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EDUCATING CHRISTIANS FOR POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT:

AN EXAMINATION OF AUGUSTINIAN, LIBERATION AND CONFESSING CHURCH APPROACHES

Nigel William Oakley

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Theology

University of Durham

2003

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Educating Christians for Political Involvement:
An Examination of Augustinian, Liberation and Confessing Church Approaches

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 2003

Nigel William Oakley

This thesis examines the role of the churches in educating their congregations for political involvement. It does this by examining three aspects of the political thought of three theologians, Augustine, Gustavo Gutiérrez and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The first aspect is eschatology, on the grounds that thought on the eschaton influences thought on how to react to the present. The second is ecclesiology, with particular reference to how the theologian expects the church to relate to the civil society in which the church is located. The third is the 'prepolitical' education, or the education of the ordinary Christian for political involvement, in that civil society. The thesis concludes by stating that there is no formula, or curriculum, for prepolitical education, but there is a 'summary grammar' expressed in the form of three inter-related tensions on which all prepolitical education must rest if it is to be a properly Christian prepolitical education. The first tension concerns the 'now' and the 'not yet' nature of the coming of God's kingdom; the second relates to the idea that that the church should be in the world but not of it; and the third is based on how the church relates to the world in a prophetic and an embodied manner.

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Declaration

None of this material has been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

While political theology is making strides towards acceptability in the academy, and it is becoming more acceptable for politicians to state publicly that they have a Christian (or other) faith; there are still many people, including Christians, who wish to keep the fields of faith and of politics totally separate.[1] On the one hand, 'the electorate now looks with almost unprecedented expectancy to the churches and to theology to make constructive and significant contributions to public debate',[2] but on the other, there are still those who are prepared to argue[3] that a twenty-first century Archbishop of Canterbury ought to stick to religion and keep out of politics.[4] Given that there is still a debate over whether the church ought to be involved politically, in this thesis I have chosen to examine the parameters within which ordinary Christians – that is those who occupy the pews, rather than those in leadership – should be educated for political involvement.

1.1 The Theological Parameters for Political Education

I make this choice for three reasons. Firstly, in order to counter the arguments of those who would keep politics and faith separate, ordinary Christians should be aware that their faith, and the attitudes that follow from that faith, ought to impinge on their political thoughts, views and actions. Secondly,

---

[1] This includes members of the General Synod of the Church of England. On issues such as trade union power, 'Synod members were operating principally in terms of secular political values.' However on issues such as abortion, 'they seemed to be guided by principles of mainly theological governance' (Kenneth N. Medhurst and George H. Moyser, *Church and Politics in a Secular Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 265). Grace Davie also notes 'the phrase ['privatised religion'] gives an accurate impression of the current state of affairs, for it is true that religion has very largely become a matter of personal or private choice. So long as the expression of your views does not offend anyone else, you can believe whatever you like' (*Religion in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 76). It is, of course, when religious people speak politically that offence is taken – by those who disagree politically – and objections follow.

[2] Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 118.

[3] In the letters pages of *The Times*, and elsewhere.

[4] This separatist view is not confined to non-Christians. Medhurst and Moyser note that within the Anglican Church, there are those who 'argue that Christianity is largely a personal matter having no direct implications' (*Church and Politics*, 356).

because magisterial pronouncements from church leaders are bound to have more weight if there is active support for those pronouncements from the 'grass roots' of the churches, rather than the, at best, passive support which is all too common at present, then the grass roots needed to be educated to understand the reasoning behind such pronouncements. Thirdly, because I believe that the more the Christian community can influence the larger society in which we all live, the better society may be as a result. At the very least, Christians can point to how society can, and ought, to improve, so that life may be better, more just, for all.

Rather than look at educational practice I wish to examine the theological underpinnings from which any such practice should emerge. This is because educational practice will change with circumstances, time, and the means by which people are able to participate in the political processes of their society. I have therefore set out to establish some parameters by which a Christian political involvement in any society may be measured. The approach I use in examining the theological bases for Christian political involvement is to look at the thought of three different theologians whose work has influenced thinking on political involvement for Christians.

1.2 The Three Theologians

I have chosen Augustine of Hippo as the first theologian because of his continuing influence on Western Christian political thought. Due to his profound influence throughout the ages, and the differing ways in which his thought has been interpreted, I will look not only at some of Augustine's writings, but I will also look briefly at the work of some of his twentieth century interpreters in this field. One of these interpreters is Peter Bathory, whose thesis on prepolitical education in Augustine's thought has, until now, remained unexamined. While I fundamentally disagree with Bathory's

analysis, his thesis has pointed a way forward for considering how Christians may be educated 'prepolitically.' [5]

As an antithesis to Augustine, I have chosen the liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez as my second theologian. I will also examine the work of Paulo Freire: the pedagogue on whom Gutiérrez based his work on Base Ecclesial Communities. As I shall show, both Gutiérrez and Freire have mellowed somewhat in later years: the former due to a greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects of liberation, and the latter's stance has softened mainly due to the practical experience of being involved as a political leader in education.

Finally, as my third theologian, I have chosen Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Although he has many contributions in his own right, Bonhoeffer can be viewed as having a mediating position between the first two schools of theology, as he has an Augustinian inheritance (mediated through his Lutheranism), and he has, by their own admission, influenced liberation theologians. This influence is somewhat surprising as Bonhoeffer himself remained, as I shall show, authoritarian in outlook both culturally and politically.

1.3 Eschatology, Ecclesiology and Prepolitical Education

These three theologians are from different times, places and cultures. In order to compare their political thought, I will examine three specific areas of that thought. I will look first at eschatology. This is because, as has become widely accepted during the twentieth century starting from the work of Albert Schweitzer on the kingdom of God, a theologian's approach to eschatology cannot but affect their approach to the present.[6] If God is seen, for example, as

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[5] I have borrowed the term 'prepolitical' from Peter Bathory (see *Political Theory as Public Confession* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1981), and chapter 3 below). I use the term 'prepolitical education' to mean that education which prepares people to be politically involved. This is as opposed to *political* education, which is education for specific views and actions, and which can easily become political indoctrination.

[6] 'From first to last ... Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionising and transforming the present' (Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM Press, 1967), 16). For the contribution of Schweitzer (and Johannes Weiss) see ibid., 37-9.

a God who will judge and therein condemn the world and who calls his people out of that world, then it is unlikely that Christians will be encouraged to engage with the world for its betterment; conversely if God is seen as the One who will bring the world to perfection, then Christians will be encouraged to spend their entire energy in improving the lot of humanity. None of my theological conversation partners offers such a form of eschatology, at either extreme; though Augustine is more negative about the world than Gutiérrez. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the latter is more positive about political involvement and action than the former.

The second area I look at relates to ecclesiology – to how the three theologians related the church to the society in which that church was located. Are church members, and the church of which they are a part, merely aliens in an unfriendly environment, and to keep their heads down as they await the promises of heaven? Or is the church the voice that condemns the injustices of society, and thereby requiring its members to take the lead in overcoming those injustices? Or are church members to work invisibly within society, seeking somehow to do what they can when they can, but, for the most part, going along with society as it is? Circumstances alter cases, but neither Augustine, Gutiérrez, nor Bonhoeffer ever advocated non-involvement in society: the questions revolve around how and in what way were people to be involved in society. However, as I shall show, for both Augustine and Bonhoeffer, the emphasis was on how church leaders were to be involved in civil society, rather than ordinary people. The ordinary Christian's role was relegated largely to obedience, unless civil society's strictures ran contrary to the commands of God.

Given this attitude to the role of the ordinary Christian, the education of the ordinary Christian for political involvement, or prepolitical education,[7] becomes the third area of examination. Clearly, the liberation approach stands apart from the other two theologians who place a greater presumption in favour of political authority. However, it cannot be said that Liberation

[7] See note 5 above.

Theology advocates disobedience for the sake of it. Though Liberation Theology is clearly more sympathetic to revolution and to the 'counter-violence' of the masses against the oppression of the state, it is interesting to note that both Gutiérrez and Freire tone down their revolutionary language in later works. None of the theological approaches is entirely free of hierarchy and thereby of authority,[8] but all of them do have something to say about the education of the ordinary Christian for political involvement; depending of course on what is meant by 'political involvement'.

1.4 Political Involvement in Civil Society

Where politics is seen as a debate over what is the most efficient way of implementing a course of action, there may be a wish to leave the discussion to the experts, but debate in politics does not just come about because people have differing views over what is the most effective means of governing society, it also occurs because people's interests differ, so what is seen as efficient or effective will differ. More importantly for this thesis, people's values differ. This means that their ideas of what is *right*, not just what is efficient or effective, will differ.[9] It is at this level of values that silence by any part of the community allows others with differing values to impose their views on the whole of society unopposed. It also means that those who do seek change will assume that silent churches, and silent church people, support the *status quo*. This is a broad definition of what political involvement entails; indeed Gustavo Gutiérrez also refers to a broad and a narrow definition of politics. For Gutiérrez, the construction of a society 'in which people can live in solidarity' is political and 'encompasses and severely conditions all human activity.' He continues: '[o]nly within this broad meaning of the political sphere can we situate the more precise notion of "politics," as an orientation to

[8] Gutiérrez and Freire work from a hierarchy of pedagogue, 'organic intellectual' and the masses. However, as I note, this is an organisational, rather than a status, hierarchy.

[9] 'A modern democratic society is characterised not simply by a pluralism of comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines but by a pluralism of incomprehensible yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines' (John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), xvi).

power.'[10] Gutiérrez is clearly reacting against the idea that "politics" should be a clearly defined free time activity.[11] Indeed he is prepared to regard the struggles against the marginalization of unimportant people as political struggles, even if some would regard such small gestures as 'having little political effectiveness.'[12] Following Gutiérrez, 'politics' and 'political involvement' in this thesis will have a broad definition encompassing the values by which Christians live. A command as basic to the Christian faith as 'loving your neighbour' will then have a political dimension, but the practical outworking of that love will, of course, depend on time and circumstance: however, none of the theologians studied in this thesis assumed that loving one's neighbours meant that they should be left alone in their troubles. Being a Christian means being involved in civil society, and that, in turn, means being politically involved in that civil society.

This is, of course, a messy business. We cannot necessarily tell what is the right course of action to take in a particular circumstance. All we can do, like Bonhoeffer, though hopefully not in such extreme circumstances, is take the free responsibility that we have under Christ and offer that to him and trust that our actions are indeed righteous ones. Politics, certainly in its narrow sense of a will to power, cannot be defined as a natural part of humanity's role on earth in the pre-Fall sense of 'natural';[13] but trying to keep the church pure will in the end divorce it from the real lives that its people (and any others whom it is trying to reach) live. In this sense, the church would return to what Bonhoeffer calls the 'monastic' misunderstanding of what God's call on our lives means, and tries to find somewhere 'which is not the world', where this monastic call can be lived out 'more fitly.'[14]

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[10] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (London: SCM Press, revised edition 1988), 30. See 4.4.3 below for further discussion.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., xxx.
[13] Here I follow Augustine (see 2.4.3.4 below).
[14] See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 252; and see 6.5 below for further discussion.

Another difficulty is what is meant by 'civil society'? 'There are many definitions of the term "civil society" ...'[15] amongst social scientists and others. Interestingly, the same social scientists generally understand 'that local religious congregations including churches are a part of civil society.'[16] When I refer to the relation between church and civil society, I shall assume that the church *qua* church is distinct from civil society. This does not mean that I assume that a church could have no contact with civil society: indeed each member of the church is, simply by living, working and acting in the community, of necessity a member of civil society. Also, as I have pointed out above, none of the theologians studied in this thesis would accept non-involvement in civil society. Even Augustine, who makes much of the different 'ends' of members of the earthly and heavenly cities – members of the heavenly city are destined for heaven, and those of the earthly city are destined for damnation – requires his readers to use the peace of the earthly city, to pray for this 'peace of Babylon', even though they may be mere pilgrims in a strange land on their way to their home in the celestial city. Christians then are to be involved in civil society, even if they are aware that there is always something better than that civil society. Civil society, for this thesis, is defined as the communities in which we live, and in which we seek to live at peace with one another. Civil society, being composed of imperfect human beings, will always be imperfect itself, and will contain injustices that need to be challenged.

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[15] Michael Walzer, 'Introduction' in Michael Walzer (ed.) *Toward a Global Civil Society* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), 1. For a discussion on the different ways in which civil society has been defined, see John Keane, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 32-64. Cf. Margaret Harris, 'Civil Society and the Role of UK Churches: An Exploration', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 15, 2 (2002), 47.

[16] Harris, 'Civil Society and the Role of UK Churches', 48. Waltzer's list of the networks that must be rebuilt by the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe includes churches ('The Concept of Civil Society' in Walzer (ed.) *Toward a Global Civil Society*, 7). For Keane, civil society requires 'the principle of freedom of religious worship ... [and] the freedom not to be religious' (*Civil Society*, 108) – in a chapter about nationalism, Keane appears to argue that one's religious identity, like one's national identity, should be 'only one identity among others' (ibid., 107).

1.5 Educating the Ordinary Christian

How then are ordinary church members to be educated to cope with living in this imperfect world? If we follow Augustine and, to a lesser extent, Bonhoeffer we could conclude that we should leave 'politics' to church leaders. They will do what they can when they can. However, my contention is that if church members are silent on issues – such as the war against Iraq – when their leaders speak out, then church leaders will inevitably be speaking in a vacuum, and can find that their comments are at best reported, and at worst ignored. Church members need to know, at the very least, the basis on which their leaders are speaking out, and to know why those leaders are saying what they are saying.[17] This leads me to the thesis, outlined above, that there needs not only to be a prepolitical education within the congregation, but an examination of the theological foundation for that education.

The theological foundation of a prepolitical education for the congregation is expressed in the form of a summary grammar. This grammar in turn rests on three inter-related tensions, within which any church must remain if it is to educate its congregation prepolitically. The first tension is eschatological in that it relates to the 'now' and the 'not yet' nature of the coming of God's kingdom; the second follows from the idea that the church is in the world, but not of it; and the third tension is based on how the church relates to that world in a prophetic and an embodied manner. However, before I expand on these tensions, I will look at each of the three theologians in more detail, beginning with Augustine.

[17] This is not to say that political involvement is entirely a matter of speaking, but that at present it seems that a lot of political 'action' from Anglican bishops consists in reports and submission to various parts of government. It is always to be hoped, and expected, that any church leader's actions, whether they could be construed as political or not, do not belie their words.

Chapter 2

FROM *L'AUGUSTINISME POLITIQUE* TO POLITICAL AUGUSTINIANISMS: A CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF RECENT REFLECTION ON AUGUSTINE'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

2.1 Introduction

In spite of his overwhelming influence down the centuries, Augustine left behind no treatise devoted to political thought.[1] His thought has to be culled from various books, letters and sermons, and has inevitably borne different interpretations. Augustine was famously used as an authority on both sides of the eleventh-century Investiture Controversy, and even twentieth-century exploration of his political thought has resulted in Augustine's concerns being filtered through the fears and aspirations of the interpreter's time.

In this chapter, I will give an overview of Augustine's political thought and how that thought has been interpreted. The debate centres on how far Augustine felt that the church could interfere in matters of the civil society, or whether he felt that Christians should merely obey the strictures of Romans 13 in all circumstances; this debate therefore affects how far the congregation should be educated for political involvement.[2] It also affects what I shall call[3] the "summary grammar" of the church's role in the world, and the questions of how far the paradox of the world being both destined for destruction and loved by God means that Christians should engage with that world.[4]

---

[1] '[R]econstructing Augustine's political ... thought is like putting together the fragments of a pot retrieved from an archaeological site' (R.W. Dyson, *The Pilgrim City: Social and Political Ideas in the Writings of St Augustine of Hippo* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2001), xi).

[2] This is the specific topic of chapter 3.

[3] Following Nicholas Lash, see chapter 7 below.

[4] The prophetic/embodied aspect of the summary grammar is less of a concern from an Augustinian perspective.

After I have examined Augustine's principal 'political' idea[5] of the two cities, I shall look at other, less theoretical, aspects of his political involvement. This second part will also look at some of Augustine's letters and sermons given in response to events as they happened. I shall also briefly consider what has been, and what now should be, understood by 'political Augustinianism'. I shall then discuss some twentieth century views on Augustine's political thought. In the light of all this, I shall re-examine Augustinian political thought under three topics. These topics are firstly the eschatological question – that is, in the light of the final destination of the two cities, whether the pilgrim members of the city of God should cooperate with members of the earthly city; secondly, the ecclesiological question, how the church should relate to society; and, thirdly, the educational question, how far does Augustine believe that Christians require educating so that they can participate in their society.[6]

2.2 Augustine's Life and Times

Augustine lived in the fourth and fifth centuries, from 354 to 430,[7] just as Catholic Christianity became the only recognised religion in the Roman Empire.[8] In early adulthood, he rejected the Catholic Christianity of his mother, and, for a while, embraced Manichaeanism. Though he remained part of the sect for nine years, he was spiritually unsatisfied and started to look for a more adequate system of belief. It was through the sermons of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, that Augustine returned to the faith of his childhood. He was baptised in 387. His return to Catholic Christianity occasioned a crisis of employment. He felt compelled to give up his job as public rhetor at the

[5] 'Augustine's purposes ... first and last, are religious' (ibid.). Even the two cities are not, therefore, presented as a political idea – however much political use has been made of that idea. Johannes van Oort gives an impressive list of scholars (including Neville Figgis) who correctly regard *De Civitate Dei* as an apologetic work '*contra paganos*'. See van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's* City of God *and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 163-7.

[6] As already noted, this topic will be covered in more depth in chapter 3.

[7] Among the best biographies of Augustine are Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967) and Gerald Bonner, *St Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1986).

[8] Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, which tolerated Christianity, in 313; the general edict against paganism (which therefore made Christianity the only form of religion tolerated in the Empire) was issued in 391 by Emperor Theodosius.

Imperial Court in Milan, and he felt he could no longer teach rhetoric: with his conversion his promising career in Imperial service was over, and he sought a life in retirement.

A year later he returned to Thagaste, in North Africa, the place of his birth, to continue his 'retirement'[9], but made the mistake in 391 of going on a visit to Hippo, not knowing that the bishop there was looking for a priest to assist him. Augustine was recognised, and, in the manner of the time, was seized and forcibly ordained. On Bishop Valerius' death, Augustine became bishop of Hippo in his place, a title and job he was to fulfil until his death thirty-five years later.

Even while he was a priest, Augustine was, against the practice of the time, encouraged to preach, and to play his part in church affairs. The church in North Africa was beset by the Donatist controversy – a split in the church that dated back to the time of the anti-Christian persecutions. Augustine was to spend much of his life debating with, and writing against this sect, as well as the Manichees and, later on, the Pelagians.

Augustine lived in troubled and violent times: he was the target of a Circumcellion assassination attempt.[10] Across the Mediterranean, the Empire was under threat. In 410, Rome itself was sacked. Although the physical damage was comparatively minor, the damage to the Roman psyche was colossal. Augustine felt compelled to write an extended rebuttal to those pagans who derided Christianity on the one hand for taking people away from the old gods who had protected Rome for centuries, and on the other, for having a God who was clearly too weak to protect the centre of the Empire. The barbarian hordes were a constant threat to peace and Augustine himself

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[9] It was a very active 'retirement': Augustine had started on the great output of books and treatises that would continue for the rest of his life. The classical idea of *otium* is better understood as a retreat from the world for study and/or prayer, rather than our idea of retirement.

[10] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 330. The Circumcellions were an extreme, and violent, part of the Donatist church. This incident is also recorded in Possidus's account of Augustine's life, see 'The Life of St. Augustine written by Bishop Possidus' in F.R. Hoare (ed. and trans.), *The Western Fathers* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 206-7.

was to die with the Vandals at the city gates. Augustine knew that the Roman peace was fragile, and that disaster could easily be around the next corner. He therefore sought, and encouraged others to seek, the peace of eternal life, which was better than any peace that the world could give.

