now begin to transform the situation of death in which the poor live”. As has been noted above, Gutiérrez points to the relationship between peace and justice and he frequently reflects upon the real meaning of shalom.

The prophet is speaking of the gift of life. Once again, the two opposite ends of life, children and the elderly, serve to show that today’s weak and oppressed will be able to live an unhindered and undiminished life. Their right to life and happiness will be ensured and respected. In these new conditions, infants will not die prematurely; these premature deaths are surely one of the cruellest signs of poverty and injustice.

This is a utopian vision of how the most vulnerable, children and elderly people, whose fundamental rights are negated, will again be restored. Gutiérrez comments upon Isaiah 65:20a, his intention being to demonstrate that God’s salvation is inseparable from the practice of justice. So “the gift of life necessarily finds expression in just social relationships”.

In another context, Gutiérrez can refer to God’s promise to Abraham (Gen. 18:18-19, especially v. 19 where the election of Abraham is based on the mission “to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice”). This expression of right and justice that is to characterise the Israelite people can be seen today, according to Gutiérrez, as a model for the mission of the church which will guarantee the rights of the people, “especially the right of the poor and the helpless to life”. And therefore it should not come as a surprise that Gutiérrez in another context can say that “a situation of disregard for the right to life of persons is in the last analysis a rejection of God”.

There is a clear notion on the significance of creation early in the reflection of Gutiérrez. For him there is a close link between creation and salvation (and liberation!), a link that is based on “the historical and liberating experience of the Exodus”; creation is the first salvific act of God and it is linked to the liberation of Israel from Egypt. Exodus is not only liberation from slavery it is also “the long march to the promised land in which Israel...”

67 Gutiérrez 1986a, p. 95 (p. 34); italics in the Spanish original.
68 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 191 (p. 95).
69 “No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days or an old person who does not live out a lifetime.” We saw in the previous chapter (see above p. 151) that Gutiérrez used this biblical reference also in his homily for the memorial service for CGTP’s general secretary Pedro Huilca in December 1993, Gutiérrez 1993d.
70 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 191 (p. 96).
71 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 63 (p. 20).
72 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 147 (p. 90).
73 For instance the chapter Creación y salvación in Gutiérrez 1988, p. 246-257 (p. 151-158).
74 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 246 (p. 151).
can establish a society free from misery and alienation”. Gutiérrez interprets this as meaning that “the eschatological horizon is present in the heart of the Exodus”.\(^{75}\) So respect for human life implies respect also for creation.

Gutiérrez found this perspective in his reading of Las Casas, for whom “the defence of the life of the Indians involves the defence of the nature around them, the protection of their entire vital medium.”\(^{76}\) This also relates to Christian stewardship, for Gutiérrez argues that to defend the right to life also means finding “expression in the right to the use the goods of this world together with all that flows from them”.\(^{77}\)

A final notion is related to the holiness of God which to Gutiérrez is the foundation for God’s action. God sanctifies his people when he liberates them from oppression. This is well expressed in the above-mentioned passage in *Teología de la Liberación*, “Yahweh liberates the Jewish people politically in order to make them a holy nation”.\(^{78}\) In another context Gutiérrez relates this holiness precisely to the right to life:

Yahweh sanctifies the people and brings them into the holy camp, by freeing them from oppression. In turn, this free nation, made up of persons whose right to life and justice is respected, must bring others into the sphere of the Holy One. […] The holiness of Yahweh is manifested in the holiness of believers in Yahweh. If they are to give this kind of witness, they must undergo an interior change and begin to follow a different path.\(^{79}\)

People’s right to life and justice is placed as a condition for a free Israel and this is what makes the nation holy. A little further on Gutiérrez says that “to establish justice and righteousness is to prolong the liberating action of God” and that it is the mission of his people to take an active part in this effort. In the end this means for Gutiérrez that “[t]he justice of God thus marks God’s saving action in history”.\(^{80}\)

This dimension is, for obvious reasons, dominated by the Catholic theological discourse as it relates to the gift of love from God and emphasises the sanctity of life. But the radical political discourse is necessary to stress that life never can be instrumental; it is a question of a life with dignity in which justice for the poor is a condition for human life. We can see how the last passage places liberation from oppression as a condition for the sanctity that the people of biblical Israel share with the God of life. The strong emphasis on the sanctity of life sustains the pastoral theological discourse as it gives people reason for hope in difficult situations.

\(^{75}\) Gutiérrez 1988, p. 252-253 (p. 155-156).
\(^{76}\) Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 116 (p. 78).
\(^{77}\) Gutiérrez 1986b, p. 221 (p. 155).
\(^{78}\) Gutiérrez 1988, p. 252 (p. 155).
\(^{79}\) Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 76 (p. 28)
\(^{80}\) Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 76-77 (p. 28).
4.2.2 Death is a negation of the right to life for the poor

The right to life for the poor is threatened by poverty and injustice; this perspective can be found in most of what Gutiérrez says. The expression dead “before their time” that Gutiérrez inherited from Las Casas implies that the right to life is refused to the poor and that the death of the poor is a negation of their right to life. It is the oppressive system that denies them this right. This was the perspective of Las Casas, which Gutiérrez finds relevant in his contemporary Latin American context and so clearly stresses “the two fundamental human rights are being violated: the right to life and the right to liberty.” Las Casas blamed the colonial system for the situation of the Indians, a situation that had expropriated them of “their right to life, liberty and the gospel as well”. From a theological perspective, according to Gutiérrez, poverty is thus a negation of the intention within creation and is contrary to God’s wish of a life with dignity for all human beings.

Unfortunately, according to Gutiérrez, the exploitation that resulted in premature and unjust deaths of the indigenous population in the Americas and the slaves brought from Africa did not end with the colonial period. “Today the native peoples, like the extensive black population of this continent, continue to see their lifestyles, their values, their customs, their right to life and liberty, trodden under foot.”

Most of the time when Gutiérrez speaks about death it is related to poverty. I do not here deal with the issue of poverty specifically but it is necessary to have it in mind in any analysis of Gutiérrez’ theology. One of his most obvious statements on this relationship is the following quotation:

“The real issue in this situation is becoming increasingly clear to us today: poverty means death. [...] Death, this is what it is all about, when we talk about poverty and destruction of human beings and peoples or cultures and traditions.”

These are harsh but clear words. Poverty may never be idealised, according to Gutiérrez. It is a dimension of death as its result is the deprivation of life. Poverty, therefore, has to be described in real terms so it can be understood that it is a consequence of unjust structures which are contrary to the will of God and not a condition that just happens.

81 For instance Gutiérrez 1979, p. 134-135 (p. 77).
82 Gutiérrez 1979, p. 156 (p. 90).
84 Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 391 (p. 288); italics are mine.
85 Gutiérrez 2003a, p. 35.
87 Gutiérrez 1983, p. 21 (p. 9). The second sentence is not included in the English translation. The original Spanish reads: “De eso se trata, de muerte, cuando hablamos de la pobreza, de la destrucción de personas y de pueblos, de culturas y de tradiciones.”
It is not only a question of unjust structures and a socio-political issue on a macro level. In his parish in Lima Gutiérrez was confronted with examples of the consequences of poverty in his pastoral counselling, which affected him deeply. Seen together abuses of various kinds, divisions and family tensions, divorces, malnutrition, child mortality, crime and loss of cultural values form a pattern of a human suffering of enormous proportions. Gutiérrez concludes: “If to all this we add the repression that is worsening in Latin America and is on its way to becoming part of daily life, then we have a picture of suffering and death.”

This last reference shows how Gutiérrez has a pastoral concern that, in its context, is almost completely dominated by a radical political discourse. Domestic violence and oppression are related to structural injustices on a macro level. With this dimension, Gutiérrez shows the limitation of a pure Catholic theological discourse in responding to poverty and unjust structures. The radical political discourse shows that poverty means death, which a Catholic theological discourse must respond to.

4.2.3 The right to life is proclaimed from a situation marked by premature and unjust death

According to Gutiérrez the gospel with its message of the right to life has to be proclaimed from a context that is marked by premature and unjust death. A church that wants to be faithful to God has to be aware of this perspective and have the capacity to respond to the grief of the poor and their situation.

Las Casas and some of his colleagues protested against the exploitation of the Indians and their premature deaths. Today, says Gutiérrez, the same element of colonialism “continues its ravages. […] Oppression ever ancient and ever new! It wears new guises today. But still it persecutes to the dust the ones who dare to raise their hand against it.” There is still, according to Gutiérrez, need for this voice 500 years after Las Casas and this fact has motivated most of the theological reflection and pastoral action of Gutiérrez.

The contradiction or the contrast between the paschal proclamation of the risen Christ and the poor’s conditions of death has to be faced and understood. This is the challenge that liberation theology, according to Gutiérrez, has intended to respond to.

To Gutiérrez human suffering is an important and inevitable question for the theological discourse.

