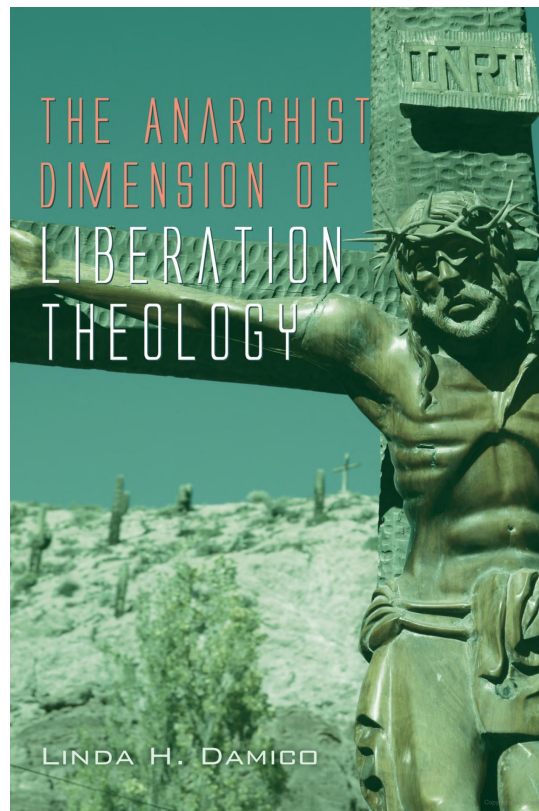


The Anarchist Dimension of Liberation Theology

Linda H. Damico



1985

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[Title Page]

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
THE ANARCHIST DIMENSION OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY
by

LINDA H. DAMICO

A dissertation submitted to the Department of Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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[Synopsis]

THE ANARCHIST DIMENSION OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY
(Publication No.)
Linda H. Damico
The Florida State University
Major Professor: Donald C. Hodges, Ph.D.

tact the Dissertations Customer Sendees Department.

While studies have shown the close connection between liberation theology and Marxism, no one has probed the relationship between liberation theology and anarchism. This study will show that in many of its most prominent themes liberation theology has an anarchist dimension. Its particular ethical concern with freedom, justice, equality, and love, its denunciation of political and economic structures of domination, its emphasis on action, its championing of all oppressed people, its realistic consideration of the issue of violence, and its vision of a future free from all servitudes reveal an indebtedness to anarchism.

This study will also examine some of the sources that have helped lead liberation theology in an anarchist direction. The anarchist elements in the Bible, the example of primitive Christianity, the example of popular religious movements, the progressive elements within the Church, the anarchist components of Marxism, and the influence of certain Latin American political activists and theoreticians have all contributed to the anarchist dimension of liberation theology.

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Preface

While studies have shown the close connection between liberation theology and Marxism, no one has probed the relationship between liberation theology and anarchism. I became aware of a link between the two when I discovered that many of the intellectual sources of liberation theology had been strongly influenced by anarchist thought. When I further discovered that some anarchists and liberation theologians were inspired by many of the same biblical texts, the connection became more evident. The writings of José Porfirio Miranda finally convinced me that my intuitions were accurate. Liberation theology has an anarchist dimension. Its particular ethical concern with freedom, justice, and love, its denunciation of political and economic structures of domination, its emphasis on action, and its vision of a future free from all servitudes reveal an indebtedness to anarchism. This work will examine in detail these and other anarchist themes in the work of some of the leading Latin American theologians.

The structure of each chapter, with the exception of the first and the last, is the same throughout the work. I examine the anarchist view on a particular theme showing differences among the anarchists when significant. This is followed by an examination of the ideas of the liberation theologians on these same themes. Not all themes found in liberation theology have been used. Only those revealing a definite anarchist message were considered.

Because of the great diversity of anarchist thought and because this work examines issues of a social nature, only certain anarchists were included. I did not elucidate the thought of the individualist anarchists Max Stirner and Benjamin Tucker, but concentrated on those anarchists who have shown a strong social interest—Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Sorel, and to a lesser extent, Alexander Berkman.

Likewise, I selected only those liberation theologians who have exhibited a common social and religious consciousness. Only those open to a class analysis of the Latin American situation and sensitive to social and economic concerns were included in this work. All, with the exception of Miguez Bonino, are Roman Catholic.

The biblical quotations used in this work are from the revised standard version. All interpretations of these quotations are from the liberation theologians. Although I am not a biblical scholar I realize that many of these interpretations are not the usual ones. If problems of exegesis arise, one must remember that liberation theologians interpret the scripture from the unique perspective of a revolutionary situation. They claim that theology is never disinterested, but always serves to justify a particular social or ecclesial order. Their interest is to join with the poor and oppressed in changing the world and they propose to justify a social and ecclesial order free from all forms of

domination and coercion. Interpretations of scripture are made with these interests in mind.

With some hesitancy I expose the anarchist dimension of liberation theology. If theologians in Latin America have been censured for their Marxist sympathies, what actions might be brought against them for their anarchist views? My hope is that those who read this work will come to a more complete understanding of the positive aspects of anarchism and will see in liberation theology a manifestation of these positive aspects. The political terrorism and pointless violence sometimes associated with anarchism are not essential to this philosophy. What is essential is an optimistic view of human nature, a realistic and concrete approach to ethical, political, and economic matters, a suspicion of all hierarchies, and a realization that a revolution by all the oppressed is necessary to attain liberation. Enemies of liberation theology who wish to condemn it for sharing these anarchist elements will discover no support in this text. Friends of liberation theology will not feel threatened but will find the anarchist dimension an enriching insight into an intriguing theology.

Acknowledgments

Without the assistance and support of many people this dissertation could not have been completed. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Donald C. Hodges. His exact and thorough editing, his insightful criticisms, and his encouragement were invaluable, I would also like to thank the other members of my supervisory committee, Dr. John J. Carey and Dr. Russell M. Dancy, for their continuing interest and helpful suggestions.

I am grateful to Deborah Hepburn for her help in translating into English some of my correspondence with liberation theologians.

Additional thanks are due Frances Gilbert for her patient and good humored assistance with the word processor .

To my friends in Tallahassee whose kindness and caring helped sustain me while I completed this project, I give my love.

My deepest thanks go to my parents for their long and loving support throughout the many years of my education. I owe my brother Angelo a special thanks for his warm generosity.

Chapter I. The Anarchist Sources of Liberation Theology

One of the well-known facts about liberation theology is that it is closely associated with the Marxist tradition. Many of the most prominent Latin American theologians openly quote Marx and Marxist sources. It is not as well-known that much of the influence Marx had on liberation theology derives from the anarchist elements in Marx's own thought. Nor is it generally recognized that many of liberation theology's most important claims are anarchist. Many factors, including Marx's influence, have contributed to the anarchist components of this relatively new Latin American theological phenomenon. The anarchist elements in the Bible, the example of primitive Christianity, the example of popular religious movements, the progressive elements within the Church, the anarchist components in Marxism, and the influence of certain Latin American political activists and theoreticians with anarchist leanings have all contributed to shaping liberation theology.

The Bible is the most important source of liberation theology. It is so important that it has been said to be the only source of liberation theology.¹ All other sources derive from a tradition that was begun in the Old Testament, was carried through in the New Testament, and has been sustained throughout history. It is a tradition that reacts against all forms of domination and oppression.

José Porfirio Miranda has no trouble labeling this tradition a "radical anarchism."² As evidence, he points to the first Biblical teaching on government, the radical messages in the Gospel, and the antilaw teachings of St. Paul.

In Judges 8:22–23 and Samuel 8:6–7, the oldest biblical teachings concerning government, we see the beginning of a distinctly anarchist trend. In these passages God does not give legitimacy to social power structures but opposes them. The monarchy that was founded in Israel was in direct opposition to the will of God. According to Miranda, these passages show that "God and human beings cannot reign at the same time."³ When we examine these passages within the context of the prophetic tradition and its corresponding idea of a covenant we see that this negative idea toward government and authority is part of a theme that pervades much of the Old Testament.

¹ José Combi in, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 4.

² José Porfirio Miranda, *Communism in the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1982), p. 73.

³ Miranda, *Communism*, p. 72.

The foundation of community established in the covenant was that of common assent to a group of norms binding on the members. The law was not something imposed by a kingly power structure but was based on common agreement. However, a new arrangement based on coercive power with all its abuses was established by David and Solomon. What had been the revolutionary anarchist aspect of the Mosaic tradition became reversed. A monarchy was established against the will of God. And from the oppression resulting from monarchical rule the prophetic tradition was born.⁴

This anarchist tradition did not stop with the Old Testament, but was carried into the New Testament. One of the first, and perhaps the most powerful anarchist passages is Luke 1:51–55. In this passage Mary praises a God who has “scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts... put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree...” Miranda claims that this passage is Luke’s way of summing up the Kingdom and that, faithful to the prophetic tradition, it is not just a question of one particular set of rulers but of every class of ruler.⁵

Miranda also points out that Matthew 6:24 and Mark 1:15 help show that Jesus’ message was “the most subversive ever proclaimed in politics,”⁶ a message that was also part of the radical anarchist tradition.

The epistles of St. Paul likewise exhibit an anarchist component. As Miranda explicates the Pauline texts:

Paul wants a world without law. Exegesis which avoids this fact makes an understanding of the Pauline message impossible. Neither Kropotkin nor Bakunin nor Marx nor Engels made assertions against the law more powerful and subversive than those which Paul makes.⁷

And:

Paul believes in a world without law and without government...⁸

Although Miranda is perhaps the only liberation theologian to connect explicitly the biblical message with anarchism, he is not the only one to discover an anarchist message in the Bible. European anarchists were among the first to recognize the anarchist dimension of the Bible. Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Sorel, and Berkman, among the important anarchists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, saw and were inspired by its radical message.

⁴ George Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973), p. 73.

⁵ Miranda, *Communism*, p. 72.

⁶ Miranda, *Communism*, p. 73.

⁷ José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974), p. 187.

⁸ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 257.

Proudhon admitted that the three most important sources for his thought were Adam Smith, Hegel, and the Bible.⁹ Kropotkin saw in Christ's teaching a radical equality that conflicted with an ideology supporting domination and inequality.¹⁰ Tolstoy believed that if every individual followed the pacifist teachings of Christ all governmental authority would be undermined.¹¹ Sorel claimed that the Bible is the best revolutionary text for instructing the people.¹² And Berkman held that if we followed the teaching of Jesus we would create an anarchist world.¹³

Most surprising of all is Bakunin's recognition of the revolutionary content of the Gospel message. Bakunin, who was so adamantly opposed to religion in his later writings, conceded in his early years that there was something different about Christianity. The values of original Christianity were seen as having revolutionary import:

Freedom, the realization of freedom: who can deny that this is what today heads the agenda of history? Revolutionary propaganda is in the deepest sense the negation of the existing conditions of the State; for, with respect to its innermost nature, it has no other program than the destruction of whatever order prevails at the time... We must not only act politically, but in our politics act religiously in the sense of freedom, of which the one true expression is justice and love. Indeed, for us alone, who are called the enemies of the Christian religion, for us alone is it reserved, and even made the highest duty even in the most ardent fights, really to exercise this love, this highest commandment of Christ and the only way to true Christianity.¹⁴

Another important influence on liberation theology is the example of the primitive Christian community. This community represented one of history's great milestones when the poor began to believe in a God who would set them free.¹⁵ These early Christians took political, social, and economic stances that can only be interpreted as anarchist: they reacted strongly against the dominating structure of the Roman Empire; they formed decentralized religious communities; and they adopted egalitarian economic practices (Acts 4:32).

⁹ See Ernst Victor Zenker, *Anarchism* (London: n.p., 1898), p. 35.

¹⁰ Peter Kropotkin, *Ethics*, trans. Louis S. Fieland and Joseph R. Piroshnikoff (New York: Dial, 1936), p. 126.

¹¹ Leo Tolstoy, "My Religion," in *My Religion. On Life. Thoughts on God, On the Meaning of Life*, Vol. XVI of *The Complete Works of Count Tolstoy*, trans. Leo Wiener (Boston: Dana Estes, 1904), p. 18.

¹² From a quote in Georges Sorel, *From Georges Sorel*, trans. John and Charlotte Stanley, ed. John Stanley (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p. 8.

¹³ Alexander Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover, 1972), p. 75.

¹⁴ Michael Bakunin, "The Reaction in Germany," in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed., trans, and introd. Sam Dolgoff, pref. Paul Avrich (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 56.

¹⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Theology from the Underside of History," in *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983), p. 202.

The Gnostic movement is a good example of the anarchist development of early Christianity. In their claims of immanent divinity and direct access to God, the Gnostics posed a serious threat to later attempts at Church centralization and hierarchical authority. It has been said of the Gnostic movement:

Those who expected to “become Christ” themselves were not likely to recognize the institutional structure of the church—its bishops, priests, creed, canon, or ritual—as having ultimate authority.¹⁶

Also influencing liberation theology is the example of popular religious movements that, in the spirit of early Christianity, have proclaimed the anarchist Gospel.¹⁷ The Carpocratians of Alexandria in the second century; the Beghards, Waldenses, and Albigenses of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the Adamites and the Hussites of the fifteenth century; and the Anabaptists and early Quakers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century have all been part of a subterranean stream of anarchism reacting against domination in one form or another.¹⁸

Within the Church’s ranks the monastic tradition continues the anarchist tradition. Arising from the anarchocommunist spirit of the early Essenes, the monastic tradition inspires a streak of independence and community not seen in other aspects of religious life. Although not widely influential among many liberation theologians, it has managed to inspire at least one very important theologian—Ernesto Cardenal.¹⁹

Last but not least, the Church establishment, in an effort to adjust to changing historical conditions has opened the door to a freedom of thought and expression that did not seem possible at an earlier time. Vatican II was the first step to a new ecclesial consciousness. Even though liberation theology may have occurred without this progressive turn, there is no question that as it stands today liberation theology’s freedom to express its radical message was made possible by the changes brought about by the second Vatican council.

Turning now to nonreligious sources it may come as a surprise that Marx is the single most important source of liberation theology’s anarchist dimension. Because of his controversial opposition to Bakunin, Marx is often deemed a convinced authoritarian centralist who vehemently fought against all anarchist doctrines. Indeed, the strong rivalry between the two central figures in the International Working Men’s Association prompted him to attack the policies of anarchism. But, according to Abraham Guillen, this opposition to anarchism was mostly one of strategy, not of principle.²⁰ If we examine Marx’s works, especially his *Civil War in France*, the 1871 “Address of the General

¹⁶ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 134.

¹⁷ Gutiérrez, *Power*, p. 202.

¹⁸ Derry Novak, “Place of Anarchism in the History of Political Thought,” *Review of Politics*, 20 (July 1958), pp. 307–329.

¹⁹ Philip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1984), p. 8.

²⁰ Abraham Guillen, *Philosophy of the Urban Guerilla*, trans. and ed. Donald C. Hodges (New York:

Council of the International Working Men's Association," and the 1872 Preface to the German edition of the Communist Manifesto, we find that Marx made some important concessions to anarchist thought. Also, his early writings, especially his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and his *Theses on Feuerbach*, contain themes strikingly anarchist in tone. Although it is beyond the scope of this investigation to ferret out all the anarchist aspects of Marx's thought, themes that have had a marked influence on liberation theology should be brought to the reader's attention.

Nothing in Marx's works has influenced liberation theology more than the notion of praxis, a notion shared in common with European anarchists. Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, in which this concept appears, is one of the texts most often cited by liberation theologians. According to the notion of praxis, the main purpose of human thought as well as labor is the transformation of the world. It is through this transforming activity that humans come to know the world and to know and forge their own nature. When human labor is thwarted, as it is in societies with alienating social structures, humans exercise their freedom by transforming society.

Connected with this is another anarcho-Marxist component—the "New Man." From Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* liberation theologians derive a picture of a new, thoroughly emancipated human being. Should all the structures of alienation be removed, a new community with a new sense of freedom would emerge. In this community each individual would be free to develop his or her capacities and talents to the fullest. Each individual would take the reins of his or her destiny while remaining responsible to the community. The freedom of all, according to Marx, would become the freedom of each.

Another important anarchist component of Marx's work is the idea that revolution rather than reform will usher in the new society. Although there is an evolutionary aspect to Marx's thought in which reforms play a role, the overwhelming emphasis in his works is on revolution. In the "Address to the Communist League in 1850" Marx says:

For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but its annihilation, not the soothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of existing society but the formation of a new one.²¹

Liberation theologians, in their criticism of developmentalist reforms, reveal their debt to Marx. Because of their convictions that developmentalist and other reformist programs have led to more rather than less dependence and oppression in Latin America, some theologians have concluded that those in positions of domination will never willingly relinquish control of those structures that keep them in power. Reforms, in

William Morrow, 1973), p. 77.

²¹ Karl Marx, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), p. 367.

the long run, reenforce that control. For society to change, according to these theologians, those who are oppressed by the social structure must rise up and overthrow the dominant structures and institutions. It is not enough to depose the people in power. What must be done is to eliminate the roots of oppression, and revolution from below, they believe, is the only way that this can be accomplished. These liberation theologians downplay, if not discard, those Marxist components that are antianarchist. The “dictatorship of the proletariat,” for instance, is rarely, if ever, mentioned. The Marx of liberation theology is, in part, an anarchist Marx.

Although the Bible and Marx are the primary sources, other channels have been important in allowing the entrance of anarchist themes into liberation theology. Two Latin American figures predominate: José Carlos Mariátegui and Che Guevara.²² Each of these has had a considerable influence on liberation theology, and each can be shown to have had anarchist leanings.

Throughout most of his life Mariátegui was surrounded by colleagues and mentors who espoused anarchist ideas. Abraham Valdelomar, a close friend, and probably the first to introduce Mariátegui to socialism, was himself strongly influenced by anarchism. Having lived in Italy when the anarchosyndicalist ideas of Sorel were making a significant impact on political thinkers, Valdelomar’s claim that “myth” plays an important role in guiding the masses on the path of revolution strongly indicates a Sorelian bent.²³

Henri Barbusse, a cofounder of the French communist party, and one of the most important influences on Mariátegui, also shows his anarchist colors in his belief that both “myth” and morality play important revolutionary roles, a belief that Mariátegui accepted. Like Valdelomar, Barbusse felt the impact of Sorelianism. In 1923 he was involved with the journal *Clarté* at a time when Sorel’s close friend, Edourd Berth, was appointed to the editorial board, a time when *Clarté* took on a distinctly Sorelian cast.²⁴

Whatever the immediate source, the anarchist ideas of Georges Sorel made a great impact on Mariátegui’s thinking. According to John Baines, a biographer of Mariátegui:

Sorel’s concern for moral standards, and his conservative insistence on the value of tradition and custom in men’s lives, paralleled basic and consistent themes in Mariátegui’s own thought. Moreover, his apocalyptic view of revolution deeply influenced the Peruvian. For Mariátegui also held an

²² The influence of Che Guevara on liberation theology is well-known. The influence of Mariátegui, however, is not as well-known even though Gustavo Gutiérrez in his book *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981) refers to Mariátegui on a few occasions. But, in a personal interview on November 23, 1982, Dr. José Miguez Bonino clearly stated that among the secular influences on liberation theology Mariátegui was one of the most important .

²³ John M. Baines, *Revolution in Peru* (University, Alabama; Univ. of Alabama Press, 1972), p. 22.

²⁴ Jack J. Roth *The Cult of Violence* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980), p. 174.

eschatological view of the world .that would be totally changed through spontaneous revolution.²⁵

This eschatological view of the world, along with the view that “myth” and morality are important aids to revolution are fundamental anarchist themes in liberation theology.

The other major Latin American secular influence on liberation theology derives from Che Guevara. Although Che was very much a Marxist, there is a tone to his writings that strongly suggests an anarchist leaning. His belief in moral incentives for revolutionary action, his humanist values, his conception of the “New Man,” his emphasis on independent revolutionary action by peasants in the countryside, his belief in action as the best form of propaganda, and his criticism of vanguard parties are all anarchist themes that have influenced not only liberation theology, but also the post-Guevarist Latin American revolutionary movements. In particular, Che’s heroism and commitment to the oppressed had a deep and profound effect on Camilo Torres, a guerilla priest who developed a liberation theology of his own that has had an important impact throughout Latin America.

Other influences on liberation theology that have been linked to the anarchist tradition include Frantz Fanon, Nicholas Berdyaev, Herbert Marcuse, Emmanuel Mounier, and Jean Paul Sartre. Each of these has contributed in some way to the ethical, political, or, in some cases, the theological views adopted by liberation theology.

Though the theologians may not readily admit the anarchist aspects of their thought, and may not openly stand in the anarchsit ranks, it is certainly impressive that the company they keep has startlingly anarchist credentials. History has a way of drawing together those who speak a common language. In this case, the language of anarchism binds the theologians of liberation to those who throughout history have championed the victims of political, soical, and economic domination.

²⁵ Baines, *Revolution*, p. 108.

Chapter II. Call to Freedom

“For you were Called to Freedom Brethren...” (Galatians 5:13)

One of liberation theology’s most important values is freedom. Freedom is both the basis for action and the goal. Even the word “liberation” implies a process of acquiring and recovering freedom.¹ The Latin American situation is such that a cry for freedom is inevitable. Whenever a people are subjugated, oppressed, or coerced by abusive external powers, there cannot help but arise a reaction to that situation. Liberation theology, committed as it is to the poor and oppressed, gives voice to those nameless, voiceless ones who cry out against their masters. In Latin America liberation theology is a call for a new Exodus, a freeing of the people of God from a tyrannical colossus—U.S. imperialism and its junior partners among the financial oligarchies in each country. It is also a call for liberation from all those forms of servitude and dependence that flow from this basic and deadly subjugation.

It is not surprising that this emphasis on freedom would have something in common with anarchism. Anarchism is the quintessential philosophy of freedom. There is no concern more deeply felt by anarchists than the concern for freedom. Its definition expresses that concern. All anarchists, whether individualists or communist, see freedom as the central characteristic of their philosophy. As Alexander Berkman says, “Anarchism means that you should be free.”² Anarchists believe that freedom is the goal of society; that freedom is the motivating force of the oppressed classes and that it is the means of human fulfillment.

But a common emphasis on freedom is not sufficient to show that the freedom of the liberation theologian is the same as that of the anarchist. We must look more closely at the characteristics and consequences of freedom before we can say that liberation theology shares this anarchist concern.

A careful distinction must be made between the anarchist and the liberal conceptions of freedom. Although anarchism has been accused of being a disguised form of liberalism,³ this accusation cannot stand up when we examine anarchism in depth.

What is liberal freedom and what are its consequences? Considering freedom abstractly and generally, the liberal believes that one should be free to do what one

¹ Hugo Assmann, *Theology for a Nomad Church*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976), p. 47.

² Alexander Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover, 1972), p. xxvi.

³ Lenin says, “...we must say to you bourgeois individualists that your talk about absolute freedom is sheer hypocrisy. There can be no real and effective ‘freedom’ in a society based on the power of

wants, as long as it does not obviously harm someone else.⁴ Connected with this is the notion of the inalienable right to private property.

This seems innocuous enough. But upon closer scrutiny and considering the consequences in concrete situations a picture emerges that is incompatible with the liberty of all human beings.

Bakunin and Kropotkin associate this liberal notion of freedom with an extreme individualism that, in consequence, sets person against person; the freedom of one is restricted by the freedom of another.⁵ This type of freedom is suited to an economic system that creates conditions of competition between classes and among members of each class. It is also suited to an economic system in which those privileged by private property are free to exploit the labor of others while the “unprivileged” propertyless masses are free to have empty stomachs.

This is not the anarchist conception of freedom. Distinct from the liberal notion, freedom for the anarchist is tied to specific historical conditions. Any attempt to consider liberty *per se* is an error, he believes, because the attempt to abstract freedom from concrete conditions usually leads to consequences in which many are excluded from the material necessities that help make them free. To know freedom is to know history, economic conditions, reality. To know freedom is to act for freedom. The anarchist conception of freedom is not absolute, but is relative to the times and to the laws of nature and society.

Bakunin especially tied liberty to the concrete world. For him freedom could only be materialistic, realistic, and collectivistic.⁶ Freedom must take into account all authorities that oppress whether they be divine, collective, or individual. Bakunin recognized that freedom is bound to society and can only exist in a social situation.⁷ For him there could be no intellectual or moral emancipation without material emancipation. Only by collective and social labor can humans free themselves from the “yoke of external nature.”⁸ To be sure, Bakunin spoke at times about freedom in abstract and idealistic terms, saying that “freedom is an absolute right of every adult man and woman.”⁹ However, it is generally regarded that the anarchist notion of freedom is concrete and

money, in a society in which the masses of working people live in poverty and the handful of rich live like parasites...This absolute freedom is a bourgeois or an anarchist phrase (since, as a world outlook, anarchism is bourgeois philosophy turned inside out).” V. I. Lenin, “The Organization and Party Literature,” *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 151.

⁴ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), p. 9.