2.3 The Two Cities

2.3.1 Introduction

Inevitably, a section with the title 'The Two Cities' will concentrate on Augustine's major work, *De Civitate Dei* [*The City of God*]. This book is not the first or only reference to the two cities, but it is his major work on the theme of the earthly and heavenly cities.[11] These two cities would only be separated at the parousia; until that time members of the two cities would intermingle in the *saeculum*,[12] both seeking (for different reasons) the peace of Babylon.

2.3.2 Pilgrimage and Peace

Augustine regarded the Christian as a pilgrim member of the city of God, a wanderer within the *saeculum*. Only at the end of time, when Christ returns in judgment, would the members of the two cities be separated and receive their reward on the basis of whether they have been guided by love of God or love of self. Both the earthly and the heavenly city, according to Augustine, have existed, and will continue to exist, throughout time. This 'twofold division of the universe into the "City of God" and the "City of Earth" originated in the prideful revolt of the (now fallen) angels in heaven.'[13] In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine makes it clear that he does not regard members of the city of God as being 'at home' in the earthly city.

> Now Cain ... belonged to the City of man; the second son, Abel, belonged to the City of God ... When those two cities began to run

[11] This theme can be seen in Augustine's thought from the 390s onwards. For a discussion of the development of this idea in Augustine, see van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 87: 'The *City of God* is ... a grand vision [in which Augustine] brought together what he had written earlier ...'.

[12] For further discussion on '*saeculum*' see 2.4.3.3 below.

[13] Rex Martin, 'The Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33 (1972), 195.

> through their course of birth and death, the first to be born was a citizen of this world, and the second was a pilgrim in this world, belonging to the City of God. The latter was predestined by grace and chosen by grace; by grace he was a pilgrim below, and by grace he was a citizen above ...[14]

From this, it seems that the earth is the territory of the earthly city, through which the pilgrims are to pass on their way to eternal glory. However, the situation is not as simple or as clear-cut as it might first appear; members of both cities 'make use of good things, or are afflicted with the evils, of this temporal state' and will continue to do so until 'they are separated by the final judgment'.[15] In other words, members of both cities must live side by side in the same world, and make use of the same peace,[16] until that world ends.

For Augustine, humanity is naturally social.[17] However, it does not follow that he believes that humanity is naturally political.[18] So, although the two cities live side by side in this world, and make use of the good (and suffer the evil) it offers, the question arises as to how this cohabitation is to be achieved and carried on.

2.3.3 A Common Good?

One of the major difficulties for the pilgrim members of the city of God is that 'the order of their love' is so radically different from the members of the earthly city (who will always be in the majority).[19] As far as Augustine is concerned, either one's love is orientated towards God, or it is orientated towards self. However, if people are to live peaceably together, there has to be some sort of agreement over what is to be the basis of their society – what is to be 'the common good.' But, in terms of the two cities, the question arises of how is there to be any 'political agreement among men who are theoretically

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[14] R.W. Dyson (ed. and trans.), *The City of God against the Pagans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), XV.1. All quotations from *De Civitate Dei* (hereafter referred to as *DCD*), unless otherwise indicated, will be from this translation.
[15] *DCD*, XVIII. 54.
[16] *DCD*, XIX. 26.
[17] See *DCD*, XII. 22-3, XIX. 12.
[18] For a discussion on this point, see Dyson, *The Pilgrim City*, 48f.
[19] See, for example, *DCD*, XVI.21 and XXI.12.

opposed to one another'?[20] Unless there is some basic agreement amongst people, political cooperation will be 'superficial at best'.[21] Fundamentally, George Lavere contends, Augustine believes that there can be no *common* good between the two cities, just as there is – and never has been – a truly just state which based 'its conception of justice upon a sincere allegiance to God'.[22]

However, in *De Civitate Dei* XIX. 24, Augustine accepts that all societies have cohered somehow. There is, he claims two chapters later, an intermediate concept of peace – one which members of both cities can use – and it is in this intermediate concept of peace, 'the peace of Babylon', that an intermediate common good can be placed. In other words, even though at the deepest level, '[t]he two cities cannot agree on a single purpose',[23] Christians are told by Augustine to make use of the 'peace of Babylon', and they are to pray for 'the temporal peace which is for the time being shared by the good and the wicked alike.'[24] Although there can never be a *societas perfecta* on this earth,[25] there is an intermediate peace which all can strive to maintain. It is at this level of striving that Augustine expects his judge to sit,[26] and the Christian king is expected to rule, even while those judges and kings are all too aware of the lack of true peace and justice in the world they have authority.

Given the above, the question arises whether (following Robert Markus) 'Augustinian theology should at least undermine Christian opposition to an open, pluralist, secular society.'[27] This is, to say the very least, debatable. Augustine asserted that any society that did not submit to God was, in the final

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[20] Jacques Maritain, quoted in George Lavere, 'The Problem of the Common Good in Saint Augustine's *Civitas Terrena*', *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983), 2.
[21] Lavere, ibid.
[22] Ibid., 5. Augustine makes this clear in *DCD*, XIX. 21.
[23] Ibid, 7.
[24] *DCD*, XIX. 26. Interestingly, and against most commentators, Oliver O'Donovan argues that Augustine does not allow for any sort of 'justice of Babylon' to go with its peace (Oliver O'Donovan, 'Augustine's *City of God* XIX and Western Political Thought', in Dorothy F. Donnelly (ed.), *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 1421). If this is so, why should Augustine expect a judge to sit (*DCD*, XIX. 6)?
[25] Against Augustine's medieval interpreters – see below.
[26] *DCD*, XIX. 6.
[27] R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 173.

analysis, unjust and therefore would be damned. Gerald Bonner, in his review of Markus's work, puts it this way:

> Augustine never forgets the warped element in the nature of fallen man which continually threatens to transform the theologically neutral *terrena respublica* into a visible manifestation of the *Civitas terrena*, and his tendency to identify the two while refusing to abide by that identification ... is psychologically justified for, as Markus says: "The sphere of politics belongs irrevocably to the realm infected with sin."[28] Everything in Augustine's career would suggest that he considered a state governed by Christians to be a "better" political entity than a pagan state; and the general tendencies in open, pluralist, secular societies hardly suggest that the abandonment of religious norms has been a particular blessing for human society.[29]

This lack of blessing upon 'the abandonment of religious norms' gives Christians another reason to be involved in civil society on the grounds that if they are not involved, others, with different perspectives will be. For example, in *Epistula* 220 to Boniface, Augustine reminds him that he, Boniface, did not give up public life because of the benefit he was able to give to the churches whilst in his public role.[30] Augustine is quite happy for this involvement to be for the betterment of the churches, as the churches point the way to the City of God, and therefore to humanity's true 'end'. However, as we have seen, even in their cooperation with those who have such a distinct 'end' from them, the pilgrim members of the city of God do not lose their eschatological perspective. Humanity remains divided on the most fundamental issue, and this division will remain until the *civitas terrena* is destroyed at the parousia. This awareness of the final separation[31] does not, in Augustine's eyes, excuse a lack of involvement in the world, for all its problems; as I have noted, Augustine agrees with the philosophers that 'the life of the wise man is a social one'.[32] To sum up, those Christians who have the gifts and the calling,

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Gerald Bonner, '*Quid Imperatori cum Ecclesia*? St. Augustine on History and Society', *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971), 246-7.

[30] *Letter* 220, 3, in E.M. Atkins and R.J. Dodaro (eds. and trans.), *Augustine: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). All references to Augustine's sermons and letters will be from this collection, unless otherwise indicated. Contra Atkins and Dodaro, hereafter I shall follow normal practice by referring to '*Epistula*' and '*Sermo*'.

[31] Which also extends into this life: against Markus, O'Donovan contends that 'true Christians were never true Romans ...'. The temporal peace, 'not an institution, but simply a condition of order', is the only thing 'common to both communities' ('Western Political Thought', 141).

[32] *DCD*, XIX. 5.

must fulfil their role in the *saeculum*, and seek cooperation in and with members of the earthly city for the sake of the peace of Babylon – even if their constant prayer is 'From my necessities deliver Thou me.'[33]

2.3.4 Babylonian Peace, Yes; *Societas Perfecta*, No

As far as Augustine is concerned, the peace of Babylon was all that could be expected from the political authorities, not least because one person cannot see into another's heart.[34] Augustine is also aware that, if a society exists by being 'bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love', then it follows that 'the better the objects of this agreement, the better the people ...'.[35] However, true peace, a peace that did not depend on coercion, was only to be found in the City of God.[36] For this reason Herbert Deane correctly insists that '[i]t is perfectly clear, however, that the conditions *sine qua non* for the existence of such a [Christian, truly just] state can never be realised on this earth.'[37] Therefore those commentators who thought that Augustine regarded a truly just, Christian state as 'feasible or necessary'[38] were wrong. However, this does not mean that Augustine views the beliefs of those in authority with indifference. In *Epistula* 138 (quoted by Deane), we are told that 'an army composed of the sort of soldiers that the teaching of Christ would require' along with others, both in authority and under it 'would contribute greatly to the security of the commonwealth'.[39] This situation may be 'contrary-to-fact' and conditional[40] – in so far as there is no commonwealth so composed – but Augustine is clear that such a society would be better than any other. He makes a similar point in *De Civitate Dei*:

> If kings of the earth and all nations, princes and all the judges of the earth ... people of every age and each sex ... if all these together were to hear and embrace the Christian precepts of justice and moral virtue,

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[33] *DCD*, XIX. 6.
[34] Even with the aid of torture, a judge cannot be certain he has arrived at the truth. See *DCD*, XIX. 6.
[35] *DCD*, XIX. 24.
[36] Even Christians cannot obtain true peace in its entirety in this life. See *DCD*, XIX. 27.
[37] Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 137.
[38] Ibid.
[39] *Ep.* 138. 15. Cf., Deane, *Political and Social Ideas*, 138.
[40] See Deane, 138.

> then would the commonwealth adorn its lands with happiness in this present life and ascend to the summit of life eternal, there to reign in utmost blessedness.[41]

Augustine is clearly aware of the present state of humanity and the commonwealth, but a Christianized society, as an improvement on any other society, 'must at least be left open as a possibility'[42] however remote that possibility might appear to Augustine, or to us.

The obvious Christianized society is, of course, the church. However, as I have noted above, the church in Augustine's time had plenty of members whose attitude and behaviour left much to be desired. Neville Figgis, in his discussion of the church, tells us that:

> By the mere use of the terms *civitas* and *regnum* ... Augustine prepared the way for the later development of the doctrine that the Church is a *societas perfecta*, and must have the powers necessary to any self-sufficient community.[43]

Figgis is careful to state that the *societas perfecta* doctrine is a development from Augustine's thought, and not part of his thought. Although there are points of contact between the City of God and the institutional church,[44] the identity between the two is metaphorical and representational, rather than actual.[45] Augustine's Church was, as he well knew, imperfect. If Augustine is seen as opening the way for a *societas perfecta* doctrine, then Augustine's followers were simply being careless with his language and meaning, and thereby misinterpreting him.[46]

It is, therefore, safe to conclude that Augustine held out no hope for a perfect society in this world. Indeed in his discussion of Augustine's ideas on sacred and secular history, Markus points out that

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[41] *DCD*, II. 19.
[42] Martin, 'The Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy', 201.
[43] J. Neville Figgis, *The Political Aspects of Augustine's City of God*, (London: Longmans/ Green, 1921), 71.
[44] For example, Augustine sees himself as 'defending the City of God – that is His Church' against the calumnies of the philosophers (*DCD*, XIII. 16). See also ibid., XVII. 4, XVIII. 29, where similar identification appears to be made, and cf. Martin, 199. Van Oort (*Jerusalem and Babylon*, 128) makes the excellent comment that 'concerning the *civitas Dei* he [Augustine] hardly ever states that it has reprobate people in its midst; but concerning the *ecclesia*, he does so on several occasions.'
[45] Cf. Martin, 198-202.
[46] For further exploration of this topic, see the discussion on 'political Augustinianism' below.

> Even at a time when Augustine is prepared to envisage a period in which Christ will rule with his saints before the final consummation of history, he repudiates naïve millenaristic speculation ... [A]t the end of the fourth century, Augustine was moving ever further from the conceptions which lay behind them. After *c.*400, even the residual echoes of milleniaristic ideas ... disappear. Some famous chapters of his *De Civitate Dei* contain a frontal attack on chiliasm.[47]

In other words, by the time *De Civitate Dei* came to be written any idea that a form of perfectionism could be found on earth had completely disappeared from Augustine's mind. Deane is equally gloomy: Augustine's words 'give no support to the hope that the world will gradually be brought to belief in Christ and that earthly society can be transformed, step by step, into the kingdom of God.'[48]

Against this pessimism, Jean Bethke Elshtain takes a more balanced approach. For her, Augustine sees that '[s]ocial life on all levels is full of ills and yet to be cherished.'[49] However good Augustine is 'in cataloguing the miseries attendant upon the human life ... [t]here are countervailing influences ...'.[50] Although it is true that, for Augustine, perfection is impossible, for '[e]ven in our good works we are dislocated creatures, torn by discord, but striving to attain some measure of *concordia*', it is also true that 'love abides'[51] for as she notes, Augustine says that 'a man should harm no one, and, second, that he should do good to all, so far as he can.'[52]

Augustine, even while he was aware of how imperfect the world is (and how it will never be perfect), never abandoned the hope that guides us towards the peace and love of God. 'And the more we try to emulate God's love, the stronger will be our hope; the more decent our lives with and among one another.'[53] Society, it seems on this reading, appears open to progress. But *Epistle* 44,[54] which Elshtain quotes to support her assertion, merely points to

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[47] Markus, *Saeculum*, 20.
[48] Deane, *Political and Social Ideas*, 38.
[49] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 27-8.
[50] Ibid., 37-8.
[51] Ibid., 89.
[52] *DCD*, XIX. 14; cf. Elshtain, *The Limits of Politics*, 96.
[53] Elshtain, 89. Also see *Ep.* 138. 15, quoted above.
[54] See Philip Schaff (ed.), *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers:* Volume 1: *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994 (reprint)), 285-90.

Christian behaviour in love (as opposed to relying on money) and has no theory of progression in society as such. Augustine does not regard historical progression or improvement as inevitable. Indeed, he finds historical development 'inherently ambiguous', what may appear to be progress may turn out to be a disaster and vice versa.[55] The best we can say is that society can be 'Christianized' – in that society may be composed of Christian soldiers, judges, kings and so on – and that Augustine saw that this sort of 'Christianized' society would be better than other societies.[56] This does not mean that Augustine saw the (earthly) possibility of a *societas perfecta.* As far as Augustine is concerned, God may be achieving his purposes by 'allowing evil to wax great.'[57] However, whether the times were good or bad, Augustine expects some form of Christian involvement in society.[58] The motivation for such action, and for what end, is what I explore in the next sections.

2.3.5 Direct Action

When any examination is undertaken of Augustine's political involvement, we see that it is Augustine himself,[59] or his fellow bishops,[60] or Christian Imperial officials[61] who are urged to take some form of action in the *saeculum.* This tendency can be seen in both Augustine's more theoretical (even if polemic) writing,[62] as well as when he is dealing with practical, up to the moment, issues in his letters and sermons. This action depended upon the authority which had been given to various bodies by Rome: Augustine himself 'was a much sought-after arbitrator' in his own Episcopal court.[63] Conversely, the ordinary people are encouraged *not* to act – and certainly not to take part in a

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[55] O'Donovan , 'Western Political Thought', 146.
[56] See *Ep.* 138. 15. For further discussion on whether Augustine thought historical development was possible, see 2.3.6 below.
[57] O'Donovan, 'Western Political Thought', 146.
[58] For example, the reluctant judge will take his seat, because 'the claims of society, *which he thinks it wicked to abandon,* constrain him ...' (*DCD,* XIX. 6, emphasis added).
[59] 'But you all know that it's your needs that force me to go there, even though I don't want to. I have to wait my chance ...'. *Sermo* 302. 17.
[60] See for example *Ep.* 10* to Alypius.
[61] See for example *Ep.* 220 to Boniface.
[62] Such as 'The Mirror to Princes' in *DCD,* V. 24.
[63] The court's authority derived from apostolic instruction to believers (1 Cor 6.1-6) and 'the Roman legal device of *recepti arbitri*' (Bonner, *Life and Controversies,* 123).

lynching. In *Sermo* 302, Augustine rages against his congregation for their part in the death of an unpopular Roman official:

> 'But', you might say, 'think of the things that crook did ...'. He has his own judges, his own authorities. There is an established government: *all that there are are established by God* [Rom 13.1]. Why are you so violent? What authority have you been given? But, of course, this isn't public punishment, it's simply terrorism in the open.[64]

In the same sermon, the only people encouraged to act, as they were the ones with the legal authority, are the heads of households who should have prevented their families (and anyone else under their authority) from taking part in the disturbance.[65] It is clear that Augustine does not approve or advocate mob violence of any description. Robert Dodaro puts it this way:

> Augustine makes it clear in this sermon that what he most fears in political dissidence is its capacity to corrupt the desires of Christians to live justly into a form of envy aimed at possessing and exercising the same corrupting power which those in public office possess. If Christians truly wish to create a more just society, they should first renounce the desire to become like their enemies by renouncing the use of violence. Christ and the martyrs testify that the only efficacious way to reform political society is to oppose injustice through nonviolence.[66]

At first, we may wish to question this non-violent approach as it sits strangely with Augustine's advocacy of the just war and coercion. However much he saw war as a necessary evil, he still expected wars to happen, and he expected Christians to take part in such wars, (even when ordered into battle by 'an infidel Emperor').[67] But there is a difference in Augustine's mind between the 'ordinary' Christian, and, for example, a Christian Emperor.[68] Although Augustine did not see these Christian leaders as 'parts of a government machinery', but as 'members of the Church',[69] these leaders were obliged to act in ways that Augustine would clearly object to if he met similar action in

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[64] *Sermo* 302.13. Emphasis original.
[65] *Sermo* 302.11. Heads of households were seen as a mediating authority between household and state (see *DCD*, XIX. 16).
[66] Robert Dodaro, 'Between the Two Cities: Augustine's Political Activism' (unpublished paper delivered to *Conference 2000: the Power and the Glory. The Legacy of Constantine at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, University of Exeter, 7-10 August, 2000), 3-4.
[67] See *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, CXXIV. 7, quoted in Deane, 149.
[68] Even when Augustine had ceased to expect there to be a Christian Empire, he still talked of Christian Emperors. See Markus, *Saeculum*, 146ff.
[69] Ibid, 148.

ordinary members of his congregation.[70] Therefore, to defend Dodaro, it is the *motive* with which a Christian goes to war that exercises Augustine. Even if the action may be similar, the Christian ruler would only engage in just wars.[71] In other words, the *libido dominandi* that motivates so many rulers, should not exist in the heart of the Christian ruler – just as it should not exist in the heart of the ordinary Christian – as it is 'founded upon the direct opposite of neighbourly and Christian motives.'[72]

Augustine is not totally averse to political action by his congregation – when they release slaves from a slave ship docked in port, there is no condemnation similar to *Sermo* 302. In his letter to Alypius, Augustine notes that his congregation, being 'aware of our practice of performing acts of mercy in such cases', released one hundred and twenty people either from the docked ship or 'from the place where they had been hidden before being put on board.'[73] Augustine pleads with Alypius to do what he can so that the illegally enslaved people can and do remain free, and Augustine's congregation is no longer harassed by the slave traders demanding the return of their 'goods'. Augustine's lack of condemnation here shows that quietism in all circumstances is not the end of the story.

So, from this, it must be concluded that for the ordinary Christian, direct political action is not an option unless it is within the realms of legitimate authority,[74] and is done with the correct motive: that is, action is undertaken for others (like those on the slave ship) rather than themselves.

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[70] To look no further than *Sermo* 302, the heads of households are emphatically *not* seen as having authority to call their households out against that 'bad man' – in fact, as discussed above, the reverse is the case.

[71] That is, 'if they resort to punishment only when it is necessary to the government and defence of the commonwealth, and never to gratify their own enmity …'. *DCD*, V. 24.

[72] Figgis, *Political Aspects*, 52.

[73] *Ep.* 10*. 7.