Our task here is to find the words with which to talk about God in the midst of the starvation of millions, humiliation of races regarded as inferior, [dis-
This is, according to Gutiérrez, the *locus* from where the proclamation of the right to life as a gift of the God of life has to proceed. In all its horrendousness the holocaust was a historical event that we should take notice of and learn from, while the agony of the people living in Ayacucho was something on-going when Gutiérrez wrote this. It is not only the political violence that concerns Gutiérrez here. One has to face the situation of violence in relation to the overall condition of poverty and injustice, if not it is impossible to understand the present situation in Peru with Ayacucho representing one alarming example. In the context of Ayacucho Gutiérrez gives many concrete examples of institutionalised violence such as hunger for bread, infant mortality, the disappeared persons, etc. To these factors Gutiérrez adds the phenomenon of terrorism and repression manifested in mass graves full of cadavers.

Gutiérrez ends this passage with a reference to the metaphor of a dark tunnel in which it is difficult to see the end. This text was written some years before his piece on the glow-worms from 1992. In the midst of the 1980s the difficulty of the situation of violence was generally interpreted with the metaphor of not being able to see the light at the end of the tunnel and Gutiérrez was no exception. Even if the situation worsened in the following years, Gutiérrez changed perspective in the text from 1992 and started to look for signs of hope.

In this dimension of the right to life the radical political discourse is the basis for the pastoral theological discourse. The proclamation about the God of life has to start with the reality in which people live and this reality must be analysed and interpreted in order to be understood. To “talk about God” is a pastoral mission, but the socio-political reality must be taken into consideration for the proclamation of the gospel.

### 4.2.4 The struggle of the poor for liberation is also a struggle for the right to life

The most frequent use of the term right to life in the writings of Gutiérrez is where he reflects upon the efforts of the organised poor in their own struggle...
for liberation. An early notion of this motif is taken from a text which is a critical analysis of the preparatory document for Puebla. The text ends with a wish that the bishops’ conference might be an instrument for the church “to get situated on the road to faithfulness of the poor and oppressed of Latin America, who struggle for liberation, for the right to live”. In this context of unjust and premature death something new is growing: the poor are being organised and from this a new liberating faith is growing. There are people who dedicate their lives to the struggle against death, a fact that gives rise to the “hope that this people is beginning to experience, which brings it joy”.

This perspective has been fundamental for liberation theology from the very beginning. Gutiérrez referred to it already in his introduction to the first edition of Teología de la Liberación, saying that the book “is an attempt at reflection, based on the Gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America.”

Something happens with the theological reflection when the poor challenge it as “agents of their own destiny”. Gutiérrez touches upon this also in the new introduction to Teología de la Liberación and links it precisely to the right to life: “During the 1950s and 60s we saw the first steps being taken in conscientization, and we saw the poor beginning to organize themselves in the defense of their right to life, in the struggle for dignity and social justice, and in a commitment to their own liberation.”

One example of this that Gutiérrez often comes back to is from Pope John Paul II’s first visit to Peru in 1985 when he visited Villa el Salvador in Lima. He was addressed by a couple, Víctor and Isabel Chero, that spoke on behalf of the community describing the reality of the poor in Villa el Salvador and their struggle for justice: “we struggle for this life in the face of death”. In this process, Gutiérrez comments, the poor became a people. He continues to quote them: “In the recently formed communities, shared need has united and organised us; it has created among us solidarity in the struggle for life and defence of our rights”. Gutiérrez’ conclusion is that “[t]he faith experience of the poor and oppressed that bursts into our lives and our theology is the vital context, the historical and social setting” for the theological reflection.

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95 Gutiérrez 1979, p. 235 (p. 124).
96 Gutiérrez has nuestro pueblo (‘our people’) instead to stress that he is also part of the people.
98 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 61 (p. 1).
99 Gutiérrez 1988, p. 31 (p. 22).
100 For instance in Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 13-17 (p. xi-xiii).
102 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 17 (p. xiii).
The organisation of the poor and their process of conscientisation create a platform for their claim for the right to a decent and worthy life. “It is surprising to see a people becoming increasingly better organised and more effective in the struggle to assert its rights to life and justice”\textsuperscript{103} and this people “inspired by its faith and hope sets out to defend its right to life”.\textsuperscript{104} In another context Gutiérrez says that he approaches the Scriptures “in terms of my own history, in terms of the situation of a people that suffers abuse and injustice but is organising to defend its right to life and in keeping its hope in God strong”.\textsuperscript{105}

This irruption of the organised poor constituted an enormous challenge to the church. And as a response to this challenge Gutiérrez and other priests and theologians within the liberation theology movement, together with the poor, began to reflect and construct what was about to become liberation theology. From this point of view liberation theology can be said to be a defence of the right of the poor to life, a life in justice and human dignity.

In the following quotation Gutiérrez synthesises the perspective:

The struggles of the poor for liberation represent an assertion of their right to life. The poverty that the poor suffer means death: a premature and unjust death. It is on the basis of this affirmation of life that the poor of Latin America are trying to live their faith, recognize the love of God, and proclaim their hope. Within these struggles, with their many forms and phases, an oppressed and believing people is increasingly creating a way of Christian life, a spirituality. Latin American Christians will thus cease to be consumers of spiritualities that are doubtless valid but that nonetheless reflect other experiences and other goals, for they are carving out their own way of being faithful both to the Lord and to the experiences of the poorest. This historical moment, with its focus in the process of liberation, is truly the terrain on which a people’s spiritual experience is located as it affirms its right to life. This is the soil in which its response to the gift of faith in the God of life is taking root. The poverty that brings death to the poor is no longer a motive for resignation on the conditions of present existence, nor does it discourage Latin American Christians in their aspirations. The historical experience of liberation that they are now beginning to have is showing them, or reminding them of, something deep down in themselves: that God wants them to live.\textsuperscript{106}

The poor’s struggle for liberation is not just a protest against poverty and injustice it is also an affirmation of their right to life. The concept of poverty as a premature and unjust death is something that has been stressed above. What is new in this passage and what Gutiérrez wants to stress is that the poor in this situation and in their struggle for liberation try to live their faith,
to develop a new kind of spirituality that responds to the situation and needs of the poor. One expression of this spirituality mentioned here is that the poor recognise the love of God and proclaim their hope. The poor become agents of their own destiny as they abandon just being consumers of spiritualities and exercise their own spirituality, forging a way of being faithful to God and the experience of the poorest.

Gutiérrez considers this as a historic moment where a new spirituality arises that basically is said to be an affirmation by the poor of their right to life. Therefore, Gutiérrez says that poverty with its deadly consequences can no longer be a reason for resignation or discouragement. This is by no means a way of softening the state of poverty or the experience of the poor of being oppressed by unjust structures. In the poor’s struggle for liberation something new is sensed that takes them out of resignation. The conviction that gives the strength is that God wishes them to live.

Also in this dimension, the radical political discourse plays an essential role. But this is more as a background for the recognition of the capacity of the poor themselves to be agents for their own liberation from oppressive structures. So this is part of the liberal political discourse as it recognises the participation of the poor in the construction of society. But it is also part of the pastoral theological discourse as it both recognises the participation of committed Christians in this struggle for liberation as a result of their faith and encourages the poor to take part in this struggle.

4.2.5 The right to life must be seen from a perspective that intends to see Christ in the poor

Matthew 25:31-46 is a text of importance in Latin America. For centuries catholic theology and popular tradition have seen the poor as an earthly image of Christ.107 This notion can either result in a charitable attention to the poor without really questioning the structural causes behind poverty or in a more prophetic manner which questions the structural injustice that produces poverty.108

In the Medellín document there is a short statement that is based on this last interpretation. In the document on Peace the bishops say that where structural injustice exists “there will we find the rejection of the peace of the Lord, and a rejection of the Lord Himself”.109 In Puebla this perspective became important for the discussion that led to the statement that the church has to make a preferential option for the poor110; Gutiérrez calls Matthew 25 a key text for Puebla.111 In a passage where the bishops present a “socio-

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109 Medellín 2:14c.
110 Puebla 382, 707, 733, 769, 1134 and 1217.
111 Gutiérrez 1979, p. 269 (p. 142).
cultural vision of the Latin American reality”112 they focus on “the generalised extreme poverty” saying that the church has to “recognize the features of the suffering Christ” in the faces of the poor.113 After this introduction these faces are exemplified in the faces of children, youth, indigenous people, peasants, workers, the under- and unemployed, marginalised urban settlers and elderly people.114 The bishops end the passage saying that the church shares the people’s anguish that is based on this lack of human dignity and respect for their human rights.115

In Santo Domingo the bishops developed the idea. Discovering the face of Christ in the suffering faces of the poor is a permanent challenge for all Christians and the bishops explicitly refer to Matthew 25. Things had changed since 1979 so the bishops had to extend the list of the suffering faces of the poor, mentioning among others faces such as those who are “disillusioned of politicians who give promises but do not fulfil” and those suffering from violence of different kinds.116

Gutiérrez confirms that Matthew 25 served as an early point of reference in the circles of liberation theology,117 he reflects that it “has long made it play an outstanding role in the spiritual experience of Latin American Christians” and refers to people like Las Casas.118 Gutiérrez notes that the biblical perspective of the neighbour originally was related to the Jewish community but the perspective opens: “the bond between the neighbour and God is changed, deepened and universalised by the incarnation of the Word” and Matthew 25 becomes “a very good illustration of this twofold process”.119 Gutiérrez’ conclusion is that Matthew 25 implies that meeting “the poor through concrete works is a necessary step in view of encounter with Christ himself”.120

Gutiérrez’ reading of Las Casas has deepened and strengthened his perspective. Las Casas “saw in the Indian, in this ‘other’, this one-different-from-the-Westerner, the poor one of the gospel and ultimately Christ himself”.121 To Gutiérrez this is the key to the Lascasian theology where “[t]he right to life and liberty, the right to be different, the perspective of the poor – these are intimately connected notions in the experience our friar [that is Las Casas]”.