⁵ Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal,” in *Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 141 and Michael Bakunin, “The Paris commune and the Idea of the State,” in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed., trans, and introd. Sam Dolgoff, pref. Paul Avrich (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 262.

⁶ Bakunin, “God and the State,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 236.

⁷ Bakunin, “God and the State,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 238.

⁸ Bakunin, “God and the State,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 236.

⁹ Bakunin, “Revolutionary Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 76.

tied to reality.¹⁰ It might even be said that because of Bakunin's realistic approach he was able to recognize more clearly than Marx the dangers to that freedom from a bureaucratic State.

Another characteristic of this anarchist notion of freedom has already been mentioned—freedom is social. We must not confuse the egoistic, individualistic liberty of liberal thought with the individuality that a social, collectivist notion of freedom entails. Kropotkin makes this distinction clear in his essay “Modern Science and Anarchism.” There he says that the full development of individuality stands in contrast to the “individualism” of middle-class intellectuals. This latter individualism is seen as the chief obstacle to individuality. Why? Because in a capitalist system, the majority of people do not have the leisure to develop their individual gifts.¹¹ Individuality in capitalist society is sham individuality.

Freedom for revolutionary anarchists is freedom for the individual, but it is not freedom for the isolated individual. It is possible only when the freedom of every individual is embraced. Far from the freedom of one individual being a limitation on the freedom of another, the freedom of each depends on the freedom of all.

Bakunin is the most vocal in this regard. In an article written in 1871 he says:

Man completely realizes his individual freedom as well as his potentiality only through the individuals who surround him, and thanks only to the labor and the collective power of society. Without society he would remain the most stupid and the most miserable among all the other ferocious beasts... Society, far from decreasing his freedom, on the contrary creates the individual freedom of all human beings. Society is the root, the tree, and liberty is the fruit.¹²

Kropotkin agrees, claiming that the individual is free “in proportion as all others around him become free.”¹³

At first glance it seems that Proudhon's views on freedom are an exception, putting him more in the individualist anarchist camp. His fear that communism would lead to a deadening homogeneity killing all individual initiative prevented him from exploring the social aspect of freedom in depth. But when he examines the social virtues—

¹⁰ Rudolf Rocker recognizes that the anarchist idea of freedom is relative and concrete. He says, “Even freedom is only a relative, not an absolute concept, since it tends constantly to become broader and to affect wider circles in more manifold ways. For the Anarchist, freedom is not an abstract philosophical concept, but the vital concrete possibility for every human being to bring to full development all the power, capacities and talents with which nature has endowed him and turn them to social account.” Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism; Theory and Practice* (Indore City: Modern Publishers, 1947), p. 29.

¹¹ Peter Kropotkin, “Modern Science and Anarchism,” in *The Essential Kropotkin*, ed Emile Capouya and Keitha Tompkins (New York: Liveright, 1975), p. 73.

¹² Bakunin, “God and the State,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 237.

¹³ Kropotkin, “Modern Science and Anarchism,” *Essential*, p. 72.

justice, equality, love—in connection with freedom, he is kept from falling too deeply into individualism.

Freedom, justice, and equality are mutually interdependent, according to Bakunin. All are important for human fulfillment. In his “Revolutionary Catechism of 1866” he says:

The freedom of each is therefore realizable only in the equality of all. The realization of freedom through equality, in principle and in fact, is justice.¹⁴

Much earlier in his life he had connected freedom not only with justice but also with love, saying that it is in these that we find the one authentic expression of freedom.¹⁵ Although he does not make this connection explicit in his later writings, love for humanity is linked with human fulfillment in freedom. It is not only the duty of respect for others that makes freedom possible, but it is also something over and above, which is love.¹⁶

In addition to the characteristics of freedom shown above, Bakunin’s analysis of freedom is distinguished by the way it presents freedom historically. It is here that we get a more complete picture and a more profound understanding of freedom.

Historically, humans achieved an original freedom as social laboring beings, lost the freedom they had achieved, fight now to recover that freedom, and hope to regain it in a new society. This is the outline. Let us turn to Bakunin for more details.

In the beginning, claims Bakunin, natural man was a brute, a slave to nature about him and within him. In this state there was no liberty and no awareness of liberty. Gradually, in a process that Bakunin makes no attempt to explain, man became humanized and emancipated but only as a social being. In society man became a moral being when he learned to reason, speak, and will. As a social being he became aware of freedom and started to control his own destiny.

But, according to Bakunin, only labor allowed man to exercise this control. Through labor man, rather than being dominated by nature, began to employ his creativity and to build civilization. Through labor man became free.

But this originally acquired freedom was lost. Bakunin gives little clue as to how this occurred. Somehow the freedom attained through labor became divorced from the freedom attained through society. Kropotkin offers a moral view, saying that man’s instinctual sense of what is good and evil may have become obscured by prejudice and personal gain. Man thus became capable of acting in a way contrary to his best interest, choosing what seemed best in private appropriation over what was best in mutual aid.

¹⁴ Bakunin, “Revolutionary Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 76.

¹⁵ Bakunin, “The Reaction in Germany,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 56.

¹⁶ Bakunin says, “If there is one fundamental principle of human morality *it is freedom*. To respect the freedom of our fellow man *is duty*; to love, help and serve him *is virtue*.” Bakunin, “Revolutionary Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 76.

Whatever the explanation, revolutionary anarchists believe that in the process of history what was separated will be united and man will realize his fulfillment in complete freedom—both in creative labor and through the collective power of society.

Anarchists also believe that there is a sense in which the human being is free now, prior to complete emancipation in a new society. Insofar as we act to transform our present society, we are free. Freedom goes hand in hand with action, whether it be labor and the transformation of nature, or revolution and the transformation of society. In revolution we are free to create freedom. Freedom is the basis and freedom is the goal.

Here we see two features that help make anarchism distinct. According to Bakunin, it is primarily through revolutionary actions that liberation is possible historically. The oppressed must act to transform society if freedom is to be attained. Bakunin was no quietist. Evolution alone will never achieve the goal. The second feature is that the anarchists believe that morality is a revolutionary motivating force. Morality stirs the oppressed to action. The oppressed act not only to attain a new society based on moral ideals, but they act out of moral concern for the present.

And what is the society toward which revolutionary action takes us? Anarchists believe that it is a society of complete freedom—freedom in the sense of freedom from all that oppresses and dominates, from all that controls us economically, politically, culturally; and freedom to develop our potentialities both individually and collectively. They believe that it is a society of a new human being and a new social order; a society where humanity is completed and where human nature is fulfilled.¹⁷ Most of all, for the revolutionary anarchist, it will be a society where there is no monolithic, hierarchical institution to lord it over us. In short, it will be a Churchless and Stateless society.

We turn now to liberation theology to see in what ways its notion of freedom resembles that of the anarchists.

If there is one thing that liberation theology and revolutionary anarchism have in common it is that the freedom, which they emphasize, goes far beyond the freedom of liberalism. Liberal freedom for the liberation theologian is a guise, an appearance, a word only. What it hides is the oppression of the capitalist system, an oppression that hurts not only the lower classes but also the “lower” nations. Latin America and all of the Third World nations are victims of the “oppression and spoliation inflicted in the name of ‘modern freedom and democracy’ and by its bearers.”¹⁸ Liberation theology, which questions all ideologies, penetrates the guise of liberal freedom. The capitalist system, supported by liberalism, turns the Third World nations into nations dominated by the great metropolitan powers.

Liberation theologians also share with anarchists a concrete, historical approach to freedom. As mentioned earlier, their emphasis on freedom arises from an acute

¹⁷ The final chapter will have a much more detailed account of this last form of liberty.

¹⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Two Theological Perspectives,” in *The Emergent Gospel*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (Markknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 235.

awareness of the situation of dominated people. Whenever they speak of freedom it is either in connection with some historical situation of domination or else to explain that freedom is historical.

There are a few Latin American theologians who take an interior, existentialist approach to freedom, but I would hesitate to call them liberation theologians. What distinguishes liberation theologians from others is a recognition that the starting point of theology is a commitment to the poor in their real, historic conditions. Ellacuría says it quite nicely:

This Christian liberty affects the most personal life and being of individual beings, but it does so in the full concrete web of history. If we acknowledge the reality of this concrete web of history, then any purely interior liberty is utopian, partial and inhuman.¹⁹

Gutiérrez would agree:

To conceive of history as a process of the liberation of man is to consider freedom as a historical conquest; it is to understand that the step from the abstract to a real freedom is not taken without a struggle against all the forces that oppress man...²⁰

Liberation theologians believe that the biblical message of freedom is also clearly historical, that the Bible never speaks of freedom unless there is some concrete situation to which it is related. They believe that this is especially clear in the Old Testament where freedom means freedom from certain conditions of slavery either in Egypt or among the chosen people; where it means freedom from unjust authorities, kings, and landlords. Nowhere is freedom discussed as ‘ a concept divorced from history.

Liberation theologians also recognize that the New Testament gives a similar historical message. When they look at the life and practice of Jesus they see a man who exercised his freedom within a historical context. Jesus showed great freedom in his actions toward the ruling class, the law, and the religious authorities of his time. He neither yielded to their threats of death and punishment, nor did he take an unyielding, inflexible position against them. Rather he always consulted the “signs of the times,” measuring his own actions and attitudes by their relation to the world of the poor. His actions were strongly prophetic, showing a deep awareness of the historical conditions in which he lived.²¹

As Hugo Echeagaray clearly states:

¹⁹ Ignacio Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976), p. 108.

²⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 32.

²¹ Hugo Echeagaray, *The Practice of Jesus*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1984), pp. 90–93.

The practice of Jesus will make clear to us the radical freedom with which he acted, precisely because his activity did not abstract in any idealistic way from the concrete social, cultural, and economic conditions in which it was carried on. On the contrary, the freedom of Jesus demonstrates its history-making power to the extent that it immersed itself in those conditions and went on to transform them.²²

Freedom for liberation theology is preeminently social. Freedom in terms of isolated individuals does not exist. There really are no isolated individuals. Freedom is therefore never solely private nor internal. According to the Marxist-leaning theologians, freedom is a social reality implying a historical liberation. Along with being social it is dependent upon justice, equality, and love.

On justice Ellacuría says:

...the struggle to inculcate justice is a basic feature of liberty.²³

On equality, Combiin says:

...liberty is a new kind of common life, a mutual relationship based on equality and cooperation.²⁴

On love, Comblin also says:

Freedom and love are equivalent. Love is free and freedom produces love.²⁵

Not only are justice, equality, and love necessary for freedom, but freedom is necessary for justice, equality, and love. All are interdependent.

The liberation theologians turn to the Bible to support their social view of freedom. They emphasize the fact that the life of Jesus was one of interaction and social exchange. Jesus, they believe, exercised his freedom, not in isolation from others, not in the development of an interior, private life of contemplation, but in social communion. In both his life and his message this social aspect of freedom predominates. Theologians believe that this view of freedom is not limited to the New Testament, but is a theme also woven throughout the Old. "Man in the Bible lives his life, like Jesus, in interdependence with others, or the totality of men. The biblical people are a collective responsibility. Freedom consists in mutual responsibility for all and for the very development of collective responsibility,"²⁶

²² Echegaray, *Practice*, p. 14.

²³ Ellacuría, *Freedom*, p. 110.

²⁴ José Combiin, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 161.

²⁵ Combi in, *Church*, p. 148.

²⁶ Jose Combi in, "Freedom and Liberation as Theological Concepts," in *The Mystical and Political*

This description of social freedom is closely tied to the ideas of justice, equality, and love. Collective responsibility means that we serve one another not as servant to master but as equals. “For you were called to freedom brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love of one another be servants of one another. For the law is fulfilled in one word ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Galatians 5:13–14).’” And where there is love and equality there is justice. In justice we “do unto others” out of mutual respect. To be free, in this sense, means being a slave to justice (Romans 6:18).

From what the liberation theologians tell us about Genesis and the nature of sin we can construct an historical picture of freedom that is quite similar to that of the anarchists. The language of the theologians is religious but the message is similar. From what the theologians tell us we see that the original human freedom is intimately connected with society and labor; we see the loss of that freedom through sin; we see a way to regain the freedom that was lost; and we look toward the final recovery of freedom in the fulness of time.

Liberation theologians tell us that according to Genesis human beings were created in the image and likeness of God. This image and likeness, we are told, is one of freedom.²⁷ God exercises freedom as the omnipotent creator of all things, and we are likewise called to exercise our freedom as creative beings. We were made to transform the Earth, to dominate nature, and to create civilization. Through our labor we become more perfectly human and, consequently, more perfectly free.²⁸

This freedom for which we were created is not the freedom to do as we please.²⁹ Rather it is a freedom in solidarity with all—a social freedom, a freedom to love, a freedom to work for the good of man.³⁰

When sin enters the picture, however, the freedom for which we were created vanishes. Human beings become alienated from each other and domination enters human relationships. Dussel says: “Sin is nothing else but the domination of the ‘other.’”³¹ Sin disrupts the communion with others and robs us of our freedom.³²

Liberation theology affirms that this slavery of sin can be eradicated. It affirms that the God who liberated the Jews from slavery offers us the same liberation. Through Christ we are shown the way. We are shown that through our action we can attain the Kingdom of Freedom. But this gift of God requires that we act. We must take the reins of our own destiny as social beings, to create a new society and a new man.

Dimension of the Christian Faith, ed. Gustavo Gutiérrez and Claude Geffré (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), p. 98.

²⁷ Comblin, *Church*, p. 41.

²⁸ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 159.

²⁹ Comblin, “Freedom and Liberation as Theological Concepts,” *Mystical*, pp. 98–99,

³⁰ Comblin, *Church*, p. 41.

³¹ Enrique D. Dussel, “Historical and Philosophical Presuppositions for Latin American Theology,” in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, trans. John Drury, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 208.

³² See Gutiérrez, *Theology*, pp. 176–177.

According to liberation theologians, not any action will do. Because sin, that which keeps us from being free, is found only in concrete historical situations and specific embodiments of alienation, the action that liberates us must be concrete, historical, radical. "Sin (the basic alienation) demands a radical liberation, which necessarily includes liberation of a political nature. Only by participating aggressively and effectively in the historical process of liberation can we point a finger at the basic alienation that underlies every partial form of alienation."³³ The theologians believe that we are therefore called to revolutionary action; we are called to transform all those social structures that keep us from being free; we are called to act in freedom and for freedom.

To undertake this type of revolution requires a new consciousness, a new man. This new man of the liberation theologians is both now and in the future. The new man is revolutionary man motivated by love and justice. It is this new man who will create the new man of the future.

So we see that for the liberation theologian morality motivates the Christian revolutionary to act. For the theologians this was the message of Christ. Christ the liberator, motivated by love and justice, called all to freedom. It is he whom we must imitate. Severino Croatto says:

...once they have grasped the biblical mission of freedom as an essential vocation of humankind, Christians have all the greater commitment to initiate a liberating process, or to collaborate with it.³⁴

And what is the end result of this process of liberation? For liberation theologians, as for revolutionary anarchists, it is the fullness of freedom—a new society that is free from all that dominates and oppresses us. It is a society perfected by love and justice, a society no longer entrapped by sin. It is a historical Kingdom of God on earth.

It should be clear, at least in outline, that the conception of freedom held by liberation theology is similar to that of revolutionary anarchism. In what follows, as more details unfold and the picture is completed, liberation theology, in most of its major parts, will be shown to be committed to an anarchist conception of the nature and destiny of man—although this commitment has yet to be acknowledged by any of the major theologians of liberation.

³³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith," *Frontiers*, p. 21.

³⁴ José Croatto, *Exodus*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 8.

Chapter III. Revolutionary Justice

“So Whatever You Wish That Men Would Do To You,
Do So To Them...” (Matthew 7:12)

Man is a social being and only a social, free being can have morality. Freedom and society are, therefore, necessary for the moral virtues, especially those of a social nature—justice, equality, and love. Even Thomas Hobbes, the father of modern liberalism, recognized that morality is born of society. An atomized, individualized, competitive world devoid of society is a world that is completely nonmoral. But Hobbes, because his philosophy was a product of a nascent business society, believed that the moral virtues, especially justice, imposed limits on freedom. The human being, for him, was completely free only as a competitive, nonsocial, amoral being. Hobbes dichotomized freedom and society and, therefore, dichotomized freedom and morality.

Likewise, freedom in capitalist society is shorn of justice, equality, and love. But the hope of anarchism and liberation theology is that there will be a time when the rift will be healed, when freedom and morality will be rejoined in a new society.

We must now turn to a closer look at this morality, to the social virtues of justice, equality, and love.

It is true that one needs a certain amount of freedom to act in accordance with justice, but justice can be said to be above freedom in that there can be no complete freedom without justice. This is why some writers have claimed that, for anarchists, justice is the most important ethical concept. It is necessary, then, to know what anarchists mean by “justice” before we can understand freedom in its full sense.

When we look at what the anarchists say about justice we see that it can be conceived in two ways. The first, in what Proudhon calls the Transcendental System, presents justice as an “external, objective pressure exerted on the self” by an absolute authority, be it divine or human.¹ Justice in this sense is that which is established by a legal code. As such it is absolute and is usually based on violent acts and established by force.² This justice by decree, according to the anarchists, is that which has prevailed historically. It primarily serves the interests of those who make the laws, the

¹ Pierre Joseph Proudhon, “Justice in the Revolution and in the Church,” in *Selected Writings of Pierre Joseph Proudhon*, trans. Elizabeth Fraser, ed. Stewart Edwards (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1969), p. 251.

² Michael Bakunin, “On Federalism and Socialism,” in *Selected Writings*, trans. Steven Cox and Olive Stevens, ed. Arthur Lehning (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), p. 107.

ruling powers.³ in capitalist society the law and, therefore, justice serve those who own private property.

In contrast there is what Proudhon calls the justice of the Immanent System.⁴ This conception of justice is not a product of external pressure, rather it is based solely on human conscience. This does not mean that it is subjective and relative. On the contrary, it is an immanent law inherent in the soul. It is the same in all human beings and is therefore universal. It differs from the natural law of the Christians in that, for Proudhon at least, it is totally human and neither directly nor indirectly connected with the divine. The anarchists believe that we are aware of this type of justice more as a feeling or sentiment than as an idea or concept, although for them, it is both.

This second conception of justice has never prevailed in political, judicial, or economic systems but, according to the anarchists, this will be the justice that will hopefully prevail in the new society because without it there can be “no liberty, no republic, no prosperity, no peace!”⁵

In addition to being immanent, justice for the anarchists we have been considering is concrete rather than abstract. I say this with some reservation because the anarchists never explicitly affirm that justice is concrete. When Proudhon claims that “justice is not merely a relationship, an abstract idea, a fictitious creation of the intelligence or an act of faith on the part of conscience” but is “something real...based on those freely moving forces we know to be realities,”⁶ he is speaking in a way disconnected from concrete historical events. And it is true that Proudhon sometimes refers to “Justice” as if it were a divine entity. But disregarding this cosmic reference to justice, it is safe to say most anarchists, including Proudhon, show an extreme awareness of the concrete instances of social and economic history where injustice occurs. They do not try to make the situation fit some abstract, absolute definition of justice. When referring to justice as an instinct or feeling they speak abstractly, but when justice is considered as an action it is almost always connected with human beings in concrete, historical situations.

Focusing now on that which distinguishes justice from other moral- virtues, we shall turn to the issue of equality. The anarchists connect it so intimately with their conception of justice that it must be considered here as a requirement of justice rather than as a separate virtue. Equality, if not the defining characteristic of justice, is its most stringent requirement. As Kropotkin tells us, it is Proudhon to whom we owe the honor of being the first to show clearly the connection of justice and equality.⁷ For Proudhon, and other anarchists as well, without equality there can be neither freedom

³ Peter Kropotkin, *Ethics*, trans. Louis S. Fielland and Joseph R. Piroshnikoff (New York: Dial, 1936), p. 271.

⁴ Proudhon, *Selected Writings*, p. 251.

⁵ Bakunin, *Selected Writings*, p. 108.

⁶ Proudhon, “Theory of Property,” *Selected Writings*, p. 140.

⁷ Kropotkin, *Ethics*, p. 269.

nor justice.⁸ Justice for the anarchists may be defined as the “recognition of the equality between another’s personality and our own.”⁹

For the anarchists the basis of equality between individuals is respect for human dignity, a respect born not of self-interest but of a recognition that the personhood of the other is deserving of that respect.¹⁰ This applies equally to enemies and friends. According to the anarchists we have a right and a duty to respect all human beings. As we shall see, this does not mean that all human beings should be treated the same.

More concretely, anarchists believe that the principle of equality, rather than a levelling of differences, means that each individual has the right to self realization. This requires that there be equal opportunity in education and upbringing as well as equal access to the means for developing one’s special gifts and talents.¹¹

The anarchists do not hold that this self realization means that individuals be permitted unlimited privileges. Care must be taken that both the interests of society and the interests of the individual are served.¹² No one must be sacrificed for the interests of others. This suggests that all aspects of social life should be taken into account in determining if certain individual interests are compatible with the equality of all.

Once determined that economic class is incompatible with the interests of all individuals, the abolition of class with all its accompanying ranks and privileges becomes necessary. There can be no equality in a class system.¹³ The class in power always has privileges and opportunities denied to the underlying population.

Abolition of classes means economic equality. While revolutionary anarchists believe that there should be “no monopoly nor private ownership of the means of existence,”¹⁴ there is not complete agreement on what equality involves in the of distribution of wealth. Equal distribution does not imply that everyone should have exactly the same things. Differences in talents and abilities would require differences in means to realize

⁸ Michael Bakunin, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, ed. G.P. Maximoff (New York: Free Press, 1953), pp. 156–7.

⁹ Pierre Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property?*, trans. Benjamin R. Tucker (New York: H. Fertig, 1966), p. 231.

¹⁰ Peter Kropotkin clearly points out that the anarchist conception of equality means respect for the individual. He says: “The principle of equality sums up the teaching of the moralists. But it also contains something more. This something more is respect for the individual. By proclaiming our morality of equality, or anarchism, we refuse to assume a right which moralists have always taken upon themselves to claim, that of mutilating the individual in the name of some ideal...We recognize the full and complete liberty of the individual; we desire for him plenitude of existence, the free development of all his faculties.” “Anarchist Morality,” in *Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 105.

¹¹ Bakunin, “Principles and Organization of the International Brotherhood,” *Selected Writings*, pp. 76–7.

¹² Michael Bakunin, “Revolutionary Catechism,” in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed., trans., and introd. Sam Dolgoff, pref. Paul Avrich (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 76.

¹³ Bakunin, “National Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 99.

¹⁴ Alexander Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover, 1972), p. 195.

those talents and abilities. There must be some differentiation in distribution. Some (Proudhon, Bakunin) would make the basis of differentiation contingent on ability while others (Kropotkin, Berkman) would make the basis of differentiation dependent on need. There would still be equality, but it would be equality of proportion rather than absolute equality. For Proudhon and Bakunin equality would be a proportion according to “what a man may acquire by his own skill, productive energy and thrift.”¹⁵ For Kropotkin and other communist anarchists, it would be a proportion according to need. “From each according to his ability, to each according to need.”

Though dependent on economic equality, political equality is also basic to anarchist principles of justice. There can be no equality in a system where any person or group of people rules over another. Equality cannot exist together with authority. Berkman gives us a good summary of the anarchist view:

There can be no justice between master and servant. Nor equality. Justice and equality can exist only among equals.¹⁶

Although justice may be a natural instinct in man, anarchists believe that it takes concrete considerations of social, economic, political, and individual equality before justice can be realized. Respect for the individual’s right to equality is basic but respect alone is not enough. Justice, like freedom, is won through action. The great principle of justice and equality, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” is a principle of action. The focus of the anarchists on this principle means that they realize the necessity for action.¹⁷ Such actions must sometimes go beyond the ordinary. We cannot “Do unto others...” in a society that ignores such a dictate. A social transformation is necessary for justice to be the basis of society. And social transformations require revolutionary actions.

Although a just society requires revolutionary action, revolutionary actions also require justice. Justice, even more than freedom, for revolutionary anarchists, is the great motivator of revolutions. For Proudhon, Kropotkin, and Bakunin the impelling motive of every revolution is justice. It is justice which “urges us to take upon ourselves the defense of the interests of the terribly maltreated people and demand their economic and social emancipation along with political freedom.”¹⁸ Justice motivates the

¹⁵ Bakunin, “Revolutionary Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 234. See also Proudhon, *What is Property?*, p. 234.

¹⁶ Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?*, p. 49.

¹⁷ Kropotkin’s analysis of anarchist morality points explicitly to the relation of the the principle of equality to action. He says: “By proclaiming ourselves anarchist, we proclaim beforehand that we disavow any way of treating others in which we should do not like them to treat us; that we will no longer tolerate the inequality that has allowed some among us to use their struggle, their cunning or their ability after a fashion in which it would annoy us to have such qualities used against ourselves. Equality in all things, the synonym of equity, this is anarchism in very deed.” “Anarchist Morality,” *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, p. 99.