[74] *Ep.* 10* makes clear that Augustine wishes to use the appropriate laws to keep the 'slaves' free. He is not interested in a clandestine 'free the slaves' movement.

2.3.6 The Improvable Earthly City

However, even if mob rule should not be part of the Christian's political armoury, before we accept Herbert Deane's thesis of Augustine as political quietist[75] in its entirety, we need to examine a further argument from Peter Burnell. Burnell presents us with three convictions he has derived from Augustine's writings. The first two are not contentious: we are told 'that injustice is unavoidably part of civil life', and, secondly, that 'human beings ... still have civil duties.'[76] It is his third conviction that we need to examine. This conviction is 'that despite the effects of original sin, civilisation is susceptible of moral improvement.'[77]

Burnell argues that Augustine, in his early writings, 'had, by means of a clear, hypothetical example [in *De Libero Arbitrio*], defended the propriety of using revolution to correct civil injustice.'[78] There is, therefore, a theoretical Augustinian possibility of a legitimate uprising to displace a government that failed to live up to its responsibility to govern according to the common good of its people. I quote the section of *De Libero Arbitrio* to which Burnell refers:

> *Augustine*: But suppose that the same people ... come to prefer private interest to the public good. Votes are bought and sold. Corrupted by those who covet honors, they hand over power to wicked and profligate men. In such a case would it not be right for a good and powerful man (if one could be found) to take from this people the power of conferring honors and to limit it to the discretion of a few good people, or even to one?[79]

Whether or not this passage should be read as an argument against democracy, it certainly does not read as a blueprint for overthrow of a government. Burnell has clearly ignored the genre of this writing: this is part of a debate that investigates many hypotheses. This situation is clearly hypothetical, and it cannot be described as representing Augustine's thought. Also, given Augustine's later strictures on what people were to accept from their leaders

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[75] See 2.4.3.2 below.
[76] Peter Burnell, 'The Problem of Service to Unjust Regimes in Augustine's *City of God*', in Dorothy F. Donnelly, *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 39.
[77] Ibid, 40.
[78] Ibid, 41 (with a reference to *De Libero Arbitrio* [On the Free Choice of the Will]).
[79] Thomas Williams (trans.), *Augustine: On Free Choice of the Will*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 1. 6.

(even if they were tyrants), it is difficult to imagine at what point this 'good man' should act.

Augustine does not, however, advocate obedience to the civil authority in all circumstances. The one over-riding exception is when God commands something that conflicts with the law of the land: 'But when God commands something contrary to the customs or laws of a people ... it has to be done.'[80] God, as the supreme authority, is to be obeyed over any king. Herbert Deane, who makes much of political obedience, accepts this.[81] The question is over how far 'religious' obedience to God entered the 'political' realm, and how far any resistance (if any resistance is allowable) should go. Deane says that:

> we have no right to *resist* the state's commands or to *rebel* against the constituted authority. Our only recourse is to follow the example of the holy martyrs, that is, to refuse to obey the ruler's sacrilegious commands and to accept quietly, without resistance, even joyously, whatever punishment he may impose upon us for our failure to obey.[82]

Nor, as Augustine pointed out in *Sermo* 302 (quoted above) are we to resist and rebel when authority imposes unjust penalties on us,[83] but as Peter Burnell correctly points out:

> Intended audience is the important factor here. When haranguing his flock Augustine is prepared to assume the existence of settled and constant government. Hence he talks in extremes: official executions (*publica supplicia*), as opposed to open banditry (*aperta latroncinia* [*sic*]).[84]

In his more considered writings, such as *De Civitate Dei*, Burnell contends, Augustine cannot make such assumptions.[85] Against Deane – who tells us, for example, that, according to Augustine, a usurper must be opposed 'even if he

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[80] *Confessiones*, III. viii (15). Text from *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). All quotations from *Confessiones* (hereafter referred to as *Conf.*), unless otherwise indicated, will be from this translation.

[81] 'Since obedience to rulers is clearly in the public interest, all the laws promulgated by the ruler must be obeyed by all citizens, with the sole exception of laws or commands that run contrary to God's ordinances' (Deane, 147).

[82] Ibid, 149 (emphasis original). And see *Sermo* 326. 2: the martyrs know that the Emperor can threaten death, but God threatens hell. Punishment is not resisted, but the idolatrous command is equally not obeyed. (Quoted in Dyson, *The Pilgrim City*, 102-3).

[83] Though interestingly, Augustine leaves open the recourse to law against the unjust official. Active rebellion is the problem, especially while there is means of redress.

[84] Burnell, 'Unjust Regimes', in Donnelly, 42.

[85] Augustine's thoughts in *DCD*, V. 17, where he claims that it makes no difference 'under what rule a man lives ...' will be discussed below.

seems to be a better and wiser man than the present king'[86] – Burnell contends that Augustine still sees (in about 415) civil revolution as 'a permissible kind of action in itself.'[87] What Augustine was attacking, in *De Civitate Dei* III.15, according to this argument, is the Roman expulsion of Tarquinius 'without seeking or ascertaining his judgment in the matter'.[88] He does not say that the Romans should have merely remained obedient to their king. For Burnell, this means that Augustine tacitly supports insurrection – in spite of Augustine's faithful record in the following chapter of *De Civitate Dei* of the disasters that followed Tarquinius's expulsion.

That Augustine was recording history in these chapters seems to have bypassed Burnell. Even if it is conceded that Augustine's history is both polemical and selective, if he was in favour of this particular insurrection, it was surely in his power to make his approval clear in his text. Admittedly, Augustine does not specifically say that the Romans were wrong in their action, but I cannot accept that this passage in *De Civitate Dei* – as 'a matter of practical congruency'[89] – points to a *strong* argument that Augustine was in favour of insurrection. He may not necessarily be as quietist as Deane paints him, but, as we shall see, finding circumstances in which Augustine favours rebellion is a very difficult exercise.

In his discussion of Spartacus (in *De Civitate Dei* IV, 5), Burnell views Augustine as saying that 'merely having got hold of some imperial power ... is not a sign of virtue.'[90] This is true enough. However, after telling us that, although Augustine clearly takes St. Paul seriously in his injunction to obedience to those in authority, and (while they lasted) 'Spartacus and his gladiators were ... the powers that be',[91] Burnell continues:

> Augustine still thought it perfectly proper to do what one could to oppose ... Spartacus's gladiators ... That this is so and the principle that makes it so are clear from Augustine's assertion a few chapters

[86] Deane, 145. Of course, if the usurper is successful, he must be obeyed, but this does not make his rebellion 'right or meritorious' (ibid.).
[87] Burnell, 'Unjust Regimes', 43.
[88] *DCD*, III.15.
[89] Burnell, 'Unjust Regimes', 43.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 44.

> later [*De Civitate Dei*, IV. 15] that imperial interference by Rome ... are justified as occasional moral necessities. One should not desire such things for themselves, but they are justified when they prevent a greater evil, the unjust, lording it over the just.[92]

Taken as a whole, this later chapter of *De Civitate Dei* reads ironically. The Romans, it seems, should have worshipped 'Foreign Iniquity' as a goddess, as she clearly did so much to help the Romans justify the increase of their Empire. (And of course, as other parts of *De Civitate Dei* make clear, Augustine is not convinced of the final justice of the Roman cause, and questions whether the results of Roman peace are worth the cost.)[93] Augustine does contend that 'the wise man, they say, will wage just wars',[94] so there are judgments to be made by leaders and a just war can be waged as a 'necessary evil', but Augustine does not say here (or elsewhere) that ordinary people should determine whom they should obey, and against whom they should rebel.

There is the further point to consider. Namely whether Augustine really thought that Spartacus and his gladiators ever constituted more than a rebellion, albeit a successful one for a time. This, I suggest, is open to doubt. After all, Augustine says '[*j*]*ustice removed*, then, what are kingdoms but great bands of robbers?'[95] – and the gladiators are hardly described as just when they 'enjoyed whatever pleasures they wished, and did what their lust suggested.'[96] Augustine grants the Roman Empire some sort of justice (even if it comes nowhere near the justice of the Heavenly City), but the gladiators are not even granted that: it seems they must remain a 'great band of robbers' to be treated, justifiably, as such.

In book XIX of *De Civitate Dei* (written ten years after the chapters discussed above), Augustine reconsiders the ideas of just war and civil unrest. A just war (as noted in XIX, 7) is primarily justified by the enemy's injustice. We are simply left with the contention that a just war therefore 'changes a society in

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[92] Ibid.
[93] See, for example, *DCD*, XIX. 21, XIX. 7.
[94] *DCD*, XIX. 7.
[95] Ibid, IV. 4 (emphasis added).
[96] Ibid, IV. 5.

the direction of justice [and] has an obvious revolutionary dimension.'[97] Even when Augustine does accept that Rome's Empire was acquired justly, he is all too aware of the cost:

> It is true that the Imperial City has imposed on subject nations not only her yoke but also her language, as a bond of peace and society ... But how many great wars, what slaughter of men, what outpourings of human blood have been necessary to bring this about![98]

Augustine, it seems, is more equivocal than Burnell. Even when society has paid the price of a just war, there is no guarantee that people will be moved very far (if at all) towards justice.

Civil unrest in book XIX is apparently covered by the story (in chapter 12) of Cacus. The comparison made is the one between the monster's savage acts, and 'legitimate revolution'. The latter, according to Burnell, 'makes no sense unless there can be a necessity that leads a downtrodden and desperate citizenry into sedition and legitimately causes a revolution.'[99] However, Burnell forgets that, in the context of the chapter, there is nothing to suggest that Cacus's actions are legitimate; only that they demonstrate the universal and instinctive desire for peace which all societies share. If we extend Burnell's analogy we can see that praise is only due to the Herculean figure who totally destroys the seditious society – so both rebels and the rebelled against are no more! Thus we see that Burnell's analogy does not stand up to scrutiny for all that Augustine says that:

> He who has learnt to prefer right from wrong and the rightly ordered from the perverse, sees that, in comparison with the peace of the just, the peace of the unjust is not worthy to be called peace at all. Even that which is perverse, however, must of necessity be in, or derived from, or associated with, and to that extent at peace with, some part of the order of things amongst which it has its being or of which it consists.[100]

From this we can see that Augustine recognises different types and orders of justice, but we cannot say that Augustine is interested in encouraging 'legitimate revolution'.

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[97] Burnell, 'Unjust Regimes', 45.
[98] *DCD*, XIX. 7.
[99] Burnell, 'Unjust Regimes', 46.
[100] *DCD*, XIX. 12.

Burnell has, however, ignored one aspect of Augustine's view of obedience to the civil authorities. In *De Civitate Dei*, V.17, Augustine refers to the fact that it makes no difference under whose authority a man lives, as he will soon die, 'provided only that those who rule him do not compel him to do what is impious *and wicked*'.[101] In XIX, 17, Augustine makes a similar point, though with one vital omission. In this chapter, we see the Heavenly City preserving and following 'the customs, laws, and institutions by which earthly peace is achieved or maintained', 'provided only that *they do not impede the religion* by which we are taught that the one supreme and true God is to be worshipped.'[102] There is no mention here of the wickedness or injustice that was also prohibited earlier in the book. As Augustine did not have the mindset characteristic of modernity that makes a distinction between 'religion' and 'politics', or between 'worship' and 'doing justice', I do not believe this is significant. God has, to put it broadly, forbidden injustice among his people.[103] Therefore his people cannot (or should not) be commanded to commit injustice as obeying such a command would surely 'impede the religion by which ... the one supreme and true God is to be worshipped.'

The above can be viewed as reopening the door to civil disobedience that might have been firmly shut on dismissal of Burnell's unfortunate account of Cacus. However, the door can only be considered to be open a crack as there is still no practical point at which Augustine allows his congregation to engage in any actual civil disobedience. In this light, and to the extent that there is a difference between the peace of the just and that of the unjust, I can only agree with Robert Dodaro's conclusion that:

> legitimately-established civil officials ought to be obeyed unless they command one to violate God's law. Augustine has the Christian martyrs in mind when he formulates this principle, and while it allows *in theory* for the possibility of a non-violent, conscientious civil disobedience outside of martyrdom, *it is not easy to imagine cases in which he would have thought its application justifiable*. In no case

[101] *DCD*, V.17, emphasis added.
[102] *DCD*, XIX. 17, emphasis added.
[103] See, for example, Micah 6.8. However, we should note that Augustine would, and did, point to Romans 13 where obedience to the political authorities is advocated.

> could it be extended as a principle to justify armed insurrection or violence against persons, property or public institutions.[104]

Augustine does recognise that some civil societies are better than others. We may therefore surmise that it is possible to judge between societies. However, given Augustine's elitist thought, it must be up to leaders to make the choices. It is to the role of leadership that I now turn.

2.3.7 To Obey or Not To Obey?

Given the very limited idea that Augustine has of the freedom to disobey civil authority, it may be surprising to read that Augustine does not obey all that Imperial authority throws at him. He is prepared to assert his point of view (whether individually, or as a member of a Church council). To quote Dodaro again:

> Reading Augustine's correspondence leaves one with the clear impression of an African church capable, *against almost all the odds*, of undertaking an extremely limited level of coordinated political activity.[105]

In forwarding this 'extremely limited level of coordinated political activity', it helped that the Catholic Church was the established religion, and that the (African) church in council was therefore able 'to apply delicate, diplomatic pressure to the imperial court in order to redress social and political injustices occurring within Roman Africa.'[106] This is not to say that the Imperial court immediately acceded to the requests emanating from the African bishops, but that the bishops were able, over the years:

> to use the council as a format for addressing the imperial administration with a united voice, one which was respectful without being timid, and for seeking reforms which would contribute to the formation of a more just society while asserting at the same time the legitimate role of the Church in fostering justice.[107]

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[104] Dodaro, 'Between the Two Cities', 3, emphasis added.
[105] Dodaro, 'Augustine's Political Activism', 11, emphasis added.
[106] Ibid., 12.
[107] Ibid. This suggests that church leaders were involved in political life not just to maintain such order that existed in civil society, but also to promote greater justice in society. For further discussion on this point see 2.4.3.3 below.

Society was, as Burnell has argued, 'susceptible of moral improvement' (though not as easily as Burnell implies), and there was a role for Christians to play in that improvement. That role would depend on a person's place in society. Ordinary people were not, as seen in *Sermo* 302, to partake in rough justice, but apply for the legal redress that was available. Bishops had a more active role as supplicants. As people with authority they were able to suggest what could be done to those with power.[108] And Christians with imperial power are to use that power to further the aims of the church.[109] They must 'serve God as kings':

> for no man as a private individual could command that idols should be taken from the earth. But that when we take into consideration the social condition of the human race, we find that kings, in the very fact that they are kings, have a service which they can render to our Lord in a manner which is impossible for any who have not the power of kings.[110]

Thus it was the leaders – whether of Church or civil society – who had the authority and the power to affect any (small) improvement in the justice of society.

2.3.8 Conclusion

From the above we can see that Augustine was a child of his time. Barbarian hordes threatened the Empire, and the struggle was to maintain such peace and security that existed. Essentially, and as far as ordinary people were concerned, their role was to obey the commands that authority laid down. Those who had authority in civil society were to use that authority to further to work of the church. Church leaders had the right of supplication,[111] but could not order civil authority to act according to the church's wishes. This is a far cry from what came to be called 'political Augustinianism'.

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[108] See below for the difference between 'authority' and 'power'.
[109] See *Ep.* 220 to Boniface: what prevented him from abandoning his career (and what Augustine and Alypius, a fellow bishop, pointed out) was 'the degree to which your activities were benefiting the churches of Christ'.
[110] Figgis, *Political Aspects*, 57.
[111] See the correspondence between Augustine and Macedonius: *Epp.* 152-5.

2.4 Augustine from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century

2.4.1 Introduction

This section will look at how Augustine has been interpreted in the Middle Ages and how four twentieth century interpreters have seen him. I will contend that Augustine was unjustly served by his medieval interpreters, and that, in the twentieth century, although his interpreters have been kinder to him in the sense of being truer to his own thought, Augustine has been seen in the light of the contemporary history of the interpreter. I will finish the section with an overview based on my reading of Augustine and the authors under consideration.

2.4.2 The Medieval Background to Augustinian Interpretation

This sub-section will be a brief overview of a large and contentious subject. After an examination of the conflict between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, I shall examine Arquillière's thesis on political Augustinianism, which, however political, is clearly not Augustinian.

How far Walter Ullmann was correct to regard the early Middle Ages as a battle-ground between a Germanic ascending theory of government and a Latin, descending theory of government, is debatable,[112] but what is certain is that the Middle Ages was a theocratic society with a theocratic style of government.[113] The Investiture Controversy[114] was not – as might be assumed from a modern perspective – a battle between 'Church' and 'State' or between 'sacred' and 'secular', but was about how God devolved his powers, to whom, and how these powers were split between the Pope and Holy Roman Emperor.

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[112] See Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought*, (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Peregrine Books, 1975), 12-13. For objections to Ullmann, see J.H. Burns, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350-c.1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 127: 'There is no trace of a popular assembly, of any other constitutional curb on the exercise of the [Vandal] king's will ...'.

[113] By 'theocratic', I mean a society that accepts the sovereignty, and therefore the ultimate authority, of God.

[114] Between Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) and the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV (1056-1105).

And we find that 'Augustine is used as an authority on both sides.'[115] I shall examine the Papal side of the case first, and then look at the Imperialist position.

On the Papal side, the argument followed from the Augustinian thought that civil government only existed because of the Fall.[116]

> Coercive authority was necessary, he [Augustine] conceded, but on his theory the prince who wielded it was little more than a highly respected hangman, a divinely appointed executioner of criminals. According to Augustine true justice was to be found only in the church [*sic*] – and it seemed but a small step to many medieval propagandists to argue that the ministers of the church were accordingly qualified to direct all the activities of secular rulers.[117]

Given the medieval identification of the City of God and the Church – an identification that Augustine himself did not make – the medieval papalists argued that Papal authority should be predominant in all spheres of life. However, we must note that this argument was not expressed as taking over 'secular' society: but as a concept by which any authority that existed in the political or civil sphere was deemed to have derived from, or was secondary to, authority in the spiritual sphere. Pope Gregory the Great, for example, applies the words of Pope Gelasius' doctrine of two powers – or two swords – to his own situation, and with the spiritual power being weightier than the temporal; it is the Popes who will have to answer for kings at the Day of Judgement. Therefore:

> Il est clair que, sans sortir de son rôle spirituel, Grégoire-le-Grand inclut dans l'institution royale, une fonction religieuse ... On peut dire qu'en introduisant la morale chrétienne dans la politique, en inculquant aux rois le devoir de protéger la discipline de l'Église, il ouvrait un champ illimité aux interventions du Saint-Siège.[118]

The Holy See, in defence of what it perceived as its own interests, became more and more willing to 'interfere' in temporal affairs. This culminated in the Investiture Controversy – Gregory VII's attempts to excommunicate and depose Henry IV. The interference by the Church in what we would now call

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[115] Figgis, 87.
[116] Robert Markus also persuasively argues this. See *Saeculum*, 197-210.
[117] Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050-1300* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1980), 165. Tierney also appears, erroneously, to conflate 'church' and 'City of God'.
[118] H.-X. Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme Politique* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1934), 40-1.

'affairs of state' would not have been perceived like that at the time. Figgis points out that, several centuries before Henry IV, Charlemagne would have seen himself as the head of a *Civitas Dei*, not of a *Civitas terrena*: 'the realm of 'imperial Charlemagne' was a Christian Empire, the City of God on earth.'[119] John Milbank goes so far to say that 'a ruler like Charlemagne comes to see himself, without incongruity, as a kind of bishop with a sword ...'.[120] Van Oort accurately states the problem:

> Stripped of its eschatological content, the *City of God* became a theological and political programme. Whereas Augustine saw Church and State as transitional phases in the divine plan of salvation ...[121]

Therefore, with the eschatological emphasis forgotten, the belief that the Holy Roman Empire was a Christian commonwealth was one that was universally shared in the later Middle Ages. The question was whether the Emperor held his sceptre by the grace of God immediately or via the authority of the Pope as Vicar of Christ.