112 Puebla 15-71.
113 Puebla 31.
114 Puebla 32-39.
115 Puebla 40.
116 “[...] desilusionados por los políticos, que prometen pero no cumplen;” Santo Domingo 178.
118 Gutiérrez 1983, p. 156 (p. 104). Gutiérrez comments in a note that Las Casas’ expression “the flogged Christs of the Indies” (Spanish: Cristos azotados de las Indias) was inspired by Matthew 25, Gutiérrez 1983, p. 104 (p.162).
120 Gutiérrez 1983, p. 169 (p. 112).
Casas] has of the God of Jesus Christ in whom he believes with all his strength”.122

Gutiérrez finds two dimensions in Matthew 25. The first is related to the fact that it implies that Jesus identifies himself with the poor in this world;123 this is a dimension that strengthens the poor in their struggle. The other indicates that it is the task of Christians to see Christ in the suffering of the poor;124 this dimension is a vocation to commitment.

Both these dimensions indicate an invitation to be in solidarity with the poor. To follow Christ means among other things for Gutiérrez to act in favour of the poor.125 As a consequence of this there follows a double motion: to be in solidarity with the poor can be said to be the way of coming to God and the relation with God is the condition for a real meeting with the other. For Gutiérrez it is impossible to separate these two motions and therefore he can say that “Jesus Christ, who is God and man, is our way to the Father but he is also our way to recognition of others as brothers and sisters”.126

The identification of the poor and the analysis of the causes of poverty are related to the radical political discourse, but what we find here is above all an example on how the Catholic and the pastoral theological discourses relate to each other and interplay. The position is based on biblical texts and CELAM documents in which Christians are called to respond in solidarity with the poor as they identify Christ in the poor.

4.2.6 Respect for the right to life supposes commitment to the poor

In his reading of Las Casas, Gutiérrez suggests that the situation of premature and unjust death of the indigenous population in the Americas required “a decisive option” for the royal court in Spain and implicitly for the church. The option is decisive since Las Casas in his interpretation defines the right to life as the first human right.127 In this context it should be interpreted as a vocation of solidarity with the poor. Las Casas’ defence of the right of the Indians to life and freedom is intimately related to his faith in God and for Gutiérrez this position has full validity today.128

In another context Gutiérrez stresses how and from where the church should set up a strategy to approach people:

123 Gutiérrez 1986a, p 107 (p. 40).
124 Gutiérrez 1992a, p. 98 and 621.
125 Gutiérrez 1983, p. 156-157 (p. 112). This is also his main idea, for instance, in a recent essay that was thought to be a contribution by Gutiérrez to CELAM V 2007 in Aparecida, Gutiérrez 2006b.
If we are to make our way today in the history of our country, we must rebuild it starting from Ayacucho in the forgotten mountain country and marginalised jungle; from the alleys and slums of Lima; from the desperation of the poor and their lack of resources; from their right to life and to a peace based on justice; from the creativity of the poor and their power in history. All this confronts the ecclesial community with an increasingly radical demand that it be a sign of the kingdom of life, and this in a shifting and confused setting where violence and terror, repression and affliction, but also hope and prophetic energy, are intermingled.

This is a missiological text. To walk “in the history of our country” should be interpreted as the mission of the church which must relate to the various contexts of the people exemplified by Gutiérrez in this passage: people in Ayacucho and in the shantytowns of Lima. Solidarity with the poor is a question of credibility for the Christian community, a sign of the reign of life in a context where injustice, violence and poverty are predominant. The proclamation must take into consideration the situation of the poor described above and should be based on their right to life and peace. The notion of historic creativity and power of the poor must be interpreted as a stressing of the capacity of the poor to be agents of their own destiny. Being a sign of the reign of life can hardly for Gutiérrez be interpreted otherwise than as a call to commitment for the poor.

The option for the poor is here identified with the mission of the church and as such it is part of the pastoral theological discourse as it admonishes and encourages Christians to be in solidarity with the poor.

4.2.7 Martyrdom can be seen as a manifestation of the struggle for the right to life

To be a sign of the reign of life can be costly in the Latin American context. Christian men and women, known and unknown, have died as witnesses in solidarity with the poor in their struggle for liberation and human rights. Gutiérrez recognises this, not just in his dedications in many of his books, but he also frequently values the blood of martyrs as something that strengthens the church:

The furrows are watered at times with the blood of witnesses (martyrs) to that preferential love of God for the poor that is today leaving an indelible imprint on the life of the church in Latin America. This martyrdom is setting a seal on the following of Jesus and the subsequent theological reflection that are now coming into existence in Latin America. Ours is a land of premature and

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129 As the English translation of Spanish Reino with ‘kingdom’ is problematic (see above p. 85) I would have preferred the word ‘reign’ instead. It is obvious that Gutiérrez himself have problems with this terminology as he in recent time tends to use Reinado instead of Reino to focus less on the action of the ruler.

130 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 208 (p. 105).
unjust death, but also of an ever stronger assertion of the right to life and to the joy of Easter.\textsuperscript{131}

Martyrdom in the Latin American context, according to Gutiérrez, is basically connected to people that are committed to the preferential option for the poor. It is always dangerous to defend the right to life of the poor and insignificants. The spiritual experience in Latin America is paradoxically characterised by premature and unjust death as well as the joy of Easter.

“The blood of our martyrs will be the seed of many new Christians, and it is a consolation for us to see that we are enduring our share of the sufferings still lacking in the passion of Christ (Col. 1:24) for the redemption of the world.” Gutiérrez quotes the Guatemalan bishops in a text from 1981 to show that there is a dimension of martyrdom in Christian faith.\textsuperscript{132} But in spite of all his appreciation before martyrdom, the cruelty behind the reality of martyrdom must never be forgotten, neither “the abhorrence that the conditions giving rise to these murders make us feel”.\textsuperscript{133} Suffering and martyrdom can, according to Gutiérrez, never be something strived for but one has to be aware that the price can be high for those who support the church of the poor and defend the rights of the poor. The experience of the cross is thus a concrete reality for many Christians in Latin America.\textsuperscript{134} The paradox is that it is not “Christian” to strive for martyrdom because that would be the same as saying that we would like to have executioners, but, as Gutiérrez states, “we may not wish to have murderers”.\textsuperscript{135} Jesus did not strive to be killed, but his questioning of the powerful put his freedom and life in danger, and he was aware of it.\textsuperscript{136}

Gutiérrez points to Archbishop Oscar Romero in San Salvador. He was aware of the risks for his own security. He was assassinated because he gave testimony about the God of life and for his predilection for the poor and oppressed. To Gutiérrez martyrdom is “the final accomplishment of life”.\textsuperscript{137} It is a question of solidarity with the poor and of giving testimony to the grace of God. “What brought Jesus to his death, and what brings his present-day followers to their death, is precisely the coherence of message and commitment.”\textsuperscript{138}

Gutiérrez synthesises these perspectives in the following way:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{131} Gutiérrez 1983, p. 12 (p. 2).
  \item \textsuperscript{132} Message from the Guatemalan bishops’ conference 6 August, 1981, quoted in Gutiérrez 1983, p. 174 (p. 116).
  \item \textsuperscript{133} Gutiérrez 1983, p. 175 (p. 116).
  \item \textsuperscript{134} Gutiérrez 1988, p. 54 (p. 40).
  \item \textsuperscript{135} “[…] no podemos desear que haya asesinos.” Gutiérrez 2005b.
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Gutiérrez 2005b.
  \item \textsuperscript{137} Gutiérrez 1988, p. 55-56 (p. 41).
  \item \textsuperscript{138} Gutiérrez 1988, p. 56 (p. 41).
\end{itemize}
The God in whom we believe is the God of life. Belief in the resurrection entails defending the life of the weakest members of society. Looking for the Lord among the living leads to commitment to those who see their right to life being constantly violated. To assert the resurrection of the Lord is to assert life in the face of death. Now, for the Christians the resurrection is a Passover or passage. Passover in the Bible is the passage from oppression in Egypt to the promised Land. The celebration of Passover meant remembering the gift of deliverance. It is in this context that Jesus located his own work, which was a passage from sin, oppression, and death to grace, freedom and life. There is no affirmation of life that does not entail passing through death, confronting death. This is the witness that so many in Latin America have given us in our time. The message of the resurrection of the Lord and of our own resurrection in union with his is clear: life and not death, has the final word in history.\textsuperscript{139}

Martyrdom is a profound consequence of commitment to the God of life. Without idealising it, Gutiérrez points to its crucial role in today’s spirituality in Latin America, which makes it a profound part of the pastoral theological discourse in Gutiérrez’ writings. Martyrdom has for some become the ultimate consequence of solidarity with the poor and the defence of the lives of the weakest in society. It is an expression of defiant hope as it asserts life in the face of death.