¹⁸ Bakunin, *Political Philosophy*, p. 295.

oppressed as well. Through revolution a new society based on the fulness of freedom, justice, and equality will hopefully be realized. As Bakunin says, “the task of socialism is the creation of the Kingdom of justice on earth.”¹⁹

The last anarchist virtue to be examined is love. Although love does not play as significant a role in the anarchist ethical philosophy as justice and equality, it is an important concept. Proudhon goes so far as to say that when love becomes the only law, justice will disappear.²⁰ For him the law of love, which is “superior to all metaphysics,” is the law that will create a perfect society.²¹ The need for justice will disappear when love reigns.

Bakunin also stresses the importance of love. Although he is suspicious of personal love, he recognizes the imperative of love and respect for humanity. In the “Revolutionary Catechism” he says: “To respect the freedom of your fellowman is *duty*; to love, help, and serve him is *virtue*.”²²

Tolstoy, an anarchist about whom we have said little, gives the virtue of love a key role in his philosophy. For him, love is the essence of Christianity and the salvation of mankind. Were all men to follow the law of love, the Kingdom of God on earth would become a reality.

Although Kropotkin says little about love as such, what he describes as “mutual aid,” a concept that plays a significant role in his philosophy, comes very close to what many would call love.

There is no one definition of love on which all anarchists agree. But from the combined thought of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy, one may construct an anarchist picture of love along with the role it should have in the evolution of the new social order.

Proudhon and Tolstoy recognize love as a natural instinct, but it is Kropotkin’s “instinct of solidarity” expressed in mutual aid that best describes that love.²³ For Kropotkin, this instinct, which is natural to humans and to other social animals, is necessary for the survival and progress of the species. While competition and the will to power are also natural tendencies in the animal world, solidarity and mutual aid

¹⁹ Bakunin, “Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 122.

²⁰ Proudhon, *Selected Writings*, p. 231.

²¹ Pierre Joseph Proudhon, *System of Economic Contradictions* (Boston: Benjamin Tucker, 1888), I, 410.

²² Bakunin, “Revolutionary Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 76.

²³ Tolstoy says of love: “...this love of men among one another is their natural condition in which children are born according to Christ’s words and in which all men must live until this condition is influenced by fraud, error, or temptation.” Tolstoy, “What I Believe,” in *A Confession. The Gospel in Brief. What I Believe*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 524. Proudhon also believes that love is a natural instinct. He says: “There exists a law, older than our liberty, promulgated from the beginning of the world, completed by Jesus Christ, preached and certified by apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, graven on the hearts of man, and superior to all metaphysics; it is Love...To fulfill this law and make himself happy man needs only to follow the inclination of his heart and listen to the voice of his sympathies.” *System*, p. 410.

are more advantageous. Progress occurs in human society when mutual aid is allowed to develop. In fact, all elements of progress can be attributed to mutual aid.²⁴

This instinct of solidarity is based, according to Kropotkin, on a primitive, unconscious awareness that the happiness of each is dependent on the happiness of all. It is an instinct which moves one to help and serve others even when it might be costly to oneself.²⁵

This basic and unconscious love gives rise to the conscious sentiments of justice and equality.²⁶ Here another form of love enters the picture—love as justice. This type of love is shown by the anarchists to have all the characteristics of justice: it is immanent, concrete, and requires equality and revolutionary action. For Proudhon, especially, this is the love that will perfect society.²⁷ This type of love is the same as the virtue of justice, not as a sense of duty, but as freely “doing unto others.”²⁸

Another type of love found in anarchist political thought is heroic love. We see this type of love most clearly in the writings of Kropotkin. Although he is reluctant to use the word “love” to label this particular human endeavor, there seems little doubt that it could be given this name. What he calls “morality” is synonymous with what I call heroic love. Consider what he says of the principle of morality:

...[it is] total abandonment of the idea of revenge, of “due reward”...[it is] freely giving more than one expects from his neighbors...²⁹

He also says:

But in proportion as relations of equity and justice are solidly established in the human community, the ground is prepared for the further and the more general development of more refined relations, under which man understands and feels so well the bearing of his actions on the whole of society that he refrains from offending others, even though he may have to renounce on that account the gratification of some of his own desires... (Thus] he so identifies his feelings with those of others that he is ready to sacrifice his powers for their benefit without expecting anything in return. These unselfish feelings and habits...alone deserve, in my opinion, the name of morality.³⁰

²⁴ Kropotkin, “Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal,” *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, p. 139.

²⁵ Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, ed. Paul Avrich (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1972), p. 22.

²⁶ Kropotkin, *Ethics*, p. 30.

²⁷ Proudhon, *System*, p. 410.

²⁸ Although Proudhon believed that in some sense, love is above justice, he also equates the two. Thus he says, “On Earth justice is eternally the condition of love.” Quoted by Henri de Lubac, *The Un-Marxian Socialist*, trans. R. E. Scantlebury (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p. 223.

²⁹ Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, p. 250.

³⁰ Kropotkin, *Ethics*, p. 30.

The heroic love that Kropotkin describes as “morality” is a supreme act of the will. Though it may be based on instinct and feeling, it is the willingness to lay down one’s life so that justice, freedom, and equality may prevail. It is the identification with the feelings of the oppressed to the point of self-sacrifice; freely giving more than one expects in return. It goes beyond equality, beyond justice. It might even be said to go beyond reason.

What is important in the anarchist conception of love is that there be a love that will transform society and that will ultimately prevail. Until there is a love that implies freedom and equality, there will be no peace on earth.

We now have the task of showing that liberation theology is, indeed, anarchist in its conception of justice, equality, and love. One thing is certain, these concepts play as important a part in liberation theology as they do in anarchist philosophy. The new society to which both aspire is seen by them as being perfectly moral. Although their ideal seems utopian, it has consequences in the concrete situation of the present. The morality sought in fulfillment of society is also the morality that motivates revolutionary action. But more on this later. For now we must look at justice.

There is no peace without justice! If there is one value that liberation theologians hold as dearly as freedom, it is justice. Justice as a value is so important to liberation theologians that most believe that we cannot know God unless we do justice. According to them, it is justice that the prophets of the Old Testament were sent to proclaim and it is justice that was the primary value and activity of Jesus. They believe that Jesus was sent to do justice to the poor and to show that this is the means to our salvation here on earth. Although they do not use the anarchist words “immanence” and “transcendence” when referring to justice, they suggest that the justice of their concern is immanent.

Sobrino recognizes that one cannot do the work of justice as long as one fails to denounce the will to power.³¹ This seems to indicate that justice and authority are antithetical. Those who are in positions of authority, and these include lawmakers, cannot know justice. A tension consequently occurs between justice and lawmakers as well as between justice and law. Even more specifically, Miranda tells us that justice demands that we abolish law.³² Justice, then is not a result of law. It is not something handed to us by law or authority or any external pressure. Justice, for these liberation theologians, is above the law. It is even above the law of religion.³³

But if liberation theologians do not believe that external authorities can know justice, how can it be known? According to the theologians we can know justice as an

³¹ Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 122.

³² José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974), p. 61.

³³ José Miguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 65.

internal value or attitude. Although Gutiérrez claims that “Peace, justice, love and freedom are not private realities,” he believes they are discovered in the hearts of man.³⁴ He says that in Jeremiah 31:33–34 God promises his people that to know Him they will no longer need to look outside themselves. The covenant of God is written in the hearts of the people and this is how they will know God. But, Gutiérrez reminds us, to know God is to do justice. “The God of Biblical revelation is known through interhuman justice. When justice does not exist, God is not known...”³⁵

From this one can conclude that to do justice one must know the meaning of justice and to know the meaning of the word one must look within to the covenant of God written in the heart. For liberation theologians, like the anarchists, there is a sense of immanence connected with justice. The principal difference between the liberation theologians’ concept of immanence and the anarchist concept is that for the former it is God who plants the notion of justice in the hearts of men. There is a divine element that is absent from the thought of most anarchists. The God of liberation theology is intimately connected with our lives in that we only encounter Him/Her in concrete actions toward our neighbor. We know God when we do justice to our neighbor. In a sense, then, we can say that the God of liberation theology is an immanent God.

Not only do liberation theologians characterize justice as an immanent value, but they also characterize it as a value that must be expressed in concrete action. The fact that justice is done throws it into the realm of the concrete. Although the theologians believe that a recognition of the rights of the poor is necessary to create just conditions of life, this recognition is at most an internal attitude. Thus in order for just conditions of life to prevail, there must be concrete actions toward others.

The liberation theologians also show that an analysis of the concrete historical situation, especially its socioeconomic structure, is necessary before we can determine exactly what actions justice requires. Miranda says: “If we are not to talk about abstractions such as... ‘justice’ we must analyze the split of society into two classes.”³⁶

It is also apparent that in order for there to be just conditions of life, there must also be equality. For liberation theologians the radical equality of all human beings is one of the most important messages of the New Testament.³⁷ This equality consists

³⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 167.

³⁵ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 195.

³⁶ José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx Against the Marxists*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), p. 146.

³⁷ Miranda is quite clear about the relationship between equality and justice. He says: “And for Matthew the law and the prophets are synthesized both in the formula ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ (Matthew 22:39-40) as well as in the formula ‘Whatever you want men to do to you, do this to them’ (Matthew 7:12). For anyone without systematic preconceptions, the latter formula must appear to be a norm of the most elementary justice...Indeed in all laws this rule is the norm of equality; and equality is a matter of justice.” José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx And the Bible*, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974), p. 63.

of the belief that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.³⁸ There is neither male nor female, slave nor free. We are all equal in that we are children of God and share in Christ's sonship.³⁹ When a rupture occurs in this brotherhood/sisterhood relationship injustice has dominion.⁴⁰ Injustice, is a departure from that for which we were created—equality. As the theologians see it, injustice is found in all instances where one person is set above another, whether it be master over slave, or one institution over another as in some hierarchical, authoritarian system.

As we have seen, liberation theologians believe that brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ establishes equality on the individual level. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is the command that recognizes dignity and demands respect. This command is the heart of liberation theology's message of justice.

But because personal justice is bound up with social justice, equality too must be looked at on the social level. Liberation theologians, therefore, hold that social equality is the primary concern of the Gospel message. Personal equality cannot exist unless social and economic equality also exist. Liberation theologians realize that this means that class division must be abolished.⁴¹ Equality in a class society is a contradiction. They also realize that this means that the private ownership of the means of production must be eliminated.⁴² Such ownership, they claim, leads to differentiating wealth, which, by its very nature, means the inequality of classes.⁴³

Liberation theologians do not suggest that all wealth and private possession be abolished and that everyone lead ascetic lives. Liberation theologians believe that wealth as such is good.⁴⁴ we are given the earth so that we may use its bounty, but we are to use it only in a way that can be shared by all.

As with the anarchists, liberation theologians disagree on the criteria for the distribution of wealth. Miranda, for example, points out that the gospel message requires that distribution be carried out in a communist manner. Others are more vague on what they expect. Since this will be covered in more detail in a later chapter, I will merely say that whatever the criteria of distribution, the liberation theologians demand that it not result in poverty for some and wealth for others, nor should there be exploitation, coercion, or spoliation.

Finally, liberation theologians hold that equality must be realized on the political level. We have already seen that they agree with the anarchists in believing that authentic justice is not established by any authority. And we have seen that in liberation

³⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith," *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), pp. 67–8.

³⁹ Gutiérrez, *Power*, pp. 67–8.

⁴⁰ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 269.

⁴¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez. "Faith as Freedom," in *Living with Change, Experience, Faith*, ed. Francis A. Eigo and Silvio E. Fittipaldi (Vilanova, Pennsylvania: Vilanova Univ. Press, 1976), p. 25.

⁴² Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Freedom and Salvation," in *Liberation and Change* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), p. 77.

⁴³ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, pp. 16–7.

⁴⁴ Ignacio Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976), p. 153.

theology filiation in Christ means that no person, institution, or system can have dominion over another. Applying this to the political realm would establish a system where political power was not one of coercion, of authority and decree, but rather one that serves all people. Miranda states that justice (and therefore equality) demands that we abolish the State and the law.⁴⁵

Except for some details regarding distribution of wealth, the equality spoken of by the liberation theologian touches the same levels and reaches the same degree as that of the anarchists. For revolutionary anarchists and theologians alike justice requires individual, social, economic, and political equality. Concretely, this means that we should respect the rights of the individual, that classes and the private ownership of the means of production be abolished, and that a system of relationships be established where there is no domination and coercion, but only service—a classless, stateless society.

But how do the liberation theologians propose that we get from here to there? Latin Americans live in a society where equality, even of opportunity and rights, is nonexistent. How does one attain an authentically free, just and equal society? The only answer is revolutionary action. The “justice” of liberation theology, as we have shown, demands that we act. The theologians believe that through acts that are in accord with justice we usher in the Kingdom of God, not only for the future but in the present. The Kingdom of God is doing justice. Therefore, the Kingdom of God in which all will participate in complete brotherhood/sisterhood demands that we do the work of justice now.⁴⁶

The most important acts that we are asked to do are acts that will transform an unjust society. Gutiérrez goes so far as to say that the only justice is revolutionary justice:

The only justice is the one that goes to the very root of all injustice, all breach with love, all sin. The only justice is the one that assaults all the consequences and expressions of this cleavage of friendship. The only justice is the definitive justice that builds, starting right now, in our conflict filled history, a Kingdom in which God’s love will be present and exploitation abolished.⁴⁷

For Gutiérrez and most liberation theologians justice demands revolutionary action that attempts a radical restructuring of society.⁴⁸ It is only such action that gets

⁴⁵ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 61.

⁴⁶ Sobrino, *Christology*, pp. 120–21.

⁴⁷ Gutiérrez, “God’s Revelation and Proclamation in History,” *Power*, p. 14.

⁴⁸ Gutiérrez is quite clear about what he means by revolution. He says, “To support the revolution means to abolish the present status quo and to attempt to replace it with a qualitatively different one; it means to build a just society based on new relationships of production; it means to attempt to put an end to domination of some countries by others, of some classes by others, of some people by others.”

at the root of all domination, oppression, and exploitation. Reform, which smooths over temporarily a conflictive situation, might even be called unjust because it masks the problem, allowing oppression to spread. The liberation theologians believe that we must not stop at reforms and we must not stop at revolutions that are partial. “All consequences and expressions” of the breach with love must be abolished. The revolution, which Gutiérrez seems to suggest, must be a permanent revolution. And, if I might digress, this is in accord with the anarchists. In *Confessions of a Revolutionary*, Proudhon explicitly states that revolutions, which are the successive manifestations of Justice, really are “one and the same permanent revolution.”⁴⁹

According to these theologians of liberation, revolutionary action must not stop until “God’s will be present and exploitation abolished.”

We must now look at what liberation theologians mean by “love.” Love as a value is more important to liberation theologians than to anarchists. The fact that, for them, God is love gives them a different perspective and focus. They believe that God is the very meaning of human existence. They point to the numerous references in the New Testament in which the supreme revelation is that we should love one another as God has loved us. For liberation theologians it is love that creates the equality of brotherhood and sisterhood.⁵⁰

Liberation theologians understand, however, that the historical reality is that we are not equals. They believe that sin, the refusal to love and to grant respect and dignity to our neighbor, has entered the world and brought with it estrangement, domination, and injustice.⁵¹ However, sin is not the permanent condition of this world. Christ, the messenger of the new creation, shows us that sin can be overcome and that the greatest potential for the liberation of human beings is in the new commandment of love.⁵²

Depending on the definition of love, however, one is led to different conceptions of the means used for making love prevail in the social order. If one sees love primarily on an individual level, divorced from the social virtue of justice, one could not condone violence as a means of having love prevail in the social order. Love of this kind precludes any form of resistance to evil. Whether or not the situation is unjust is of little or no consequence.

If, on the other hand, love means the same as justice there is an automatic tension between love and any unjust situation. The two cannot exist side by side. For love to prevail there cannot be injustice. If violence is the only means to accomplish a just society, then violence is allowed.

Theology, p. 48.

⁴⁹ Proudhon, “Confessions of a Revolutionary,” *Selected Writings*, p. 158.

⁵⁰ For the relation between love and equality see: Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 71; Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 63; Gutiérrez, “Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith,” *Power*, p. 68.

⁵¹ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 198.

⁵² Gutiérrez, *Power*, p. 15.

These two conceptions of love are represented in the writings of Leonardo Boff and Enrique Dussel. On the one hand, Boff rules out all violence “even for the sake of having love prevail.”⁵³ on the other hand, Enrique Dussel believes that love can only flourish in freedom and justice so that the very essence of love may require some violence.

The question of violence has not yet been mentioned in connection with the anarchists. I mention it here only to show: (1) > that the liberation theologians have different notions of love that can lead to different consequences; and (2) that justice is an important form of love recognized by the liberation theologians and that violence is not necessarily excluded from this love.

If God is love as liberation theologians insist and if we are made in God’s image, then as a basic part of our human nature there must be love. We have already shown that for the theologians man is by nature social. This basic sociability we may call the original, unconscious instinct of love. Thus, it may be dormant within us.⁵⁴ «e have an awareness, when not clouded by sin, that other humans are necessary to our salvation and that a oneness with them is ultimately to our advantage. The whole notion of brotherhood/sisterhood implies community and a sense of solidarity.

Miguez Bonino and Miranda explicitly point out the close connection of love and justice. Miguez Bonino tells us that love must be set in relation to the Kingdom of God and as such cannot be purely personal but must be “inextricably interwoven with hope and justice.”⁵⁵

Miranda, even more explicitly, tells us that the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22: 39–40) is the same command to “do unto others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). Miranda claims that any attempt to distinguish love and justice is a result of an ideological system that does not “understand that true love discovers that it is unjust that our neighbor should suffer.”⁵⁶

Since liberation theologians identify, or at least connect, love and justice they also recognize that love is concrete and therefore expressed in action directed on the side of those who are victims of injustice—the poor and oppressed. Liberation theologians hold that even though we are called to love our enemies oppressors, the love that is identified with justice is not directed toward the enemy in the same way that it is toward the poor and the oppressed• To love and liberate the poor is the only way the oppressor will be liberated. To liberate the poor releases both oppressed and oppressor from the sin which keeps them both in chains.⁵⁷ Liberation theologians contend that

⁵³ Leonardo Boff, “Christ’s Liberation Via Oppression,” in *Fronteirs of Theology in Latin America*, trans. John Drury, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 120. (It is interesting to note that the Vatican, in an effort to mitigate the effects of liberation theology in Latin America, has silenced Leonardo Boff, one of the least radical of the liberation theologians.)

⁵⁴ Sebastian Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977), p. 174.

⁵⁵ Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 113.

⁵⁶ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 63.

⁵⁷ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, pp. 275–6.

even Jesus, who represents the fulness of love, recognized that some people were his enemies and was critical and rejecting of them.⁵⁸ Love that is identified with justice, then, is not a love of compromise, tolerance, and acceptance of evil. Rather, it is a love that condemns and acts against evil.⁵⁹

Although liberation theologians do not write about heroic love as such, they do speak about a type of love that can be characterized as heroic. This type of love is the love they see in the one who lays down his life for his friends.⁶⁰ “Greater love has no man than this...” (John 15:13). Liberation theologians believe that this is the love that transcends egoism.⁶¹ It is the love that Jesus had on the cross, a love, the theologians believe, that we are called to follow. This love does not mean that one should passively lay down his or her life without resistance. Love, as we have shown, requires that injustice be resisted.

Heroic love is the love of the revolutionary, of the new man who struggles to build the Kingdom of God on Earth. Heroic love, as seen in the lives of Che Guevara and Camilo Torres and all those who have been persecuted for the sake of justice, is a love that transcends. It goes beyond the situation of injustice and contributes to creating a new situation in which love itself will prevail.

Liberation theologians, like the anarchists, place little emphasis on personal love. In fact they warn us that a love that stays on this level too often sinks into sentimentality or remains satisfied with itself.⁶² The theologians recognize that even the “I-Thou” love of the existentialist becomes trapped in the personal dimension. It fails to see the individual as a social, economic, cultural, and political being. It is often blind to the fact that its own act of love, be it charity or friendship, has political and social implications.⁶³ Most of the liberation theologians agree that the love of the Gospels, the love that Jesus primarily wanted to teach us, is not personal, individualistic, but social and political.⁶⁴

For liberation theologians love, like freedom, justice, and equality, will be a guiding principle of the new society. In the Kingdom all human relations will follow only one law—the law of love. As a result there will be full equality and freedom in a classless society, without domination, oppression and exploitation.⁶⁵

We are now able to see that liberation theology in its consideration of those things necessary for the creation of a society compatible with the Kingdom of God chooses

⁵⁸ Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 121.

⁵⁹ Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 121.

⁶⁰ Enrique Dussel, “Historical and Philosophical Presuppositions for Latin American Theology,” in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, trans. John Drury, ed. Hosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 210.

⁶¹ José Croatto, *Exodus*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 78.

⁶² Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 62.

⁶³ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 202.

⁶⁴ Sobrino, *Christology*, p. 370.

⁶⁵ See Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 276; Pierre Bigo, *The Church and Third World Revolution*, trans. Sr. Jeanne Marie Lyons (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977), p. 300.

those values that are important to the anarchists. Freedom, justice, equality, and love play the same ethical and revolutionary role in the nineteenth century thought of European anarchists as they do in the twentieth century thought of Latin American liberation theologians. It is this similarity in ethical thinking that gives further evidence that liberation theology is, indeed, anarchist in its preconceptions.

Chapter IV. Challenge to Domination

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s
and to God the things that are God’s.”

(Mark 12:17)

If freedom, justice, equality, and love can be found on one side of the moral coin, on the opposite side can be found domination, coercive power, authority, and external laws. For both the anarchists and the liberation theologians, the negative side of freedom is freedom from oppression and domination. There can be neither freedom nor equality when one human being rules over or dominates another no matter what form that rule takes. And where there is neither freedom nor equality, absent also are justice and love. Freedom or domination—either we accept one side of the coin or the other. There is no middle ground. Liberation theologians and anarchists agree that an option for one means the negation of the other. And, as we have seen, anarchists and theologians of liberation unhesitatingly opt for freedom.

If freedom is a goal, as it is for anarchists, domination must be overcome. Yet among the anarchists, only Kropotkin goes into any detail concerning domination. In attempting to account for the historical reality of the domination of one person over another, or of the few over the many, he claims that along with the natural instinct toward mutual aid is the strong and natural tendency for personal domination.¹ Throughout history these two instincts of humankind have come into conflict. Periods of progress for humanity are periods when mutual aid predominates. In the long run this tendency is the one that prevails. Although there are periods of history when the tendency to mutual aid seems crushed, it always manages to come back stronger.²

Kropotkin hoped that the society of the future would see a triumph of mutual aid. His ideal of the future was that of a society completely devoid of domination.³ Kropotkin envisioned a communal society so free of domination that even its own communism cannot be imposed. He says:

¹ Peter Kropotkin, *Ethics*, trans. Louis S. Fielland and Joseph R. Piroshnikoff (New York: Dial, 1936), p. 263.

² Peter Kropotkin, “Mutual Aid,” in *The Essential Kropotkin*, ed. Emile Capouya and Keitha Tompkins (New York: Liveright, 1975), p. 207.

³ Kropotkin, “Modern Socialism and Anarchism,” *Essential*, p. 65.

Communism cannot be imposed from above; it could not live even for a few months if the constant and daily cooperation of all did not uphold it. It must be free.⁴

I think it is safe to say that the other anarchists would agree with Kropotkin. We need only look at the words of Bakunin to see more fully the anarchist rejection of domination:

...all domination presupposes the subjection of the masses and consequently their exploitation to the profit of some minority or other.⁵

Equally odious to the anarchists is the use of coercive power to enforce the various institutions of domination that have occurred historically. Coercive power, especially in the form of political power, they believe, is absolutely corrupt. Not only does it corrupt those who use it but it leads to subjection and exploitation.⁶

Bakunin clearly rejected the use of coercive political power when he wrote:

But there can be no equality between the sovereign and the subject. On the one side is the feeling of superiority necessarily induced by a high position; on the other, that of inferiority resulting from the sovereign's superior position as the wielder of executive and legislative power. Political power *means* domination [my emphasis].⁷

He also said:

Class, power, State, these three terms are inseparable, each of them implying the other two, and summed up in aggregate by these words: the political subjection and economic exploitation of the masses.⁸

And what of authority? The anarchists recognize that distinctions must be made when speaking about "authority." Not all authority is rejected. Bakunin was especially willing to accept the authority of expertise.⁹ He was willing to grant to the scientist, in particular, the authority that comes with specialized knowledge. When one has need of such knowledge scientists should be consulted. But this does not mean that they

⁴ Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal," in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 140.

⁵ Michael Bakunin, *Marxism, Freedom, and the State*, trans., ed. K. J. Kenafick (London: Freedom Press, 1950), p. 43.

⁶ Michael Bakunin, "The Program of the Alliance," in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed., trans., and introd., Sam Dolgoff, pref. Paul Avrich (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 245.

⁷ Bakunin, "Representative Government and Universal Suffrage," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 221,

⁸ Michael Bakunin, "Marx and Marxism," in *Selected Writings*, trans. Steven Cox and Olive Stevens, ed. Arthur Lehning (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), p. 254.