Figgis tells us that, on the Imperialist side of the dispute,

> [Otto of Freisingen] uses the 'render to Caesar' to support the rights of the crown, and quotes the pertinent passage of S. Augustine addressed to the Donatists in which he laid down that property can be rightly possessed only by human law at the bidding of kings, who are of divine appointment ...[122]

However, once the identification of the City of God with the Church had been made, and the doctrine of the 'two swords' had been accepted,[123] then the weight of the argument would have been on the papalist side. Whatever the truth of the argument, Augustine's works were clearly used both to support and to reject the idea that the Pope held both the spiritual and the temporal swords, and merely loaned the temporal sword to the Holy Roman Emperor.

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[119] Figgis, *Political Aspects*, 84.
[120] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 419. This does not mean Charlemagne welcomed papal interference in his Empire – even if the Pope had crowned him Holy Roman Emperor.
[121] Van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 92.
[122] Figgis, 92.
[123] For an excellent summary of this doctrine, see Deane, 172.

H.-X. Arquillière, writing in 1934, regarded the medieval political thinkers who turned to Augustine's works for their inspiration as not making the careful distinction he, Arquillière, thought necessary between the natural and the supernatural, between faith and reason. However, in spite of its reliance on Augustine's writings, whether medieval society can be described as one that owed much to 'political Augustinianism' – and whether 'political Augustinianism' owes much to Augustine – is open to debate. Certainly Arquillière's assertion that the natural order of the State is older than that of the Church[124] is open to contention on two grounds. Firstly, given the very modern way that Arquillière uses 'Church' and 'State', it must be pointed out that modern ideas of 'State' (and particularly a nation state) are very much younger than the Church – the nation states of Western Europe grew up under the tutelage of the Church. However, if we are to translate Arquillière's 'l'État' by 'political authority', then we can say that 'States' did exist before the institutional Church,[125] but these 'States' were only granted existence (as far as Augustine was concerned) as a post-Fall dispensation; there was no *right* for them to exist.[126]

My second objection to Arquillière's contention is that, by natural order of the state, Arquillière appears to mean a secular – as in a non-theocratic – organisation. For Augustine, and any king (pagan or otherwise), power came from God, or the gods. A 'state' separated from the religious basis of society would have been unthinkable before the modern era. The right of a state to exist 'antérieurement à l'Église et indépendamment de l'Église',[127] which Arquillière happily asserts, is not one which pre-modern society would recognise: it would have been more a case of *which* God the 'state' should follow, not *whether* the State should look to (a) God or not as it so chose.[128]

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[124] See Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme Politique*, 23.

[125] We must note, however, that the City of God has always existed according to Augustine, including before the Fall. This eternal existence can be ascribed to the church when (and only when) the church is seen as the metaphorical representation of the City of God.

[126] On Augustine and the 'right' of states, even a 'just' state, to exist, see *DCD*, XXII. 6 (cf. ibid., III. 20). Also see the discussion in Rowan Williams, 'Politics and the Soul: A Reading of the *City of God*', *Milltown Studies* 19/20 (1987), especially 65-6.

[127] Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme Politique*, 37.

[128] Tierney tells us that 'a theocratic ordering of society is a very common pattern of human government' (*Crisis of Church and State*, 1).

Anyone who tried to follow a different religion would be looked on with suspicion at best, or face more active persecution – as the Christians of the first to third centuries found to their cost.

For Arquillière, the essence of political Augustinianism is the tendency '*à absorber l'ordre naturel dans l'ordre surnaturel.*'[129] If this meant the absorption of the temporal into the remit of the spiritual (as represented by the Holy See), then this would be a good account of medieval Papal policy (political Gregorianism perhaps?). However, as we have just seen, Arquillière's ideas of what the natural order is do not correspond with what pre-modern society would have understood; and nor is this a fair representation (as Arquillière admits) of Augustine. As Milbank points out, Augustine does call on the secular powers to assist in the suppression of Donatism, but this is against the more general flow of his 'ontology'.[130] 'Augustine certainly understands that salvation *means* the recession of *dominium* ...'[131] Augustine, it seems, is not entirely consistent: but the Augustine of the Middle Ages – for whom the Church *is* the City of God, and for whom the Church could and should direct all aspects of temporal life – is not the Augustine we, or his twentieth century interpreters, recognise.

All this suggests that Augustine's writings had a profound influence on the Middle Ages, but that Augustine was misunderstood by his interpreters; in particular Arquillière's "political Augustinianism" is not worthy of the name.

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[129] Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme Politique*, 38, emphasis original.
[130] See 3.7.4 below.
[131] Milbank, *Social Theory*, 421, emphasis original. That is, the increase of peace to the exclusion of all violence. This comes from Augustine's idea that everything aims at peace (even Cacus – see discussion above).

2.4.3 Augustine's Twentieth Century Interpreters[132]

In this sub-section, I shall give a brief overview of four books offering an interpretation of Augustine's political thought. These books have been chosen because their authors are widely recognised to be prominent figures in the study of Augustine's political thought.

2.4.3.1 J. Neville Figgis: Augustine as a Soul Divided.

J. Neville Figgis, whose work was published in 1921, wrote in a world convulsed by the First World War, just as Augustine's had been by the sack of Rome in A.D. 410. Augustine's position after 410 was 'one somewhat resembling that of a modern Christian faced with the charge that Christianity is bankrupt because it did not prevent the [First World] war'.[133] Augustine's answer, written over several years, is *The City of God.* This book makes it clear that, for Augustine 'the whole course of created existence is seen ... as a conflict between two societies' (31). This 'conflict' would only be resolved eschatologically.

Figgis shows us an Augustine who grew up in a Roman Empire which had, it seemed, lasted forever – a child of late antiquity who has to integrate his Christianity into his Classical learning without denying that Christianity (7). Although '[t]he goal of the *Civitas Dei* is the *pax æterna*, and the *visio dei*' (41), Augustine 'does not promise a new earthly security under the ægis of the Church' (42). Augustine, it seems, 'did not set out to compose a philosophy of history' (36), but he was certainly 'historically minded' (34) and, for him, the Church was 'an important part of the world historical process' (35).

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[132] John von Heyking's book *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001) is the first major work to appear in the twenty-first century, but as it follows Markus' line of *saeculum* as *tertium quid*, it will not be given any major treatment here. Von Heyking also argues for an Augustinian view of politics as 'right-by-nature'. This is flawed: while love of God is reflected through love of neighbour, it is not necessarily reflected through love of city – indeed Augustine constantly relativises 'love of city', the heavenly city's pilgrims are to use what the city provides, and not enjoy it for its own sake (see ibid, 176 for von Heyking's position). Von Heyking also tries to make love of glory a political virtue, when it was the Romans chief vice (see *DCD*, V. 13; cf. review by Oliver O'Donovan in *Studies in Christian Ethics* 15 (2002), 134). His book therefore should be treated with caution if one is looking for Augustine's political thoughts.

[133] Figgis, *Political Aspects*, 6. Page numbers in brackets in the text of this sub-section refer to this work.

Just as the Church cannot be identified with the City of God, the State and the earthly city are not identical (although there would be considerable overlap between the earthly city and 'all actual States' (65)). Figgis tells us that Augustine regarded '[a]ll governments as the will of God" (65). This does not mean that Augustine thought any civil state could be truly just, but that 'some form of State is needful to the worst tyrant and that the State is a natural and therefore a Divine necessity' (58) – as such, it must be obeyed.[134] 'Augustine did not deny the goods of human life, but sought to raise them to a higher power' (67).

Figgis devotes two chapters to tracing Augustine's influence through the Middle Ages and on through the Renaissance and Reformation. Given the Church's place in 'the world historical process' (35), Figgis argues that Augustine 'did much to strengthen the Church as an imperial force' and if the 'actual expression *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is not his ... the principle he definitely states' (72).

It seems that Augustine's (neo-)Platonism gave him the 'nostalgia for the infinite' (7) which governed the division between the world affirming and world denying sides to his character and leaves us with the dichotomy that world adoration is not enough and world flight is impossible. He concludes that:

> just as the individual is driven to the larger life of the community ... so human society and all human culture is possible only by the ultimate recognition of the eternal goal. Otherwise there will come the decadence, such as overcame Greece and Rome and the Renaissance. That is the lesson of the "De Civitate Dei" (117).

2.4.3.2 Herbert A. Deane: Augustine as Political Quietist.

Herbert Deane, reflecting the Cold War era in which he was writing, presents us with an Augustine whose 'theological beliefs and his experience and observations of men's actions in an age of disorder enforced upon him an

[134] Hobbes develops this thought in *Leviathan.*

attitude of pessimistic realism ...'.[135] This attitude applies both to the State – Augustine's words 'give no support to the hope that the world will gradually be brought to belief in Christ and that earthly society can be transformed, step by step, into the kingdom of God' (38) – and to the Church: it is 'absolutely impossible to identify the City of God ... with the visible Christian Church in this world' (24).

Deane's presentation of Augustine as promoting both a 'political and social quietism' (151) has been noted above. For Deane, the state exists solely 'to maintain earthly peace' and does so 'through the use of coercion and the fear of punishment' (221). So the 'State' would not appear to have any role to play in church life. But Augustine gives it one when he appeals for 'secular' power to coerce and punish reluctant Donatists, as well as other heretics and schismatics (174). Deane therefore argues that Augustine's appeal to secular authorities, given his more general quietist attitude, is 'a contradiction of the most fundamental kind' (220). For a man who saw 'the inherent limitations and inadequacies of the political process ...' (219) as clearly as Augustine did, his appeal to that process in an attempt to coerce belief merely shows Deane 'the grim conclusions to which even a very wise man can be led by zeal for the promotion of orthodoxy' (220). This is in spite of Augustine's own explanation of his change of mind (that this coercion brought people into the city of God),[136] and Deane's own note (189) that punishment can be an inducement a change of mind.

In conclusion, Deane regards Augustine as a philosopher who exhibited 'both the power and limitations of the great vision' (238). That vision saw mankind 'completely vitiated by sin' (239) and had 'no room for the idea that every man is a particular, complex mixture of good and evil impulses, of love and hate, or of egotism and altruism' (240). Deane does not seek to apply Augustine's words to his day, but only tells us that, given 'our era of war,

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[135] Deane, *Political and Social Ideas*, 241. Page numbers in brackets in the text of this sub-section refer to this work.

[136] See *Epp.* 185. 7, 100. 1-2, 88. 6-8. Also see *DCD*, XVIII. 50: the kings who persecuted the church 'might begin to persecute the false gods, for whose sake the worshippers of the true God had hitherto been persecuted.'

terror, and sharp anxiety about men's future ... we cannot afford to ignore Augustine's sharply etched, dark portrait of the human condition' (243).

2.4.3.3 R.A. Markus: Augustine in Favour of (Limited and Secular) Involvement

Writing in the ever more 'secular' (i.e. non-theocratic) era of the 1960s, R.A. Markus is concerned to show how Augustine thought Christians should live in the *saeculum*, 'the world of men and of time',[137] a world that would never be perfect, but one in which they should participate. Just as Markus's world is liberal and pluralist, so he seeks to show that Augustine would be at home in such a society.

In Markus's opinion '[t]he most significant aspects of Augustine's reflection often turn out to be his changes of mind ...' (viii). One change of mind is the move away from any Eusebian apologetic. It is later in his life that Augustine develops his thought from the idea of the Christian having to 'stick it out' in the *saeculum*. He is:

> much too sensitive to the claims of the earthly state on the members of the heavenly city to let it go at that. Concern for the temporal order, in its very temporality, had become part of a Christian's duty to God' (100).

Therefore the 'societies, groups and institutions' which make up the *saeculum* are legitimate areas for Christian concern as part of their 'intermediate principles' in which they can agree with their fellows, even if their ultimate destiny is radically different (101). This is certainly no argument for political revolution, but appears to be pointing in a less quietist direction than Deane. It also opens the question of whether Christians can be involved in civil society just for the maintenance of 'the peace of Babylon' in that society, or whether they are to be involved to promote greater justice and order. For Markus, 'concern for the *saeculum* is the temporal dimension of his [the Christian's] concern for the eternal city' (102), but '[i]n the last resort man's destiny is not within his control' (103). From this eschatological perspective, therefore, it

[137] Markus, *Saeculum*, viii. Page numbers in brackets in the text of this sub-section refer to this work.

cannot be said that the promotion of greater justice is indicative of human salvation – Augustine is no advocate of a 'politics of perfection' – but involvement, including involvement to promote greater justice, is part of what love of neighbour is about.

As I have noted above, Augustine only expects such involvement from church and civil leaders. Markus' implication that any Christian could or should be so involved is clearly a development from Augustine. He is also wrong to assume that Augustine would recognise a *saeculum* as a temporal indistinct reality where 'both poles of the dichotomy' of the stark division of the two cities was somehow, if temporarily resolved – even if it was only resolved long enough for members of both cities to promote its welfare. Oliver O'Donovan is surely correct when he points out that there 'never emerges a *tertium quid* between the two cities, a neutral space on which they meet as equal partners.'[138] Members of the two cities make use of the peace of Babylon for their own distinct ends.[139]

However, Markus still feels there is a difficulty with Augustine's continuing 'implicit but effective rhetorical identification of the existing with an ideal order' (146), which is due to Augustine's continuing 'to speak of Christian rulers and officials owing specific service to God in their public, official capacity' (147). There can be no Christian Empire, but there can be a Christian Emperor, who is a servant of the church.[140] This line of thought, as Markus points out, easily leads to the 'political Augustinianism' defined by Arquillière even though 'it was scarcely in line with the grain of Augustine's own thought ...' (152).

In spite of his reservations, Markus talks of a 'politically radical' Augustinianism (168) at the same time warning that it is all too easy to slip 'from eschatological hope ... into revolutionary strategy ...' (170). However, because 'the man whose hope is eschatological has no programme, no

[138] O'Donovan, 'Western Political Thought', 141.
[139] See *DCD*, XIX, 26.
[140] Though both Augustine and Markus are clear that they refer to the Emperor as an individual Christian; there is nothing specifically Christian about the office of Emperor.

ideology, and no strategy' (171), the only possible action by a Christian is piecemeal opposition to policies without being tied to 'any final political vision'. The 'eschatological objective' cannot 'be anticipated in the present world of politics' (171). If this is so, then why should anyone be involved in promoting justice and peace, given that these ideals cannot be anticipated this side of the eschaton?

Markus thinks that Augustine's '"secularisation" of the realm of politics' implies 'a pluralistic, religiously neutral civil community' (173). This is not to be seen as Christian detachment – even if '[i]n the *saeculum* we must be content with the provisional ...' (173) – as the believer is drawn into 'participation in political life and into full membership of his society without [it] tethering him to any ideology ...' (173). However, as I have noted, there is no *tertium quid* in Augustine's thought, nor is there any reason to assume that Augustine would accept a 'secular' society as better than a Christian one. Markus is right to point to a less politically quietist Augustine than Deane, but he goes beyond Augustine in assuming that any Christian, rather than just leaders, could be involved in political life.

2.4.3.4 John Milbank: Augustine as Advocate for 'Ontological Peace'

As befitting his post-modern (or, as he would prefer, 'post-secular') times, John Milbank's densely written work[141] has one very simple purpose – to undermine the whole modern culture of 'secular reason'.[142] He seeks in many ways to go forward by returning to old nostrums. Before reaching the chapter under consideration, he writes eleven previous chapters that are 'but preludes to an assertion' that theology is a social science and, indeed, 'the queen of sciences' for Christians in 'this temporary world' (380). He uses Augustine – especially *The City of God* – to put forward his case that a Christian counter-

[141] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*. Page numbers in brackets in the text of this sub-section refer to this work.

[142] For all the 'onslaught ... against secular reason' (432), a kind of 'Hegelian' metanarrative is allowed – however, it has to be 'based on faith, not reason.' (387). This is the nub of his disagreement with Markus – for a discussion of this disagreement, see Michael J. Hollerich, 'John Milbank, Augustine, and the "Secular"', *Augustinian Studies* 30 (1999), 311-26, especially 318.

history, counter-ethic, counter-ontology and a final return to counter-history as 'ecclesial self-critique' (381) provides 'the only alternative to a nihilistic outlook' to which all other forms of history must succumb, due to their inability to assume anything other than 'a necessary dialectical passage through conflict' (389).

Milbank's case is 'that one needs to emphasize more strongly the irruptive character of Christianity, and therefore its difference from *both* modernity *and* antiquity' (399). This difference can be seen in the locus of the *paideia.* Because the 'Christian ethical identity' came in the context of 'a new kind of community, the *ecclesia*' (399), the basis of *paideia* was not therefore the city, but the Christian household – a place where all could 'receive an education in true virtue' (403). We thus have a *paideia* based on the *ecclesia* and the Christian household that leads to greater involvement with the *polis*, while recognising that the *polis* is never going to be translated into the city of God.

On re-reading *The City of God*, Milbank informs us that we will 'realize that political theology can take its critique, both of secular society and of the Church, directly out of the developing Biblical tradition, without recourse to any external supplementation' (389). Certainly as far as Augustine goes, this critique shows that the

> contrast between ontological antagonism and ontological peace is grounded in the contrasting historical narratives of the two cities. The *Civitas terrena* is marked by sin, which [includes]... an enjoyment of arbitrary, and therefore violent power over others – the *libido dominandi* (390).

However, Milbank goes on to show that Augustine was not as consistent as he might be when he introduced a defence of coercion in his battles with the Donatists: 'his account of a legitimate, non-sinful, 'pedagogic' coercion violates this ontology' (419) – an ontology that was revolutionary precisely because it denied 'any ontological purchase to *dominium* or power for its own sake ...' (419).

Milbank recognises that, for Augustine, the Fall introduced coercion into the world. This fallenness leads to the tragedy of the Church's involvement with the *dominium*. Milbank also accepts that Augustine believed that humanity was naturally social, but politics was – in the pre-Fall sense of the term – unnatural. However, Milbank adds that 'Augustine allows us to see many forms of 'the social' beyond the political, and also implies that the political is necessarily *imperfectly* social' (402, emphasis original). But it takes Aquinas to begin the separation of the secular from the spiritual:

> [Aquinas] has ... moved not very far down the road which allows a sphere of secular autonomy; nevertheless, he has moved a little, and he has moved too far. By beginning to see social, economic and administrative life as essentially natural, and part of the political sphere separate from the Church, Aquinas opens the way to regarding the Church as an organization specializing in what goes on inside man's souls ... Once the political is seen as a permanent natural sphere, pursuing positive finite ends, then, inevitably, firm lines of division arise between what is 'secular' and what is 'spiritual'. (407)

Milbank argues for the removal – or at least a blurring – of this division, as 'the absolute Christian vision of ontological peace now provides the only alternative to a nihilistic outlook' (432). From the time of Augustine, who compromised his radical peace ontology in his disputes with the Donatists, through Aquinas, to secular reason, the Church's salvation ('the peace of the *altera civitas*' (432)) has often been absent. The only alternative is a return to 'the absolute Christian vision of ontological peace'[143] – a refined 'political Augustinianism' without any compromise with 'the negative distortion of *dominium* ...' (417).

Milbank's thesis of 'ontological peace' is an interesting one, but which falls down when it comes to practicalities. Even if all punishment should be 'the self-punishment inherent in sin' (421), Milbank does not say how he proposes to raise a person's conscience, or install self-discipline, without an external discipline being imposed first (even Pinocchio needed his Jiminy Cricket). What Milbank needs to note is Augustine's 'nostalgia for the infinite'.[144] That sacred and secular should not be treated as separate is quite correct, but merely

[143] Though how this is possible, given the Fall, Milbank does not say.
[144] Figgis, 7.

arguing for ontological peace does not address the world as lived in by us, or by Augustine.