4.3 Conclusion

In Gutiérrez’ books it is possible to trace the pastoral theological discourse as a synthesis of the Catholic theological, the liberal and the radical political discourses. His books are both a basis and a synthesis of his theological essays and reflections. In his books he finalises thoughts that he first had broached in his essays, lectures and homilies. This in turn gives him a solid basis for new essays and reflections in specific moments as we saw in the previous chapter.

Undoubtedly there is a clear focus on life and the sanctity of life in Gutiérrez’ writings during the 1980s and 1990s which makes it likely to declare his theology, at least during these years, a theology of life. We have seen elements of his theology of life also in his first writings in the 1970s, but it is in the 1980s and 1990s that they become crucial. This strong emphasis on life sustains position put forward in the essays we examined in the previous chapter.

Life for Gutiérrez is first and foremost a gift from God, a consequence of his love with a specific focus on the poor, the poor of Jesus Christ. The right to life is closely related to justice and is elaborated against the background of a premature and unjust death. Therefore Christian proclamation must take

\textsuperscript{139} Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 54 (p. 14-15).
this situation into consideration. There is a clear interaction between the radical political and the Catholic theological discourse. The right to life is also expressed by a people who organise themselves in the struggle for their liberation. From a Christian position, like that of Gutiérrez’, the link to resurrection is crucial.

In Gutiérrez’ books it is the committed pastor who talks through a pastoral theological discourse. Gutiérrez talks to his readers in words that comfort, teach, admonish and encourage in both general and specific situations. One basis for a pastoral theological discourse is the theology of life. From this position Gutiérrez speaks words which give reason for hope into a context that is hard for many.

The predominant discourse in Gutiérrez’ books is the radical political discourse. His theology of life is all the time related to the situation of institutionalised violence, poverty and injustice. Premature and unjust death is the circumstance into which Gutiérrez proclaims his theology of life. The liberal political discourse is toned down in his books as they are not primarily written for the specific moment. The Catholic theological discourse is, however, present both explicitly in all the references to papal encyclicals and CELAM conferences and implicitly in constant calls for committed Christians and the church to take action in favour of the poor.

One can implicitly read words of both comfort and encouragement in Gutiérrez’ books, but these words are not directly addressed to specific people as his homilies and theological essays are. We find much teaching in the books and they can be seen as an instrument for the pastor to give his readers an orientation for interpreting the situation and relating it to the doctrine of the church. Above all there is a fair amount of admonition in the books as they are full of indications intended to guide committed Christian in their actions.

In more specific moments, when Gutiérrez speaks to people directly affected by the violent situation as in most of the texts analysed in the previous chapter, the pastoral theological discourse is more focused on comfort and encouragement in order to give reasons for hope. The picture we get from his books is a more general one in which the pastoral theological discourse is more focused on admonition and teaching. Comfort and encouragement are for particular people in a specific situation, especially the poor and people directly affected by violence, whereas admonition is for the general public, including those who have to read Gutiérrez in English and other translations.
Chapter 5

Gutiérrez as pastor in the shadow of violence – an assessment

We have seen how Gutiérrez participates in the public debate during critical and difficult moments in Peru. His role has been the committed pastor, “pastor of the nation”. This sketches a slightly different picture than the Gutiérrez we meet in his internationally published books. We should, however, not overemphasise the different pictures as there is a dynamic interrelationship between his essays and his books: Christian hope can be said to be based on the gospel of the God of life.

Especially for our analysis of Gutiérrez’ written contributions in La República, the four discourses introduced in the introduction have been useful. The pastoral theological discourse in his writings can be been seen as a synthesis of the catholic theological, liberal and radical political discourses, but it is also a discourse giving reason for hope and encouraging to action. Taken all together they facilitate our reading of Gutiérrez and make it possible to sketch his pastoral program.

Theological reflection for Gutiérrez develops as these four discourses interact in the see – judge – act model. The interaction between the four discourses can be exemplified from this model where the first step, to see, refers to the radical and the liberal political discourses; the second, to judge, to the Catholic theological discourse; and finally, the third, to act, to the pastoral theological discourse.

Apart from using the four discourses to analyse Gutiérrez’ texts, I have also examined the extent to which his texts comfort, teach, admonish and encourage people in Peruvian society. These elements are emphasized to different extents depending on the situation and the genre of texts. Generally speaking we can say that the teaching element is always present, but mostly implicitly. In contact with people affected by violence and in his preaching, stress is normally put on comfort and encouragement, whereas his essays stress admonition.

In the introduction I raised a series of questions that I sought to deal with in my analysis. In this concluding chapter I will try to take them a step further as I point to some vital themes and concepts central in Gutiérrez’ reflec-
tions that I have taken from the texts analysed. These themes are summarised in key words that I have taken from Gutiérrez’ own texts. These are themes that gives a picture of his reflection as pastor.

I will come back to them soon, but first I would like to point to a characteristic in Gutiérrez’ style of writing that made me group these themes in the way I did.

5.1 A conflict perspective and a pastoral model

In a conflictive society such as the Peruvian, especially in the two last decades of the previous century, it should not come as a surprise that there is a dialectical character in much of what Gutiérrez writes. The tensions between social classes in Peru and their relationship to the concomitant conflicts are deep and characteristic of Peruvian society. These conflicts have their origins in Peru’s colonial heritage and are characteristic of the whole Latin American continent as we saw in Chapter 1. This colonial heritage is one important cause behind the continuing reality of institutionalised violence. The major expression of this institutionalised violence is the widespread and endemic poverty that is one of the primary characteristics of Latin America as a whole. To Gutiérrez it is important to stress this in most of what he writes and says; poverty thus becomes the basic hermeneutical principle in his entire theological reflection.

Institutionalised violence manifests itself, according to Gutiérrez, in a fundamental conflict between the powers of life and the powers of death; it is a conflict between life and death. The armed conflict between Sendero Luminoso and the armed forces put both sides on the same side as representatives of the powers of death in opposition to large sectors of Peruvian society that favoured life and respect for human rights. The political violence must, according to Gutiérrez, be seen as a reflection of this fundamental conflict and thus cannot be understood in isolation from it. We have seen how Gutiérrez often points to poverty and social injustice as a breeding ground for the terrorist violence of Sendero and the repressive response of the authorities. Only if this is taken into consideration is it possible to grasp and interpret the political violence that haunted Peru in the 1980s and 1990s.

According to Gutiérrez the conflict between Sendero and the Peruvian authorities was more superficial. More real, however, was the conflict between civil society on one hand and both Sendero and the Peruvian authorities on the other. It was not just the fact that common people were exposed to the crossfire between the armed opposition groups and the authorities; the civilian population was under attack from both Sendero and the armed forces. Yet these conflicts also reflected the fundamental conflict: the institutionalised violence itself.
This more specific conflict, the political violence that Sendero initiated in 1980, which was investigated and analysed by the Peruvian TRC, was interpreted in this wider context within its report and represents a position that Gutiérrez fully agrees with.

Out of a socio-political analysis of the conflict Gutiérrez responds from the perspective of a pastor relating to the people as individuals and to the Peruvian population in general. His pastoral response is manifested in the pastoral theological discourse, which reflects the see – judge – act model and interacts with the other three discourses.

The political violence was the backdrop to which Gutiérrez responded in his pastoral task. As we saw in Chapter 3 he both responded in some critical moments but he also let the socio-political context be reflected in his preaching, not least at Christmas and Easter. Christian commitment as the ultimate consequence of the incarnation as well as the struggle between life and death, which the gospel proclaims life is victorious over death through the resurrection of Jesus, made, as we have seen, these references inevitable for Gutiérrez. Simultaneously he tried to set the issue of political violence in relation to its root causes.

When Gutiérrez addressed the public through the theological essays that were published by La República, he was not afraid to point to the deeper conflicts in society. He identified the fundamental conflict between those with economic and political interests and those without economic and political power: the poor and insignificants. These conflicts that characterise today’s situation in Peru and other countries in the global south have, for Gutiérrez, a clear reference to the situation in the society in which Jesus lived. Even though there were other factors it was, according to Gutiérrez, how those in power interpreted this conflict that led to Jesus’ death on the cross.

To Gutiérrez highly political issues become pastoral concerns, not only when he met relatives of the victims of political violence. Also the pastoral theological discourse has political implications besides giving reason for hope as they also call for action. In the final analysis, according to Gutiérrez, every theology is pastoral theology since theology in general responds to pastoral questions.¹ That is why he uses a pastoral language in his texts, not only in his preaching and in his theological reflections but also when he addresses the general public in his essays in La República. This is what makes his intervention relevant to the public debate. He is not just repeating what other moulders of opinion say, but rather sustains his position on a critical theological reflection resulting from his theological pastoral program.

¹ Gutiérrez is, however, cautious about this as he is aware that the term “pastoral theology” easily could be misunderstood. “Pastoral theology [correctly understood] is the only serious theology”, he said to me in the interview in Lima 1 February, 2008. He pointed to how Dietrich Bonhoeffer tried to respond to the “adult” human being, Johann Baptist Metz to the situation after holocaust and he himself to the situation in Ayacucho. OK-A 10d.
5.2 Binary oppositions

The use of paradoxes in his writing is characteristic of Gutiérrez and being aware of this is fundamental in order to fully understand what he says. Without doubt Gutiérrez’ way of expressing himself has a dialectical character. Peace is always described in relation to institutionalised violence. The right to life is sketched from the perspective of a situation of death that is the condition of the poor. Latin America is described as a “land of premature and unjust death”. Despite this rift between rich and poor in Latin America Gutiérrez adds that there is a strong affirmation of both the right to life and the joy of Easter. It is not possible to separate these perspectives; premature death, defence of the right to life and the paschal joy are intimately interrelated. This intimate relationship between life and death turns out to be one of the most important dialectics in Gutiérrez’ theology.