⁹ Bakunin, "God and the State," *Selected Writings*, p. 132.

have infallible authority nor that they should be allowed special privileges including the right to dominate. Authority of expertise, an authority that serves the people with its knowledge of specific matters, may be granted, but authority that is coercive and dominating cannot be allowed in the anarchist scheme. Proudhon showed his rejection of dominating, coercive authority by calling it the “curse of society.”¹⁰ Bakunin called it the “negation of liberty.”¹¹ And Kropotkin claimed that it, along with law, was the “main support of crime and idleness.”¹²

Anarchists also believe that coercive authority patronizes. Those who use coercive authority assume as a fact that the masses are incapable of governing themselves and that only through the “beneficent yoke of wisdom and a justice imposed upon them” can there be any harmony.¹³ They treat the masses as if they were unruly children incapable of ascertaining their own best interest.

Coercive authority is seen by the anarchists as incompatible with their conception of a future society not only because it negates freedom and patronizes, but also because it goes against the principle of equality.

Equality, as we have seen, allows for differences in talent and expertise, but it cannot permit power differences of command and rule.

Along with their rejection of coercive authority the anarchists reject expressions of such authority in the form of law. Here consideration must be given to different kinds of law, some of which are not rejected.

The first is eternal law or divine law. This law is conceived as a command transmitted by a transcendent, authoritarian deity, to humans by way of direct revelation, the eternal light of reason, or representatives who claim divine right. Most anarchists reject such a deity and thereby reject divine law.

Tolstoy is one of the exceptions. He embraced a divine law revealed in the New Testament through the teaching of Jesus Christ. Tolstoy believed that Christ summed up the whole of the divine law in commandments which were reasonable, beneficent, carry in themselves their own justification, and embrace the whole life of man.”¹⁴

The second type of law—law enacted or legislated by a government, sovereign, State, or other ruling power—is also rejected by most anarchists. This type of law, especially when it claims divine law as its source, is deemed incompatible with freedom.¹⁵

Acceptable to most anarchists are natural laws and contractual laws.

¹⁰ Pierre Joseph Proudhon, “Theory of Property,” in *Selected Writings of Pierre Joseph Proudhon*, trans. Elizabeth Fraser, ed. Stewart Edwards (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1969), p. 94.

¹¹ Bakunin, “God and the State,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 238.

¹² Peter Kropotkin, “Law and Authority,” *Essential*, p. 43.

¹³ Bakunin, “Federalism, Socialism, and Anti-Theologism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 142.

¹⁴ Leo Tolstoy, “What I Believe,” in *A Confession. The Gospel in Brief. What I Believe*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 520. (See also p. 369.)

¹⁵ Peter Kropotkin, *The State: Its Historic Role* (London: Freedom Press, 1943), p. 30. See also Alexander Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover, 1972), p. 46.

Natural laws are those laws that are “inherent in the body social, just as physical laws are inherent in material bodies.”¹⁶ Although we are aware of only a few precepts of these natural laws, they have governed society through customs and tradition since the beginning of social beings.¹⁷ These laws are personally recognized through “conscience” or the instinct of sociability i.e. mutual aid. Because these laws are completely internal, neither imposed by a deity nor some external authority, they are the only laws completely compatible with the principle of freedom. As Bakunin says in “God and State”:

The liberty of man consists solely in this: that he obeys natural laws because he himself recognized them as such, and not because they have been externally imposed upon him by any extrinsic will whatever, divine or human, collective or individual.¹⁸

Only when one knows what natural laws are operative in society and acts in accordance with those laws, can there be complete freedom.

Contractual laws are also compatible with freedom. Proudhon writes:

That I may remain free, that I may be subjected to no law but my own, and that I may govern myself, the edifice of society must be built upon the idea of contract.¹⁹

Like natural laws, contractual laws are not imposed by some external authority; only the agreement of the contracting parties enforces them. But unlike natural laws, contractual laws are completely dependent upon human will.

It is interesting to note that the anarchist criterion for accepting or rejecting law is whether or not law is dominating. All laws imposed from some outside source and not agreed upon are accordingly rejected.

Externally imposed laws reveal their dominating character in concrete, historical ways: they are always on the side of the master, be it priest, sovereign, or rich exploiter; they are always on the side of property, and, in a capitalist society, they protect those who own the means of production.

Proudhon puts it quite eloquently:

Laws! I we know what they are and what they are worth. Cobwebs for the powerful and the rich, chains which no steel can break for the little and the poor, fishers’ nets in the hands of the government.²⁰

¹⁶ Bakunin, “Federalism, Socialism and Anti-Theologism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 129.

¹⁷ Bakunin, “Federalism, Socialism and Anti-Theologism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 129.

¹⁸ Bakunin, “God and State,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 227.

¹⁹ Pierre Josheph Proudhon. *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*. quoted in Paul Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, trans. Steven T. Byington, ed. James J. Martin (New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1960), p. 46.

²⁰ Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, quoted in Eltzbacher,

If this were not enough to incriminate external laws, Kropotkin gives us another reason—they are useless.²¹ If at one time this type of law had served to maintain society, this function has rapidly deteriorated. In the future anarchist society the civilizing mission of external law will be completely unnecessary. Even now these laws are no longer needed for the protection of persons or the prevention of crime. If anything, they do more harm than good.

And so, Kropotkin believes that the first duty of the revolution is to submit all existing external laws to the torch.²²

But the revolution must not stop with the destruction of external laws. The anarchists believe that to rid society of external laws once and for all one must attack and annihilate those historical forms of coercive authority that are their source—State and Church.

The principal distinction that separates anarchists from other political philosophers is their vehement opposition to the State and all its accompanying institutions. For them, nothing is more adverse to human dignity, freedom, and equality than this institution of slavery and

oppression. The anarchists believe that the structure of the State with its division into hierarchical groups and with its centralization of authority lends itself to a tyranny that always favors the rich and powerful and oppresses the poor and weak.²³ The State, though supposedly set up to be an institution of peace in which citizens are protected from harm, is a structure of organized violence whose existence is maintained by force or the threat of force. Nothing is protected except privilege and private property.²⁴

The anarchists hold that the modern State is particularly insidious because it has been reenforced by the rise of capitalism with its own institutions of oppression and exploitation.

Kropotkin says:

In history these institutions [the modern State and capitalism] developed side by side, mutually supporting and re-enforcing each other. They are bound together, not by a mere coincidence of contemporaneous development but by the bond of cause and effect, effect and cause. Thus the State appears to us as a society for the mutual insurance of the landlord, the warrior, the judge, and the priest, constituted in order to enable every one of them to assert his respective authority over people and to exploit the poor.²⁵

Anarchism, p. 45.

²¹ Kropotkin, "Law and Authority," *Essential*, p. 39.

²² Kropotkin, "Law and Authority," *Essential*, p. 39.

²³ Pierre Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Beverly Robinson (London: Freedom Press, 1923), p. 108.

²⁴ Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?*, p. 179.

²⁵ Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," *Essential*, p. 83.

The anarchists find nothing about the State that can be redeemed. The State, along with those organizations and institutions that make up its lifeblood—parliaments, tribunals, administration, banks, and universities—must be destroyed.²⁶ The Church, in particular, must be abolished. From the beginning of its history, the Church has aided the State in pacifying the masses; it has kept them in intellectual slavery to prevent their revolt against political and economic oppression; it has protected property and promoted inequality. But the anarchists believe that the time has come to put an end to every tool of coercion, command, and rule. Away with Church and State!

Even so, the anarchists caution that the State must not be used to destroy the State. No attempt must be made to legislate the State out of existence nor to effect its demise through the use of its own organizational and structural machinery. The anarchists believe that any revolutionary group that ignores these cautionary words will succeed in creating only a new form of tyranny. Nothing short of the complete abolition of the State and all its appurtenances will insure a successful revolution.²⁷

In short, the anarchists oppose, as a threat to freedom and equality, any external and coercive authority, command, rule, or domination in whatever form they may take, be it law, Church, or State.

And the liberation theologians follow the anarchists path in also unequivocally opposing domination, coercive power, authority and external laws.

We saw in Chapter II that liberation theologians view the situation of Latin America as one of external and internal domination. If it were not for this situation and the long history of colonial domination that the Latin American people have had to suffer, liberation theology may never have come about.

However, it is not only the situation of domination in Latin America that creates concern, but all forms of domination and oppression. The society that liberation theologians envision for the future and the society that they are trying to create in the present, has a universal appeal, it is “the end of domination of man over man...”²⁸ Domination, according to the liberation theologians, treats the other as a tool, a thing to be used, an inferior.²⁹ Domination completely annihilates the freedom to self-realization.

But is there not a God in the Old Testament who dominates? And are we not made in his image? Liberation theologians agree that we are led to believe in such a god. But we are not made in the image of this god, rather this dominating god is made in the image of the earthly masters and rulers. This god of domination and coercive power

²⁶ Bakunin, “National Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 100.

²⁷ See Kropotkin, “Modern Science and Anarchism,” *Essential* pp. 75–6; Kropotkin, “Anarchism,” *Essential*, p. 109; Bakunin, “On Man and Marxism,” *Selected Writings*, p. 237; Bakunin, “The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 270.

²⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 231.

²⁹ Enrique Dussel, *History and the Theology of Liberation*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976), pp. 145–6.

serves the rich and powerful leaders and legitimates their unjust authority. This god is not on the side of the poor and oppressed.³⁰

Jose Comblin gives us a picture of this false god:

There is a certain monotheistic god who serves as the foundation and support of all kinds of domination: that of the father, the teacher, the master, the owner, the State, and the army. This god is a god of power, and he sacralizes all power. He is a god of the ego, the god which the ego discovers within as the source of a more expansive and bloated social ego or as the projection of an oppressive super ego.³¹

Liberation theologians believe that the God of “power and might” in whose image we are made is a God who uses his power for liberation and service, not for domination.³² The God of love who opts for the poor cannot be a God who also approves of their subjugation.

Liberation theologians turn to the New Testament for evidence that domination is not the way of a loving, liberating God.

Aware that the people of Israel, in a situation quite similar to the one in Latin America, were dominated both by external, imperialistic, economic, and political power and by an internal structure that bolstered this power, the liberation theologians portray the ministry of Jesus as one preoccupied with a criticism of the oppressive situation, especially of dominating power structures. They show that Jesus was quick to attack those in positions of domination.³³ He attacked Herod, whom he called a fox (Luke 13:32); the Publicans (Matthew 9:10, 21, 31); the chief priests and scribes (Mark 11:18); and the Pharisees (Matthew 23:1–12).

But the theologians also point out those passages showing that Jesus was opposed not only to forms of domination within a specific historical situation, but also to domination in whatever situation it might appear.

Leonardo Boff points to Luke 22:25–28 in which Jesus is critical of all power exercised as domination over others.³⁴ The greatest, including Jesus himself, must not dominate others but should serve.³⁵

³⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Theology from the Underside of History,” in *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 204.

³¹ José Comblin, “What Sort of Service Might Theology Render,” in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 70.

³² Leonardo Boff, “Christ’s Liberation via Oppression,” *Frontiers* p. 112.

³³ Ignacio Ellacuría, *Freedom made Flesh*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976), p. 32.

³⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 285.

³⁵ Leonardo Boff, “Salvation in Jesus Christ and the Process of Liberation,” in *The Mystical and Political Dimensions of the Christian Faith*, ed. Gustavo Gutiérrez and Claude Geffré (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), p. 89.

Miranda points to the Magnificat of Mary, perhaps the most subversive passage in the New Testament, to show that domination is not compatible with the will of God. Those who are mighty, the domiantors, will be put down from their thrones.³⁶

Turning to Christ's own example the theologians point out that Jesus could have chosen the way of domination to lead the people out of their oppressive situation but instead he chose the way of service. The temptation in the desert reveals a man who recognizes the evil of an option to command and rule.³⁷

On the question of power, the liberation theologians claim that power can be used either for domiantion or for service.³⁸ When used for domination it is coercive and benefits only an elite minority, when used for service, everyone benefits. It is true that power without love naturally tends toward oppression and domination, but when used with love in mutual giving it is the condition of liberty. Power of this latter type is compatible with the new order.³⁹ it is the hope of the poor and the oppressed that in the Kingdom power will be shared by everyone. No hierarchical divisions will separate the people. There will be neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female (Galatians 3:28).

It is, then, external, coercive power as domination that liberation theologians oppose. Leonardo Boff explains that this type of power is totally against God's will:

Jesus categorically refused to inaugurate a Kingdom based on power and its use. He was the servant of every human creature, not their ruler. Thus he stood as the incarnation of God's love rather than of God's power...In his [Christ's] view power, insofar as it means domination, is essentially diabolic and contrary to the mystery of God (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).⁴⁰

Liberation theologians also oppose any authority that is used for domination. If authority is a function of a community and is also a function of service, it can be accepted. But more often than not, it becomes monopolized by a group of specialists who stand outside and above the community and use their authority for self-interested purposes.⁴¹

When the liberation theologians look to Jesus as a model they see that the New Testament supports this critical attitude toward coercive authority. Jesus is seen as

³⁶ José Porfirio Miranda, *Communism and the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1982), p. 72.

³⁷ Pierre Bigo, *The Church and the Third World Revolution*, trans. Sister Jeanne Marie Lyons (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977), p. 75.

³⁸ Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 394.

³⁹ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, p. 287.

⁴⁰ Boff, "Christ's Liberation via Oppression," *Frontiers*, pp. 108-9.

⁴¹ Leonardo Boff, "Theological Characteristics of a Grassroots Church," in *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, trans. John Drury, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 136.

displaying a great freedom in the presence of the established authorities of his day.⁴² His reproaches to, and criticisms of, those in authoritative positions made him highly suspect. He was seen as a rival to those in power.⁴³ Jesus was well aware of their power games and unmasked the superstructure! and ideological universe that they controlled.⁴⁴ He knew that their authority and power, especially that of the the religious leaders, were used to oppress the people and he denounced them at every opportunity.

Liberation theologians emphasize that it was the religious and political authorities and not the Jewish people, certainly not the poor and oppressed, who had Jesus crucified.⁴⁵ It was ruthless, power-hungry, dominating, coercive authorities who were responsible. If historically the blame for Jesus' death has been placed on the Jewish people it is because those in power and authority had need of a scapegoat.

And so it was the forces of domination, coercive power, and coercive authority that disrupted the coming of God's Kingdom on earth. Liberation theologians, therefore, believe that if the Kingdom is to be attained, these forces must be overcome.

Leonardo Boff says:

The preaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God concerns not only persons, demanding conversion of them. It also affects the world of persons in terms of a liberation from legalism, from conventions without foundation, from authoritarianism and the forces of power that subject the people.⁴⁶

In denouncing this “unholy trinity” of domination, coercive power, and coercive authority, the liberation theologians follow the anarchists. But to be convinced that they are thoroughly anarchist we must examine their attitude toward the more specific manifestations of domination and coercive authority—law# State, and Church.

Although they do not recognize the same specific ways of classifying law as the anarchists do, they have the same criteria for accepting or rejecting law. All law that is compatible with freedom is accepted; all law that is coercive and dominating is rejected.

The only law that liberation theologians give as meeting the criteria of freedom is the law of love, an immanent law that guides a person to “ties of service to neighbor.”⁴⁷ Comblin calls it the “new slavery” because it binds people together more tightly than any external form of slavery. But it is a voluntary slavery, a slavery accepted with full awareness because it is “reason itself,” and the only slavery that is free. It is a slavery of love, and love is equivalent to freedom.⁴⁸

⁴² Ellacuría, *Freedom*, p. 32.

⁴³ José Croatto, *Exodus*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 58.

⁴⁴ croatto, *Exodus*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 229.

⁴⁶ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, p. 72.

⁴⁷ Jose Combiin, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 148.

⁴⁸ Combiin, *Church*, p. 148.

The liberation theologians hold that the law of love is the only law that is life-giving and allows for creativity and self-affirmation.⁴⁹ It is the law of the “new man” and the new society.⁵⁰

The theologians turn to the New Testament to show that it was Jesus, the perfect model of the “new man,” who made it clear that the law that he had come to fulfill was the law of love. When in Matthew 5:17 Jesus said that he had come not to destroy the law but to fulfill it, his purpose was to restore its original meaning and intent, a meaning that the Prophets of the Old Testament had recognized and tried to reveal to the people—a message of life, love, and freedom.⁵¹ The law of the Old Testament, according to these theologians, was not intended to be an idol followed at all cost; it was intended to serve justice and was created for the purpose of looking after one’s neighbor.⁵² Since the law became perverted by those in power, Jesus had to restore its original meaning. He did this by promoting a morality of the heart, beyond all ritualism and legalism, a morality obeying only the law of love.⁵³

Jose Croatto interprets the passage in Matthew clearly and representatively:

In reality, Jesus fulfills the Law insofar as he “consummates” it, brings it to its end, and, by the same token, annuls it...Jesus, as the New Event of God in the world, *exhausts* the deep meaning of the Law in *love*. Without promulgating laws, he recovers in love the reservoir-of- meaning of the Law, understood originally as a path of life, as an interpretation of the liberation event of Exodus.⁵⁴

In contrast to the internal law of love, are the external, coercive laws whether written, customary, traditional, religious, or political, whether old or new, including laws made by revolutionary movements.⁵⁵ These laws are looked upon by liberation theologians as contrary to freedom and justice and are, therefore, rejected.⁵⁶ The oppression they cause is too great to let stand in a society seeking emancipation and fulfillment. This type of law blocks creativity and is dominating; it is backed by force and threat of force; it thrives on fear. It treats human beings as things to be manipulated rather than as neighbors to be respected and loved. As Segundo says, “Law constitutes the

⁴⁹ Croatto, *Exodus*, p. 66.

⁵⁰ Combi in. *Church*, p. 148.

⁵¹ Sebastian Happen, *Jesus and Freedom* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977), p. 128. See also Croatto, *Exodus*, p. 66.

⁵² Jose’ Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974), p. 181.

⁵³ Ellacuría, *Freedom*, pp. 29–30.

⁵⁴ Croatto, *Exodus*, p. 66.

⁵⁵ Combiin. *Church*, p. 147.

⁵⁶ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 30.

most generic expression of...functional, impersonal relationships with other human individuals.”⁵⁷

Justice, then, demands that external laws be abolished.⁵⁸ The Bible, especially the New Testament, supports this anarchist view. The theologians believe that one of the most prominent features of Jesus’ life was his criticism of and disregard for the law and those upholding the law.⁵⁹ Jesus recognized that even more than the domination of Roman imperialism, the people of Israel were oppressed by the enslaving structure of the law. Instead of promoting love and justice, the law legitimated a power elite, maintained the status quo, and oppressed the poor and powerless. With it the religious leaders killed the conscience of the people, deceived them and separated them from their calling as human beings destined for freedom.⁶⁰

Because of this, Jesus lashed out against the law (Mark 2:27) and the keepers of the law (Matthew 23:3, 4, 13; Luke 11:45–53). He openly defied the Sabbath law, the “touchstone of the legalistic morality of the Pharisees,” by plucking the heads of grain (Mark 2:23) and healing the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1–5).⁶¹ Jesus also encouraged others to break the law (John 5:8–16).

In fact, Jesus was so opposed to law, the liberation theologians claim, that he could not have been a Zealot. Although he agreed with the Zealots’ anti-imperialist cause, he could not accept their legalism. Jesus was much more revolutionary than they. He wanted to abolish all forms of domination, including the law.

Croatto says:

The Zealots, actually were reactionary groups. If they pursued the goal of expelling the Romans from Palestinian soil, it was to re-establish the Law and the lost politico-religious institution. They could not get out of the internal circle of legalism. Christ could not struggle or die for the law; rather he suffered its power as a structure of death. To long for a Zealot Christ, therefore, is to follow a reactionary, religio-nationalistic Christ. Recovering one’s particular religious and cultural values is one thing; recovering an oppressive legal system is another. Jesus came to save people, not the law.⁶²

As Croatto points out in the above passage, because of law Christ was put to death. Immediately after he defied the Sabbath law the Pharisees plotted to kill him; the “structure of death” that had killed the conscience of the people also killed “the only man who did not know sin.” And because of this, “God destroys sin and the law forever.”

⁵⁷ Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 160.

⁵⁸ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 30.

⁵⁹ Ellacuría, *Freedom*, pp. 29–30.

⁶⁰ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, p. 67.

⁶¹ Croatto, *Exodus*, p. 66.

⁶² Croatto, *Exodus*, p. 62.

At the point of Jesus' death "the justice of God begins in history and the 'justice' of the law ends."⁶³

If Jesus' life and teaching are not enough to reveal the anarchist message of the New Testament, the message of Paul leaves no doubt. Miranda explicitly claims that Paul's understanding of law is even more revolutionary than the anarchists. He says:

Paul wants a world without law. Exegesis which avoids this fact makes an understanding of the Pauline message impossible. Neither Kropotkin nor Bakunin nor Marx nor Engels made assertions against the law more powerful and subversive than those Paul makes. Paul is convinced not only that the law has failed in human history in its attempt to achieve justice, but that justice cannot be achieved as long as law exists...⁶⁴

Miranda claims that the law was originally to serve justice, but that it had degenerated into a tool for evil. If it had been useful at one time, it no longer has a purpose historically. The fact that it was instrumental in putting Jesus to death negates any positive function it may have had.

So Paul, according to Miranda, wanted a world without law but he also wanted a world without any normative cultural and social structures.⁶⁵ He envisioned a world of a New Man and a New Creation where there is no need for coercion of any kind—legal, political, social, or religious.

The liberation theologians backed by the anarchist message of the New Testament, therefore, reject all forms of external law. They find it alienating and oppressive and completely incompatible with God's Kingdom. Law must be abolished if freedom, justice, and love are to prevail.

To insure that law will never again rear its dreadful head, such historical institutions of force and power, as the State and Church must be abolished.

Strong words 1 The theology of liberation would border on political and religious heresy were it to support such a claim. It would not be able to escape the label "anarchist." All other postures—the rejection of domination and external authority, the rejection of law—might be tolerated if viewed in abstraction. But the rejection of the State and the Church, and a call for their abolition, is quite concrete and goes far beyond toleration. In fact, Miranda is the only one to explicitly call for the abolition of the State. For him, the State, like law, is incompatible with justice, and therefore must be abolished. In *Marx and the Bible* he says:

Completely opposite to the defense of the status quo, the realization of justice not only subverts it, it also demands that we abolish the State and the law.⁶⁶

⁶³ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 191.

⁶⁴ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 188.

⁶⁵ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 188.

⁶⁶ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 30.

The words of the other theologians are not as explicit but their harsh criticism of the State would lead one to believe that they sympathize with Miranda.

José Comblin, because of his deep and critical awareness of the oppression of the national security State, is one of the most outspoken opponents of State power. He recognizes that “when power and State are concerned, the liberty of an individual citizen is a myth.”⁶⁷ He claims that the State is, by its nature, dominating and totalitarian: “Its purpose, like that of any power, is to increase its power. It attempts to make of its citizens the agents of its growth.”⁶⁸ He also realizes that the State will never let go of its power voluntarily; it must be compelled to do so by the “active resistance of a responsible people.”⁶⁹ He believes that the State cannot be used to end domination and usher in the new order of freedom. He says:

...a socialism built by the power of the State/ whatever it may be called, is always a system of domination. There is freedom only in the control and limitation of power by the citizens and by private associations. The proletarian State is a myth which serves to conceal the ascent of a new middle class and a new capitalism.⁷⁰

Other theologians would agree with this last point. They are quite suspicious of party politics, State bureaucracies, and class dictatorships.⁷¹

Bigo's claim is similar to that of Comblin:

There is no question of simply inverting power by passing it over to an opponent group. Dictatorship by a class, even if it be the proletariat, is a kindred kind of power. Public authority does not belong to one class but to the nation.⁷²

Dussel claims that if we fall into the trap of allowing ourselves to be drugged by a “utopian dream” of a perfect system, we will ultimately allow ourselves to be tyrannized by a bureaucracy that sets itself up as the final authority. This unlimited tyranny, he claims, is “hell.”⁷³

Gutiérrez holds -that along with appropriating the means of production, the masses must appropriate their own political management. And if there is to be any govern-

⁶⁷ combi in. *Church*, p. 165.

⁶⁸ comblin, *Church*, p. 195.

⁶⁹ Comblin, *Church*, p. 195.

⁷⁰ Jose Comblin, “Freedom and Liberation as Theological Concepts,” *Mystical and Political Dimensions*, p. 103.

⁷¹ There is one exception. Miguez Bonino says that a strong centralized State is a necessary step on the process of nationalization. But he also cautions that there are dangers in such a step. Jose' Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), p. 39.

⁷² Bigo, *Church*, p. 248.

⁷³ Enrique Dussel, “Historical and Philosophical Presuppositions for Latin American Theology,”

mental structure at all it must be one that serves rather than dominates, that is freeing rather than coercive.⁷⁴

With no laws to embody its power, no bureaucracy, no dictatorship, no domination, the State, as we know it becomes a nonentity. If theologians other than Miranda do not explicitly call for abolition of the State, they do call for everything that undermines State power.