2.4.4 Augustine's Political Thought: A Summary and Overview

I have shown that Augustine's political thought has meant different things to different people. However, medieval 'political Augustinianism' cannot any longer be viewed as being anything other than a *mis*interpretation of Augustine's thought. Throughout the twentieth century, there has clearly been a progression in how Augustine's political thought has been interpreted. In the aftermath of the First World War, when nineteenth century liberal optimism in human progress had been (almost literally) shot to pieces, we have Neville Figgis presenting Augustine as a divided soul looking to the peace of heaven while, at the same time, being very aware of the sin and violence here on earth. With the Cold War crises in the 1960s, Herbert Deane brings us an Augustine who advocates political and social quietism as chaos could be just around the corner.[145] Later, as society become more secular, so does Augustine – at least according to R.A. Markus. A pluralist, non-theocratic society should, therefore, be acceptable to the 1970s Christian. But not, according to John Milbank, the 1990s Christian. In a world of post-modern uncertainty, secular reason is not a valid system to build political authority. Political Augustinianism, despite its problems with Augustine's attitude to coercion, is now presented as having more to do with seeking an ontological peace: a peace that can be more easily accomplished by small communities 'where the lines between Church and world, spiritual and secular are blurred ...'.[146]

Augustine, as we have seen, expected Christian governors, magistrates or judges to do what they could to advance the cause of the church – but this was as *Christians*, not as officials. They could, and should, use their office and official capacity to help the church, but Augustine did not presume that all officials of whatever religious persuasion must help the church – nor (as the

[145] It is perhaps significant the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, and the Cuban missile crisis occurred in 1962 – Deane's work was published in 1963.
[146] Milbank, 408.

medievalists might have been able to assume, at least nominally) did he assume all officials were Catholic Christians.

Herbert Deane, however, goes too far the other way. Augustine was never so quietist and pessimistic that he refused all questioning of civil authority: mob rule was definitely out, but this does not mean that he felt people could not be defended by the Church against unjust action by civil authorities.

'Church' and 'State' were not totally separate categories for Augustine – or for anyone at that time: society was theocratic. People might have different roles within that society, but Augustine lived in a world where an Emperor (even an unbaptised Emperor) could preside at a church council,[147] and bishops had become part of the civil authority – hearing lawsuits and deciding cases.[148] This being so, Augustine's 'political thought' must be seen (contra Arquillière) against this background.

In summary, Augustine's thought must be seen as a pastoral balancing act – exhortations to obedience, for example, are countered by Augustine's own willingness to 'interfere'. His pessimism over the idea that civil society will ever become the City of God is countered by his requirement that Christians with appropriate talents and callings should serve in that society.[149] There is, as Figgis and others warn us, no 'system' as such, but from Augustine's work, in spite of his awareness of humanity's inherent sinfulness, we will see that there are (albeit highly limited) ways of improving society.

2.5 The Christian and Political Activity

2.5.1 Introduction

Given the above overview of how Augustine's political thought has been interpreted over time, and how far this thought is from Arquillière's ideas of

[147] As Constantine did at Nicaea. Further Augustine notes that the Donatists were first to appeal to the Emperor over their theological dispute with the Catholics, see *Ep.* 88, 1.
[148] Though Augustine is not altogether happy with the time he had to spend in this role – see *De opere monachorum* 29:37 (quoted in Dyson, *The Pilgrim City*, 192-3).
[149] *DCD*, XIX.6.

l'Augustinisme politique, I will now re-examine Augustine's political thought in the light of the three themes relevant to my thesis. Firstly, because of its importance in Augustine's thought, I shall examine the eschatological question. In other words, even though the city of God will be finally separated from the earthly city at the second coming of Christ – and the worldly city will then be destroyed – I shall argue that Augustine believed that at least some Christians should be politically involved in the world. This leads on to the second question concerning ecclesiology and how the church should relate with civil society. As Augustine thinks hierarchically, ordinary folk are to content themselves with what their masters tell them to do, but, as I shall show, Christian leaders can be more assertive in what we would now call civil matters. Given this, I shall then examine the third question. This looks at the education and training Augustine thought most appropriate for those who exercise political leadership. This third question will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter in conversation with Peter Bathory's book, *Political Theory as Public Confession.*

2.5.2 The Eschatological Question

2.5.2.1 Introduction

Even in his defining of the two cities, and how they came about, Augustine is thinking eschatologically. It is equally clear that members of the city of God are not 'at home' in the earthly city.

> It is written, then, that Cain founded a city, whereas Abel, a pilgrim, did not find one. For the City of Saints is on high, although it produces citizens here below, in whose persons it is a pilgrim until the time of its kingdom shall come. Then it will call together all those citizens as they rise again in their bodies; and then they will be given the promised kingdom, where they will reign with their Prince, the king eternal, world without end.[150]

How, therefore, are we to understand the role of the pilgrim in what we must assume to be a hostile environment?

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[150] *DCD*, XV.1.

2.5.2.2 The Pilgrim's Way

Eugene TeSelle, in his book *Living in Two Cities: Augustinian Trajectories in Political Thought*, devotes a whole chapter to the nature of the pilgrim.[151] I have already noted the pilgrim nature of Christian's journey through this life, but this does not mean that Christians should despair of 'attempts to transform the world', or be people who react against the "occupied territories" language of liberationists. As TeSelle says,

> Both moves are Augustinian only as a *first step*, a clarification of one's primary values and commitments. When they become the last word they are un-Augustinian in their indifference to relative judgments about better or worse in the temporal sphere. Augustine ... was not prepared to abandon the world ... in the same manner.[152]

Even as they are pilgrims, Augustine expects that Christians who are truly 'fathers of their families' create a household that 'ought to be the beginning, or a little part, of the city;' and therefore 'domestic peace has reference to civic peace'.[153] However, the difference between true fathers and earthly fathers can be seen in the next chapter of *The City of God.*

> But a household of men who do not live by faith strives to find an earthly peace in the goods and advantages which belong to this temporal life. By contrast, a household of men who live by faith looks forward to the blessings which are promised as eternal in the life to come; and such men make use of earthly and temporal things like pilgrims: they are not captivated by them, nor are they deflected by them from their progress towards God.[154]

Though the world has to be travelled through, it is not, therefore, abandoned.[155] It is clear that Augustine viewed Christians as pilgrims through the earthly city, with their sights set on the eschatological city of God. In the end, for Augustine, all political life is relativised: the Christian was to make use of the peace of Babylon, and to pray for that peace even while knowing that this earthly peace was not, and never would be, perfect peace. For

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[151] 'The Sojourner: Neither a Citizen nor an Alien' in Eugene TeSelle, *Living in Two Cities: Augustinian Trajectories in Political Thought* (New York: University of Scranton Press, 1998) 45-71.
[152] Ibid, 61.
[153] *DCD*, XIX. 16.
[154] *DCD*, XIX. 17.
[155] As can be clearly seen in *DCD*, XIX. 16 quoted above.

Augustine, the peace of Babylon is something that the Christian can make use of, but for different ends than members of the earthly city for whom this peace is the only peace they know. However Augustine also saw that the Christian had a responsibility to love their neighbour and was therefore required to be involved in civil society.[156] While not setting out to transform society, the pilgrim had a different ethos of life, which could affect society – hopefully for the better.

For Augustine, true justice will only occur in the City of God, but Christians, as pilgrims on their way to their homeland, are to offer their talents to be used in the earthly city in order to secure and maintain the peace of Babylon. In other words, even if the eschaton is the first word – that in the end very little matters in terms of what civil customs and laws we follow,[157] or under what authority we live – it does not mean it is the only word Christians offer to the world. For Augustine, political involvement is a necessary part of life. Therefore, I shall consider how the church should relate to civil society.

2.5.3 The Church and Civil Society

2.5.3.1 Introduction

The balance between looking to the infinite and living in this world is, of course, difficult to achieve. And as we look at Augustine's writings, at times one aspect is emphasised, then the other. On the one hand, he clearly tells his congregation not to get involved,[158] not to be disobedient (not even to tyrants)[159] – after all we are all going to die sometime anyway.[160] All of this points to a very quietist approach to life. And yet, we also see Augustine vigorously defending himself when taken to task by Macedonius, who

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[156] Though with the correct motives – see 2.3.5 above.
[157] Provided that 'there is nothing indecent or immoderate about it' (*DCD*, XIX. 19).
[158] See *Sermo* 302.
[159] *DCD*, II. 19. 'Christ's servants, therefore ... are commanded to endure this earthly commonwealth, however depraved and wholly vile it may be, if they must.'
[160] *DCD*, V. 17. 'As far as this mortal life is concerned, which is spent and finished in a few days, what difference does it make under what rule a man lives who is soon to die, provided only that those who rule him do not compel him to do what is impious and wicked?'

suggests that religion should be kept out of politics (or, in this case, the justice system).[161]

2.5.3.2 Congregational Political Action

As I noted in 2.3.5 above, in *Epistula* 10* Augustine notes that his congregants were 'aware of our practice of performing acts of mercy in such cases',[162] and so took direct action in freeing over one hundred slaves. While he expects to solve the problems thus created by due legal process, Augustine does not condemn their actions. Therefore we must accept that quietism in all circumstances is not the end of the story.

Sermo 302 tells a very different story: lynching, rioting and other sorts of violent behaviour are emphatically not condoned. 'Rough justice' is not the sort of behaviour Augustine expects from his congregation. If the official has broken the law, the remedy is through the law. On the whole, political action is to be left to those who are in a position to take that action: whether that person is a leader in the church or in civil society.

2.5.3.3 The Role of the Bishop

Augustine tells his congregation that he would rather not go to see imperial officials on their behalf, where

> I have to wait my chance, stand outside the door, queue while they go in ... have my name announced – then sometimes I only just get admitted! I have to put up with the humiliation, make my request, sometimes succeed, sometimes leave disappointed.[163]

It seems that being a bishop is no guarantee of success when pleading with imperial bureaucracy. This is in spite of Augustine's role as a civil judge in minor disputes, and Augustine's influence on several important imperial officials. Augustine himself, when not haranguing his flock (though how much of his complaint in *Sermo* 302 is invective or polemic?) defends the right of the church to argue in supplication for the guilty. 'In short, the Lord himself

[161] *Epp.* 152-5.
[162] *Ep.* 10*. 7.
[163] *Sermo* 302. 17.

interceded with the men to save the adulteress from stoning, and by doing so he advocated the duty of intercession to us.'[164] Augustine may be aware that his efforts will not necessarily succeed, but this does not mean that he wishes to abandon the right to argue his case.

2.5.3.4 Conclusion

How the church related to civil society precluded, as far as practical politics was concerned, any form of civil disobedience – even if such action can be seen as theoretically possible from Augustine's writings.[165] On the whole, the people who were to advocate improvements in the justice of society were church leaders: Christian leaders in the '*saeculum*' were to support the church. So a person's relationship with society would depend on their position in that society. That position in society partly depended on the system of patronage (a system Augustine used to advance his own career as a rhetor prior to his conversion), but whether the individual was granted any career advance depended on the level of education that person had received. It is to our third theme of education that we now turn.

2.5.4 Education and Training in Augustine's Congregation

2.5.4.1 Introduction

If political action can be taken, we must look to see where that action should originate, and how people should be educated to take any action. Even in *Epistula* 10* Augustine is left with a series of problems following congregational action, so what sort of education, or, more broadly, *paideia*,[166] did Augustine have in mind for those who were called to be politically involved?

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[164] *Ep.*, 153. 11.
[165] See 2.3.6 above.
[166] For the breadth of the meaning of *paideia*, see Eugene Kevane, 'Paideia and Anti-Paideia: the *Prooemium* of St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*', *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), 153-80, especially 156-7.

2.5.4.2 Leading Us into All Truth

For all practical purposes, Augustine expects his congregation to be obedient to those in power. While this does not mean we can dismiss the idea of Augustine teaching the congregation on how they should approach political matters – even in *Sermo* 302, as I have noted, he tells the congregation that their remedy is through the laws of the state[167] – Augustine does not set out a political program, nor does he give a political *paideia*. This is because the subject of *paideia* for Augustine is not politics, but truth. This is summed up by Philip Cary:

> In the classical philosophic view of education represented by Augustine, liberal education (the learning appropriate to a free person rather than a slave) forms human character by strengthening it with the virtues necessary for the pursuit of truth, which is the pursuit of happiness. Thus any pedagogy not based on the students' innate love of truth is not liberal education but training for servants ...[168]

For Augustine the best education is a *paideia* based on Christian truth, taught by Christian leaders.[169]

Ernest Fortin, in his discussion on Augustine's theory of conscience (and making use of *De utilitate credendi*), points up Augustine's elitist thinking, and thus the dependence on leaders. The truths relating to the existence of God and his involvement in the lives of his creatures

> are inaccessible to the multitude of uneducated men. If they are to be accepted at all by them, *it can only be* on the authority of a few wise and learned men.[170]

Foolish people (in contrast to 'the wise')[171] who are unable to see the truth require someone in or with authority to lead them into that truth.[172] Of course,

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[167] See *Sermo* 302. 13.
[168] Philip Cary, 'Study as Love: Augustinian Vision and Catholic Education' in Kim Paffenroth and Kevin L. Hughes (eds.), *Augustine and Liberal Education* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 62.
[169] How 'political' this education would be will be discussed in chapter 3 below.
[170] Ernest L. Fortin, 'The Political Implications of St. Augustine's Theory of Conscience', *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), 150, emphasis added.
[171] For Augustine's definitions of 'wise' and 'fools' see below.
[172] See C.L. Cornish, 'On the Profit of Believing' [*De Utilitate Credendi*] in Philip Schaff (ed.), *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, vol. III: St. Augustine, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993 (reprint)), 34.

from Augustine's perspective, since God is the source of all wisdom, the wise person must be an adherent of the Catholic Church.[173] The big question is of course, how to recognise wisdom. This is where the Church comes in as 'the specific authority instituted by God to lead men to the truth.'[174] But there is a need, as far as Augustine is concerned, for leadership. To reiterate: in *Sermo* 302, the only people enjoined to action are Augustine himself, and heads of households, who should have prevented their families and servants from joining the lynch mob.

So, wise leadership is the key to authority in the church *and* in civil society. We must note, however, the distinction Augustine draws between 'authority' and 'power'.

> In Augustine's usage authority (*auctoritas*) belongs to teachers, not to kings. Political rulers are not said to have authority, but rather power or sovereignty (*potestas* or *imperium*).[175]

Therefore we can see that just because a person has power – and must, therefore, be obeyed (subject to the strictures discussed above) – it does not mean they necessarily have the authority to direct people to the truth. For this, a wise man is required.

> The wise man here is not someone clever or skilled, but rather one who has a "clear and strongly established knowledge of God and man" (*De utilitate credendi* 12.27 ...), and lives and conducts his life in a way that answers to that knowledge ... From this, no one with moderate intelligence can miss the point that it is more "useful and helpful to obey the precepts of the wise" than for the fool to live by his own whims (*De utilitate credendi* 12.27 ...).[176]

For Augustine, then, the wise man is the person to follow and will lead us to God. Also for Augustine, it is the Church that guides us all to the truth – and no political authority (however good in secular terms) that ignores the truth of

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[173] Anything useful from Classical liberal education, was taken over by the church as a 'spoiling of the Egyptians' (see Saint Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* [*De Doctrina Christiana*], trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), II. 144-52. References to this work follow Green, and future references to this text will be cited as *DDC*).
[174] Fortin, 'Augustine's Theory of Conscience', 151.
[175] Philip Cary, 'Study as Love', 56.
[176] Felix B. Asiedu, 'The Limits of Augustine's Personal Authority: The Hermeneutics of Trust in *De utilitate credendi*', in Kim Paffenroth and Kevin L. Hughes (eds.), *Augustine and Liberal Education*, 136-7.

God is truly just.[177] From this Rowan Williams tells us that 'Augustine assumes that a person nurtured in the Church and in the ordered *caritas* it inculcates is uniquely qualified to take responsibility for wielding political power.'[178] Whether Augustine would accept that any Christian was so qualified is open to doubt. What we do know[179] is that Augustine is happy to refer to the idea of Christian leaders in civil society long after he has abandoned any idea of a 'Christian Empire.'

This is not to say a Christian leader would have an easy time as he tried to balance the conflicting interests of the earthly and the heavenly cities. Not only does a Christian leader have 'the alarming task of discerning the point at which what he is defending has ceased to be defensible ...',[180] but also there is the tension of knowing, more generally, that '[a] wise leader, political or otherwise, must be sensitive to the double necessity that Augustine points to in [*De Civitate Dei*, XIX. 6]'.[181] This 'double necessity' is that 'on the one hand, ignorance is unavoidable, and, on the other, judgement is also unavoidable because human society compels it.'[182] This inevitably leads to tensions, and to the realisation that the only certainty is that mistakes will be made. Hence Augustine's praise of Theodosius, whose penitence (very much against the norm for Roman Emperors) over the massacre of the Thessalonians is commended in *De Civitate Dei*, V. 26.

2.5.4.3 Conclusion

I have shown in this section, that Augustine's elitist thinking meant that he expected there to be leaders both in the church and in civil society. The leaders in the church should guide the rest towards the Christian truths.[183] Also Christian leaders in civil society would face an almost impossible task in their

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[177] *DCD*, XIX. 21.
[178] Williams, 'Politics and the Soul', 68.
[179] For example from Augustine's insistence to Boniface (*Ep.* 220) and to Christian judges (*DCD*, XIX. 6) that they should continue in public office.
[180] Williams, 'Politics and the Soul', 66.
[181] Mark J. Doorley, 'Limit and Possibility: An Augustinian Counsel to Authority', in Paffenroth and Hughes (eds.), *Augustine and Liberal Education*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2000), 151.
[182] *DCD*, XIX. 6.
[183] Augustine himself spent considerable time educating others, some of whom went on to be bishops themselves; conversely, the masses remained uneducated (see 3.2 below).

uncomfortable role. In the light of his hierarchical thinking, it is unsurprising that Augustine did not advocate political action on the part of his congregation. However, in spite of the difficulties facing leaders, the only education Augustine offered was the informal Christian education of the Church[184] which had no directly political content.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that Augustine was not entirely the political quietist that he has been portrayed, but neither would he have advocated 'political Augustinianism'. He involved himself with the civil society around him, and although the scope for action was limited, he nevertheless saw taking that action as part of his responsibility as a Christian. Others with public roles were also expected to take action in the service of the church, but the general mass of the population were expected to follow the instructions of those placed over them, and civil disobedience was never part of what Augustine saw as legitimate political action. I shall now move on to examine Peter Bathory's book, to see if there is scope in Augustine for a prepolitical *paideia*.

[184] As noted above, Classical education was pillaged for the truths that Christianity could accept.

Chapter 3

PREPOLITICAL EDUCATION IN AUGUSTINE'S THOUGHT

3.1 Introduction

As intimated in the last chapter, Augustine is interested in educating his congregation into the truth of the Christian gospel. His concern is not 'political'. I have suggested that his reactions to congregational action in the public realm vary according to the motives of his congregation: taking part in the lynching of a hated tax official can only be selfish,[1] whereas the releasing of illegally held slaves indicates a willingness to act on behalf of others.[2] Motivation, and holding the correct authority, is clearly Augustine's concern when he addresses, or thinks about, Christian leadership. Christian emperors are judged happy 'if they rule justly', not for other reasons that Augustine describes as mere 'gifts and consolations of this wretched life...'.[3]

Given Augustine's eschatological perspective and elitist mode of thought, the question explored in this chapter is what sort of education would Augustine think appropriate for his congregation. Before I explore Peter Bathory's thesis of a prepolitical *paideia*, I will look more generally at Augustine's approach to education. The main difficulty in looking for a *political* education, or an education for political action, is that Augustine did not have the mindset of a modern man in divorcing his faith from political life. On the contrary, '[a]ll societies of antiquity, culminating in the Roman Empire, assumed an intrinsic relationship of religion to the political order'.[4] Therefore an education that looked for 'truth' in terms of religious faith would be bound to share the same assumptions about the relationship of faith and political order. It is only in this way, as I shall show, that Augustine can be said to have an education for political involvement. In other words, any political education is implicit in his

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[1] *Sermo* 302.
[2] See *Ep.* 10*.
[3] *DCD*, V. 24. These include ruling 'for a longer time', subduing their enemies and avoiding revolt against their rule (ibid.). Such 'consolations' are relativised by Augustine, who points out that 'every man should be a Christian only for the sake of eternal life' (ibid., V. 25).
[4] Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Augustine and Christian Political Theology', *Interpretation* 29 (1975), 253. This 'intrinsic relationship' extended well beyond Antiquity (see 2.4.2 above).