There is a manner of using dialectics and paradoxes in his writings that can be seen as resulting from Gutiérrez’ sense of humour and his readiness for irony, which probably saved him from becoming cynical during the years of political violence in Peru.²

Some of the themes that summarise Gutiérrez’ reflection as pastor are familiar to many of his readers and some are more specifically a response to the particular context. A reading from a conflict perspective taking into consideration the dialectic style in Gutiérrez’ writing made me group them in six conflicting poles. This structure has been constructed on the basis of the analytical tool of “binary oppositions” developed by structuralists and others.³

The fundamental binary opposition is the polarized conflict between death and life. Death is both the origin as well as the logical and ultimate consequence of violence and life can be said to be both the origin and the ultimate consequence of peace. At the same time, Christian faith claims that resurrection breaks the boundaries of death; it is life not death that will get the final word. But not only that; in Christian spirituality there is a strong tradition that says that something has to die in order to let something else live. Sometimes this is described with the expression “through death to life”, that is “the law of the wheat grain”. According to this, life presupposes death as Jesus said in John 12:24: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Gutiérrez

² See above, Chapter 3, p. 189-190.
³ A simple definition of a binary opposition can be found in an article by Sorcha Fogarty, University College Cork, in The Literary Encyclopedia. 15 February, 2005, http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=122 (retrieved 8 May, 2009) where she quotes Ferdinand de Saussure; for de Saussure binary oppositions are “means by which the units of language have value or meaning; each unit is defined against what it is not”. I am indebted to Dr Imelda Vega-Centeno for the development of this structure after our conversations 28 January, 2008 and 19 April, 2009. She has herself used the binary opposition tool in her analysis of the ideology of the Apra party, Vega-Centeno 1991.
touches upon it in a text that I quoted above: “There is no affirmation of life that does not entail passing through death, confronting death.”

There is no static relation in these oppositions. On the contrary, they describe a movement from a state of violence to a utopian vision of peace, from injustice to justice, from impunity to reconciliation, from despair to hope etc. What Gutiérrez intends in his pastoral program is to admonish and encourage his readers to take part in this movement; to “be friends of life” is one of the ways he describes this concept.

In this we can identify the four elements in our pastoral model. The element of teaching is implicit and present in all conflicting poles and the stress on the other elements varies from pole to pole. In the first four oppositions the focus is mostly on admonition and challenge, while comfort and encouragement characterise the last two poles.

5.2.1 From institutionalised violence to peace

The general discussion during the time of political violence in Peru circled around how to obtain peace and national harmony and secure democracy. For people in general it was the liberal political discourse that would bring an end to the chaotic situation in the country. As we have seen, Gutiérrez does not disagree with the liberal political discourse, but he finds it to be insufficient; peace cannot be defined as an “absence of problems” as he once expressed it. If the root causes of the present situation are not attacked, there will never be a lasting solution to the situation. That is why the radical political discourse is needed and has to condition the liberal political discourse. For Gutiérrez the concept of institutionalised violence that was introduced in the document on peace in Medellín is fundamental for his analysis.

Already the fact that it was developed in a document that focuses on peace indicates the conflictive relationship between the two poles in this binary opposition. The bishops referred in the document to the statement by Pope Paul VI just before the conference that “development is the new word for peace” in a time when intellectuals in the global south, among them Gutiérrez, began to question the word ‘development’. As a matter of fact, the bishops did not explore any further the issue of development but focused on the structures of injustice that gave rise to the concept of institutionalised violence. According to the logic of the bishops it was impossible to say something about peace without referring to the acute violent context of the contemporary Latin American continent; underdevelopment was here said to be “an unjust situation which promotes tensions that conspire against peace”

4 Gutiérrez 1989b, p. 54 (p. 14). See above, Chapter 4, p. 223.
5 Gutiérrez 1993a, p. 67 (p. 182).
that in turn creates a situation that cannot be described in anything other than as “a sinful situation”.

For Gutiérrez this dichotomy is crucial for his theological reflection in general. Even though the concept of institutionalised violence as such is not used very often in his writings it is obvious that it is a guiding principle in his analysis of the socio-political context and his intention to theologically reflect upon it; institutionalised violence is used almost synonymously with poverty and injustice. According to Gutiérrez this situation has characterised Latin America ever since the arrival of the first Europeans at the end of the 15th century. His reflection on institutionalised violence gave him a useful interpretive key to understand and make sense of the political violence that erupted in Peru in 1980 with the first attack of Sendero.

During the 1980s and the 1990s it was not enough to refer to unjust structures or “inhuman poverty”; something had to be said about the “bloodthirsty and unacceptable terrorism”. But unlike some commentators, Gutiérrez never spoke of political violence alone as an isolated issue; he always related it to poverty and unjust structures. Without justifying the methods of Sendero Gutiérrez constantly stressed the need to understand the phenomenon against a background of institutionalised violence manifested in poverty and unjust structures, which according to him constituted a breeding ground for all kinds of violent expression, including the violence adopted by Sendero.

Gutiérrez’ interpretation of the institutionalised violence became a useful tool in his critique of both the methods of Sendero and the repressive response by the Peruvian authorities. The pretentious use of terror took people’s attention away from the structural injustice that Sendero pretended to fight against. Likewise the military response by the government served as a pretended legitimisation for not confronting the institutionalised violence; by not confronting poverty and unjust structures the counterinsurgency strategy was completely discredited.

The fact that institutionalised violence was used in the Medellín document on peace indicates that peace is not just a question of a cessation of fighting; it is something much more profound. This is a position that Gutiérrez fully supports and he stresses that this process must be guided by a vision of authentic and true peace. The rhetoric of the Fujimori government in the 1990s about pacification was, according to Gutiérrez, a superficial strategy that had as its only ambition to end the violence of Sendero and MRTA. Authentic and true peace understood from the Old Testament interpretation of shalom cannot be based on anything other than justice, which implies the right of all people, including the poor, to live with dignity. The lesson that can be learned from both the Peruvian TRC report and Gutiérrez’ constant stress on the need to confront injustice and poverty is that if institutionalised
violence is not dealt with at its root there is an immediate risk that phenomena such as the violence of Sendero might easily appear again.

Peace does not come out of nothing, it has to be constructed. This statement from Medellin⁸ is fully accepted by Gutiérrez. Peace is not just a guiding principle; it must be converted into action. As peace presupposes the establishment of justice, Gutiérrez invites Christians not to remain passive or indifferent but to take an active part in people’s effort to respond to and counteract institutionalised violence and be, in the vocabulary of Matthew, peacemakers (5:9).

The liberal political discourse about peace and national harmony dominated the public debate in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s. The aim was to attain an end to the political violence and establish peace and order. There was less emphasis put on the root causes. In this dialectic the liberal political discourse is shown to be important also for Gutiérrez for he is also concerned about the establishment of peace and harmony in society. But it is equally clear that the means to get there must be described with the radical political discourse. The Catholic theological discourse is present in the sense that it is the adoption of the concept of institutionalised violence taken from Medellín that is the incentive for Gutiérrez to write as he does. The pastoral theological discourse in this dialectic speaks implicitly about giving reason for hope, but explicitly it is a call for action, for Christians to become peacemakers.

5.2.2 From injustice to justice

Justice is another pole of opposition to institutionalised violence, but the concept of justice is so important for Gutiérrez that it deserves specific attention. It is, however, important to stress the connection between them as justice is juxtaposed to peace and institutionalised violence to injustice.

The frequent use of the expression from Las Casas that the Indians die “before their time” is one of Gutiérrez’ clearest ways of pointing to the consequences of unjust structures. In many cases people are not dying “at the end of their days, but at the beginning of their days”. Death is what it is all about when poverty and unjust structures are interpreted, a death that for Gutiérrez is unjust and premature. What Las Casas described as a destruction of the Americas, and later also of Africa, in the 16th century is still a reality for the poor and insignificants today. Individual suffering of people is met pastorally by Gutiérrez, but it is always put into a wider context than that. This is, for him, a systematic and structural injustice that has to be confronted with a deep commitment for justice by those who call themselves Christians.

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⁸ Medellín 2:14
The hermeneutical principle *par excellence* for Gutiérrez is the preferential option for the poor. Poverty and the situation of the poor is the underlying factor to which all he writes about relates to. This perspective on the poor and their situation is what really characterises liberation theology. Gutiérrez has been faithful to this principle throughout all his theological reflection, which he once formulated as doing theology “from the underside of history”.9 This sensitivity for the needs of the poor can be traced in all the writings I have examined in this dissertation. His concern for the poor is a constant feature that is always directly or indirectly present in his texts.