The Bible, especially the New Testament is used to back up the theologians in their anti-State stand.⁷⁵ They point to three passages in the Gospels that are particularly revealing of Christ's opposition to political power.

The first passage is Matthew 4:8–11 where the devil tempts Jesus offering him all the Kingdoms of the world, but Jesus refuses. Political rule is not the way of the Son of Man nor is it the way that God's Kingdom will be established. Political rule is the temptation of the devil and as such was rejected.⁷⁶

It is this rejection of Kingship that the liberation theologians see as setting Jesus apart from the Zealots. In the discussion of law it was shown that Jesus sympathized with the Zealots' anti-imperialist views, but could not identify himself as a Zealot because he felt obliged to renounce the nationalistic and political institutions that the Zealots wanted to restore. The Zealots wanted a politico-religious Messiah, or king, but Jesus had to reject that kind of power because his message was more exacting than theirs. It is not that Jesus' Kingdom was to be in heaven, but in Jesus' Kingdom there would be no kings. Political power is incompatible with God's earthly promise and it must be rejected.⁷⁷

Miranda says:

What disturbed the Zealots was that the *Romans* ruled Israel. Jesus went far beyond the Zealots. Jesus left all nationalism completely out of his plans...Jesus was incomparably more faithful to all the Jewish revolutionaries. God and human beings cannot reign at the same time.⁷⁸

The second passage is one we looked at earlier—Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:52). Miranda claims that when Luke sums up the Kingdom with "he has put down the mighty from their thrones," he is not talking about any specific rulers, not even those of Rome, he is talking about "every class of rulers."⁷⁹ The Kingdom of God and human "Kingdoms" are incompatible.

Frontiers, p. 211.

⁷⁴ Gutierrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith," *Frontiers*, pp. 2, 17, 18.

⁷⁵ 8 Jose Porfirio Miranda, *Communism in the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1982), p. 73.

⁷⁶ Bigo, *Church*, p. 75.

⁷⁷ Croatto, *Exodus*, p. 62; Gutiérrez, *Theology*, pp. 226–32.

⁷⁸ Miranda, *Communism*, p. 72.

⁷⁹ Miranda, *Communism*, p. 72.

The third and most distinctive passage, in which Jesus rejects political rule as contrary to God's Kingdom, is Mark 12:17. There Jesus says: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." What is particularly important about this passage is that for centuries it has been used to justify the legitimacy of the State.⁸⁰ From the perspective of those who opt for the poor this passage takes on a different meaning.

Miranda interprets this passage in a way that is clearly anarchist. This passage, he claims, cannot be reasonably interpreted as a recognition of authority; it is, rather, an attack on authority. Jesus had already claimed that the rival of God is something real and tangible, namely money, which cannot be served in also serving God (Matthew 6:24). Consequently it would be contradictory to claim that Jesus submits to authority in urging that the coin should be returned to Caesar. Miranda explains:

It is as if Giovanni Papinni, after having said that money is devil crap, had added: Give the money back to the government—and give God what is God's...Jesus' ploy is to deny *all* government authority, but in such terms that no one can accuse him before the governor (my emphasis).⁸¹

Other liberation theologians, though differing in the details of their interpretation, agree that this is an antigovernment, anti-State passage.⁸²

The epistles of Paul also contain the same message. Miranda shows that Paul is as antigovernment as he is antilaw. For Paul "the State and law are conceived as one and the same thing."⁸³ Just as there will be no need for law in a world where all are "righteous," there will be no need for the State. The new creation and the new man will be completely free.

But complete freedom will not come as long as people are bound to a hierarchical Church, a Church that cares more for laws, canons, codes, traditions, and rituals than it does for human beings, a Church closed to the future and the progress of history, a Church steeped in the past and blind to present realities. Complete freedom will not come as long as there is a Church that drugs the people with the hope that a heavenly Kingdom awaits those who are patient, meek, mild, and long-suffering. It will not come as long as the Church promotes the belief that "original sin" makes a change in human nature impossible; that human beings must remain fallen creatures who need an external dominating force to keep them from tearing each other apart.

⁸⁰ it is interesting to note that Kropotkin did not recognize the radical message of this passage. He saw it as a pro-State concession that the early Christians made in an effort to escape persecution. Peter Kropotkin, *Ethics*, pp. 120–1.

⁸¹ Miranda, *Communism*, p. 65.

⁸² Bigo, *Church*, p. 76.

⁸³ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 184 and p. 258.

Liberation theologians realize that there has to be a radical change. Although they do not make the extreme demand that the Church be abolished, they recognize that it must be transformed.⁸⁴ Ellacuría says it eloquently:

The Church must begin to liberate itself so that it will be obvious that it is free of all worldliness; free of the trappings of wealth, honor and power; free of avarice, fear, and servile attitudes; free of structures that configure its hierarchy and its methods of government along the lines of the most dictatorial states. The Church must encourage within its own boundaries the fullest measure of liberty possible...The Church must foster and encourage a maturity motivated by love and liberty rather than by fear. It must promote a maximum of personal relationships and a minimum of institutional relationships. It must place the value and worth of the person above that of the institution.⁸⁵

The change that Ellacuría calls for is not being initiated by the institutional Church but by the poor and oppressed and by those members of the clergy who have made a commitment to them. A new structure from the base up, a Church of the people is being formed in Latin America. These base communities are transforming the conception of what it means to be a Church and to be God's chosen people. At last, a Church is emerging that is rooted in the concrete realities of history, that is awake to and suspicious of the ideologies of the status quo, that allows the masses to take control of their own social, political, and religious destiny.

Even though these changes do not abolish the Church, as the anarchists would like, the transformation of the Church meets all the requirements that the anarchists find necessary to insure a society of freedom.

The new Church in Latin America also meets Jesus' demands. The theologians believe that the Church formed by Jesus was a Church of the poor and lowly.⁸⁶ They remind us that none of Jesus' disciples came from the priestly class, nor were they rich and powerful. Jesus did not ally himself with the religious leaders of his day. Instead, he undermined the power base of the priestly class and the religious authorities.⁸⁷ He rejected their oppressive traditions and laws and founded a Church with only one law—the law of love.

The Church that Jesus founded is a model for the base communities—a Church of the people, by the people, and for the poor, oppressed, homeless, widowed, and rejected.

⁸⁴ See Gustavo Gutierrez, "Freedom and Salvation," in *Liberation and Change* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), p. 93; Enrique Dussel, "Current Events in Latin America," *Challenge*, p. 33; Boff, "Theological Considerations of a Grassroots Church," *Challenge*, p. 134.

⁸⁵ Ellacuría, *Freedom*, p. 162.

⁸⁶ Gutiérrez, *Power*, p. 211.

⁸⁷ Segundo, *Liberation*, p. 112.

In denouncing domination, external, coercive power and authority, laws that enslave, governments that command, and Churches that oppress, liberation theology is anarchist. It is anarchist in repudiating all dominating external rule and all threats to freedom. It is anarchist in believing that without the yoke of hierarchical tyrannies, people can and will create a society that is harmonious, just, and loving.

Chapter V. Property is Theft

“...and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.” (Acts 4:32)

Anarchists and liberation theologians condemn all forms of dominating power and authority but their condemnation would not be complete unless they also denounced the economic system that underlies and supports the structure of political and religious oppression. For them there is no hope of freedom from State, Church, and law without complete emancipation in the economic realm; there is no hope of political and religious equality without economic equality. The economic system is the key to opening all other doors to freedom, justice and equality.

In their analysis of economic reality the anarchists conclude that accumulated private property is the root cause of economic inequality, but all do not agree in their analysis of private property, nor do they agree on the steps to be taken to ensure economic equality.

In his early writings Proudhon considered property to be unjust and exploitative. If property is the absolute right to use and abuse one's material goods at will, then the property owner may if he chooses, squander his goods, abuse the land, exploit the laborer who works for him.¹ The proprietor is never called to act with consideration for the common good. He acts with only his own interests in mind. He may accumulate as much as he likes and then let what has been accumulated rot. A right such as this is the suicide of society, because it leads to inequality of conditions and the sovereignty of some people over others.² Proudhon says:

... if we are associated for the sake of liberty, equality, and security, we are not associated for the sake of property; then if property is a *natural* right, this natural right is not social but anti-social. Property and society are utterly irreconcilable institutions.³

But Proudhon distinguishes another type of property that does not entail this absolute right to use and abuse, but rather the right of a laborer to *possession* of the

¹ Pierre Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property?*, trans, Benjamin J. Tucker (New York: H. Fertig, 1966), p. 42.

² Proudhon, *What is Property?*, p. 285.

³ Proudhon, *What is Property?*, p. 52.

products of Nature and the products of work.⁴ With this type of property one does not have the right to accumulate, abuse and exploit, but only to enjoy the fruits of one's labor and to use the means of production in such a way that society as a whole will benefit. Proudhon describes the rights and duties of the possessor:

... he is responsible for the thing entrusted to him; he must use it in conformity with general utility, with a view to its preservation and development; he has no power to transform it, to diminish it, or to change its nature; he cannot so divide the usufruct that another shall perform the labor while he receives the product. In a word, the usufructuary is under the supervision of society, submitted to the condition of labor and the law of equality...⁵

Instead of being the curse of society, this latter type of property is the savior of society. It is this right of private possession that Proudhon glorifies in his later writings and regards as the only way that an individual can guard against the encroachments of a monolithic State.⁶ Property of this type, when equally distributed, is a decentralizing force, the basis of federalism and the only guarantee of freedom.⁷

What Proudhon envisions is a society where everyone is entitled to the product of his labor. It is a society of private property but only to the extent that it does not entail abuse. Land is distributed equally and is cultivated and used only by those who own it so that they may reap the benefits of their toil.⁸ In other words, the product of labor belongs to the one who works and the one who works is the one who owns the means of production, be it land or machinery.

Free enterprise is retained in Proudhon's system of small landholders and craftsmen and is secured by mutually agreed upon contracts rather than by any outside authority. Proudhon indicates that money is also retained but is rendered ineffectual as a tool of exploitation. It would no longer be used for the accumulation of property but would be used purely as a convenience in exchange of commodities.

In Proudhon's model of private property and free enterprise, equality is maintained not in any absolute sense but in proportion to the amount of work put into one's product. There is no domination in the political sense because this federalistic, mutualistic system of contractual obligations precludes centralized, dominating governmental authority. Each party in the economic contract is equal to any other. One's own labor determines bargaining power.

Unlike Proudhon, who championed private property in both the means and the products of labor, Bakunin believes that only the products of work should belong to

⁴ Pierre Joseph Proudhon, "Theory of Property," in *Selected Writings of Pierre Joseph Proudhon*, trans. Elizabeth Fraser, ed. Stewart Edwards (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1969), p. 127; see also *What is Property?*, p. 44.

⁵ Proudhon, *What is Property?*, p. 82.

⁶ Proudhon, "Theory of Property," *Selected Writings*, p. 133.

⁷ Proudhon, "Theory of Property," *Selected Writings*, p. 141.

⁸ Proudhon, *What is Property?*, p. 82.

the producers in private. In Bakunin's collectivist system, land and the other means of production are the common property of society.⁹ The State was formed to protect the privileges of those who own titles to property. Destroy private property and you destroy the State.¹⁰

For Bakunin one of the first duties of the revolution is to eliminate private property in land and the other means of production.¹¹ The means of production must be collectivized but care must be taken that the collectivization process does not transform private property into public property managed by the State. Collective ownership should not result in centralized ownership, rather it should lead to ownership by workers associations. Those who do the work, not as individuals, but as a socially interrelated group, become the owners of the means of production.

The economic structure that Proudhon envisions may be suited to a nonindustrialized society, but it could never work in a society where production has already become socialized. Large industry already requires a certain amount of cooperation among workers. Bakunin's system would only rearrange ownership. The workers producing in common would become the common owners.

But Bakunin's system still retains private property in the products of labor. As with Proudhon's model, each worker would be remunerated according to his work. Although there is some controversy concerning the basis of product distribution for Bakunin,¹² he indicates that distribution will be according to work and not according to need.

Bakunin says:

...whoever wants to live in society must *earn his living* by his own labor, or be treated as a parasite who is' living on the labor of others [my emphasis].¹³

He also says:

Economic and social equality means the equalization of personal wealth, but not by restricting what a man may acquire by his own skill, productive energy and thrift.¹⁴

Through hard work and sufficient skill an individual worker can secure personal wealth. The more industrious a worker, the more products of consumption he can

⁹ Michael Bakunin, "Revolutionary Catechism," in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed., trans, and introd. Sam Dolgoff, pref. Paul Avrich (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 93.

¹⁰ Bakunin, "The Program of the International Brotherhood," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 151.

¹¹ Bakunin, "The Program of the International Brotherhood," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 151.

¹² James Guillaume in a letter dated August 24, 1909 emphatically states that goods in Bakunin's collectivist society will be distributed according to need. He says that the "collectivist Internationalists never accepted the theory of 'to each according to the product of his labor.'" James Guillaume, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 159.

¹³ Bakunin, "Revolutionary Catechism," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 89.

¹⁴ 4 Bakunin, "Revolutionary Catechism," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 88.

accumulate. Whether or not money is used in this system is unclear. All that can be said with certainty is that Bakunin's wage system does not preclude the use of money.

In contrast, Kropotkin believes that as long as there is private property of any kind there will be inequality and domination. Common ownership of the means of production is a step in the right direction, but there must also be common ownership of the fruits of one's labor. As long as one is paid according to work, keeping intact a system of private property of the products of production, domination and oppression are inevitable. In a wage system there will always be those who accumulate more than others and who will use their economic plenty to attain power and privilege. Even more insidious and brutal is the difference in pay resulting from the distinctions between ordinary and professional labor. Kropotkin claims that:

...to establish this distinction is to maintain all the inequalities of our existing society. It is to trace out beforehand a demarcation between the worker and those who claim to rule him. It is still to divide society into two clearly defined classes; an aristocracy of knowledge above, a horny-handed democracy below; one class devoted to the service of the other; toiling with its hands to nourish and clothe the other until that other profits by its leisure to learn how to dominate those who toil for it.¹⁵

Kropotkin believes that the only way to solve the problem of inequality and domination is to establish a communist society where both the means of production and the products of work are held in common and where everyone, "contributing for the well-being to the full extent of his capacities, shall enjoy also from the common stock of society to the fullest possible extent of his needs."¹⁶ In this society the wage system is abolished and money becomes obsolete.

Whether it be the mutualism of Proudhon, the collectivism of Bakunin, or the communism of Kropotkin, the anarchists envision an equitable economic system where there can be hope of a just society. The anarchists realize that without such equality, political and social freedom is a dream.

Liberation theologians, like the anarchists, are aware that we will never end domination unless we expose and abolish the particular economic causes of that domination. They believe that political transformations are not enough and only lead to other forms of oppression. What is needed for the creation of a just, free and equal society is a complete overhauling of the existing structures—economic, social, and political.¹⁷ This

¹⁵ Peter Kropotkin, "The Wage System," in *The Essential Kropotkin*, ed. Emile Capouya and Keitha Tompkins (New York: Liveright, 1975), p. 99.

¹⁶ Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles," *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 59.

¹⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 26.

involves taking a new look at the prevailing conception and glorification of private property, the mainstay of the capitalist system.

Liberation theologians share the anarchist opposition to accumulated or, what Miranda calls, “differentiating” private property, which they see as the basis of unequal social classes and unjust distribution.¹⁸ The essence of differentiating property, according to Miranda, is institutionalized violence. Differentiating property can never be legitimate because it “could not and cannot come to be except by means of violence and spoliation.”¹⁹ No one willingly accepts poverty and economic oppression; it is always forced in some way.

The questions now are: Is private property ever compatible with a just society? If so, how? If not, what economic system would be compatible with justice?

No liberation theologian adopts a mutualist system such as one advocated by Proudhon. Although some make claims similar to those of Proudhon, they never explore the economic consequences of such claims.²⁰ The closest attempt to give recognition to a system similar to Proudhon’s can be found in the liberation theologians’ analysis of land distribution in the Old Testament. There an effort was made to retain private possession of land, but to divide it in such a way that would inhibit stratification and limit abuse. The Jubilee Year was specifically set up to correct any abuses that had occurred. At that time those who had accumulated more land than they had possessed when it had been divided equally were to return it to the original owners. All would then be free. But this system was a failure and its social ideas never fulfilled.²¹

Some liberation theologians adopt an economic stance similar to that of Bakunin.²² They are socialistic rather than communistic. They recognize that in order for there to be a free and equal society there must be social appropriation of the means of production. Although they definitely opt for socialism, they are silent about any specific distribution arrangements. They are clear only that there must be no distinction of classes and no exploitation. These theologians are so intensely aware of the oppressive nature of private ownership of the means of production in capitalist society that their main concern is to eliminate capitalism rather than to eliminate economic oppression

¹⁸ See Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and the Theology of Liberation*, trans. Bernard F. McWilliams (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), pp. 49–50. See also Giulio Girardi, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Hugo Assmann, “Final Document,” *Christians for Socialism*, trans. John Drury, ed. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1975), p. 169. See also Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith,” *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), pp. 37–8.

¹⁹ José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974), p. 13.

²⁰ Pierre Bigo, *The Church and Third World Revolution*, trans. Sister Jeanne Marie Lyons (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977), p. 160.

²¹ Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 53.

²² Gutiérrez, Assmann, and Miguez Bonino are among those who show a preference for socialism, although none of these claim that socialism represents the perfect society nor do they identify socialism with the Kingdom.

altogether. What seems important to them is to analyze the present situation and to take the necessary measures to alleviate the most pressing problem.

But there are theologians who go a step further and opt, quite unambiguously, for communism. For them the accumulation of private property in both its forms, in the means of production and the products of labor, is an offshoot of original sin.²³ Miranda is especially aware that accumulation of private property can never be anything but abuse, violence, and injustice. By definition it can never mean economic equality but is always differentiating.²⁴ These theologians believe that while there is private property, injustice and domination reign. The only remedy for this is communism—from each according to one's ability, to each according to one's need. In a communist society the earth and all its fruits are the common possession of everyone to use. According to these theologians we have the absolute right to fulfill the needs necessary for life and happiness.

Jose Miranda is the theologian most representative of the communist position. For him, communism and God's Kingdom are one and the same. It is unnecessary to turn to Marx to be convinced that communism is the only economic system compatible with justice: "The notion of communism is in the New Testament, right down to the letter...²⁵ There each human being is accorded dignity and respect irrespective of whether or not he or she is economically productive. In the Bible, according to Miranda, what is important is that needs are met. Jesus, therefore, instructs us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless, but not only through personal charity, which is but a temporary solution, but through social structures. Jesus wanted a permanent solution to poverty, a solution that would shake the foundations of oppression. Jesus' solution was communism.

Miranda points to John 12:6; 13:29 and Luke 8:1–3 to show that Jesus was a communist. He says:

For Jesus, whether the conservatives like it or not, *was in fact* a communist...Judas "carried the purse," so they had everything in common and each received according to need.²⁶

Furthermore, according to Miranda, "Jesus made the renunciation of property a condition for simply 'entering into the Kingdom' (cf. Mark 10:21,25)."²⁷ the beatitudes Jesus makes it plain that the Kingdom is reserved for the poor only. The rich are not permitted to enter unless they give up their property. There can be no differentiating

²³ Enrique Dussel, *History and the Theology of Liberation*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976), pp. 135–6.

²⁴ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 13.

²⁵ José Porfirio Miranda, *Communism and the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1982), p. 1. In a letter received 14 January 1983, Miranda states that it was the scientific study of the Bible, not Marxism, that led him to become a communist.

²⁶ Miranda, *Communism*, p. 18.

²⁷ Miranda, *Communism*, p. 18.

wealth in the Kingdom and, therefore, no social classes of rich and poor. For Miranda this is communism.

He specifically states:

...Jesus is not condemning the physical fact of being rich in this saying [see Luke 6:20,24]. What he is condemning is the fact that some are rich while others are poor, that existing society is divided into classes. All this means is that the Kingdom will be communist...²⁸

Miranda indicates that Jesus attacked the most important support of a property system—money. In Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13 Jesus recognized money as the one great rival to God. As Miranda claims, this was the first time in history that anyone had pointed out the danger of an economic system based on money. If we are to serve God and follow the teaching of Jesus we must get rid of any mode of production that makes money the supreme god.²⁹

Miranda also claims that the wage system is oppressive. Any time we are forced to “earn a living” we lose some of our freedom. He says:

But the most inescapable snare is the necessity to “earn a living” in the terms imposed by the social system. So there is no need for chains and bars; the slave who flees will be forced by hunger to return.³⁰

An economic system where labor is the basis for distribution is still a form of slavery.

As further evidence that communism was preferred by Jesus, Miranda points to the economic practices of the early Christians who followed their leader’s example. When we look at these practices there is no mistaking the fact that one of the most important requirements for being a Christian was communism.³¹ Miranda directs us to look at Acts 4:32, 34–35:

Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common...There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. (See also Acts 2:44–5].

²⁸ Jose Porfirio Miranda, *Marx Against the Marxists*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1980), p. 200.

²⁹ Miranda, *Marx Against the Marxists*, pp. 198–9.

³⁰ Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 8.

³¹ Miranda, *Communiam*, p. 7.

The fact that the communism of early Christianity failed, Miranda claims, does not remove the obligation of Christians to become communists. Communism is still the essence of Christianity and the hope of the Kingdom.³²

Miranda arrives at all the same economic conclusions as Kropotkin. There can be no question that, given Miranda's views on State and law together with his views on a just economic structure, he is a communist anarchist or anarchocommunist.

The other theologians, though taking a different path and arriving at conclusions different from those of Miranda, still have a view of private property in line with anarchist thinking. What is important is that the liberation theologians oppose all forms of differentiating wealth that allows domination and coercive power. Like the anarchists, the theologians realize that in order for there to be a free and just society, economic equality is necessary.

³² Miranda, *Marx Against the Marxists*, p. 200.

Chapter VI. Direct Action

“So Faith by Itself, if It Has No Works is Dead” (James 2:17)

Freedom, in liberation theology, is not something to be attained only at some future time; it is not an ideal of a perfect society that we must wait for, hoping that through patience and a few prayers it will fall to earth like manna from heaven. Freedom requires action now. It requires that human beings take control of their destiny and transform those social, political, economic and religious structures that are dominating and oppressive. Only action enables the person to develop, to grow, to expand in knowledge and talent. Action, whether in labor or in revolt, is life giving and life moving.

From the perspective of liberation theology, philosophies that do not promote action, that deal only with metaphysical entities, absolutes, universals, ideals, and good arguments, are moribund; theologies that deal only with dogmatic abstractions, supernatural deities, and heavenly rewards are dead. They have no connection with pulsing, struggling reality, with life, with history, with change. Their supposed neutrality with regard to the things of this earth, especially political matters, hides their support of the dominating structures of the status quo. One must choose either action, transformation, freedom, and life, or stagnation, status quo, domination, and death.

Anarchists and liberation theologians choose the former. They are realists. Even their morality, while idealistic in the sense of being a goal to which they see society striving, is grounded in the concrete. For them, justice and love are not attitudes only, they are actions that take place in concrete situations. They are elements that transform the present. Morality without transforming action is an opium of the people; it is a morality of the dead.

Action, so essential to freedom and morality, is the task of anarchism and liberation theology. If what they proclaim does not transform the world, they have failed.

Let us now look more closely at the role and nature of action in anarchist thought so that we may determine whether or not liberation theology does, indeed, have an anarchist message.

Anarchism, the philosophy of action par excellence, regards action as significant for three reasons: (1) action is necessary for life and freedom; (2) action creates theory; (3) action is a powerful form of propaganda.

We have already touched upon the first reason. Action is necessary for life because it enables an organized being to “develop and increase its faculties and fulfill its destiny.”¹ Anarchists hold that through action human beings are able to survive physically and also to develop intellectually and morally. They believe that through work, the human transforms nature and creates products necessary for survival. Through the transformation of nature and the exercise of creativity in social cooperation, people awaken to life morally and intellectually. This, they say, is the dawn of freedom.²

The anarchists also believe that action is the dawn of science. They hold that we can know reality only by doing, by practical action. Theoretical knowledge is the second step; it follows practical action. Bakunin, particularly aware of this, says in reference to the emancipation of the working class that “the only way for the workers to learn theory is through practice...”³ Only through action can the reality of the social situation become glaringly clear and the intelligence of the workers awakened and “raised to the level of what they instinctively feel.”⁴ When later Bakunin says that “theory is always created by life, but never creates it.” he further clarifies his realistic position.⁵ So if life is dependent on action and is an expression of action, the connection between action and theory becomes even stronger. Action, manifested in the life of human beings, creates knowledge of reality.