Christian education, and not explicit. That there is a political side to his education is evidenced by his comment towards the end of *Confessions*, where he states that

> our soul yields works of mercy 'according to its kind (Gen. 1: 12), loving our neighbour in the relief of physical necessities ... This means such kindness as rescuing a person suffering injustice from the hand of the powerful and providing the shelter of protection by the mighty force of just judgement.[5]

What we would call political action, action in the public sphere, is motivated by the Christian command to love our neighbour. The question remains as to how Augustine thought he could teach his congregation and others how they could show 'such kindness'.

3.2 Augustine's Teacher Training

As well as its being riven by the Donatist schism, Augustine was well aware that the African church suffered from a lack of education amongst its priests. In order to overcome this lack, after his ordination as presbyter,

> Augustine organised a monastic community within the precincts of the church. The function of this community was primarily educative, to train a more educated priesthood ...[6]

Once Augustine had become bishop of Hippo,

> he set up ... three similar communities, one consisting of priests and minor clerics and two consisting of laymen ... The purpose of these communities was not to separate their members from the affairs of the world but to prepare them for more intelligent participation in its life. They were in fact designed to become competent Christian teachers ... Possidus mentions the names of several of its members, who later became bishops of African sees.[7]

Bishop Possidus was himself one of those men. In his 'Life of St. Augustine', he tells us that,

> As divine truth made headway, those who had been serving God in the monastery with the holy Augustine, and under his rule, began to be ordained as clergy for the Church at Hippo ... [T]en men ... were supplied by the most blessed Augustine to various Churches ... These

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[5] *Conf.* XIII. xvii (21).
[6] George Howie, *Educational Theory and Practice in St. Augustine* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 23.
[7] Ibid, 24.

> [men] in their turn ... founded fresh monasteries as the Churches of the Lord multiplied; and then ... they supplied brethren to yet other Churches for promotion to the priesthood.[8]

The difficulty, for anyone looking for a general Augustinian education, is that these monasteries became mines for the elite priesthood, rather than centres of general education for the populace: 'neither he [Augustine] nor the African church as a whole succeeded in educating the indigenous masses.'[9] In other words,

> The African church produced an incomparable elite, but no Christian people. The barbarians and the schism gave it no time to do so.[10]

While van der Meer points out that this lack of education for the masses is a criticism more of Augustine's time than of the man himself,[11] he does point out that 'the materially poor constituted the overwhelming majority'[12] of Augustine's congregation. This overwhelming majority were also uneducated, even though those 'who could come anywhere near affording it sent his children to a *grammaticus*, as the principal would be called in those rather curious private schools where the poets were read, explained and learned by heart.'[13] In the culture of the time, it was more important to be able to quote the poets exactly by heart, than to earn one's living by following some craft, even if that craft was architecture.[14] 'Yet if we take the population as a whole, the truly lettered only formed a small caste in the towns and a tiny fraction in the villas and on the land ...'.[15]

> Then there was slavery, the foundation of the whole culture of Antiquity, on which no man as yet dared lay a finger. Like St. Paul and all the Fathers of the Church, St. Augustine was more concerned to ennoble the existing relation between master and slave than to reconstruct the social order ...[16]

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[8] F.R. Hoare (ed. and trans.), *The Western Fathers* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 205-6.
[9] F. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 568.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 135.
[13] Ibid., 133.
[14] Ibid., 134.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 135.

There is, therefore, no evidence of a call to liberate the slaves. The fact that slaves often wanted for nothing while the poor-but-free could be seen begging for bread, meant that the 'more serious social problem for Augustine was massive poverty ...'.[17]

While Augustine's church in Hippo provided sanctuary to slaves and others in times of need, and while he preached to a congregation of mainly poor people, it is, we are told, 'the towns and the upper classes' that are Augustine's 'immediate preoccupation'.[18] His own writings on education are aimed at those who are already educated. Indeed in *De Doctrina Christiana*, he tells his readers to look elsewhere for teaching in the study of rhetoric,[19] though he expects the rhetorical styles to be understood and used by those readers when they come to put his words into practice.[20] It is however, interesting that Augustine assumes a high level of intelligence on the part of his reader,[21] and he clearly assumes that the best 'performances' are from those who 'can argue or speak wisely, if not eloquently.'[22] Therefore, though Augustine is not theoretically averse to someone who is not eloquent in expounding the scriptures, it is clear that he prefers the speaker to be both wise and eloquent.[23]

This dichotomy is evidence of what Carol Harrison refers to as Augustine's tension 'between his past, but still enduring, educational and intellectual formation, and his present identity as a Christian bishop.'[24] Perhaps the best way to describe the tension is to suggest that Augustine thinks that Christian

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[17] Robert Dodaro, 'Eloquent Lies, Just Wars and the Politics of Persuasion: Reading Augustine's *City of God* in a "Postmodern" World', *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 113.
[18] van der Meer, *Augustine*, 568.
[19] *DDC*, IV. 3.
[20] 'The general function of eloquence, in any of these three styles [of rhetoric], is to speak in a manner fitted to persuade ... and if he fails to persuade he has not achieved the aim of eloquence (ibid., 143).
[21] Ibid., 7.
[22] Ibid., 17.
[23] Ibid., 22. Augustine, against pagan criticism, also states that the Scriptures are naturally eloquent (ibid., 25).
[24] Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 69, cf. Figgis *Political Aspects*, 44. Interestingly, 'grammar seems exempt from Augustine's criticisms' (Catherine M. Chin, 'Christians and the Roman Classroom: Memory, Grammar, and Rhetoric in *Confessions* X', *Augustinian Studies* 33 (2002), 162); Augustine wishes to place grammar within Christian, and not pagan learning (ibid., 163). This looks like an example of 'spoiling the Egyptians' (see 2.5.4.2 above).

truth *ought* to be able to stand by itself without human embellishment, but he *knows* that human beings are perfectly capable of following an eloquent speaker – whether or not that speaker propounds the truth,[25] and the same attitudes will prevail when it comes to reading the written word. Augustine himself, as a young man before his conversion, regarded the scriptures as 'unworthy in comparison with the dignity of Cicero.'[26] The fact that he has clearly changed his position on Catholic Christianity may have influenced his wish to find and defend eloquence – even grand eloquence – in the Scriptures, without, of course, making Biblical writers or expounders dependent on classical rhetorical style.[27]

In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine changes Cicero's priorities of eloquence from saying that the 'teaching and delight were subordinate to the ultimate goal of persuasion',[28] to the idea that teaching, or instruction, 'is a matter of necessity.'[29] Delight, for Augustine, is part of (Christian) eloquence, merely because 'the disdainful kind of person ... is not satisfied by the truth presented anyhow ...',[30] and persuasion, or moving people cannot occur, unless they have been taught.[31] However, if the use of rhetoric is what will allow them to learn, to perceive delight, and be moved to action, then so be it. Given that Augustine's 'overriding emphasis [is] on teaching the truth',[32] it is unsurprising that he would wish to make use, and recommend others to make use, of a skill that had served him so well in both his civil and his pastoral careers – even if he has to considerably adapt classical rhetoric before it can be deemed suitable for Christian use.

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[25] 'But the speaker who is awash with the kind of eloquence that is not wise is particularly dangerous because audiences actually enjoy listening to such a person on matters of no value to them, and reckon that somebody who is heard to speak eloquently must also be speaking the truth.' *DDC*, IV. 17.
[26] *Confessions*, III, v (9).
[27] See Harrison, *Augustine*, 70-1.
[28] Ibid., 73.
[29] *DDC*, IV. 76.
[30] Ibid., 78.
[31] 'People may either do or not do what they know must be done; but who could say that they must do something which they do not know they must do?' (Ibid., 76).
[32] Ibid., 73

In sum, we can conclude that, although Augustine does not require everyone to be eloquent in propounding the scriptures, he is fully aware of his culture and his time. That culture meant that, all too often, the eloquent rather than the wise would win any argument. Augustine's own education was elitist and this elitist thought can still be seen in works such as *De Doctrina Christiana.* Elitism at that time would have extended to reading itself. We must note that for centuries, the Bible, as with other literature, was usually read aloud.[33] Hence we can appreciate Augustine's surprise at Ambrose's *silent* reading, even in public.[34] In a culture where it could not be assumed that everyone could read, any educational programme could be seen to be elitist. However Augustine, as a Catholic bishop, had pastoral responsibility for many poor people (and slaves), so what programme could he envision for them? It is to this topic that I now turn.

3.3 Educating the Poor

Augustine is clearly a pastor, and an educator. His many sermons and letters address issues of the moment. He frequently tells his congregation what he expects of them – and in no uncertain terms.[35] This 'education' can only be described as informal. A more theoretical treatment of educating the poor is the *De Catechizandis Rudibus,*[36] written in response to a request from Deogratias, a deacon of the church in Carthage. This short treatise, as might be expected from its title, is about education for Christian baptism. It is therefore not, by any stretch of the imagination, an education for involvement in public life. It is, however, instructive as it shows Augustine's methods for training ordinary people.

The instructions Augustine gives (and even the examples he uses) in this work show a didactic method: the teacher teaches and the pupil listens. Questions

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[33] See Joseph T. Lienhard, 'Reading the Bible and Learning to Read: The Influence of Education on St. Augustine's Exegesis', *Augustinian Studies* 27 (1996), 10-11.
[34] See *Confessions*, VI. iii (3).
[35] See for example, *Sermo* 302, discussed in chapter 2 above.
[36] Augustine, *Catechising of the Uninstructed* [*De Catechizandis Rudibus*], trans. S.P.F. Salmond, http://ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF1-03/npnf1-03-25.htm (11/09/02). This work was written 'about the year 400 A.D.' (ibid., 'Introductory Notice') and is divided into both chapters and paragraphs. As the latter are consecutive throughout the work, I shall just refer to the work by paragraph number.

are seen as opportunities for the instructor to expand or expound Christian history or doctrine.[37] This stands in marked contrast to *De Magistro*, another early work by Augustine,[38] which uses an interlocutory method. The teacher asks questions in order to lead his pupil in dialogue towards the truth: there may be direction on the part of the teacher, but the amount of input on the part of the pupil is considerable. A similar interlocutory method can be seen in *Contra Academicos*.[39] It can be argued that these latter two early works purport to be reports of actual conversations between educated people, whereas *De Catechizandis Rudibus* is meant as a manual for Deogratias to use in his instruction of candidates for Christian baptism, including the uneducated.

For Augustine, Christian truth was based on knowledge of events in the Bible Therefore a certain amount of instruction would be required – especially for the unlearned poor (which, as noted above, made up a large part of Christian congregations).[40] Augustine recommends a shorter catechism[41] for those who have had a (classical) liberal education and have 'already acquired a considerable knowledge of our Scriptures and literature...'.[42] He also notes the special treatment to be given to those 'who come from the commonest schools of the grammarians and professional speakers' who are neither uneducated nor of the 'very learned classes'.

Therefore, we can see that Augustine is clearly aware that there are different classes of hearer,[43] and he wishes to address them all. However, Augustine's approach to the uninstructed seems radically different from the way he seeks to educate the already classically educated Christians who were his

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[37] The only major questioning is done by the teacher of the catechumen to check that the latter is genuinely seeking baptism (and with the correct motives). *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, 9.
[38] Augustine, *The Teacher* [*De Magistro*], ed. and trans. Peter King (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 94-146. This work was originally written in 389 A.D.
[39] Augustine, *Against the Academicians* [*Contra Academicos*], ed. and trans. Peter King (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 1-93. This work was originally written in 386 A.D. (This interlocutory method is also followed in *De libero arbitrio*.)
[40] See *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, 24-50.
[41] Ibid., 52-5.
[42] Ibid., 12.
[43] This is further discussed in ibid., 23.

companions in the educative monasteries he set up.[44] A set of instructions in the form of an address does not engage the hearer in the way that a participant in debate and discussion is engaged in learning and understanding what is under discussion.[45] It is therefore unsurprising that van der Meer insists (however much Augustine was a man of his time in matters educational) Augustine and his fellow bishops failed to produce a Christian people.[46] His wish to educate 'everyman'[47] was clearly limited to the truths of the Christian gospel. Even his book *De Doctrina Christiana*, although it is ostensibly directed at 'those whom we desire to be educated for the good of the church',[48] is elitist. R.P.H. Green notes that *De Doctrina Christiana* 'is surely not for all preachers, for he assumes that the communicators have considerable knowledge already, or the means to gain it, and much of his advice would be beyond the comprehension of most preachers of his time.'[49] 'Everyman' for Augustine, it appears is very much an '*educated* everyman.'

3.4 Prepolitics for the Congregation

Against van der Meer and others, Peter Bathory produces a thesis that puts a different, and radical, light on Augustine. Bathory's thesis, in *Political Theory as Public Confession*, that Augustine aimed at a universal 'prepolitical' education for his congregation has considerable appeal on a first reading.[50] However, for all that Bathory can be seen as a counter-weight to those such as Herbert Deane who take the line that Augustine advocated total, and passive,

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[44] See Howie, 23-4, and the discussion above.

[45] This topic is further discussed in chapter 5 on Paulo Freire, who distinguishes between 'banking' and 'liberative' education. The former merely seeks to transfer information from one mind to another; the latter seeks to engage the pupils in their own educative process.

[46] See above and van der Meer, 568.

[47] Bathory derives the term 'everyman' from Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 186. However, O'Connell is making the point that Augustine believes that all humanity is a part of one – fallen – society (hence our equality before God), and that man shares a 'mysterious unity with his fellow-men.' (Ibid., 187).

[48] *DDC*, IV, 8 – not all of whom should necessarily devote their time to learning the rules of eloquence (see ibid.).

[49] R.P.H. Green, 'Introduction' to Saint Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, viii.

[50] 'Augustine of Hippo's political thought was – and is – immensely influential. He saw "political theory as public confession" – the presentation of a Christian perspective on the political process and on historical development which was in a real sense the proclamation of the gospel' (Duncan B. Forrester (quoting Bathory's phrase), *Christian Justice and Public Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11).

obedience to the political authorities, I will argue that Bathory's book is not immune from criticism.

Bathory's *Political Theory as Public Confession* introduces an account of the 'everyman' of Augustine's North African congregation. According to Bathory, this everyman needed to be educated away from Roman 'antipolitics',[51] into a proper appraisal of his own limitations and limited sphere of action – so that he would be in a better position to take that action. Bathory, chiefly through examination of Augustine's *Confessiones* and *De Civitate Dei*, expounds an idea of a church-led, or bishop-led, pre-political education, which is needed to drive the revival of civic virtue. He does this by pointing up the educational parallels between the two books. That is, the educational stages undergone by the individual in *Confessiones* are similar to the stages communities go through in *De Civitate Dei.* And, just as Augustine – after the process of the *Confessiones* – becomes aware of the lack of true education and leadership in his upbringing, so people more generally need to be educated to be similarly aware regarding political leadership in civil society.

After an examination of why Bathory's work could appeal to those seeking to broaden the base of Christian political involvement, I shall present an account of his work. Then I shall argue that Bathory is open to criticism in five specific areas. Firstly, he fails to take account of the eschatological nature of Augustine's teaching. Secondly, he seems unaware of the hierarchical nature of Augustine's thinking – which leads to questions, discussed above, about how far Augustine would go in educating the ordinary congregant. Thirdly, he fails to explore the implications for political life of Augustine's approach to lying. Fourthly, he also fails to mention coercion. There is no discussion, therefore, of pastoral coercion, or the coercion of the political authorities who 'do not bear the sword in vain', a sword that would presumably still be used by the new, Christian, leaders. This omission, in a discussion of Augustine's views on political involvement, is a significant oversight. Fifthly, Bathory's

[51] Bathory calls Roman politics a 'bastardization' of Classical politics (*Political Theory*, 11), and Roman society as one in which people 'were too ready to follow any plausible leader ...' (ibid., 121).

idea of Augustine as a 'political therapist' must be questioned in the light of Augustine's overwhelming religious concern for the well being of his congregation.[52]

Then I will briefly re-examine Deane's quietist approach, before returning to Bathory, to see what we can learn from his thesis on Augustine's political thought. My conclusion will be that, although (contra Deane) Augustine can hardly be described as passive in front of political authority, neither can he be described as a pre-political educator searching for a universal *paideia* – however attractive the idea may appear. The Christian in power may be, from an Augustinian perspective, the best possible option in a fallen world, but this does not mean (as Bathory seems to think) that Augustine thought everyone should be educated 'prepolitically' so that they could recognise those who might be the best to have political authority over them. That Augustine expected the actions of all Christians in authority in civil society to be based on a Christian *paideia* is easier to argue, though the difference is one of motivation, not necessarily of action.

3.5 Augustine as Proto-Liberation Theologian?

Bathory's work can been seen as an opening up of Augustine's political thought for ordinary humanity. The ordinary person of Augustine's congregation, 'everyman', is educable, and can be trained to recognise which leader is best to lead his society back towards a true public virtue. This, of course, is not what is usually emphasised in Augustine's writings, but, given that the aim of my thesis is to examine how 'ordinary' Christians should be involved in civil society and how they should be educated for that involvement, Bathory's thesis (if he is correct) makes very congenial reading. For, according to Bathory, ordinary congregants *can* be involved in political debate. They should also be aware of public life around them and of the contribution they can make. And the education that the church provides, given

[52] Bathory regards Augustine as a 'political therapist' in the sense of giving his congregation the wherewithal to understand (and presumably, given Bathory's thesis, the wherewithal to influence and take part in) public life as lived in North Africa in the fifth century. The 'this worldly' approach entailed contrasts with the religious and eschatological note in Augustine's teaching that other commentators emphasise.

that it impinges on the congregants' everyday life in civil society, implies that the church has to be politically involved. There is, therefore, more to Augustinian politics than obeying whoever happens to be in charge. True leaders can, it seems, be identified and encouraged. And, of course, the political values and opinions of ordinary people count.

The value of ordinary people (politically or otherwise) is a central theme of liberation theology:[53] the poor need to be released from their oppression in *this* world if the church's call to (total) liberation in the next world is to be understood. In order to do this, the church must move away from being seen as part of the political establishment. Indeed, Bathory tells us that Augustine saw 'no intrinsic good in extent of empire' and that

> No tinkering with imperial institutions would provide an adequate solution ... thus Augustine began to question any form of alliance between the church and the empire (92).[54]

Whether this means that there is to be a 'political therapy' that involves radical criticism of the current political order, and works towards a new political order in civil society, is doubtful. It is true that Augustine, especially after 410, rejected the Eusebian version of a Christian Roman Empire; but any argument about an Augustinian concept of a total separation of the church and the empire must take account of his own position, once he became a bishop, as 'a member of the new governing class', and as a 'city judge' (1). He may have complained that the arbitration of disputes took him away from other tasks, but there is no evidence that Augustine thought that this task ought to be outside the remit of a Christian leader.[55]

The idea that Augustine favoured a 'more limited order' in the *saeculum*[56] based on love (92) is more plausible. As I noted in chapter 2, Augustine

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[53] Bathory does not make the link, but there are similarities between his approach to Augustinian prepolitical education and the approach of the Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs) set up under the influence of Liberation Theology (see chapters 4 and 5 for further discussion on BECs).

[54] Throughout the rest of this chapter, unattributed page numbers refer to Bathory's work.

[55] On the contrary, see *Epp.* 152-5.

[56] Bathory follows Markus and accepts the idea of the *saeculum* as a *tertium quid.* As I have explained above in chapter 2, I do not accept that Augustine thought in terms of any neutral ground between the two cities.

certainly thought that '[t]he more perfect the love that held a society together, the more ordered was that society' (92); but the question remains whether he therefore thought that his congregation must be taught how to live out its faith in a social *and political* environment, as distinct from living it out in obedience to the civil authority. Bathory moves away from the 'passive obedience' model of Augustinian political thought and gives us an Augustine who wants to educate ordinary mortals so they are aware of their oppression (created by the lack of leadership in civil society) and who points them towards taking part in the community politically. How far Augustine can be moved towards a liberation theological approach to politics remains to be seen, but I shall now examine Bathory's thesis against what I have already discussed of his work (and its interpretation) above.