Justice is one of the most important concepts in the theology of Gutiérrez. It is easy to see its presence directly and implicitly in most of what he writes. Peace can never be separated from justice and both concepts can be derived from the Old Testament notion of *shalom*. It is described as conditional for life in harmony with the will of God and also nature. In Psalm 85 Gutiérrez finds a dynamic and poetic link between peace and justice where it says that peace and justice embrace and even kiss each other and that justice will lead the advance.

In every reference to the political violence, Gutiérrez stresses that poverty and unjust structures constitute the root cause for every kind of violence. Striving to eliminate extreme poverty is thus essential in the construction of a just society. The governments’ talk of pacification and ending the killing is not enough; the nation is aspiring something more, it wants an authentic peace.

Needless to say, in this dialectic it is the radical political discourse that is predominant. It reflects one of the most important contributions by Gutiérrez, not only to the public debate on the socio-political context, but also to the universal theological reflection. The strong emphasis on *shalom* as his biblical foundation also shows that the Catholic theological discourse is present and the pastoral theological discourse is admonishing people to take action and confront the unjust structures.

5.2.3 From impunity to reconciliation

Historically there is a long tradition of impunity in Latin American society and Peru is no exception. It is a highly polemical issue in the political debate as was demonstrated, for instance, in the debate around the trial on ex-president Alberto Fujimori. Almost per definition, members of the armed forces are normally pardoned or not even tried for excesses or violations of human rights. Therefore it is a positive sign that a series of truth commissions have been set up in some twenty countries in the world since the early

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9 Gutiérrez 1979 p. 305-395 (p. 169-221). The essay *Teología desde el reverso de la historia* was first published as booklet by CEP in 1977 and later revised and published in Gutiérrez 1979.
The most well-known commission is of course the South African TRC. After the South African experience the process of reconciliation has been added to some truth commissions like the Peruvian one, which makes three dimensions essential in the process: truth seeking, reconciliation building and recommendations to the pursuit of lasting peace with justice.

It was not until the controversial amnesty law, adopted by the Peruvian congress in June 1995, that Gutiérrez really began to explore the reconciliation concept. He took the offensive in justifying this approach with references to Christian concepts such as forgiveness and reconciliation. In his passionate essay *Vergüenza*, he responded firmly to what he perceived as a perverse manipulation of these concepts.

The notions of reconciliation in the books by Gutiérrez normally relate to God’s reconciliation with humankind through Jesus’ death on the cross. In *Vergüenza* we find something new. This is a more preliminary interpretation than in the later *Desenterrar la verdad*. In *Vergüenza* Gutiérrez focuses specifically on the need to establish justice in society and the need to start judicial processes against those who committed crimes against human rights. National reconciliation is, for Gutiérrez, not least a process that has to take time, but also a process that cannot be ordered from above which seeks to force people to forget what has taken place. One important element in the reconciliation process is to search for the truth of what really happened. The Cantuta case that was in focus for the amnesty law became a symbol for the need to clarify what happened and to start judicial processes against those responsible.

Gutiérrez was one of many advocates for the establishment of the Peruvian TRC and he carefully followed its development. This permitted him to develop his conception of reconciliation. In his later essay he clearly states that reconciliation must be based on both truth and justice. Forgiveness by no means excludes sanction against those who committed crimes. To know what happened, according to Gutiérrez, is not inessential in ensuring respect for the victims and their relatives. The willingness to learn from the past is set up as a condition for real reconciliation by Gutiérrez.

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10 These commissions can generally be presented as follows: “truth commissions are bodies established to research and report on human rights abuses over a certain period of time in a particular country or in relation to a particular conflict. Truth commissions allow victims, their relatives and perpetrators to give evidence of human rights abuses, providing an official forum for their accounts. In most instances, truth commissions are also required by their mandate to provide recommendations on steps to prevent a recurrence of such abuses.” Retrieved 9 May 2009 from the website of the United States Institute of Peace and their Truth Commissions Digital Collection, http://www.usip.org/library/truth.html. Another useful website to consult is http://www.truthcommission.org/.

12 Gutiérrez 1995b, see above Chapter 3, p. 128-137.
13 Gutiérrez 2003b, see above Chapter 3, p. 137-149.
Truth and justice are not enough in the reconciliation process, according to Gutiérrez, there is also a need from a Christian perspective to approach those who suffered from the violations, the victims. He therefore stresses the need for consolation as a Christian and human attitude in relation to the victims. We saw this in his way of meeting pastorally both the relatives of the Cantuta victims and the Huilca family. In the homily for the Cantuta victims he even put their quest for justice as a condition for consolation. Consolation is seen as a guiding principle for Christian behaviour. Closely related to consolation is, according to Gutiérrez from his reading of Isaiah, liberation; that is liberation from a situation that hinders people from living a decent life.

On a recent occasion Gutiérrez systematised three conditions for the reconciliation process: memory, justice and forgiveness.\(^{14}\) He says that it is impossible to understand what takes place today without remembering the past.\(^{15}\) It is likely important to stress the need for justice as “poverty is not a destiny but a condition; not a misfortune but an injustice”.\(^{16}\) Finally, Gutiérrez points to the need for forgiveness. For him as priest and pastor it is important to stress that forgiveness above all is a gift that liberates both the one that is forgiven and the one that forgives.\(^{17}\)

In a conflict situation, a process of reconciliation can open a way out of the conflict. This is, however, not an easy solution. A thorough interpretation of the different levels of Christian understanding of reconciliation thus becomes a tool striving for justice and against impunity.

In this dialectic it is the liberal political discourse that is predominant while the radical political discourse gives an underlying perspective to it. Gutiérrez’ interpretation of reconciliation shows that the Catholic theological discourse is present as well as the pastoral theological discourse.

5.2.4 From selfishness and indifference to solidarity

Not only strategies to construct harmony, democratic structures and peace are important in the liberal political discourse, according to Gutiérrez. He also sees the need to focus on attitudes and human values as instruments in this discourse. In some of his essays he points to ethical attitudes, moral integrity and moral authority as means for constructing a society with human and democratic coexistence. He takes elements from the Catholic theological discourse to strengthen ethical attitudes and elements from the pastoral theological discourse to promote a willingness to work for change and to pro-

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\(^{14}\) Gutiérrez 2007a. This was originally a contribution to an international seminar on reconciliation organised by the IBC in Lima in August 2006 titled *Exigencias de la reconciliación en nuestro país*.

\(^{15}\) Gutiérrez 2007a, p. 186-188.

\(^{16}\) “La pobreza no es un destino, es una condición; no es un infortunio, es una injusticia.” Gutiérrez 2007a, p. 188.

\(^{17}\) Gutiérrez 2007a, p. 189-190.
mote a sense of disinterestedness, in which solidarity with the most vulnerable is one important ingredient.

One aspect for Gutiérrez to stress in his reflection on Christmas is his interpretation of Christmas as a festival where the incarnation of Jesus is manifested as God’s solidarity with humankind. For Gutiérrez Christian solidarity is based on an incarnation which presupposes solidarity. As the birth of Jesus represents God’s incarnation in history, Christians are invited to incarnate themselves in their own history in solidarity with the poor.

A similar interpretation can be found in relation to Easter, where the death of Jesus can be seen as the ultimate consequence of the incarnation as God’s solidarity with humankind. It was also solidarity with the poor that brought many of the recent Latin American martyrs to their deaths.

Fundamental for Gutiérrez’ reflection on solidarity and commitment is Matthew 25:31-46 even if it is more implicitly than directly present in his writings. In this passage Jesus’ identification with the poor, the hungry, the thirsty etc, “the least of these who are members of my family”, is essential. Both Las Casas and the Latin American bishops’ conferences in Puebla, Santo Domingo and Aparecida have pointed to this passage and Gutiérrez develops it. He points to two dimensions: Jesus identifies himself with the poor, which strengthens the poor in their struggle, and this identification is therefore a call to committed Christians to see Christ in the suffering of the poor.

Jesus was born in a remote spot of the Roman Empire. This fact is fundamental for Gutiérrez and was stressed on several occasions. The shepherds were the first to receive the message of Jesus’ birth. Gutiérrez stresses this line throughout his reading of the New Testament from the shepherds to the women outside tomb of Jesus as the first witnesses of the resurrection. It indicates that the poor are not only a target group, the proclamation of resurrection starts with people whose existence is marked by unjust death.

The fact that Jesus’ death was not natural but imposed is an indication for Gutiérrez that death is closely related to the suffering of the poor. And this means that it is from the suffering of the poor that the church should preach the gospel of resurrection.

This has consequences for the mission of the church. In other texts Gutiérrez makes a point of the fact that the Great Commandment on mission in Matthew 28 was given in the Galilee. This means that the starting place for mission is from a despised place in Israel, a remote spot in the Roman Empire.

Gutiérrez is convinced that there will always be time to respond to what is taking place. He constantly encourages people not to surrender. Passivity and indifference are permanent threats to intentions to promote initiatives for just structures in Peruvian society that counteract the present state of violence and injustice. As long as people are true to their ideals, there will always be a possibility to work for a change. One way to do this that must not
be underestimated is to publicly speak out and denounce the violations of fundamental human rights. Gutiérrez’ reflection around the expressive silence after the bomb in the Tarata street in 1992 when many people were so shocked that they were not even able to speak out, points to the need to find words to enable people to come out of their silent trauma and begin to act.\(^\text{18}\)

One of the objectives of Sendero and possibly also of the armed forces was to frighten people into silence and passivity. Just to make people speak in order to come out of fear is one way of making people counteract the forces that tried to control and dominate the population.