Finally, and above all, the anarchists believe that action awakens the spirit of revolt and is, therefore, one of the most powerful forms of propaganda. Kropotkin explains :

When a revolutionary situation arises in a country, before the spirit of revolt is sufficiently awakened in the masses to express itself in violent demonstrations in the streets or by rebellions and uprisings, it is through *action* that minorities succeed in awakening that feeling of independence and that spirit of audacity without which no revolution can come to a head.⁶

According to the anarchist way of thinking, action breeds action. Were it not for the heroic actions of individual and minority groups, revolutionary transformations might never occur. The written and spoken word is important, but only the example of deeds moves the masses to take action themselves.

From the above it should be clear that, although the action of work in transforming nature for survival is important, the most significant form of action is revolutionary. Through revolutionary action all social relations, including those of work, are trans-

¹ Pierre Joseph Proudhon, “War and Peace,” in *Selected Writings of Pierre Joseph Proudhon*, trans. Elizabeth Fraser, ed. Stewart Edwards (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1969), p. 204.

² See Chapter II for a more thorough discussion.

³ Michael Bakunin, “The Policy of the International,” in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed., trans, and introd. Sam Dol- goff, pref. Paul Avrich (New York: Knopf), p. 167.

⁴ Bakunin, “The Policy of the International,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, pp. 166–7.

⁵ Bakunin, “Statism and Anarchy,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 327.

⁶ Peter Kropotkin, “The Spirit of Revolt,” in *The Essential Kropotkin*, ed. Emile Capouya and Keitha Tompkins (New York: Liveright, 1975), p. 6.

formed. Anarchist revolutionary action threatens all dominating structures and all forms of alienation.

The anarchists unmistakably choose revolutionary action rather than reform. Reform involves legislation and legislation involves the State. If, therefore, the end of all domination is the goal, reform can never accomplish that end for the simple reason that it must be implemented within the oppressive institutions of domination. Reform can never create the conditions of freedom.

Bakunin makes this evident when he likens reform to revolution by decree:

*I am above all an absolute enemy of revolution by decrees, which derives from the idea of the revolutionary State, i.e. reaction disguised as revolution. To the system of revolution by decree I counterpose revolutionary action, the only consistent, true, and effective program. The authoritarian system of decrees in trying to impose freedom and equality obliterates both. The anarchistic system of revolutionary deeds and action naturally and unfailingly evokes the emergence and flowering of freedom and equality, without any necessity whatever for institutionalized violence or authoritarianism.*⁷

Although anarchists disagree on what form revolutionary action should take, practically all anarchists share

Bakunin's rejection of reform.

The anarchists also realize that revolutionary action is necessary because the State will never give up its power voluntarily. It initiates reforms frequently to mollify the masses, but it would never legislate itself out of existence and control. Its power must be wrenched away by revolutionary action.

An issue of a more philosophical nature must now be considered. Revolutionary action presupposes that there be a subject who is capable of changing the circumstances into which he or she is thrown; it presupposes human freedom. But what role do objective circumstances play in the choices that the free subject makes? Is not each person determined in some way?

The anarchists answer these questions by refusing to draw a line between freedom and determinism. There are natural necessities, both biological and social, operative in the lives of human beings. These natural laws and tendencies influence human thought and action and determine human history to the extent that there is an "inevitable character [to] all events that occur."⁸ But the human being is the only creature who is aware of these natural necessities and it this awareness that "gives him the feeling of self-determination, of conscious, spontaneous will and liberty."⁹ Though people cannot free themselves from the universal yoke of natural laws, they can free themselves

⁷ Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Peasant Crisis," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, pp. 193–4.

⁸ Bakunin, "The International and Karl Marx," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 310.

⁹ Michael Bakunin, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism*, ed. G. P. Maximoff (New York : The Free Press, 1953), p. 95.

from the external material world and social conditions of their human world.¹⁰ Human beings are, therefore, free but not absolutely free. They are not free in the sense of spontaneous self-determination independent of natural necessity, but they are free to act in accordance with these influences and to change their external environment.

The anarchists realize that the natural, material, and social conditions undergo evolutionary changes and that these changes also affect human consciousness. Thus, as conditions become more and more unbearable, revolutionary action will inevitably occur.¹¹ They also believe that our freedom is exercised when we, through an analysis of the material and social conditions that shape our lives, are able to recognize the evolutionary tendencies and to act accordingly.¹²

Anarchists, therefore, conclude that human beings are free when they are determined to act in conformity with tendencies and instincts that are themselves headed in the direction of freedom. More simply put, human beings are determined to be free.

At the same time, the anarchists remind us that, although evolutionary changes may produce material conditions so unbearable that the people are sure to revolt, the misery and poverty alone are not sufficient to produce a grand-scale revolution. The evolutionary changes must also affect the consciousness of the masses in such a way that people are motivated morally and psychologically.¹³

The anarchists present three elements that are necessary to the inward preparation of those who are moved to revolutionary action: (1) there must be hope; (2) there must be a moral ideal; and (3) there must be myth.

Hope that the future will be better than the past, that the cause to which the masses aspire will be victorious is, according to the anarchists, a necessary prerequisite to revolution. Without this hope, desperation may drive the people to skirmishes and rebellions, but never will it produce a revolution.¹⁴ Hope must be present even to initiate criticism of existing conditions. There would be no reason to criticize and react if better conditions were not perceived as being possible. Kropotkin puts it quite aptly:

Some ray of hope, a few scraps of comfort, must penetrate his gloomy abode before he can begin to desire better things, to criticize the old ways of living, and prepare to imperil them for the sake of bringing about a change. So long as he is imbued with hope, so long as he is not freed from the tutelage of those who utilize his superstition and his fears, he prefers remaining in his former position.¹⁵

¹⁰ Bakunin, *Political Philosophy*, p. 96.

¹¹ Bakunin, "The Program of the International Brotherhood," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 155.

¹² Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal," in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 141.

¹³ Chapter VII will also cover the psychological factors necessary for the revolt of the masses. The focus, however, will be different, although there will be some overlap.

¹⁴ Kropotkin, "The Spirit of Revolt," *Essential*, p. 7.

¹⁵ Kropotkin, "Law and Authority," *Essential*, p. 33.

To prevent confusion, it must be pointed out that, for the anarchists, hope for the future is not for material progress only but also for moral progress. Thus the second element necessary for revolutionary action is the moral ideal. Justice and right are the goals as well as the inspiration of revolutions. People must be convinced that their cause is just. The anarchists are so convinced of the power of the moral ideal that Berkman claims that more people have been inspired by a sense of justice and right than have been moved by material considerations. As evidence, he points to the numerous historical incidents where people are willing to sacrifice material well-being and even their life for the sake of liberty and justice. It is not misery and poverty alone that moves people to heroism, self-sacrifice, and revolution but the injustice of that misery and poverty.¹⁶

There must also be a myth, some activating hypothesis about the future. For our analysis of myth we must focus on Sorel, the only anarchist to cover myth in some detail.

To understand what influences one to revolutionary action we must contrast myth with what is traditionally called “utopia”. According to Sorel, utopia, usually the product of one theorist, is an intricately described conceptual model of a future state used for comparison with existing reality “in order to estimate the amount of good it contains.”¹⁷ its aim is reform and it is constructed in such a way that “certain parts of it...can be fitted into approaching legislation.” Since its historical descriptions can be shown to have some analogy to existing reality, and “the spontaneous movements it presupposes can be compared with the movements actually observed in the course of history,” its truth can be evaluated.¹⁸

Myth, on the other hand, a product not of individual theorists but of group will, is, for Sorel, not so much a detailed description of a future state as it is a determination to act in the present. Rather than leading to reforms that only patch up existing reality, myths “lead men to prepare themselves for combat which will destroy the existing state of things.”¹⁹ Myth cannot be refuted because convictions cannot be refuted. They either lead human beings to action or they do not. What is required of myth is that it be efficacious. For myth to be distinguished from utopia it must move people to revolutionary action.²⁰

Myths, according to Sorel, provide a “future” element without which no action is possible, they “give an aspect of complete reality to the hopes of immediate action.”²¹ Created by groups already disposed to revolution, myths give hope an object and give aspirations a fulfillment. But myths are not for the future only. Myths must solve or

¹⁶ Alexander Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover, 1972), pp. 268–9.

¹⁷ Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York: Smith, 1941), pp. 57–8.

¹⁸ Sorel, *Reflections*, pp. 57–8.

¹⁹ Sorel, *Reflections*, pp. 57–8.

²⁰ Sorel, *Reflections*, pp. 57–8.

²¹ Sorel, *Reflections*, p. 142.

attempt to solve existing problems; they must be revolutionary here and now. If ideas fail to initiate action in the present, they are not myths.

Unbearable material conditions, hope, moral ideals and myths—these are the conditions that the anarchists perceive as necessary for revolutionary action. And it is revolutionary action that is the task of anarchist philosophy. Words and ruminations will never by themselves usher in the new society. Only deeds deliver.

In liberation theology too action is one of the most significant points of emphasis.²² Even more important than theology is a commitment to act in solidarity with the poor in their liberation struggles. Time and again Gutiérrez drives home his belief that theology is secondary while pastoral activity is primary. He believes that unless there is a commitment to act there can not be a liberation theology. Liberation theology is defined as “a critical reflection on historical praxis.”²³ if. <joes not stop with reflection, with mere contemplation of the world; it “tries to be part of the process through which the world is transformed.²⁴ its moments are action, reflection, action—action in solidarity with the poor, reflection on that action, and action that transforms the present and moves with the flow of history to the future.

Liberation theology is not a theology that asks the people to wait for God to intervene, nor is it a theology that tells its people that their suffering is a gift to be rewarded in a heavenly kingdom. It is a theology that believes that God’s kingdom is here on earth and that God’s people, the poor and oppressed, are called to play an active role in making that kingdom a reality.²⁵

Gutiérrez shows the importance of action in the life of a Christian when he says:

The task of trying to comprehend the faith can be undertaken only from the starting point of real-life praxis in history, where human beings fight in order to live as human beings.²⁶

Liberation theologians turn to the Bible to further reveal the importance of human action.

Elsa Tamez points out, in the Old Testament account of liberation struggles by God’s chosen people, that liberation required the people to take an active part. Even

²² Liberation theologians often use the words “praxis” and “action” interchangeably, sometimes using the terms in a more technical sense—action and theory in mutual interdependence—and sometimes using them in the more loose sense of “action” only. I will use the term “action” to maintain continuity with the early part of this chapter and will use it in the loose sense though its relationship to theory will be explained in the text.

²³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Ina and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 15.

²⁴ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 15.

²⁵ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, pp. 159–60.

²⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith,” in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, trans. John Drury, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 19.

though victory was attributed to the liberating God, the struggle always involved the oppressed people. She says: “The people act and since Yahweh is with them in their struggle, they gain victory (Judges 6:16; 8:1).”²⁷

The New Testament, as liberation theologians show, also emphasizes the active role of humanity in the coming of the Kingdom. The belief that God became a man whose mission was good works indicates that more responsibility is placed on humans to participate in the Kingdom.²⁸ It is also clear to liberation theologians that action, not prayers, petitions, nor faith, is what brings about the Kingdom.²⁹ The theologians point to several New Testament passages as evidence:

Not every one who says to me “Lord, lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 7:21).

So faith by itself, if it has no works is dead (James 2:17).

But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God (John 3:21).

Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18).

For the Kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power (1 Corinthians 4: 20).

Liberation theologians point out that the love and justice, which Jesus requires of us, are things that are done. As inclinations and attitudes they are as empty as faith without works.³⁰ Love requires action; justice is something that we “do.” Any conception of a kingdom of love and justice without action is meaningless.

For liberation theologians, as with anarchists, action is necessary for life and freedom. They believe that we share in God’s life and freedom when, as creatures made in God’s image, we exercise our creativity through transforming work. Not only does work insure our survival, according to the theologians, but through unalienated work we create our essence as human beings; we create the new man of the Kingdom. Gutiérrez quite eloquently tells us of the nature of this transforming action:

By working, transforming the world, breaking out of servitude, building a just society, and assuming his destiny in history, man forges himself.

²⁷ Elsa Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1982), p. 61«

²⁸ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, pp. 158–60.

²⁹ See Gustavo Gutiérrez, “God’s Revelation and Proclamation in History,” in *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), pp. 16–7.; Elsa Tamez, *Bible*, p.79., Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, p. 391.

³⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Faith as Freedom,” in *Living with Change, Experience, Faith*, ed. Francis A

...To work, to transform this world, is to become a man and to build the human community; it is also to save. Likewise to struggle against misery and exploitation and to build a just society is already to be part of the saving action which is moving toward its complete fulfillment.³¹

In this perspective, human life takes on a new dimension. It is no longer mere existence on an individual level. It has a social character. Work, consequently, has also expanded its meaning. It is no longer merely the transformation of nature for individual survival, but also the transformation of society in the direction of complete fulfillment—social, political, economic freedom.

For liberation theologians, therefore, action is necessary for freedom because it is through action that the Kingdom of freedom is attained. It is also necessary because freedom must be expressed in creative, liberating action. Through this creative, liberating action human beings show that they are made in the image of God. In order to exercise divine freedom, God created the world; in order to exercise human freedom, people must create the new world.³² Action is necessary for freedom because it is only through action that one can know the truth, and it is through knowledge of the truth that we are free (See John 8:32).

Liberation theologians believe that truth is dependent on transforming action. Truth, according to Miguez Bonino, is not found in the contemplation of Platonic ideas, nor is it found in the subjective consciousness; truth is found in the analysis of the actions of people within the conditions of their social situation.³³ Truth is also verified by those actions that change the world.³⁴ Action, as Gutiérrez explains, is both the matrix of all authentic knowledge and the proof of that knowledge's value.³⁵ The theologians go so far as to say, and in this they are even more radical than the anarchists, that all knowledge of

reality is dependent upon action.³⁶ Our knowledge of history is especially dependent—history can only be known by transforming it.³⁷

Eigo and Silvio E. Fittipaldi (Villanova, Pennsylvania: Villanova Univ. Press, 1976), p. 40.

³¹ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 159.

³² See Chapter II of this work for a discussion of liberation theologians' views on the relationship between freedom, action, and the Kingdom of God. For further information see Gutiérrez, *Theology*, pp. 151–60; 168–78.

³³ José Miguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 93–4.

³⁴ Gutiérrez says: "The modern human person likes to verify the truth, to give it a consistent reality. A knowledge of a reality which does not lead to changing that reality is an unverified interpretation, does not have the consistency demanded by truth." In "Freedom And Salvation: A Political Problem," in *Liberation and Change* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), p. 80.

³⁵ Gutiérrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith," *Frontiers*, p. 19.

³⁶ Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), p. 88.

³⁷ Gutiérrez, "Freedom and Salvation: A Political Problem," *Liberation and Change*, p. 80.

The liberation theologians believe that as Christians we must keep in mind that action is the basis of our faith and the only way that we can know God.³⁸ The theologians turn to the Bible to reenforce the view that it is through actions that express love and justice that God is revealed.

In the Old Testament, according to the theologians, we see that through God's action and their own struggle the people come to know God. God revealed himself as one who, through divine action, liberated the oppressed. Even when he spoke it was "a creative event, a history-making pronouncement;" his words were a promise the truth of which was verified in the fulfillment of that promise.³⁹

But, as we saw earlier, God and his people acted together in the process of liberation, and it was through such action that the people came to know God. Jeremiah 22:15–16 illustrates this point:

Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is this not to know me?

Liberation theologians also point to the New Testament, especially the epistles of John, to confirm their view that to know God requires action; it requires the action of love.⁴⁰ For "he who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

Action, for liberation theologians, is, therefore, necessary for knowledge of reality in all its dimensions. In this respect, they go beyond the anarchists. Action is necessary for theory, as the anarchists claim, but it is also necessary for truth, knowledge, and faith.

Liberation theologians also see the propaganda value of action. They realize that the actions of men such as Camilo Torres and Che Guevara are much more efficacious in conscientizing the masses than any written or spoken word. They are ready to point out that it is Jesus' actions as well as his words that we must follow.⁴¹ He must look to what Jesus did in the context of his historical situation to see what we must do in ours, keeping in mind that different situations call for somewhat different solutions. The theologians believe that when we look at Jesus' actions we see that he challenged the particular oppressive religious and political structures of his time and always acted for the purpose of bringing liberation to the poor and lowly.⁴² Even his miracles had a messianic message; "they implied the terrifyingly revolutionary thesis that this world

³⁸ Hugo Assmann, *Theology for a Nomad Church*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976), p. 81.; Tamez, *Bible*, p. 77. (See also Chapter III of this work for the relationship between justice, action, and our knowledge of God.)

³⁹ Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 89.

⁴⁰ Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 90.

⁴¹ José Croatto, *Exodus*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (Maryknoll, N.Y. Orbis, 1981), pp. 58–64.

⁴² *Create, Exodus*, pp. 58–64.

of contempt and oppression can be changed into a world of complete selflessness and unrestricted mutual assistance.”⁴³

Such actions must have had a tremendous propaganda effect in Jesus day.

It hardly needs saying that the action most emphasized by liberation theology is revolutionary action, not reform. The Latin American society is so dominated and oppressed that only action that attacks the roots and structures of such a society can bring about the needed changes. Liberation theologians realize that reforms are only palliatives, which in the long run actually aid the exploitative system. They are limited and partial measures that never get at the base of oppression.⁴⁴ Gutiérrez points out that the developmentalist policy, which from its inception in the 1950’s emphasized modernization of the existing system, is an example of the failure of reform. As a partial measure it failed to take sufficient account of political and historical factors and, therefore, proved incapable of interpreting the evolution of the Latin American continent.⁴⁵ Developmentalism never touched the root of poverty and injustice, so it failed.

Gutiérrez sums it up quite nicely:

The poverty and injustice experienced in Latin America are too deeply rooted to allow for halfmeasures. That is why people now talk about social revolutions rather than reform, about liberation rather than developmentalism, and about socialism rather than modernization of the existing system.⁴⁶

What is needed, the theologians believe, is a scientific analysis of all the factors of domination, and sufficient action to eliminate the causes. In Latin America what is specifically needed is a focus on all the structures of domination—of some countries by others, of some classes by others, and of some people by others—with the intention of eliminating the structure, namely the capitalist system, that supports such domination.⁴⁷

The action needed to bring about the end of domination, according to liberation theology can never come about through decree or law. Law, according to Comblin, is a form of domination and slavery.⁴⁸ It limits human choice and freedom and, therefore, cannot be the basis for emancipation.⁴⁹

⁴³ José Porfirio Miranda, *Being and the Messiah*, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977), p. 108.

⁴⁴ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 110.

⁴⁵ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 83.

⁴⁶ Gutiérrez, “Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith,” *Frontiers*, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 48.

⁴⁸ see José Comblin in, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 147.

⁴⁹ See Chapter IV for a discussion of the liberation theologians’ views on law.

For the theologians, the only action that will transform the social and political reality in which the poor and oppressed of Latin America find themselves is revolutionary action.

On the question of determinism the position of the liberation theologians is very similar to that of the anarchists. The human being, they believe, is free to act, to make choices, but he or she is not absolutely free. The choices one makes are always a response to reality. Our actions are never completely spontaneous, but are influenced by the concrete historical situations of our lives. The actions can in turn transform reality, but there are always limitations imposed by circumstances. Actions and reality are reciprocally dependent.⁵⁰ We are free and determined.

The question of evolution versus revolution is answered from a theological point of view. For the theologians salvation, though an historical and liberating process, is a gift from God.⁵¹ This perspective, God is in complete control of the evolution of history, an evolution that is heading toward the fulfillment of liberty, justice, and love in the Kingdom of God. Although controlled by God this evolutionary process includes the active participation of human beings. This active participation is part of the plan of salvation and must be revolutionary to achieve its goal. The final document of the 1980 International Congress of theology says:

...the Kingdom is of God; it is a grace and God's work. But at the same time it is a demand and a task for human beings.⁵²

From this we can conclude that for the theologians, freedom and determinism are operative in human reality; both evolution and revolution will bring about the Kingdom.

Let us now turn to the conditions necessary for revolutionary action. We shall see that liberation theologians follow the anarchists in their claim that oppressive material conditions, hope, moral ideals, and myths are the necessary prerequisites for any radical change.

Conditions such as those in Latin America are the breeding grounds for revolution. Misery, poverty, and injustice abound. Economic, social, and political domination keep the people in servitude. Liberation theology, as a response to these dreadful and brutalizing conditions, includes action committed to the struggles of the poor and oppressed as part of its methodology. It is also part of the method of liberation to act in accordance with the knowledge gained as a result of this commitment. As the root cause of the oppressive conditions is revealed, the task of liberation theologians together

⁵⁰ see Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," *Living with Change*, p. 28; Miguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists*, pp. 93-4.

⁵¹ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, pp. 177, 205-6.

⁵² "Final Document of the International Ecumenical congress of Theology, February 20-March 2, 1980, Sao Paulo, Brazil," in *Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, trans. John Drury, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 237.

with the people who suffer injustice and servitude is to revolt against the oppressive structures.

But oppressive material conditions alone do not motivate the people to revolution. Liberation theologians are convinced that in order for people to be moved to revolutionary action there must be hope. Without hope there would be no movement forward. Hope makes the future desirable. But hope, they point out, is not a state of mind, it is not wishful thinking that the future will be better than the past; rather, hope “must be rooted in the heart of historical praxis.⁵³ Though it leads to the future it must take shape in concrete action in the present. It must lead to social transformation for it to be anything other than a dream.⁵⁴

Hope, for liberation theologians, is connected with the Kingdom.⁵⁵ Jesus’ first public words, according to Boff, were a promise of “renewed hope for total liberation from all those things that alienate people from their authentic identity.⁵⁶ His promise was for the present as well as the future:

The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15).

Christian hope is born in Christ’s promise that God will prevail in history, but it is also a realization that we can and must take an active part.

Moral ideals, according to the theologians, also play a role in bringing about revolution. We saw in Chapters II and III that the new revolutionary man is the one motivated by freedom, love, and justice. It is he who recognizes that, for the revolution to be complete, it must transform the person as well as society. There must be a new consciousness that recognizes the inherent dignity and worth of each human being and that abhors all forms of domination, alienation, and coercive power. Miguez Bonino reveals the importance of moral ideals in revolutionary action when he says:

...the Christian faith provides today both the stimulus and a challenge for revolutionary action when it encourages us to look and work for historical realizations in the direction of the Kingdom of justice, solidarity, the real possibility for men to assume responsibility, access of all men to the creation which God has given to man, freedom to create human community through work and love, space to worship and play.⁵⁷

If what Miguez Bonino says seems utopian, it is. And this brings us to our final condition for revolutionary action-myth.

⁵³ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 218.

⁵⁴ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 218.

⁵⁵ Liberation theologians are indebted to Jürgen Moltmann for many of their ideas on the theological concept of “hope.”

⁵⁶ Leonardo Boff, “Christ’s Liberation via Oppression,” *Frontiers*, p. 107,

⁵⁷ Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 152,

Before proceeding it must be pointed out that liberation theologians use the word “utopia” in the same way that the anarchists use the word “myth.” This will become clear as we proceed. In what follows I will use the terminology of the liberation theologians.

Liberation theologians point out that the term “utopia” is “not a synonym for illusion and flight from present reality.”⁵⁸ it is not a dream to be realized only in a future that has no bearing on the concrete situation of peoples’ lives as they struggle here and now. Though utopia is a symbol for a wholly new way of being and a wholly new world, a world totally reconciled, it is also a stimulus for action in the present. The theologians believe that unless one acts to change the world, there is no hope that a future transformation can be realized. Action, then, is a necessary and key element of utopia.

But not any action. Actions that merely reform can never usher in a future like that described above. And so for the theologians, as with Sorel’s “myth,” utopia is a revolutionary mobilizing force in history. Gutiérrez is quite explicit in making this claim:

Utopia necessarily means a denunciation of the existing order. Its deficiencies are to a large extent the reason for the emergence of utopia. The repudiation of a dehumanizing situation is an unavoidable aspect of utopia. It is a matter of a complete rejection which attempts to strike at the roots of the evil. That is why utopia is revolutionary and not reformist.⁵⁹

Also, like Sorel’s “myth,” utopia is a product of the yearning and hope of a people and is not the mere imaginary projection of an individual theorist. Only an oppressed people are “capable of working out revolutionary utopias.”⁶⁰

Finally, utopian thought, as Gutiérrez points out, is not verified by comparing its descriptions of the model society with our own, utopian thought is verified by determining that it postulates, enriches and supplies new goals for political action in the present.⁶¹

All the characteristics that Sorel gave to myth, liberation theologians give to utopia. But the theologians go a step further and add a Christian element—the Kingdom of God.

For liberation theology the Kingdom is a utopian symbol.⁶² Though it is God’s work and promise for the future, it is not something *given to* people by God; it is not an external gift. The Kingdom touches what is already in the heart of human beings but which, due to society’s oppressive structures, has lain dormant.⁶³ it draws forth those

⁵⁸ Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 45.

⁵⁹ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 233.

⁶⁰ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 235.

⁶¹ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 234.

⁶² sobrino, *Christology*, p. 119.

⁶³ Boff, “Christ’s Liberation via Oppression,” *Frontiers*, p. 109.

yearnings for total liberation and for a better world. The Kingdom requires, like all utopias, that people act. Though it is a gift from God, it is also a task, a challenge for the people.⁶⁴ it “does not consist in talk but in power” (1 Corinthians 4:20)—the power to transform the structures of death into a life-giving freedom.