3.6 *Political Theory as Public Confession*: Bathory's Thesis

3.6.1 Introduction: The Unity of *Confessiones* and *De Civitate Dei*

Bathory presents us with an Augustine who is concerned 'to educate Roman North Africans so they would be better able to confront the temptations and injustices of Roman politics and society than he and his friends had been in their youth and young adulthood' (xi). As a result of this education, Augustine hopes that his congregation is able to recognise and follow the best leaders within civil society. The education Augustine propounds is vital – an individual's 'early training or lack thereof could ... have a grave impact on future social and political questions' (18).[57] Augustine clearly felt that his own education was lacking, and – in spite of the praise Augustine heaps on his mother in book IX of *Confessiones* – equally clearly, Monica is seen 'as a significant hindrance' to her son's educational development (46).[58]

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[57] 'Behaviour does not change when one leaves behind domestic guardians and schoolmasters.' *Conf.* 1. xix (30). One can only assume that Bathory means 'impact' in its broadest sense: Augustine is concerned that people are brought up to regard their private good over any public good or duty – so many would, therefore, not be involved in public life (presumably to its detriment). See discussion below on private and public.

[58] Augustine's ambiguous relationship with his mother is discussed in Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions*, 106-13.

The key to Bathory's interpretation of Augustine, and his intimate tying together of *Confessiones* and *De Civitate Dei*, is in Augustine's Platonic thought that '"the happiness of a city and the happiness of an individual human being" are the same' (19, quoting *DCD*, I. 15). Although Augustine knows that 'individual remedies to problems caused by social and political disorders were destined to be partial at best' (102),

> He hopes that diagnoses on the individual level will make larger social and political diagnoses more fruitful. He is certain that the treatment of those larger social and political diseases must begin with the individual (19).

Thus, what Augustine does for the individual, in terms of analysing the problems caused and remedies needed after a deficient education, in *Confessiones*, he does for society more generally in *De Civitate Dei*.[59] For Bathory *Confessiones* show that, for the individual (and in spite of the continuing conflict between knowing and willing), Augustine 'emphasised that ethical action ... is both possible and important in the face of life's incompleteness' (36). For Bathory, *De Civitate Dei* similarly finds Augustine looking for people 'that confront the difficulties of life actively – appreciating their limits but also affirming that which they can accomplish' (125). However, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX. 14 which Bathory uses to back up his statements merely points out that there is no final good in this life (true peace only occurs in the heavenly city), 'affirming that which they can accomplish' may only mean survival – but not even that is guaranteed.[60] Later on in book XIX, Augustine notes that social life may be desirable (he is in agreement with the philosophers here), but that it is never going to be free from anxiety as one cannot see into anyone's heart.[61] Also, even the judge finds that 'on the one hand, ignorance is unavoidable, and, on the other, judgment is also unavoidable because human society compels it.'[62] Bathory makes much, therefore, of the affirmation of what can be accomplished without acknowledging that Augustine does not think that we can do more than restrain the chaos that threatens to engulf society.

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[59] See *DCD*, X. 14.
[60] As noted above, Christians should only be Christians for the sake of eternal life, not for any benefits that may be accrued in this life (see *DCD*, V. 25).
[61] *DCD*, XIX, 5.
[62] *DCD*, XIX, 6. See 2.5.4.2 above.

Recognition of a person's limited sphere of action depends on a Christian education. For Bathory, in *Confessiones*, Augustine's task was to teach himself and his readers 'the law of the scriptures so the law of the flesh could more regularly be brought under control' (25).[63] This law of the scriptures was, however, only useful if people loved God and each other. Augustine's aim was to present people with an alternative to the corrupt Roman culture that surrounded them. For Augustine, Christ's example – as 'the concrete manifestation of the return to the [Platonic] cave' (27) – would lead to his readers' greater self-understanding as individuals and members of society sharing 'a vision of the "truest common good"' (28).

Augustine follows similar themes in *De Civitate Dei*, where he uses the Old Testament leaders 'to mediate between his account of the history of Rome [and its politics] and the mysteries of the Christian faith' (144). Thereby Bathory unites the individual therapy of *Confessiones* with the political therapy of *De Civitate Dei*, in which the politics of Rome compared and contrasted with the true politics of Christianity.

In summary therefore, we can see that Bathory has clearly identified unifying themes in *Confessiones* and *De Civitate Dei*. That these unifying themes exist is incontrovertible given that both works are by the same author and are apologies for Christianity. However, how much political and educative thought went into these themes is another question. Augustine, as I have noted, is concerned with Christian truth: political application must remain incidental. The political therapy of *De Civitate Dei* is more eschatological than

[63] Bathory says that Augustine 'even after his conversion [he saw] "... in my members another law ... making me captive to the law of sin ..."', but the quotation comes from *Conf.* VII. xxi (27), not (19), and is certainly not after his conversion. (For a discussion on the stages of Augustine's conversion, see O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions*, 101-4). At Ostia, after his conversion, his attitude was one of "Forgetting the past and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (*Conf.* IX. x (23), cf. O'Connell, 118), sin, and its legacy in him, was to be forgotten. He may still wish to teach his congregation, but his teaching does not come from an 'understanding' position. In his 'Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans', Augustine tells us, in his discussion of Romans 7:23, that though Paul's 'carnal desires still exist, by not consenting to sin he does not serve them ...' (Paula Fredriksen Landes (text and trans.), *Augustine on Romans*, (Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1982), 19). Augustine's interpretation seems to assume that there is rather less of struggle not to sin than the Pauline text would indicate.

Bathory gives credit for. It is designed to inform the Romans that their gods did not, would not, and could not protect the 'eternal city'; that a Christian 'state' may be better polity than a late Roman one, but that even this would not guarantee against disaster in this life; rather it offers eternal peace and justice in the life to come. It is to the differences between Christian and Roman politics that I now turn.

3.6.2 Roman Anti-Politics and Christian Politics

According to Bathory, Augustine's problem with Roman society was that it was not political or public enough. Rhetors vied with each other for public acclaim, no matter what the cost was to others (up to and including their death).[64] In other words, 'antipolitics' appears to mean that men are trained in a 'public' discourse which is not aimed at the greater public or common good, but at the greater private good of the rhetor. Politics is reduced to a politics of conquest, not cooperation. It seemed to Augustine that Roman society was one which 'fostered only passive cooperation' (106), and followed a deficient education which allowed and encouraged children to be 'cast into their society with a set of public examples and standards of excellence' which were disastrous (30). The unity of Roman society had only come through conquest, and

> A rule based on force, said Augustine, is inherently weak, because it eschews education and so has a weak base of support ... Consequently, fearful and insecure men were implicitly the good citizens of Roman political practice. The praxis of Roman politics was the antithesis of the classical political ideal. (124-5)

This left the Roman not only unable "to be his own friend", but also 'unable to find friends among his fellows' (126) – a state of affairs which led to people being 'immobilized ... or driven to fanaticism' (126).

In order to avoid either error, people needed to be educated and directed by a new authority, creating a mind that can judge situations and events around them. The new authority is based (as noted above) on the Scriptures. Augustine 'points the way and makes them [the Scriptures] available to

[64] *Conf.* I. xviii (29); cf. Bathory 104.

Everyman' (128). He also, in his writings, describes 'the most basic substance of the commonwealth, and he offers instruction in the reformation of that basic substance' (128).

For Augustine this solution depends on the nature of anxiety. As long as humanity lives in civil society, people will feel anxious,[65] but the nature of that anxiety will either direct people towards action or inaction. For Bathory, the Augustinian 'First Principles of Christian Education' (2) seek to 'teach men to be active forces in all aspects of their world' (2) while keeping them anxious about the new sort of life they should lead.[66] This new life, which will turn Roman culture upside down, depended on the education that people received (39-40). However, not all counsel is nurturant, and there is a 'fundamental ambivalence' in our relation with authority. So standards in public life must be high enough to avoid producing "corrosive anxieties" (41). The solution, for Augustine, is to recognise dependence on God, which leads to 'true anxiety'. This true anxiety helps people cope with their limits and allows them, through the process of self-criticism, to start liberating themselves 'from the superficial and privatizing standards of Roman society' (42).

For all that "men are said to hate authority" (122, quoting Bertrand de Jouvenel), under Roman culture men passively accepted any plausible leader and were in thrall to opinion, which in turn was 'ruled by superstition and hollow custom' (123). For Bathory, Augustine's role was to point men to true anxiety and thereby move them toward a new activism. His theory and practice of leadership was first to capture his audience's attention and then to educate it, so people could 'distinguish and reject would-be statesmen and unworthy teachings' (121).

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[65] 'For not only are we anxious lest they [our friends] be afflicted by famine, war, pestilence, or captivity ... also, there is the much more bitter fear that their friendship will be transformed into perfidy, malice, and wickedness.' *DCD*, XIX. 8.

[66] Bathory wants to differentiate between the fears of those who, surrounded by (real or imagined) enemies, live in constant tension of losing everything including wealth or position – see *DCD*, IV. 3 – and those who live in the same world, caring and anxious for others, but who know that, in the end, they and their friends will be with God – see *DCD*, XIX. 8.

The teaching method was a 'therapy of self-examination' (7); Augustine's life and experience was applied to his audience – if he knew himself better and was more aware of his own limitations, then others could be similarly knowledgeable and aware. Therefore, 'recognising their limitations but ready to act, men might ... rediscover the potential that had atrophied in the late Roman world ...' (9).[67] By nature, Augustine had 'cautious, even pessimistic, expectations of human nature', but thought that 'men might act more easily and act more justly if they had more reasonable expectations about their potential' (9). However, what Bathory fails to note is that teaching people how to live in their society is not the same as teaching them how to be politically active, or aware. Augustine is quite happy to teach that people should obey civil authority,[68] and that true peace, justice and happiness will only occur in the heavenly city.[69]

Augustine's life mirrored such a move from 'negative to positive anxiety' (51). Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, had assisted Augustine in '[t]he successful unmasking of Roman institutions and Manichean doctrine ...' but this 'demanded another sort of anxiety that would compel rather than inhibit a search for psychological and political wholeness' (53). In Milan, Augustine was finally 'set face to face with himself' (54), and his "odyssey of the soul" through self-examination had concluded 'in relief and hope' (54). Augustine, and his reader, would still face temptations, they would never achieve complete liberation from early errors, and they would still be dependent on others, but,

> Freed from the enervating anxieties of Roman custom, Augustine and his reader are propelled by a new and creative anxiety to seek new principles of order and justice ... Personal growth became more probable, as the boundaries of human action were more clearly defined (54).[70]

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[67] However, as Bathory notes elsewhere (134-5), Augustine is not always so sanguine about early Roman society.
[68] Even when it is blatantly unjust, see *Sermo* 302.
[69] See for example, *DCD*, XIX. 10-11.
[70] Interestingly, Bathory provides no references in Augustine's writings (or other, secondary literature) to back up such a sweeping statement.

Faced with the perfection of God, Augustine's readers were not to be negatively anxious, nor 'frozen in despairing inaction': rather, people's confrontation with their imperfection was to have 'psychological, political, as well as religious results' (60). Augustine is concerned with unity – unity within and between people, and the unity with (and of) God. Once human wills were united with God, they could then 'act for the good of all' (62). One is forced to wonder, however, what that action could be, given Augustine's pessimistic assessment that '[a]ny peace attainable in the *saeculum* is ... but a pale reflection of eternal peace ...' (68). What this does not mean (though Bathory gives every indication of wishing it would) is that Augustine expected 'everyman' to bring about that pale, political peace.

Augustine's method, says Bathory, takes us – following a process which parallels Plato's – 'from the social to the personal and back to the social again' (88). He seeks to create a mutually interdependent community, where, "if one member suffers, all the members suffer ..." (88).

> At times, Augustine seems to be speaking of a universal Christian community, but at others it is clear that he hopes that the principles of Christian community will affect existing nations and human institutions. The love of which he speaks ... endorses and encompasses the classical Roman virtues ... (88-9).

We must note with Deane that when Augustine speaks of this Christian community, he is speaking hypothetically.[71] How the principles of Christian community will *affect* existing nations, Augustine does not say, and such a sentiment has more to do with modern liberalism than early medieval attempts at imposing Catholic orthodoxy on the late Roman Empire. All Augustine says is that a Christian 'nation' would be better than any other polity in existence.[72] Also, Augustine himself never endorses the classical Roman virtues uncritically: the love of glory may have overcome all other vices, but was itself a vice.[73]

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[71] See Deane, 138 and 2.3.4 above.
[72] *Ep.* 138, and see *DCD*, II. 19.
[73] *DCD*, V. 12-13.

3.6.3 A New Role for Education

As has been seen above, how people are to be educated is a vital consideration for Bathory's Augustine. This education is 'prepolitical' in that it prepares people to be involved in public life – educating them differently from the Roman culture in which they had been brought up. In *The Confessions*, Augustine berates his teachers who loved oration above the moral content of their tales.[74] The lack of moral training left a tension between the obvious need for obedience to authority (which Augustine believed in), and the wish to assert self-consciousness.

In the examination of his own life, Augustine could see that, from infancy, children seek to overcome their dependency on others – therefore

> Education, Augustine stressed, is crucial to the situation. It could, however, develop in two very different directions. It could be an education that helped the child to understand the nature of his dependencies and weaknesses, or it could be a miseducation that might crush him (43).

Augustine believed that Roman education was indeed 'miseducation', and its dependence on tricks of rhetoric led to a situation that 'Roman public words had lost any connection ... with Roman public virtue' (98). To correct this, a new respect for language was needed and 'Christian rhetoric ... would bridge the gap between private and public worlds, introducing into the world of politics an important role for religious instruction and Christian belief' (99). What Bathory fails to note is that, opposed to his readership, most members of Augustine's congregation would not have had the benefit of this education. This means that application of this educative process to 'everyman' is suspect at least as Augustine himself did not treat everyone the same, but even laid down different catechisms for people depending on their education (and especially their education in rhetoric).[75]

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[74] *Conf.* I. xviii (28).
[75] See 3.3 above.

In chapter five,[76] Bathory examines Augustine's thoughts on a Christian approach to language and rhetoric. In *De Magistro*, teachers who 'were not interested in the truth of words' (103) are castigated, and a style of teaching which people were able 'to know one another, and to know that which they share with one another' (104) is commended. The argument progresses in *De Doctrina Christiana*. Here Augustine points to the seven steps he expects teachers to take their pupils towards spiritual health. The pupils should become aware of 'the possibility of public virtue and public action ...' (106). Therefore, teachers should point to "those human institutions helpful to social intercourse in the necessary pursuits of life" (107, quoting *De Doctrina Christiana*, II. 139) and, therefore, according to Bathory, 'the teacher's words should have both a proximate and an ultimate end' (107). However, it must be borne in mind that Augustine constantly and consistently emphasises the ultimate. Pagan learning should only be appropriated '[l]ike the treasures of the ancient Egyptians',[77] so students should 'not venture without due care into any branches of learning which are pursued outside the church of Christ'.[78] In the light of this, the possibilities of 'public virtue and public action' seem guarded and limited even before the later Augustine becomes 'less optimistic about the use of human institutions' (116, note 42).

In *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, 'it is possible for the teacher to communicate his own enthusiasm, and thus awaken interest in his audience, whether they are educated or uneducated, apathetic or alert' (108). As in Plato's *Symposium*, men were to be moved in more than their thoughts.[79] The listener must (unlike in Roman culture) be moved beyond the 'captivating story' to the truth and freedom beyond the words. The listener would be confronted and 'could not be passive'.

> Self-knowledge gave him [Augustine] insight into what moved people – the people of his own congregation – to thought and action.

[76] This is the only chapter that specifically pays attention to Augustine's works outside *Confessiones* and *De Civitate Dei*.
[77] *DDC*, II. 144.
[78] *DDC*, II, 139. See 2.5.4.2 above.
[79] See also *DDC*, IV. 74-80, where the Christian orator is urged to move his audience 'so as to conquer their minds' (Ibid., 79) and not just their emotions.

> Knowledge of language and rhetoric gave him insight into how such action could be evoked (111).[80]

Augustine never felt he, or others, should withdraw from the world, but he educated his congregation 'to a recognition of their active responsibilities' – as well as a love of God. Bathory concludes that '[h]is goal thus became a political goal in terms of his own argument about the nature of politics, for it was the object of their love that gave substance and direction to the political order' (114). Therefore the education and upbringing of the congregation had a political aspect in that it inevitably related to, and impinged on, the public order. However, as I noted in chapter 2, the only 'political' example that Augustine gives his congregation is that of the martyrs: civil disobedience, while theoretically conceivable is, for all practical purposes, ruled out.[81]

3.6.4 Public Leadership: Theory and Practice

Public virtue, as Augustine reminds us in *De Civitate Dei*, and as Roman leaders had forgotten, is not 'a given', it needs to be "ushered in by instruction" (125, quoting *DCD*, XIX. 4). This leaves the Augustinian educator with a task not unlike the Old Testament prophet. 'The prophetic task ... was to re-establish contact between ongoing social and political affairs and the founding principles that had given social substance to those affairs' (151). In other words, the prophet's task is to point to how things ought to be. However, unlike Rome (where any 'concern for public virtue belied a tradition that looked to the glory of the individual' (151)), the Old Testament prophet 'could rely on a preexisting community and a corresponding social and political identity' (150). So God's people must bring in an alternative culture 'that would awaken in all people the possibility of a new moral-political order' (153). This, according to Bathory, could only happen if God's people were given 'the instruction provided by a Christian *paideia*' (153).

Having described the Christian educator as a reincarnation of the Old Testament prophet, Bathory also sees the bishop's role as 'relevant to ordinary

[80] But see my comments at 3.3 above.
[81] See 2.3.6 above.

politics' because they were 'charged with initiating through their good works a new order of things' (161). Christian education, its *paideia*, began in the family and in the church.[82] The family provided 'an example of just rule' and contributed to the order of the city. The Christian minister provided the instruction of that rule so that 'reciprocal relationships' could be established between the earthly and the heavenly cities (162). The Christian preacher therefore comes to play the role of intermediary (*magister*) between Christ and the 'Christian prince' (162). If genuine political reform was to occur, which had 'a clear recognition of the capabilities of political man' (163), then the church needed to provide 'a prepolitical education that might allow men to come to terms with the most basic principles of their social existence' (163). In that, through its leaders, it educated both the ordinary congregant and the 'Christian prince', the church's role becomes 'political or prepolitical' as well.

> The church became, for Augustine, very much a part of the *saeculum* – of "the world of men and of time." Leaders of the church ... had, therefore, the responsibility to act within it [the world] to further the end of public virtue, of a "rightly ordered love." Augustine had learned of the difficulties of such action. His own experiences had taught him that confession of sin and praise might lead to a new respect for public purpose. He sought, as one of the leaders of his church and so of the *saeculum*, to elicit that respect from others. His political action and his political thought were thus united in his own public posture – a posture of public confession (167-8).

Quite apart from ignoring the fact that for Augustine there can be no 'reciprocal relationships' between cities that shall be eternally separated, there is a clear tension here between Bathory's prophet and his *magister*. While the Church must point to how things ought to be – and Bathory is correct to point to the Church's prophetic role here, though, as ever, like the medievalists before him, he is very light on Augustine's eschatological approach – the idea that Augustine saw his practical work addressing members of the civil authority (whether they were Catholics or not) or his teaching of his congregation as a prepolitical role is not borne out by his writing. His congregation were to remember the martyrs, and the fact that they were pilgrims on their way to the heavenly city. The peace of Babylon is to be used, but primarily as a guard against chaos: the love of neighbour may precipitate

[82] Milbank also notes this aspect of Christian *paideia* (see *Social Theory*, 399-403).

public action,[83] but this does not mean that Augustine believed that the justice of civil society would necessarily be improved as a result. Indeed, he was very clear that Christian action is *no* guarantee of a peaceful life on earth.