Another perhaps more subtle aspect of the need to enable people to speak is the apparent risk that the voices of those that control the situation, the authorities and to some extent Sendero, would be the only voices that people listen to. Gutiérrez has pointed to the immediate risk that this would corrode the language from inside as the interpretation of what takes place might be used to censure and even falsify reality.

Solidarity and commitment with the poor is fundamental for Gutiérrez where both lucidity and courage are necessary Christian attitudes. In some cases this solidarity has a costly price; it can lead to death. Martyrdom has been given a new and tragic meaning in many Latin American countries, including Peru, when committed Christians dedicate themselves to the poor in their struggle for liberation.

One of the most important motivations for Christian solidarity can, according to Gutiérrez, be traced in his understanding that there is only one history, God’s history. It is not possible to separate God’s history as being something apart from the history of human kind. It was into this history that God let himself be born in Jesus. For Gutiérrez this is a manifestation of God’s solidarity with human beings and thus an exigency to solidarity for the followers of Jesus.

This dialectic starts in the liberal political discourse, but the underlying discourse is once again the radical political as solidarity with the poor is its focus. But the Catholic theological discourse is also present as solidarity is motivated by biblical texts. The call for solidarity is also part of the pastoral theological discourse as it implies a call for action and solidarity as an essential Christian attitude.

5.2.5 From despair to a hermeneutic of hope

The strong accent on resurrection and the forces of life in the midst of death, exemplified by poverty and injustice, gives a solid basis for the strong emphasis Gutiérrez gives to hope. Without shrinking away from a horrendous situation he finds signs of deep commitment and persistent faith, not least from the martyrs, which makes faith more profound and encourages people

\(^{18}\) See Gutiérrez 1992c, analysed in Chapter 3, p. 121-128.
to endure. All these examples create hope in difficult moments. It is a flourishing hope that Gutiérrez sees growing among the poor and constitutes a real challenge to the forces of death.

Consequently Gutiérrez has written about theology as a matter of a hermeneutic of hope. This became central to him during the period of political violence in Peru. In the difficult situation of premature and unjust death, hope for Gutiérrez can never be an easy hope or an illusion nor can it constitute a pure escapism.

Hope is also for Gutiérrez a way to resist resignation. One reason for this position he finds in Jesus’ free acceptance to face death on the cross; Jesus accepted the way to the cross through suffering with open eyes. Gutiérrez stresses the consistency in the life of Jesus; Jesus knew that the conflict with the powerful would take him to the cross. This consistency is a model for Christians today, especially in a difficult time such as during the two last decades of the 20th century in Peru. Christian hope based on resurrection gives rise to what Gutiérrez calls terquedad.19 This attitude is the foundation for Christian behaviour in difficult moments. It is closely related to attitudes such as loyalty and fidelity to the mission of the church and makes it possible for the Christian to stand firm whatever might happen.

As a result of Christian hope, Gutiérrez can stress that there will always be time to react. No matter how difficult the moment might be, there will always be space for people of good will to act. Therefore an urgent plea for people not to lose hope but to be willing to act is present in most of what Gutiérrez wrote during the difficult years of political violence. It was a position that he based on Paul’s message to the Corinthians where they are encouraged to “be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Hope is not something that Gutiérrez can trace only from the message in the Bible. People that are committed and try to do something in the midst of times of despair transmit hope to others. Gutiérrez finds them often among the poor themselves. They are like glow-worms that light up the darkness in the tunnel and undermine the structures that uphold the same tunnel. Their example is said to light up even the darkest night.

To Gutiérrez hope is not something that just can be taken for granted. It has to be strived for and even protected. The fact that the Spanish verb esperar means both ‘to hope’ and ‘to wait’ is an indication of his use of it. As we saw in one of his texts it even implies an element of vigilance, meaning that the Christian also should be part of a movement that promotes and protects democracy and respect for human rights. This is a call out of passivity to

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19 This Spanish word means, as has been said above, ‘stubbornness’ but can also mean resistance. See above, Chapter 3, p. 188-190.
protest against the political development when values such as human rights are threatened by society in general and the political leaders in particular.

Joy is an attitude that Gutiérrez stresses particularly during Christmas and Easter but also in difficult moments. He also stresses the need to articulate this cry of joy even though the cry seems to get stuck in people’s throats. He needs to stress that joy is essential in the Christian life and that there is no contradiction of speaking of joy even in difficult moments. He often points out that there are always good moments even in difficult situations. Suffering is not opposed to joy; but sadness is. Therefore it is possible to suffer and still be joyful.

In this dialectic it is the pastoral theological discourse that is in focus; a discourse that is sustained by the Catholic theological discourse. In my interpretation, for Gutiérrez as pastor it is perhaps the most important dialectic to overcome. The ultimate aim for the pastoral theological discourse is to give reason for hope and encourage committed Christians to take action. The reflection on the glow-worms for Christmas 1992 focuses on finding reason for hope; the intention is to find hopeful signs in the midst of difficulties. A similar idea is found in the first essay analysed in Chapter 3, Aún es tiempo (‘there is still time’).20 There will always be room for something to be done no matter how difficult the situation might be; this is an implicit call for action. The second essay pointed to the need to speak when most of the people were silent.21 The third essay, Vergüenza (‘Shame’),22 indicates, in my interpretation, the need to also involve sensitivity and even passion in the commitment to do something.

The pastoral theological discourse in this dialectic shows how all four elements in the pastoral model are needed and how they interplay. People needed comfort and encouragement in order to overcome despair and find reason for hope; teaching and admonition were needed to promote people to act.

5.2.6 From death to life

Life and death not only constitute a binary opposition pair, they are intimately interrelated. This is a deep and profound Christian experience that can be followed all through the history of the church. Death is in one aspect contrary to life as a result of institutionalised violence and unjust structures. Death as such is, according to Gutiérrez, the result of something evil, ultimately sin. But Gutiérrez is convinced that death will never get the final word in history. At the same time life presupposes death, according to the law of the wheat grain.

20 Gutiérrez 1986c, see above, Chapter 3, p. 114-120.
21 Gutiérrez 1992c, see above, Chapter 3, p. 121-128.
22 Gutiérrez 1995b, see above, Chapter 3, p. 128-137.
In a socio-political context so much marked by death, Gutiérrez’ preaching of life becomes powerful. His theological reflection is based on his interpretation of the whole Latin American context of premature and unjust death from the end of the 15th century to our present days. That is why early witnesses such as Las Casas and Guaman Poma are so important for him to understand the present situation. Their testimony sheds light on the present situation and makes it possible to understand also a phenomenon such as Sendero. Gutiérrez makes the methodological and hermeneutical key he discovered in Las Casas his own so that the right to life and freedom of the Indians can be a criterion also for the interpretation of today’s socio-political context. This makes it possible for Gutiérrez to interpret and understand both the specific emergence of Sendero and the underlying causes behind their emergence.

Both political violence and institutionalised violence represent, according to Gutiérrez, a complete contempt for human life and dignity. This is a situation that always has to be criticised and counteracted no matter if the violence is provoked by the authorities or by revolutionary groups. Gutiérrez has in his essays and reflections clearly taken distance from both the prison massacres in 1986 and the attacks of Sendero because of their total lack of respect for human life and dignity.

With the assassination of Monsignor Romero and the emergence of the political violence in Peru in 1980, the theology of life became a central issue in Gutiérrez’ theology; his most important epithet for God during these years became “the God of life”. The power of life is always sketched against the background of the apparent force of the powers of death. Gutiérrez traces the origin of liberation theology to how to find a way to proclaim the life of the risen Jesus in the conditions of death that characterise the lives of the poor.

For Gutiérrez life is a gift from God because God is the God of life. To be a Christian therefore means to believe in the God of life. Being a gift of God, life is not just a question of survival but above all a question of a life lived with human dignity. Gutiérrez’ frequent reference to John 10:10 (“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”) must be understood in this context to be in contrast to those who represent the theology of prosperity. It is not a life in superfluity but a life in human dignity that Jesus offers, according to Gutiérrez.

Gutiérrez relates also the concept of shalom to creation as life can be said to be an expression of the will of God manifested in creation. As creator God’s intention was to maintain life and the earth was intended to provide needs for all living beings. To Gutiérrez this opens what can be seen as a dialectic relationship between creation, incarnation and eschatology. His theology of life is based in creation where the will of God the creator is manifested. It is confirmed in the incarnation through which God chooses to become human in Jesus who came “that they may have life […] abun-
dantly”. Resurrection opens the horizon towards the future, where the forces of life will overcome the forces of death.

Poverty and injustice can never be seen as anything other than a negation of life by Gutiérrez. Poverty means death and is contrary to the intention that the God of life had for creation. From this perspective Gutiérrez develops a dialectic between life and death. This dialectic has become a primary characteristic in Gutiérrez’ theological reflection from 1980 and onwards. With a reference to the book the Wisdom of Solomon, Gutiérrez makes it clear that “God did not make death” (Wisd. 1:13) and points out that there is a close relationship between the godless and death. To him this is a pact with death that counteracts the forces of life. Gutiérrez finds a similar option in Deut. 30:15-20 where the people of Israel were obliged to choose between life and death. People can either make a pact with the forces of death and thus move away from God or make a pact with the God of life and thus become, in the vocabulary of Gutiérrez, a friend of life.