We have seen how important action is to both anarchists and liberation theologians. Both believe that without action, revolutionary action, we could have neither life nor freedom; we could neither know the world nor change it. Without action our visions would be frustrated and our hope would perish.

⁶⁴ Gutierrez, *Theology*, p. 177.

Chapter VII. Who Makes the Revolution?

“But Many that are first will be Last,
and the Last First.”(Matthew 19:30)

We saw in the last chapter that only through revolutionary action can there be a Kingdom of freedom, justice, equality and love on earth. Though there must be evolutionary progress in the material conditions, it is social revolution that ultimately brings about the transformation to a new society. Revolutions do not occur as phenomena divorced from the people. Human beings make revolutions; human beings take it upon themselves to change the existing conditions and create a better world.

But who are these people? Who are the last that will be first? Are they an amorphous mass with no identity and no particular interest to fill, who merely rise up spontaneously in revolt? Or are they one highly explosive class that becomes aware of its exploitation, organizes in its own interest, and with deliberation and skill consciously ushers in a new era?

There is more than one answer to this question among the observers and theoreticians of revolution. Anarchists disagree among themselves concerning who in the fight against capitalist society and the State will be the revolutionaries and who will lead the revolution. All anarchists oppose oppression and authority in whatever guise it appears, but they disagree on exactly which oppressed groups will be involved in revolution, and which will organize and give cohesion to the uprising.

The one anarchist who has examined these questions in depth and who has been the most influential in Third World revolutions is Michael Bakunin. Bakunin more than any other anarchist has thoroughly, if not systematically, delved into the make-up of the revolutionary masses, studied the different leadership roles, and determined the psychological and educational factors necessary for the masses to be moved. It is to Bakunin, then, that I turn for the base and bulk of my analysis.

Because Bakunin recognized as the enemy not just the capitalist class but also other authoritarian systems such as the Church and the State, his concern was for all those who suffer oppression and not the victims of exploitation only. He claimed that, in order for there to be an end to all forms of domination and privilege, there must be a revolt of the poor, oppressed, ignorant, and subjugated masses. Were there to be a revolution led by and primarily for one class, the proletariat, only another form of domination would result. For the last to be first, the hierarchy should not be stood

on its head; it should be abolished. And this can be accomplished only when all the poor and oppressed become involved. Bakunin believed that the revolution must take place in the city, towns, and in the countryside; it must include the proletariat in the factories, the rural proletariat, and also the peasantry; it must include those workers who have fairly stable, well-paying jobs, and it must include the shiftless, miserable and illiterate workers and the unemployed—the “lumpenproletariat.” Only when all those oppressed by the capitalist system revolt can there be a free society.

Although Bakunin holds that the revolution must involve all oppressed classes, he also believes that not all classes will participate in the same way. The revolution will rely heavily on the peasants because it is they who have not been “petrified by the intervention of the State.¹ Nonetheless, the class to spearhead the revolution will be the urban proletariat. The revolution must be organized by it from the bottom up and from the circumference to the center.² The urban proletariat, the most naturally revolutionary class, must be careful not to impose its will on the masses. The urban workers “who are exploited by bourgeois masters should realize that the peasants, who are also exploited, are their brothers...³ They should work with the peasants, educating them to their own interest, and awakening in them the spirit of revolt.

Not all factions within the proletariat are equally revolutionary. Bakunin is suspicious of the upper layer of the proletariat, the “aristocracy of labor,” which lives comfortably and hobnobs with the bourgeoisie. This minority has hope of improving itself within the system and is, therefore, not prone to sacrifice its privileges and comforts for a revolution with no guaranteed outcome. The hope of the revolution, according to Bakunin, is in those “millions of uncultivated, the disinherited, the miserable, the illiterates—the rabble of the people...the *lumpenproletariat*.”⁴ It is the lumpenproletarians who are least polluted by the bourgeoisie and who, because they possess little and have no ties to private property, are most willing to sacrifice themselves in revolutionary action. As Marx would say, “They have nothing to lose but their chains.”

According to Bakunin, it is this element of the proletariat that incites the revolution, but it is not until it is joined by the peasant masses that the height of the revolutionary movement is reached.⁵

The scientists and intellectuals who join the revolution will not be permitted to lead it. In no case will they be given special privileges and power; they will merely offer their expertise and service. They must also give up the privileges they already have and take an active part in the revolutionary process, sharing with the people “their life, their poverty, their cause, and their desperate revolt.”⁶

¹ Michael Bakunin, “Letters to a Frenchman,” in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed., trans, and introd. Sam Dolgoff, pref. Paul Avrich (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 207.

² Bakunin, “The Program of the International Brotherhood,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 152.

³ Bakunin “Letters to a Frenchman,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 201.

⁴ Bakunin, “The International and Karl Marx,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 294.

⁵ Bakunin, “Statism and Anarchy,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 334.

⁶ Bakunin, “Statism and Anarchy,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 350.

Another revolutionary element is the professional revolutionary, the member of a secret organization whose task is to rally the masses of all countries into a single plan of action.⁷ Again, the principles of liberty must be upheld. The secret organization to which the professional revolutionary belongs must not become a party interested primarily in attaining power. Instead it is to be an organization which merely coordinates, clarifies, propagandizes, and serves.⁸ Though its aim is to involve all countries, it is local in character.⁹ There is no central party line which it must follow, rather it serves the will of the local masses. Its propaganda should not instill new ideas, but should draw upon the revolutionary instincts of the masses.¹⁰

It seems as if the key word in all revolutionary roles is “service.” It is only in service that the means correspond to the end. Domination begets domination. Service begets freedom, justice, equality, and love. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, Bakunin read the signs of the times and recognized the drift of history. He was especially astute in recognizing the forms of domination and oppression in capitalist society, the brutality of the State and its corresponding bureaucracy. He warned that the dictatorship of the proletariat would not mean the end of exploitation and oppression, and he was right.

The fact is that Bakunin as prophet has had a revolutionary impact on society. He has been especially influential in underdeveloped nations including those of Latin America. This brings me to an aspect of Bakunin’s thought not yet mentioned. Not only was he a champion of the “last” within a nation, he was also a champion of the “last nations”—the undeveloped and underdeveloped countries whose masses are primarily the peasants and unsettled workers. Although his views on imperialism were never developed, he was able to see the revolutionary potential of the nonindustrial nations struggling against domination and oppression.

From all that has been said we can see that, for Bakunin, the masses must liberate themselves. For the revolution to be complete and for a new society to be built according to anarchist moral principles, the people must draw upon their instincts and take the reins of their own destiny. Nothing external can liberate them—no governments, no middle class of intellectuals, not even scientists. Within the masses care must be taken to avoid revolutionary dictatorships. Although one class may be more revolutionary than another and incite the others to revolt, it has no claim to give direction to the revolution, to set policy, or to dogmatize in any way. Any attempt to centralize the revolution will only end in further oppression and domination.

Although no class alone should attempt to lead and direct the revolution, most anarchists follow Bakunin in believing that it is the task of the proletariat and its secret organization, to educate the masses. Revolutionary propaganda must not attempt to instill ideas that are foreign to the masses, nor must it lead them in a direction unrelated

⁷ Bakunin, “National Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 101.

⁸ Michael Bakunin, *The Political Philosophy of Michael Bakunin*, ed. G. P. Maximoff (New York: Free Press, 1953), p. 375.

⁹ Bakunin, “National Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, pp. 99–100.

¹⁰ Bakunin, “The Program of the International Brotherhood,” *Bakunin of Anarchy*, p. 155.

or alien to their interests.¹¹ Anarchist propaganda must be a drawing-out process. It should draw out what is already there instinctively but which, because of circumstances, has lain dormant. For example, the people need to know their economic interests.¹² The peasants must be shown that their interest is to stop paying rent to the landlord and to stop paying taxes to the State. The workers must be shown that their interest lies in collective action and solidarity.

In order for the masses to be revolutionized, education must inspire. Anarchists believe that the masses should be presented with an ideal that touches their deepest instincts, an ideal to which they can aspire with some reasonable hope of success. The masses must also know that they, as human beings with dignity, have a claim to the ideal and a right to revolt in order to attain it.¹³

Also, according to the anarchists, the best way to inspire and teach the masses is not primarily by words and ideas, but by deeds and practical action.¹⁴ When the masses perceive the revolutionary heroism of others they become inspired to act. When they begin to act they become aware of their own interests. Then if the material conditions are right, they revolt.¹⁵

But who are the heroic individuals capable by their deeds of inspiring the masses to act? According to Kropotkin, they are the individuals who are “deeply moved by the existing state of things.”¹⁶ They are individuals with a profound sense of justice, they are the ones ready to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of others. These are the ones whom Che Guevara and the theologians of liberation call the “new man.”

So let us turn to the liberation theologians.

The hope of the Latin American revolution as seen by the theologians of liberation is in the poor and oppressed. As with the anarchists, the theologians do not limit their concern to one economically exploited class. Though the oppression and domination of the proletariat may be basic, an analysis that focuses on this class will not be able to solve the problems of injustice and domination as a whole. In addition, any analysis that focuses solely on the economic side of the class situation is limited in its perception of reality.¹⁷ What is involved is a complex situation encompassing various racial, cultural, social, and historical phenomena.

But if not proletarians alone, who are the poor and oppressed? Liberation theologians see them as “nonpersons,” the dependent, the needy, the limited, the victims of injustice, domination, exploitation, and alienation. More specifically, the poor and op-

¹¹ Bakunin, “The International and Karl Marx,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 308.

¹² Bakunin, “The International and Karl Marx,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 295.

¹³ Bakunin, “Statism and Anarchy,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 335.

¹⁴ Bakunin, “The Policy of the International,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 167.

¹⁵ Peter Kropotkin, “Modern Science and Anarchism,” in *The Essential Kropotkin*, ed. Emile Capouya and Keitha Tompkins (New York: Liveright, 1975), p. 90.

¹⁶ Kropotkin, “Modern Science and Anarchism,” *Essential Kropotkin*, p. 90.

¹⁷ Miguel Concha, “International Situations of Domination,” in *The Challenge of Basic Christian*

pressed are the direct victims of abuse by the economic system. They are the peasant, the indigenous peoples, the marginalized city dweller, the factory worker. They also include the indirect victims of that system, the marginalized races, the despised cultures, and women. Internationally, the poor and oppressed are all those dominated and dependent peoples struggling for liberation from the economic slavery of imperialism.

Although the situation in Latin America creates the conditions in which the “last” can be named, liberation theologians turn to the Bible to show that a commitment must be made to those so named. Both the Old and the New Testament reveal a God committed to all oppressed people.

Elsa Tamez, a liberation theologian from Costa Rica, does an excellent study of the breadth and depth of oppression in the Old Testament. She shows that at various times in the history of Israel, the people were subjected to an unjust external power—Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Each time the people were enslaved, exploited, slaughtered or exiled, and were made to pay tribute. And each time they called upon God to deliver them from their burden. Their God was a liberating God, a God of an oppressed people, and an oppressed nation.¹⁸

Tamez points out that the God of the Old Testament is also on the side of those oppressed within a nation. Once the people of God became well organized and developed as a nation, structures of exploitation and oppression began to emerge.¹⁹ It was then that the nation’s own victims of fraud, usury, bribery, powerful kings, administrators and landlords began to cry out for deliverance. Tamez points out that Psalm 72, a Hebrew poem composed for the coronation of an Israelite King gives beautiful expression to this cry:

May he judge the people with righteousness and the poor with justice!...

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor!...

For he delivers the needy when he calls the poor and him who has no helper.

He has pity on the weak and needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life...

But according to Tamez and other liberation theologians, it is in the New Testament that we learn that God is a savior of all the oppressed. Jesus of Nazareth was born of, lived among, preached to, and died for the poor. It was Jesus who was called by

Communities, trans. John Drury, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 58.

¹⁸ Elsa Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1982), p. 17.

¹⁹ Tamez, *Bible*, p. 20.

God to give the good news not only to the Jewish people, but also to the poor and oppressed of all nations.

Liberation theologians believe that we should look to the life and actions of Jesus to discover those to whom we should be committed. Jesus' life was one that was committed to all marginalized people, to the economically poor, the victims of religious domination and discrimination, the diseased, the handicapped, the "sinners."²⁰ It was a commitment both in words and in deeds. Jesus healed the sick, forgave the sinners, defended the tax collectors and the harlots, and urged his disciples to share what they had with the poor.

The whole thrust of his preaching was to defend the poor and oppressed, to give them hope of liberation in the new Kingdom:

Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.

Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.

Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets (Luke 6:20–4).

As in the old Testament the message of liberation was for all oppressed, both nationally and internationally. As a Jew, Jesus was concerned with Roman occupation and rule over the Jewish people. We have already shown what he thought of Herod and Caesar. He condemned them not only for their power and authority in general, but also for the particular imperialistic power that they represented. Gutiérrez tells us of points of agreement between Jesus and the Zealots, the group which most hated the Roman occupation:

...for example, his [Jesus'] preaching of the coming of the Kingdom and the role he himself plays in its advent, the assertion that the "Kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and violent men are seizing it" (Matthew 11:12), his attitude toward the Jews who worked for the Romans, his action of purifying the temple, his power over people who wanted to make him King.²¹

It is interesting to note that the situation of domination in Jerusalem at the time of the Roman occupation closely resembles the present situation in Latin America.

²⁰ Leonardo Boff, "Christ's Liberation via Oppression," in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, trans. John Drury, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 113.

²¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 227.

Focusing now on the points that are particularly in line with anarchist thinking we observe that liberation theologians do not place their hopes on one oppressed class. All oppressed, exploited, dominated people are their special interest. The specific classes that they name as part of the oppressed encompass those classes that the anarchists also name: the proletariat, the “lumpenproletariat,” and the peasantry. The “last” for both the theologians and the anarchists is not only the last within a nation, but also the “last nations”—the predominately agricultural, underdeveloped countries.

What is the particular revolutionary role of each oppressed group and is one element more revolutionary than another? Unfortunately, this is where the analysis of the liberation theologians falls short. In only a few instances, and then only briefly, do the theologians address this question. In the final document of *Christians for Socialism*, Gustavo Gutiérrez and Hugo Assmann along with Giulio Girardi say:

The dependent form of capitalism that reigns in Latin America necessarily spawns the laboring classes: industrial workers, manual workers, and peasants. As such, these classes constitute the social base that is objectively revolutionary,²²

Of these, Gutiérrez points out on another occasion, the proletariat is the most “clear-sighted segment.”²³

All we can glean from this is that of all the poor and oppressed elements in society, the oppressed economic classes are potentially the most revolutionary and that the most active class is the proletariat. There is no mention of the “lumpenproletariat” unless one can infer that “manual workers” include this class. But this is only speculation. Nothing explicit is said.

Only Miranda gives a hint that he recognizes the lumpenproletariat as playing a revolutionary role:

Never have we thought that communism can be realized except by free decision of the workers, rural people, and *unemployed*, who together form the immense majority of the population [my emphasis].²⁴

The role of the intellectual is more easily discernible. Liberation theologians deny that the intellectual’s function in the revolutionary process is one of leadership. The intellectual as such has no ties to the life and struggles of the poor. Even the intellectual’s understanding is secondary to that of the poor. As Gutiérrez says: “For it is

²² John Eagleson, ed., “Final Document,” in *Christians and Socialism*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1975), p. 166.

²³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith,” in *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 45.

²⁴ José Porfirio Miranda, *Communism in the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1982), p. 11.

only to the poor that the grace of receiving and understanding the Kingdom has been granted.²⁵

Theology, an intellectual discipline, is itself secondary to this commitment to the poor.

The role of the professional revolutionaries is similar to that of intellectuals. Although liberation theologians do not specifically mention the “professional revolutionary,” the term “evangelical” would encompass this concept. The evangelical, like the professional revolutionary of the anarchists, neither leads nor teaches the masses. The good news brought to the poor is not something over and above what the poor and oppressed already know in their hearts. Evangelization for those who are not poor and oppressed can only “consist in involvement with the proclamation process of the poor themselves.”²⁶

For liberation theology the poor and oppressed are the evangelizers. “God’s love is revealed to the poor. They are the ones who receive, understand and proclaim this love.”²⁷ The “professional” can do no more than be of service to those poor and oppressed who, through the understanding gained as recipients and messengers of the gospel and as participants in the liberating process, are able to usher in the Kingdom. Like the disciples in the New Testament who were from the lowly classes, they go forth to teach all nations the liberating message of Jesus.

“Service” seems to be the key word used by liberation theologians as well as by anarchists. Those who would lead—the intellectual, the theologians, the pastoral evangelizers can only serve in a committed involvement in the historical task determined by those who are last.

Finally, we have the prophet. I do not think the theologians would see themselves as filling this role. The theologians are more in line with the intellectuals, the “evangelizers.” But the prophets in Latin America would be those heroic human beings who paved the way for others to follow, those who recognized the signs of the times, proclaimed them and then acted for the cause of freedom. Camilo Torres and Che Guevara come to mind. Although liberation theologians do not explicitly claim that these men are prophets, the impact that the lives and actions of these heroes of revolution have made on liberation theology and all of Latin America can be called prophetic. In effect, the prophet and the new man are one. Not from an ivory tower but from the perspective of active participation with the people did these heroes proclaim their message.

Jesus, is a model for these modern prophets, because he denounced the conditions of injustice and servitude and announced prophetically the transformations to come. More important, Jesus acted, it was his self sacrificing actions, even to the point of death, that initiated the process that is the Kingdom of God. The Prophet and the

²⁵ Gutiérrez, “The Historical Power of the Poor,” *Power*, p. 103.

²⁶ Gutiérrez, “The Historical Power of the Poor,” *Power*, p. 105.

²⁷ Gutiérrez, “The Historical Power of the Poor,” *Power*, p. 105.

new man are thus one in Jesus, the son of Man, the man of and for the poor and oppressed.

Would anyone deny that Bakunin belonged to this tradition? We have already shown that he fits the role of prophet. Since he was also a man of revolutionary action directed to the cause of freedom, justice, equality, and love, he was also an example of the New Man. He like Jesus, Camilo Torres, and Che Guevara were revolutionary visionaries, men of insight and action.

And so from all that has been gathered there seems no doubt that, according to liberation theologians and anarchists alike, the masses must revolutionize themselves. Intellectuals and evangelizers do not lead the poor to revolution. Even the theologians are accessories. Though the prophets may act as inspiration to the people, it is only as part of or committed to the poor that they do so. No government, no political party, no revolutionary party can take the reins of revolution. The people must be the ones to determine their own destiny. Liberation theologians are almost unanimous on this point. For liberation to be authentic, it must be the work of the poor themselves and not the work of intermediaries.

Gutiérrez says:

The future history lies with the poor and exploited. Authentic liberation will be the deed of the oppressed themselves: in them, the Lord will save history.²⁸

But if the masses must revolutionize themselves how will they know what direction to take, and will there be those to help them find their way? Liberation theologians see the primary role of the pastors of the Church as one of “conscientizing evangelization” whereby the poor person is made aware, through “unalienating and liberating ‘cultural action,’” of his or her relation to the world and to other people. “In this process, 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.²⁹ The pastors only initiate the dialogue and the actions that will bring about this process. In no case are values foreign to the poor imposed on them. This educational practice, much like the propaganda of the anarchists, is not one that instills knowledge but draws out and awakens what is already there.

It must be noted that liberation theologians recognize that for this process to result in revolutionary action, the material conditions must be ripe. When such conditions occur, the poor and oppressed will “conscientize” themselves.³⁰ Thus it is not necessary that anyone, other than the oppressed themselves, initiate the process. But those among the oppressed with the “clearer insight” may act as catalysts.

²⁸ Gutiérrez, “Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith,” *Power*, p. 53.

²⁹ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p.91.

³⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “The Irruption of the Poor in Latin America and the Christian Communities

We have, in our discussion of the prophet, mentioned the role of the new man. It is he, as a motivating ideal, who inspires the masses to act in their own behalf. It is he, by courage, love, and heroic sacrifice, who inspires them to create a new society and the New Man of the future.

It is clear that liberation theology shares a common ground with anarchists. It champions all oppressed people and not one economic class only. It recognizes that the economic classes form the revolutionary base of the masses and that these classes are composed of the unemployed, the proletarians, and the peasants. It also recognizes that the intellectual and professional revolutionary, referred to as evangelizers, play a role of committed service and not one of leadership. Most important, liberation theologians and anarchists agree that it is the “last” who must revolutionize themselves. Neither government nor political party should interfere or lead the masses in a direction not decided by the masses. Finally, liberation theologians recognize that by the inspiration of revolutionaries and through an educational process that elicits rather than instills, the masses take the first steps in their journey to transform both their own nature and society.

of the Common People,” *Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, p. 113.

Chapter VIII. The Violence of the Oppressed

“I have not. come to bring peace,
but the sword.” (Matthew 10:34)

One of the most controversial issues surrounding revolutionary actions is the question violence. Although revolutions need not be violent, when we study their history we see that many have followed a violent path. Unbearable material conditions and decades of suppressed anger necessitate action that will lift the burden of oppression and give vent to confined passions. Peaceful reforms, we have seen, may alleviate tensions for a time but in the long run may make the situation worse. A radical overthrow is frequently necessary to wrench power and privilege from dominant authorities and classes. Such an overthrow will tend to be violent, primarily because those in power never meekly disengage themselves from their exalted positions.

Those debating the question of violence must take into account the lessons of history. To defend either violence or nonviolence in a strictly moralistic and absolute manner without assessing the concrete historical situation, runs the risk of either supporting the rise of new forms of domination and oppression or defending the status quo with its masked but virulent institutionalized violence.

Conflicting positions regarding this issue can be found in both the anarchists and the liberation theologians. On the one hand, there are those uncompromising proponents of pacifism who advocate nonviolence regardless of the consequences. On the other hand, there are those who take a more realistic approach, neither defending nor advocating violence in an absolute sense but taking into account the nature and consequences of violence in each situation as it occurs. For both anarchists and liberation theologians the latter is the majority position.

Although all anarchists see the necessity of revolutionary action, not all agree that this action must or should include violence. Proudhon and Tolstoy are those most noted for their nonviolent approach.

Proudhon, the most realistic of the two, recognizes that while a peaceful revolution might be an ideal it is also possible to attain. He believes that while violence has been part of revolutionary action in the past, it does not have to be a component of revolutionary action in the future. People will come to the realization that reason rather

than irrational behavior is the more useful aid in the service of liberty.¹ Proudhon's hope is that through the establishment of voluntary federative associations within the State, the new society will spontaneously evolve.² He believes that these noncentralized, nonauthoritarian associations will, by their example, so appeal to reason and the love of liberty in oppressed and oppressor alike, that they will gradually replace the old institutions of authority and domination without bloody upheaval. Proudhon's desire for a peaceful revolution is clear. He says:

I want the peaceable revolution. I want you to make the very institutions which I charge you to abolish, and the principles of law which you will have to complete, serve toward the realization of my wishes, so that the new society shall appear as the spontaneous, natural and necessary development of the old, and that the Revolution, while abrogating the old order of things, shall nevertheless be the progress of that order.³

Although Proudhon comes down on the side of nonviolence, he does not do so by appealing to some absolute moral principle or law. His analysis of the course of history may be overly optimistic in that he overestimates the appeal to reason in a revolutionary situation and underestimates the resolve of dominating authorities to retain their privileges and power. But he seldom loses sight of reality.

In contrast to Proudhon, Tolstoy rejects violence by appealing to a moral principle. For him violence and the law of love are absolutely incompatible.⁴ Tolstoy believes that there are no compromises, no exceptions; neither circumstances nor justice can make violence morally acceptable.⁵ Love is the law that Jesus gave to humans for their happiness; it is this law that urges us to "turn the other cheek" and "resist not evil."⁶ Although individuals and governments may use violence against us, our resistance can never lead to anything but more violence. Revolutionary violence, therefore, is never moral. Tolstoy says of revolutions:

If some men affirm that the liberation from violence, or even its weakening, may be effected, should the oppressed people overthrow the oppressing government by force and substitute a new one for it, a government in which such violence and enslavement would not be necessary, and if some

¹ Pierre Joseph Proudhon, *Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*, quoted in Paul Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, trans. Steven T. Byington, ed. James J. Martin (New York: Liberation Book Club, 1960), p. 57.

² Proudhon, *The Confessions of a Revolutionary*, in *Anarchism*, p. 57.

³ Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, in *Anarchism*, p. 60.

⁴ Leo Tolstoy, "My Religion," in *My Religion. On Life. Thoughts on God. On the Meaning of Life.*, Vol. XVI of *The Complete Works of Tolstoy*, trans. Leo Wiener (Boston: Dana Estes, 1904), p. 15.

⁵ Tolstoy, "My Religion," *Complete Works*, p.68.

⁶ Leo Tolstoy, "What I Believe," in *A Confession. The Gospel in Brief. What I Believe*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 482.

men actually try to do so, they only deceive themselves and others by it, and thus fail to improve men's condition, and even make it worse.⁷

From this one can conclude that for Tolstoy the violence of the oppressed and the violence of the oppressor should both be condemned. Although he is quick to condemn the injustice of institutionalized violence, he sees no qualitative difference between this and the violence used by victims in their own defense. All that is needed, according to Tolstoy, is for each individual to follow the law of love, and the Kingdom of happiness will prevail.

Bakunin, Kropotkin, Sorel, and Berkman take a more realistic approach. They understand that violence is a normal manifestation of the struggle of the oppressed. It is natural for the poor to feel vengeful and to want to destroy the institutions and the men who have kept them enslaved.⁸

These anarchists believe that it would be unrealistic to expect the present owners to give up their possessions without a struggle.⁹ Those in positions of power will fight to retain those positions. To think that the State and capitalism will "wither away" without a struggle is, according to these anarchists, pure fantasy. Berkman is particularly explicit on this point:

It is therefore certain that government and capital will not allow themselves to be quietly abolished if they can help it; nor will they miraculously "disappear" of themselves, as some people tend to believe. It will require a revolution to get rid of them.¹⁰

The oppressed will fight in what will initially be a harsh and bloody battle.¹¹ But the anarchists are optimistic that the lower classes will not sink into brutality, carrying out a prolonged massacre. The anarchists believe that the people will realize that such bloody vengeance has risks. It can create a reaction more horrible than the original situation, evolving into a violent dictatorship as oppressive as that which was overthrown.

Bakunin is convinced that the people will come to understand that revenge against people is ineffective.¹² More power is to be found in institutions than in the people who

⁷ Leo Tolstoy, "The Kingdom of God is Within You," in *The Kingdom of God is within You. Christianity and Patriotism. Miscellanies.*, Vol. XX of *Complete Works*, pp. 203–4.

⁸ Michael Bakunin/ "Statism and Anarchy," in *Bakunin on Anarchy*, ed., trans., and introd. Sam Dolgoff, pref. Paul Avrich (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 334. See also Alexander Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), p. 176; Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York: Smith, 1941), p. 64.

⁹ Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?*, p. 111.

¹⁰ Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?*, p.220.

¹¹ Bakunin, "National Catechism," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 100.

¹² Bakunin, "National Catechism," *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 100.

run them.¹³ If the revolution is to be successful, its violent actions should be directed against those institutions and properties that are the lifeblood of the State. Once these institutions are destroyed there will be no need for massacres.¹⁴

Although the anarchists are realistic in their approach to violence, there is also an ethical component in their analysis. For them, the violence of the oppressed is not only natural but it is also just.¹⁵ The poor and oppressed are subjected to unjust institutionalized violence that forms the structures of their social existence. To throw off this burden, even if the means are violent, is justifiable. Kropotkin rather poetically describes how the violence of the people may serve the cause of justice:

That justice may be victorious, and the new thought become reality, there is need of a frightful storm to sweep away all this rottenness, to vivify torpid souls with its breath, and to restore self-sacrifice, self-denial, and heroism to our senile, decrepit, crumbling society.¹⁶

Most anarchists are convinced that the violence of the oppressed classes will be renovative rather than destructive, honorable rather than brutal and hateful. Sorel especially sees the violence of the working class as an appeal to honor.¹⁷ He believes that violence jolts the mind to new objectives and allows the workers to assert their existence as human beings.¹⁸

Kropotkin, like Sorel, claims that violence will restore heroism and self-sacrifice. He also believes that the violence of the people will not degenerate into a reign of terror because the people are too “goodhearted not to feel a speedy repugnance at cruelty.”¹⁹ The people have a natural sympathy for their victims and will not let barbarity get the upper hand.

Although ethics plays a role in the thinking of these anarchists, it is not a role divorced from concrete, material reality. Appeals to justice must follow a complete analysis of social and historical conditions. Justice must fit the situation, not vice versa.

It is this “ethical realism” or “ethical materialism” that predominates in the thought of the majority of liberation theologians. But before we present the majority position, we should take a brief look at the opinion of the minority.

¹³ Bakunin, “The Program of the International Brotherhood,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 151.

¹⁴ Bakunin, “National Catechism,” *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 100.

¹⁵ Peter Kropotkin, *Words of a Revolutionary*, quoted in Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, p.342.

¹⁶ Kropotkin, *Words*, in *Anarchism*, p.115.

¹⁷ Sorel, “Apology for Violence,” *Reflections*, p. 302.

¹⁸ Sorel, “Apology for Violence,” *Reflections*, p. 301. See also Sorel’s comments on Mme. de Stael in *The Illusions of Progress*, trans. John and Charlotte Stanley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 12930.

¹⁹ Kropotkin, *Revolutionary Studies*, quoted in Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, p. 116.

Leonardo Boff, the most outspoken representative of the pacifist position, equates violence with hate and, like Tolstoy, sets violence in complete opposition to the law of love. For Boff, violence can never usher in a society of love, and even if it could the end would never justify the means. Violence is an expression of hatred and hatred can never be used as a means to impose love. Boff says:

Jesus bore witness to the real power of God: love. It is love that liberates human beings, establishes fellowship between them, opens them up to the authentic process of liberation. Such love rules out all violence and oppression, even for the sake of having love itself prevail. Its efficacy is not the efficacy of violence that alters situations and eliminates human beings. The apparent efficacy of violence does not in fact manage to break the spiralling process of violence.²⁰

The principal fear of all those advocating nonviolence in Latin America is, as Boff suggests, that the use of violence runs the risk of substituting one tyranny for another, and thus continuing the “spiral” of violence rather than eliminating it. Peace, love, and harmony are the goal and the only means capable of reaching that goal is nonviolence.

The majority of liberation theologians recognize the risks of violence. They are aware that violence creates a number of problems: “the exacerbation of hate, resentment, rivalry, the imposition of changes from a structure of power without corresponding development of conscience, the acceptance of the ‘rules of the game’ of the present oppressive system.”²¹ But they also realize that absolute pronouncements in favor of nonviolence fail to take into consideration the entire human picture and has its own risks of ignoring the requirements of justice. What must be done is to assess the situation and weigh the human cost, then choose a course of action that reduces the overall suffering, frustration, and dehumanization.²² If the situation requires the use of violence so that justice may be served, then that is the path to follow.

When liberation theologians assess the Latin American situation they perceive two kinds of violence. On the one hand, they see the legalized political and economic violence of those in power, the overt and bloody violence carried out by the police and army, and the institutionalized violence of the capitalist system e.g. hunger, malnutrition, mental deficiency, shortened life span, infant mortality etc.²³ They see men and women deprived of personal rights by force and prevented from giving shape to their personal life on the basis of their own judgment.²⁴ They see a situation that no degree

²⁰ Leonardo Boff, “Christa’s Liberation via Oppression,” in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, trans. John Drury, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), 120.

²¹ José Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), p. 127.

²² Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 128.

²³ Jose Porfirio Miranda, *Communism in the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1982), pp. 73–74.

²⁴ Ignacio Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976), p. 198.

of rationalization could call just, a situation that no Christian could find compatible with the teachings of Christ, a sinful situation.

On the other hand, they see the violence of those who dare to fight back, to lift their heads with the will to freedom.²⁵ They see the unbearable material conditions, the years of anger, frustration, poverty, misery, disease, and death, and the courage of those who cry out “no more.” They see the love of those willing to stand against the oppressor so that their neighbor may have a better life. They see a violence born of love and hope for regeneration rather than of hate and destruction, a violence with peace and justice as its goal.²⁶

Of course, there is always the risk that the violence of the oppressed will degenerate into terror and domination. Like the anarchists, however, the liberation theologians are hopeful that the values of the poor, those values that are most Christian in nature, will put an end to the spiral of violence forever.²⁷

According to the liberation theologians, then, the choice for Christians in Latin America is either to accept the status quo, the unjust violence of the oppressor, or to accept the just violence of the oppressed. The choice is not between violence and nonviolence but between unjust and just violence. Christians, the theologians believe, must choose the latter.

Gutiérrez suggests this when he says:

The realm of politics today entails confrontations between different human groups, between social classes with opposing interests; and these confrontations are marked by varying levels of violence. The desire to be an “artisan of peace” not only does not excuse one from taking part in these conflicts; it actually compels one to take part in them if one wants to tackle them at their roots and get beyond them. It forces one to realize that there can be no peace without justice.²⁸

Gutiérrez further claims that neutrality on the issue of class is impossible²⁹, and that noninvolvement is a subterfuge to keep things as they are.³⁰ What the Church and Christians in Latin America must do is to cast their “lot with the oppressed and exploited in the struggle for a more just society.”³¹

²⁵ Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and the Theology of Liberation*, trans. Bernard F. McWilliams (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 43.

²⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Faith as Freedom,” in *Living With Change, Experience, Faith*, ed. Francis A. Eigo and Silvio E. Fittipaldi (Villanova, Pennsylvania: Villanova Univ. Press, 1976), p. 28.

²⁷ Jose Combi in, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 165.

²⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith,” in *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 11.

²⁹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p.275.

³⁰ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 266.

³¹ Gutiérrez, *Theology*, p. 266.

Segundo believes that the law of love given by Christ is compatible with violence. He gives an account of the nature of love that contrasts sharply with that of the pacifists:

We are able to love our neighbor to the extent that we keep other human beings from showing up as neighbor on our horizon. To strip the latter of the features of being neighbors, we resort to the familiar mechanism of treating them as *functions* rather than as persons...Now no one can doubt that this mechanism *does* violence to the one and indivisible reality of those persons...violence therefore is an intrinsic dimension of any and all concrete love in history...The dynamic of love, however, tends in the direction of reducing the quantum of violence required for efficacy to the lowest possible level.³²

According to Segundo, concretely expressed love is finite and biased. It must keep some people at arms length, while choosing others to be one's neighbor. Segundo believes that the Christian must choose the poor and lowly. This was Christ's choice.

Liberation theologians turn to the Bible to support their realistic approach to the problem of violence. They show in the New Testament that Jesus' love was not limitless. His preference was for the poor and miserable, for outcasts, widows, and prostitutes. It was these that he chose for his Kingdom. The others, those in positions of religious, economic, and political power, he opposed and resisted, to the point of actual physical violence, e.g. driving the money changers out of the temple (John 2:15). The theologians believe that when we look at Jesus' actions it is evident that the love he wished us to imitate is compatible with the "obligation to repulse the oppressor of the huamn community by use of violence."³³

There are those, however, who point to passages in the New Testament where Jesus clearly opposed the use of violence. In Matthew 5:21–22 Jesus spoke out against anger as well as killing; in Matthew 22:52 he claimed that all who take the sword will perish by the sword; and in Matthew 5:39 Jesus urged us to resist not evil but turn the other cheek. Surely, these must direct us to the use of nonviolence.

In response, the liberation theologians suggest that we look more closely at the issue of violence in the Bible as a whole, look at the context in which the statements regarding violence were written, and consider both the statements and the actions of Jesus in the light of the overall picture.

When looking through the Bible there seem to be contradictions in some of the passages concerning violence, for example, between the commandment "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13) and Deuteronomy 7:16 where Yahweh tells his people to kill all those whom "the Lord your God will give over to you." The Old Testament is filled with passages where killing is not only allowed but condoned. But when we examine

³² Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), pp. 15962.

³³ Miranda, *Communism*, p.76.

the context we see that what is condoned is the violence of a people carried out against an unjust aggressor. Commandments such as “you shalt not kill” mean that we should not kill without just cause, and it is concrete circumstances that determine what is just. Segundo is quite explicit on this point:

...anyone who is at all familiar with the Bible knows that such a commandment as “you shall not kill” cannot purport to constitute an absolute moral rule. For the very words of the Bible itself obligate the Hebrews to kill in different circumstances...In short, the Bible itself indicates that the commandment not to kill was not universal in any absolute sense, that it was equivalent to saying that no one could kill without a justifiable reason...The proper proportion [of violence] must be figured out in the context of each different historical situation.³⁴

Miranda also accepts the fact that the Old Testament condones the use of killing when it is carried out by the whole people, He says:

And in the series of instances in which the Mosaic legislation prescribes the death penalty (e.g.. Exodus 21:12, 15, 16, 17), it is by stoning to be carried out by the whole people (Leviticus 24:14, 23; 20:2, 27; Exodus 17:4; and so on). This is violence and it is not only permitted, it is commanded by the one true God.³⁵

The theologians, especially Segundo, believe that the seemingly contradictory statements in the New Testament can be resolved in the same way.³⁶

The theologians are aware that Jesus spoke out against violence although he too allowed its use:

Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but the sword. (Matthew 10:34)

And:

And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one. (Luke 22: 36)

The theologians point to the fact that Jesus’ followers carried swords.³⁷ They are aware that some of his followers were Zealots, a group which advocated violent overthrow of the Roman state. The theologians believe that if Jesus had been strongly opposed to violence, he would have admonished those who were set on a violent course.

³⁴ Segundo, *Liberation*, p. 166.

³⁵ Miranda, *Communism*, p. 74.

³⁶ Segundo, *Liberation*, p. 166.

³⁷ Ellacurla, *Freedom*, p. 62.

But while he condemned those who used power unjustly, he never condemned the Zealot movement. Only when the situation called for nonviolent action did he urge his followers to put their weapons away. (See Luke 22:47–53).³⁸

Liberation theologians believe that Jesus made no absolute pronouncements about the use of violence but rather showed, primarily by his actions, that one should look to the situation to determine in which cases violence should be used.³⁹ Jesus allowed, as Yahweh did, the use of violence to serve the cause of justice.⁴⁰

...sin must be resisted, even by violence, when sin itself is violent...⁴¹

Though the liberation theologians make no distinction between violence against institutions and violence against people, as Bakunin did, they share with the anarchists a realistic and materialistic approach to this issue.⁴² Appeals to universal love are not the answer for the majority of theologians. What is important for them is that we look to the concrete material conditions and realize that violence may be a justifiable revolutionary option. Violence for its own sake is never approved, but violence in the service of justice may be part of the Christian mission.

³⁸ Ellacuría, *Freedom*, p. 61.

³⁹ Segundo, *Liberation*, p. 166.

⁴⁰ Miranda, *Communism*, pp. 73–78.

⁴¹ Ellacuría, *Freedom*, p. 62.

⁴² Sebastian Kappen, a liberation theologian from India, makes the following distinction: “Violence may be understood in the sense of organized resistance meant to paralyse an existing institution or the social system as a whole. Here the object of violence is not personal but structural. The distinction is important because persons are absolute values, while structures are not...” *Jesus and Freedom* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1977), pp. 172–3.

Chapter IX. New Society; New Person¹

“Thy Kindgom Come...” (Matthew 6:10)

From what has proceeded one discovers that a thoroughly anarchist picture of a new society and a new human being has taken form, a picture that is shared in detail by liberation theology. The economic, political, social, moral, and, in some degree, the religious vision of the future is the same for both the leading anarchists we have cited and for many liberation theologians. The principal difference is that what the anarchists portray in the language of their European experience, the theologians repeat as Latin American Christians committed to the revolutionary struggle of the poor and oppressed and to a God who is seen as the ultimate liberator.

Although there is some disagreement among anarchists and theologians, especially in regard to the economic arrangement of the future society, there is enough in common to give a clear outline of a shared vision. Let us now look at the picture that has emerged.

As we saw earlier, anarchists and liberation theologians are reluctant to present too detailed an account of the future society. For them the new society is not a utopian dream—the well-designed fictionalized plan of some well-intentioned theorist who only wants an easy escape from the horrors of reality. The new society is reality in the making; it is the here-and-now struggle of the poor and oppressed to create a better world; it is the hope that motivates the struggle in the direction of freedom and justice; and it is the progressive realization of the tendencies of history. But it is also an expectation of things to come. Anarchists and liberation theologians believe that without this future element there would be no hope, no action, no revolutionary struggle. They have, then, some conceptualizations of what the future will be like, but always with the reminder that unless this future vision is efficacious in changing the structures of the present, it is pure fantasy.

Another reason that the anarchists and liberation theologians lack a detailed description of the future society is that, although they envision the future as universal,

¹ I have not used the more familiar term “New Man” as a chapter heading because in recent years many liberation theologians have become more sensitive to the effects of sexist language and have discontinued use of the term “New Man” replacing it with a more inclusive counterpart.

they believe that each region must determine for itself the details of its own future in accordance with its material and historical conditions. Geography, natural resources, custom, temperament, and social habits condition the manner in which the new society is perceived and developed. They believe that no single vision can be imposed from a centralized source; it must always be a product of autonomous communities, provinces, regions. Detailed accounts can only be given to fixed and stagnant societies. A society bestirred with change and growth escapes static conceptualizations. Such is the new society for anarchists and liberation theologians. Modeled after the living processes of nature, the new society continually perfects itself, seeking more and more freedom. It is a society of action and creation in a permanent revolution.

Although the anarchists and liberation theologians do not have a blueprint of the future, by studying and analyzing the tendencies of history and by becoming attuned to the values of the oppressed, they have some expectation of what the new society will be like.

From a scientific examination of present structures and a keen awareness of the elements of progress, they anticipate a new society free from dominations of every kind. Such a society would be without hierarchies, coercive power, and privileges of wealth, race, and gender. It would be a society where all citizens are free to do what they want, and want to do what is just. It would be a society where the freedom of each is fulfilled by the freedom of all, where there is individuality without individualism, and equality without sameness.

Upon closer examination of the socioeconomic aspect of the new society anarchists and liberation theologians believe that there will be freedom from class divisions based on differences of wealth. Whether or not there will be private property in the means of production, the exploitation of human beings will be abolished. Most anarchists and liberation theologians, moreover, agree that such property must be eliminated. Along with the abolition of private property there must also be, for those anarchists and theologians who identify themselves as communists, the elimination of the wage system, whether it be in the form of money or labor notes. Distribution according to labor perpetuates social inequality, leading to oppressive differentiations such as those between professional and ordinary worker while penalizing those who are not able to work or who, because of physical or mental disability, cannot keep pace with their fellow workers.

Anarchists and liberation theologians envision a new society free from any economic inequalities that promote privilege and power distinctions. What this means for most anarchists and theologians of liberation is that the future society will be one in which the instruments of production, land, and natural resources are held in common and material goods are distributed according to need. It will be a society where labor is a right, the foundation of human dignity and creativity, but not the basis for survival for the individual. Labor will be truly free when it is a choice, not a necessity.

Full material development, equality, cooperation, a community of brothers and sisters transcending class and all differences of wealth, is the resulting economic picture of the future.

In the political realm, anarchists and liberation theologians envision a society free from external domination and coercive power. There will be no external laws, political parties, bureaucratic dictatorships, centralized authorities. In short, the society of the future will be a Stateless one. Government and all those institutions that make up its machinery are decried as incompatible with a free people.

Liberation theologians and anarchists agree that the new society will have an orderly structure, but it will be a structure that promotes rather than prevents autonomy; a structure from the bottom up and from the circumference to the center; a structure mutually agreed upon, freely federated, and designed to serve the people. The only obligations will be those that arise from the individual's internal sense of justice and love. The mutual agreements made by people will be guided by internal inclinations rather than by coercion or fear of punishment.

Not only will the new society be Stateless, but there will be no hierarchies of any kind. What this means for the liberation theologian is that a whole new conception of "Church" will emerge. No longer can there be an authoritarian elite which, under the guise of service, keeps the masses sedated with dogma and fear of eternal damnation. No longer will the people be controlled by demands of strict obedience to a religious system that has made an idol of power and has abandoned the purpose for which it was created. No longer will the people be silent in regard to their religious destiny. Liberation theologians are part of the movement to create a Church of the people—the poor, the oppressed, the lowly. These base communities are an entirely new structure created by those to whom Jesus promised the Kingdom. Guided by their own experience and values, these communities act in service to one another, create religious models and forms of worship, and reflect upon scripture in light of the needs and demands of the historical situation. The base communities, so similar to the communities of the early Christians, are "truly the church of Christ and his apostles fleshed out at the grassroots level."²

These communities, though not modeled after any specific anarchist structure, are anarchist in form. They are free associations, federated and decentralized; run not by domination and coercion, but by mutual agreement among equals. Religion in these communities is not something that detracts from life, that hinders freedom, but is part of the creative endeavor of a people forging their own future. The base communities are the Church of the new society, both now and hopefully in the future.

In the moral realm the new society, for anarchists and liberation theologians, will be one that is free from avarice and servile attitudes; a society where the basic human

² Leonardo Boff, "Theological Characteristics of a Grassroots Church," in *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, trans. John Drury, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1981), p. 125.

dignity of each and every human being is respected; a society of freedom, justice, equality, and love. It will be a society of mutual support and cooperation where each member is viewed as a neighbor, a brother or sister, who assists in the development of every other member. It will be a society of peace and harmony—peace that comes with justice and harmony that comes with mutual respect and aid.

In the religious language of liberation theology, the new society is identified with the Kingdom of God—a gift from God and the task of the people—where all are in total communion. It will be a Kingdom of the resurrection of the dead, a society liberated from all necrophilic structures that keep the people from enjoying life. “Mammon,” will no longer rule and sinful structures will no longer keep humans enchained. Through mutual sharing and love each will receive his or her daily bread.

Liberation theology’s new society, in whatever language it is presented, is anarchist in essence. Its socioeconomic, political, religious and moral structures reflect an anarchist dimension. All the values that it promotes are anarchist values; all the servitudes that it opposes are the servitudes opposed by anarchists; all the solutions it proposes are anarchist solutions. The actions necessary to attain this new society are also anarchist.

Liberation theologians hold that along with a new society there must also be a new person. Without new institutions and structures, without a society of material expansion, justice, and peace, liberation theologians believe that it is not possible for the potentialities of human nature to be developed. At the same time, the theologians believe that unless there is a change in human consciousness, a consciousness that guides the transformation of existing historical conditions, there can be no new society. The new person and the new society are, therefore, reciprocally related, each being necessary for the emergence of the other, each having elements of both present and future.

For liberation theologians, the new person of the present is the revolutionary who, motivated by justice and love, acts to transform the existing social structures and to build a new human community. He or she is the one who critically analyzes the present, assumes control of historical situations, and initiates the escape from servitude. This new human being is so committed to the poor and oppressed that no sacrifice is too great. In a spirit of devotion, self-denial, and heroism, the new man and the new woman respond to the call of freedom.

The new person of the future as the theologians perceive him or her is the full and authentic human who comes to be as a result of transformed historical conditions that no longer permit power and privilege to bind the human spirit. With no institutional barriers to impede growth, the theologians believe that the intellectual, artistic, and moral capacities of the individual can be developed. Under such conditions, the entire nature of the human will evolve, issuing forth a new human being who has maximum control over his or her individual destiny.

The theologians believe that the new economic order creates the conditions for nonalienated work which in turn creates the conditions for a completely self-developed and creative human being. Though always bound to some degree by the laws of nature and history, this new person, through increased scientific awareness of the influences that give shape to a human environment, can for the first time make an enlightened choice concerning his or her inner transformation. No longer fettered by superstitions and enslaving ideologies, the new person develops talents, gifts, spirit, and genius to the fullest extent. At last, a new and authentic individuality is possible.

Though responsible for his or her individual destiny, development, and fulfillment, the new person, according to the theologians, is also responsible for society. Guided by love of humanity, a love that transcends all egoism, the new person makes the needs of the “other” his or her own. A family relationship of reciprocal openness and trust is established. The antagonisms and competition that characterize the individuals of other societies give way to solidarity and mutual support. Other people are no longer seen as threats to individuality and freedom; instead all are viewed as brothers and sisters whose interests are the interests of all. In complete freedom this new moral being devotes his or her life to, and finds complete fulfillment in, the service of mankind.

In short, the liberation theologians share with the anarchists the belief that the new person of the future is the completely fulfilled, totally free human being who acts in total communion with others.

Anarchists and liberation theologians place great hope in the ability of human nature to change. It is not enough that material conditions and structures change. Unless there is a new person with new attitudes and ways of relating to others, there can never be an end to domination and oppression.

Liberation theologians are especially sensitive to the need for a new person, whom they see as the deepest motivation for revolutionary action in Latin America. Inspired by the person of Jesus, the original new man, the Christians of Latin America find hope in the future. Jesus, conceived as the new creation or God-man, revealed through his life and action the possibility of human transformation. Acting in complete freedom, subjected only to the law of love, this new human being was a model for Christians to imitate and be guided by. For liberation theology, the divine element that changed the nature of Jesus can change the nature of each and every human being. Because of Christ, the evangelist Paul explains that we can “put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

In their hope for a society free from all forms of domination and oppression and in their hope for a new self-fulfilled human being ruled only by internal law, the liberation theologians and anarchists share a common dream. In all that is necessary for the realization of this new society and new person—efficacious ethical ideals, hope, “utopia,” a commitment to the poor and oppressed, revolutionary action—there is a common anarchist dimension. All the facets of liberation theology explored here, including its religious interpretations, are anarchist in nature. This should not be cause for surprise. Given the intolerable social conditions with which most Latin Americans

have to contend, only the radical solutions of an anarchist perspective can fully meet the challenge.

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