The proclamation of life, not least in a context that is so much marked by death as the Latin American, has for Gutiérrez its deepest foundation in the resurrection of Jesus. It has its natural locus during Easter, but not only then. Resurrection is for Gutiérrez not something that separates the Christian from the harsh life he or she is living; on the contrary it incorporates or incarnates the Christian deeply in ‘the real life’. Resurrection is considered to be the core of the Christian faith. In its celebration the deep relationship between Good Friday and Easter day becomes relevant in a context like that of Peru. Good Friday, where the forces of death seemed to be stronger than the forces of life, must be seen in relation to resurrection. Likewise Easter and resurrection cannot fully be understood if they are not related to the suffering that took Jesus to the cross and today is connected to a situation that is marked by death, specifically for the poor.

How is it possible to celebrate the paschal joy in the midst of the entirety of human suffering? That is the fundamental question for Gutiérrez and the real challenge is to speak about this joy without alienating people. Gutiérrez says that it is not possible to fully proclaim the gospel of resurrection if one has not experienced unjust death; implicitly he is thus suggesting that Christians in the southern hemisphere have something particular to contribute to the universal church’s understanding of resurrection.

All this is expressed in Gutiérrez’ conviction that it is life not death that gets the final word in history. In this context it is impossible not to mention all the martyrs that come out of the witness of the Latin American church. Some of them are well known like Monsignor Romero and others that Gutiérrez mentions in some of the dedications in his books. But most of them are anonymous since they were poor.

Gutiérrez can even see martyrdom as a manifestation of the defence of life. The paschal joy presupposes a willingness to put one’s own life at disposal to defend life. Eventually this might result in martyrdom. Most of the
Christian martyrs in Latin America today, according to Gutiérrez, have been committed to the preferential option for the poor. At the same time as the blood of the martyrs is said to have given nourishment to the church throughout its whole history, it can never be something to strive for as that would legitimise premature and unjust death. To defend life turns out to be dangerous for many committed Christians as they represent a constant challenge and therefore are a threat for those in power as well as for Sendero, as they clearly stand against and criticise the obvious contempt for human life and dignity these groups represent.

All this taken together strongly supports the position of Gutiérrez that the forces of life turn out to be stronger than the forces of death. His frequent references to 1 Cor. 15:54-58 reinforce this. The people in Corinth were actually, in Gutiérrez’ interpretation, invited to make fun of death: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

In this dialectic binary opposition we find elements from the radical political discourse such as the view of institutionalised violence and unjust structures being something evil. This is also a way to relate it to the Catholic theological discourse. But it is the pastoral theological discourse that is predominant. Even though Gutiérrez is not evading people’s suffering or even martyrdom, he focuses on the paschal joy as a force to overcome suffering and despair; life will have the final word. In this dialectic the pastoral program of Gutiérrez becomes clear: it is a question of defending life. This binary opposition reflects a pastoral theological discourse that embraces all four dimensions of the suggested pastoral model; it comforts, teaches, admonishes and encourages people especially in a difficult situation.

5.3 Gutiérrez’ pastoral program: An interpretation of the binary oppositions

The fundamental binary opposition is death versus life. Death is both source and origin as well as the summit and result of institutionalised violence, while life can be said to be source and origin as well as the summit and result of peace. Injustice, impunity, selfishness and despair are consequences of or related to institutionalised violence and ultimately death. Justice, reconciliation, solidarity and hope can equally be said to be consequences of peace according to the Old Testament understanding of shalom and ultimately life.

Each binary opposition constitutes a conflictive tension between each pole. We will thus have a scheme that is illustrated in Figure 2. The obvious consequence of the institutionalised violence is death as we have seen Gutiérrez describe it in most of his writings. The ultimate consequence of poverty is death as real poverty, like institutionalised violence, is always
described as something evil and sinful. To live in the shadow of violence implies in the final analysis death.

With the resurrection of Jesus, this logic is broken, according to Gutiérrez; there is a profound Christian experience that moves from death to life. It is life not death that will get the final word in history. Against the pattern of death, Gutiérrez presents his theology of life.

Figure 2. Binary oppositions in Gutiérrez’ theology.

We have seen above that all four discourses are needed in order to construct this picture. If we start with the first opposition (institutionalised violence versus peace) we have a focus on the liberal political discourse. But this has to be supplemented with both the radical political and the Catholic theological discourses. And in the fundamental dialectic (death versus life), which should not necessarily be seen as something contradictory, we land in the pastoral theological discourse that talks about Christian hope and the victory of life over death.

The idea with the binary oppositions is not to say that some people are good, those who opt for life, and other people evil. The struggle between the forces of life and the forces of death can not only be detected as a social phenomenon, it also takes place within groups of people and even within people themselves. What Gutiérrez suggests in the pastoral theological discourse directed to those who commit themselves to solidarity and transformation is that they break this pattern of death where death is the logical consequence of poverty and injustice. He invites his readers and those who lis-
ten to him to opt for peace and for justice in the midst of institutionalised violence and injustice. In the final analysis this means to break the power of death, to opt for life, to choose life, to become friends with life. The logic that leads to death can thus be broken through committed Christians that opt for life, people that in solidarity with the poor are called to do what they can to take part in the transformation of society.

Gutiérrez can say this with the conviction that, according to him, it is life not death that gets the final word in history. His interpretation of Holy Week and Easter sustains this. The martyrs of the church, both in historic times and today, are examples for the Christian community. Their testimony indicates that life was so important for them that they gave their own lives for it. Today, Gutiérrez says, many of the martyrs die in the struggle for the poor and their rights. In a similar way Gutiérrez pointed to the testimony of the relatives of the victims of the Cantuta case. Their example became a sign of hope.

What characterises Gutiérrez in his pastoral work is his intention to meet people in their situation and in his writings to relate to the immediate context that can be interpreted with our pastoral model. By doing so he also says something that is relevant in a wider context.

Gutiérrez’ intention is to preach the God of life and give reason to hope in the midst of despair and suffering. Through his texts he lets the word of God and the teaching of the Church comfort, teach, admonish and encourage those who listen to him and read his texts. The focus can be stressed slightly differently from time to time, but the four elements are mostly present simultaneously.

The teaching and admonition are focused on the need to have tools in order to both interpret the situation and relate it to the gospel. It is important to stress that this is a mutual process between Gutiérrez and the community whereby a common understanding of society and the mission of the church is developed. Much of the teaching comes from the Catholic theological discourse, but also from the two political discourses. One element in this is the conscientisation process that Gutiérrez and other colleagues adopted from Paulo Freire. The teaching element is focused on a way of understanding society in order to respond to it properly from a Roman Catholic perspective.

23 This is not only a question of Gutiérrez’ parish, but refers to other contexts where he has a pastoral concern.

24 Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian educator famous for his literacy methods. He was in exile in various countries after the military coup in 1964 and moved back to Brazil in 1980. His most famous book is Pedagogia do oprimido (Pedagogy of the Oppressed) from 1968. One example of how Gutiérrez refers to Freire is the following quotation from Teologia de Liberación: “In this process, which Freire calls ‘conscientization’ the oppressed person rejects the oppressive consciousness which dwells in him, becomes aware of his situation, and finds his own language. He becomes, by himself, less dependent and freer, as he commits himself to the transformation and building up of society.” Gutiérrez 1988, p. 178 (p. 113-114).
The admonition element often reflects the teaching and focuses on the challenges that the situation constitutes for the church and its members as they seek to respond to the situation and develop a true discipleship. It is obvious that admonition is crucial in a complex socio-political context such as the Peruvian one in this period. Admonition is specifically addressed to those who have possibilities to influence what takes place in society.

A people without hope will always be in a desperate situation. That is why Gutiérrez finds it is so important to preach and give reason for hope. Comfort and encouragement are normally the focus when he meets with people in need. The comfort and encouragement focus on strengthening the community to endure the situation, to look forward with willingness to transform society and to be prepared for the reign of God. Both these focuses belong mainly to the pastoral theological discourse.

In a tense situation with deeply unjust structures, like that in Peru, it is not strange that Gutiérrez has a prophetic touch in his way of carrying out his pastoral mission. The moment of admonition has therefore a clear nuance of challenge for his audience, specifically the middle class intellectual public. Comfort and encouragement are important perspectives also in Gutiérrez’ public teaching, but it is inevitable that the perspectives of teaching and admonition are more prominent here.

The pastoral theological program that we can trace in the writings of Gutiérrez is found to be an expression of a pastoral theology that is not individualistic but a liberating theological reflection that discusses structures. It is a pastoral program that transcends the structures in society, a kind of collective and sometimes public cure of souls that is built on an analysis of the contemporary socio-political context.

We might even call this program pastoral politics as it liberates people to take political responsibility. It encourages people to realise that it is possible to transform society.

Gutiérrez in his role as pastor speaks both words of comfort and encouragement to broken hearts and words of admonition and warning to those in power who have the capacity to transform society.
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