3.7 *Political Theory as Public Confession*: A Criticism

3.7.1 Education for This World – or the Next?

Bathory takes the approach that Augustine's aim is education, and political (or prepolitical) education is a major part of his teaching for his congregation. The impression left is an activist bishop in front of what he hopes will be an activist congregation. What form that activity can take is left open, and leaves much to conjecture: Augustine's society is far from a liberal democracy, and we are, of course, centuries away from any sort of list of 'human rights' being drawn up. In other words, the populace did not elect political leaders, and, given that most of Augustine's congregation were poor, most people's opinions would not be considered worthy of consideration – so legitimate political activity would have been limited to say the least.

On the other hand, in a society where, at least notionally, the Emperor's power was based on the support and acclamation of the people, it may be argued that demonstrations of public opinion had to be taken seriously, but these demonstrations could be problematic. Clearly Augustine is no advocate of his congregation taking the law into their own hands,[84] and, as I have noted, motivation is key for Augustine.

Bathory leaves us with a policy of Augustinian self-examination that 'sought constantly to challenge his audience' (111), but there is no evidence from Bathory as to where Augustine's challenge could legitimately lead in terms of dealing with the current political order. We might suppose that we could be left with lobbying those in power (and there is plenty of evidence that *Augustine* did that)[85] but in order to lobby, a person has to be influential enough to gain access to those with the power to alter the situation, and not

[83] Possibly like the incident covered in *Ep.* 10*.
[84] *Sermo* 302.
[85] See Dodaro, 'Eloquent Lies', 113.

even Augustine necessarily had the influence to command an audience with Imperial authorities.[86] What we are given is an idea of prepolitical education, and some parallels between the self and society, between the education of the individual and the education of a people – and no evidence from Bathory as to how he sees that education leading to responsible action by ordinary members of the congregation.

What Bathory omits to mention is the pilgrim nature of the congregation's life as members of the heavenly city, especially in relation to its eschatological end. This eschatological nature is clear to Ernest Fortin, who points out that for Augustine, the solution to the inherent tension between the Christian and his political overlords, is not to politicise religion, but to move beyond the problem 'in the direction of a goal which was not only transpolitical but otherworldly.'[87] If there is a prophetic role for the Augustinian preacher, it must surely primarily be to the pilgrim members of the city of God, those who could be recalled to the teaching of their founder. Any Christian leader in civil society, however devout, would have to bear in mind that most of the people for whom he bears responsibility are not pilgrim members of the city of God, and have to be treated as such. Also, because all are fallen, everyone will always need laws and the fear of punishment if any sort of earthly peace is to be maintained.

3.7.2 Individual and Society, Household and City

A further difficulty for Bathory in his search for the Christian *paideia* is the hierarchical nature of Augustine's thinking. He assumes, without showing any evidence, that every member of Augustine's congregation was educable to a political end.[88] Contrary to what we might expect, Bathory does not set up

[86] Harrison states that 'bishops seem to have had very little authority or influence when it came to episcopal interventions ...' (*Augustine*, 125).

[87] Ernest L. Fortin, 'The Saint Augustine Lecture 1971: Political Idealism and Christianity in the Thought of St. Augustine', in http://www.library.villanova.edu/sermons/fortin.htm (11/09/02), 35.

[88] The only 'end' that Augustine was interested in was the 'end' that led to the heavenly city. While Augustine may have believed that everyone was 'educable' in terms of being brought into membership of the heavenly city, I do not accept that Augustine thought everyone would benefit from a classical education – or even the Christian version of it (see 3.3 above). I

parallels between the family group and the city but 'the education of God's people and that of each individual ...' (165-6). He continues: 'What is important was that at each step along the way the individual had a perspective from which to view his actions and chart his directions' (166).

This emphasis on every individual – and the equality this seems to imply – does not tally with what Rowan Williams tells us about Augustine's thinking. Subordination of some people to others is part of Augustine's *ordo*, and 'the authority of the Roman *paterfamilias* over family and slaves is accepted and defended as a model.'[89] This, of course, involves coercion and not the liberal ideal of free exchange between equals that Bathory seems to assume in his writing. But, more importantly from our perspective, it shows Bathory reading contemporary ideals about the atomistic individual back into the fifth century. He tends, as seen above, to think of the individual, rather than the family unit, but as Eugene TeSelle tells us,

> Augustine's "peace tabulation" is broadly Aristotelian ... This social and political theory has a number of characteristic features ... [including] its assumption that the *household* ... is the basis of the *polis*, so that *habits of order and subordination* developed in the household give training for the life of the city and ensure its stability ...[90]

It appears therefore that not all individuals were equally important in Augustine's thought in terms of their position in society,[91] and certainly not all would, or could, have equal influence in the public arena.

I have already noted that 'Roman language reinforced the privatisation that dominated that culture ...' (103). This happened in two ways:

> First of all, the diversity of languages within the empire often meant that two people – regardless of their good will – could not communicate with one another ... But second and more disastrously, communication between two Romans was endangered by the competitiveness of Roman rhetorical custom ... (103-4).

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therefore disagree with Bathory's statement that Augustine 'made clear through his *Confessions* ... that all men were educable ...' (158) – as ever, Bathory does not tell us where in *Confessiones* Augustine makes such an inference.

[89] Williams, 'Politics and the Soul', 62-3.

[90] TeSelle, *Two Cities*, 113-14, emphasis added.

[91] He would, however, insist on their equality before God.

If such a thing was ever recognised, the Roman public-private split is a very different idea from the present-day view that there are areas of life where society has no right to interfere. The Augustinian individual was always an individual in society. There is no record of Augustine living alone.[92] It seems he always needed people around him – even as bishop of Hippo, he lived in community. This is not to say that Augustine was unaware of the self as an individual – indeed *The Confessions* could not have been written otherwise – but he is aware of himself as an individual in relation to others; in *Confessions* those others include his family, his friends, and, primarily, God.

In spite of Augustine's difficulties with his own family, he states that 'the ordered concord of domestic rule and obedience has reference to the ordered concord of civic rule and obedience.'[93] Even if Bathory now moves away from the individual / society parallel to the more Augustinian household / city one, we are still left with a difficulty (and it is one that Bathory overlooks in his desire to see the church as 'a framework' which might 'initiate true public action' (167)). This difficulty is that, while Augustine regarded the family as part of the natural order (that is, without the Fall, there would still have been family life), the same cannot be said of Augustine's attitude to the civil and political society, which is only 'natural' in humanity's post-Fall experience.[94] However, Augustine insists that 'domestic peace has reference to civic peace',[95] so there is a connection between the two, though 'the temptations of arbitrary power and excess grow greater the more power there is to be had.'[96]

There is also the difference in a faithful household's relationship to the heavenly city, and the relationship between a non-Christian household and the earthly city.[97] The faithful household seeks the perfect peace of the heavenly city even while it makes use of the earthly peace. The non-faithful household can only seek earthly peace. The latter household will establish 'an ordered

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[92] 'He was by nature a gregarious person, for whom the eremitical life had little appeal ...' (Bonner, *Life and Controversies*, 94).
[93] *DCD*, XIX, 16, cf. Bathory, 161.
[94] Cain built his city after the Fall, see *DCD*, XV. 1.
[95] *DCD*, XIX. 16.
[96] Elshtain, *Limits*, 40.
[97] For what follows, see O'Donovan, 'Western Political Thought', 140-1, and *DCD*, XIX. 17.

concord of civil obedience and rule in order to secure a kind of co-operation of men's wills for the sake of attaining the things which belong to this mortal life.'[98] The faithful household will make use of this peace or concord and 'does not hesitate to obey the laws of the earthly city' (provided that they allow the true God to be worshipped);[99] but whereas the non-Christian household only seeks earthly peace, the faithful household 'directs that earthly peace towards heavenly peace.'

> This peace the Heavenly City possesses in faith while on its pilgrimage, and by this faith it lives righteously, directing towards the attainment of that peace every good act which it performs either for God, or – since the city's life is inevitably a social one – for neighbour.[100]

Not forgetting that true peace (like true justice) only exists in the city of God, Augustine is clear that we should aim for peace in both the household and the city. That peace is a peace between friends based on trust and therefore truthfulness.

3.7.3 The Politics of (Not) Lying

For Augustine, any form of lying breaks this trust upon which society is built.[101] Bathory does not discuss how this attitude to lying would work in civil society.[102] His only example is Augustine's discussion of Varro. For Augustine, Varro had analysed Roman life, pointed to its problems, but he was too scared of public opinion to tell the truth about Roman traditional religion.[103] If we look to Augustine's discussions of lying, we find that even Rahab would not have been excused for her lies about the presence of the Israelite spies in her house.[104] There is, from Augustine's perspective, no guarantee that honest action would have the intended consequences, so how much less would deception – however laudable the ends – justify the means,

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[98] *DCD*, XIX. 17.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] See *Against Lying* [*Contra Mendacium*] in Roy J. Deferrari (ed.) *The Fathers of the Church: St. Augustine Treatises on Various Subjects* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 4 (7).
[102] This omission also occurs in the twentieth-century writers examined in 2.4.3 above.
[103] *DCD*, VI.6. Cf. Bathory, 123.
[104] *Contra Mendacium*, 17 (34). See also Dodaro, 'Eloquent Lies', 79-89.

especially given the uncertainty of the outcome.[105] After all, the Jericho authorities could have refused to believe Rahab and searched her house anyway.[106] Augustine's approach is much more rigorous that any politician, facing the 'realities' of fifth century – or present-day life – could countenance.[107] 'In the end, he rejected absolutely any possible moral justification of compensative sin, and any attempt to justify the discretionary lie even for the sake of national security.'[108]

To return to Rahab, Augustine allows that it would be correct for her to refuse to cooperate with the authorities (in other words, she did not need to point to the ceiling), but his idea of what she should say ('I know where they are, but I fear God and will not betray them')[109] is hardly likely to appease the Jericho authorities. So, while it may be 'one thing to utter a falsehood and another to pass the truth over in silence',[110] the conclusion must remain that 'all lies are intrinsically evil...'.[111]

For Thomas Feehan, Augustine's attitude to lying is based on the 'corresponding prima facie right, not to the truth, but a right not to be lied to'.[112] The arguments Augustine advances include that lying is speaking against the truth known in the mind; it intends to deceive the listener,[113] but also lying undermines trust in society. Once lying is permitted (for whatever motives), Augustine asks:

> Do you not see whither this evil tends? It tends not only to make us appear suspect to them and them to us, but it tends, and not without cause, to make every brother appear suspect to every other brother.[114]

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[105] Dodaro, 'Eloquent Lies', 89.
[106] Ibid., 88. Thomas Feehan also discusses this case (among others) in 'Augustine's Own Examples of Lying', *Augustinian Studies* 22 (1991), 171 and 180.
[107] The same could be said for any trader or military strategist.
[108] Dodaro, 'Eloquent Lies', 87.
[109] *Contra Mendacium*, 17 (34).
[110] Ernest L. Fortin, 'The Political Implications of St. Augustine's Theory of Conscience', *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), 145.
[111] Fortin, 'Political Implications', 145.
[112] Feehan, 'Augustine's Own Examples', 181. Feehan does not make the point, but for Augustine it is the grace of God that imparts the truth to a person's soul – we cannot presume on a 'right' to that truth.
[113] See Thomas Feehan, 'The Morality of Lying in St. Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990), 71-2.
[114] *Contra Mendacium*, 4, (7). Cf. Feehan, 'Morality', 74.

So that, anyone who decides that lying is helpful for their cause (or for any other reason) will find that '[w]ishing to be helpful by lying, he is held unreliable when he speaks the truth.'[115]

Bathory then, may point the way for society to be more truthful about its past and its present, but he does not examine the difficulty of creating the sort of 'lie free' environment Augustine requires – nor does he indicate whether Augustine thought such a society was attainable this side of the *parousia.* Augustine expects a very high standard of truth telling – this high standard may come from (and be seen as an over-reaction to) his own experience as a rhetor. This career culminated in his self-disgust and misery at having to deliver a panegyric to and about the fifteen year old Emperor Valentinian II[116] (even the beggar he passed in the street seemed happier than Augustine as he made his way to court).[117] Every member of the court would know that this panegyric was a lie from start to finish – and yet Augustine was expected to deliver the panegyric, and woe betide him if he told the truth! If Augustine ever expected the standard of truth-telling to rise to the heights he advocated, he does not say, but Christians were expected to tell the truth at all times. His tracts *De Mendacio* and *Contra Mendacium* were written as theological and pastoral treatises,[118] and not therefore, as social and political ones, but, given how firmly Augustine believes that it is never appropriate to lie, his attitude would, we can expect, remain the same in all circumstances. This is perhaps an occasion where we can see that Augustine is so insistent on how things ought to be, that he makes no allowance for how things are.[119] Interestingly, he appears to think much more about how things *are* when he deals with coercion.

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[115] *Lying* [*De Mendacio*] in Roy J. Deferrari (ed.) *The Fathers of the Church: St. Augustine Treatises on Various Subjects* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 8 (11). Cf. Feehan, 'Morality', 75.

[116] Dodaro, 'Eloquent Lies', 81.

[117] See *Conf.* VI, vi, 9.

[118] See Thomas Feehan, 'Augustine on Lying and Deception', *Augustinian Studies* 19 (1988), 132.

[119] John M. Rist makes the point well: 'given the complexities of present global problems and the bizarre ways in which politicians often reach the leadership of their various parties and states ... it is hard not to see systematic lying and misinforming as a necessary feature of a democratic state. And we know how uncompromisingly – even impossibly – tough Augustine is on lying' ('Democracy and Religious Values: Augustine on Locke, Lying and Individualism', *Augustinian Studies* 29 (1998), 19).

3.7.4 Coercion

As with lying, but this time against Deane, Markus, and Milbank,[120] Bathory makes no reference to coercion and its place within Augustine's thought. This omission is disconcerting, and relates to the under-consideration of the eschatological nature of Augustine's thought – Augustine tells us that only the city of God is free of coercion.

For Deane, Augustine's change of mind over the coercion of the Donatists is 'a contradiction of the most fundamental kind'.[121] Markus shares the same concerns, but tries to solve the issue by pointing out that Augustine regarded this coercion as being enforced by leaders who happened to be the church's servant rather than asking the state (as such) to enforce the Emperor's pro-Catholic edicts.[122] Whether an official should use his position – and the state's power – to force people into the Catholic Church is probably the question that Markus feels ought to have (but clearly had not) troubled Augustine.[123] For Milbank, more radically, '[t]he only finally tolerable, and non-sinful punishment, for Christians, must be the self-punishment inherent in sin',[124] as in all punishment, or coercion, 'however mild and benignly motivated, there is still present a moment of 'pure' violence, externally and arbitrarily related to the end one has in mind ...'.[125] Milbank recognises, with Augustine, that the Fall introduced coercion (and hence the tragedy of the Church's involvement with the *dominium*), but he does not seem to realise how unAugustinian (rather than 'beyond Augustine')[126] his attitude is. In *Confessiones*, while Augustine admits that his own sexual adventures are touched with 'a bitter taste',[127] Augustine affirms that there is a beneficial side to Divine

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[120] Von Heyking is more sanguine about Augustine's acceptance of violence, arguing that he always advocates more lenient punishments and saw Augustine as, on the one hand, protecting his congregation from the attacks of the Donatists, and on the other, educating and reforming those Donatists so that they became Catholics. (*Augustine and Politics*, 239-57.)
[121] Deane, 220. See 2.4.3.2 above.
[122] Markus, *Saeculum*, 148-53.
[123] Ibid., 151-2.
[124] Milbank, *Social Theory*, 421.
[125] Ibid., 420.
[126] Ibid., 422.
[127] *Conf.* II. ii (4).

punishment.[128] If God is prepared to punish, Augustine is therefore prepared to support punishment and coercion in both church and civil society.

There are implicit references to coercion in Bathory's work: for example, he points to the fact that Augustine was punished as a child – but the inference is that Augustine deserved that punishment, even if it was hypocritical of his teachers to punish him for 'crimes' which those same adults committed on a regular basis (44).

By contrast, it seems that Augustine relied on exhortation in order to modify his congregants' behaviour. On one occasion when he wanted a celebration modified (if not cancelled) he found that his sermons failed to convince his entire congregation.

> On the verge of quitting for want of "more powerful means," Augustine tells Alypius that he was visited by those whom he thought intransigent and was moved to continue his preaching that finally met with success. The steadfastness of both preacher and congregant was thus shown to be of great importance (110-11).

It seems that Christian rhetoric finally won the day (though one is left to wonder what 'more powerful means' Augustine would have liked to employ). In spite of this, it seems that Augustine's general attitude was, although he believed that '[t]he truth of a lesson may be clarified by the skill of its instructor,' that the truth that 'must dominate', and the vital aspect for both speaker and hearer, is motive (110). Given this, as Augustine did not believe that a person's will (and therefore, their motivation) could be coerced, we can perhaps see why coercion is lacking in Bathory's account. But how to get people into the position where they would become hearers? This is where coercion enters the picture: Bathory forgets that Augustine was happy 'to compel them to come in.'[129]

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[128] '[Y]ou 'strike to heal', you bring death upon us so that we should not die apart from you (Deut. 32:39).' Ibid.

[129] See, for example, *Ep.* 93.5, quoted in Dyson, *The Pilgrim City*, 201.

Augustine came to this position after he had seen the result of enforced church attendance on Donatists.[130] Indeed, his initial opinion was that force should not be used, but, as he says in his letter to Vincentius, the Rogatist[131] bishop of Cartenna:

> my opinion at first was that no one should be coerced into the unity of Christ ... lest we should have those whom we knew to be true heretics becoming false Catholics. But this opinion of mine was overcome not by the words of those who opposed it, but by the examples to which they could point by way of demonstration ...[132]

Augustine then lists several examples of what has been said to him by former Donatists in thanks that they had been coerced into entering the Catholic Church. He continues:

> Could, I then, continue to oppose my colleagues, and, by speaking against their opinion, hinder such conquests of the Lord and prevent the sheep of Christ ... from being gathered into the fold of peace [i.e. the Catholic Church]? ... Certainly not. Let the kings of the earth serve Christ by making laws for Christ.[133]

Markus also tells how the later Augustine related the external coercion with internal, motivational change.

> The divine *disciplina* uses external pressure to bring about an internal moral development ... Free choice and compulsion were not incompatible: 'It is not true that nothing is accomplished by external pressure. For not only is the wall of hardened habit breached by human terrors, but the mind's faith and understanding is at the same time strengthened by divine authority and reason.'[134]

In the same way, Bathory points out that Augustine 'saw freedom and authority as partners' (128). In order to be free, he continues, a person must be able 'to judge between alternatives' (128). But Bathory seems reluctant to allow coercion to enter the picture.

> In an attempt to recreate ... public feeling, Augustine prodded, implored, and exhorted his parishioners to a recognition of their active responsibilities toward themselves and their brethren. The *disciplina* that he sought to create was one that could become the foundation of a new order with the congregation as the centre of that order (113).

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[130] See Markus, *Saeculum*, 141-142.
[131] The Rogatists were a small Donatist faction.
[132] From *Ep.* 93, 5-19, quoted in Dyson, *The Pilgrim City*, 203.
[133] Ibid, 205.
[134] Markus, *Saeculum*, 143, quoting *Ep.* 89.7. Cf. Deane, 189.

However, as I have noted, Augustine's *disciplina* involved coercion. Also, this coercion would be needed if a person, in order to be free, had to be broken from 'the grip of past habit' – this was something which Augustine regarded as having 'entered deeply into a man's make-up' and not necessarily lost on conversion.[135] This points to a unity between the necessity for education (as in Bathory's thesis) and coercion. The importance of education from an early age, and hence Augustine's criticism of the lack of correct guidance from his mother, is clear from Bathory's thesis. However, coercion was never dismissed as part of the Augustinian pastoral strategy,[136] and could be used to get people to where they should be. Augustine would not think that all bad habits could be broken in this life, but he would want and expect as many as could be persuaded to attend church and be given the benefit of the education on offer, that they might be guided to a better life on their pilgrimage to the city of God.

If such guidance was to be made through the imperial courts, then so be it. Augustine was however, always concerned that leniency should be applied, and he always wrote against capital punishment; in one case telling the proconsul of Africa (called, confusingly, Donatus), that if the latter were to put Donatists to death in his court, he would 'deter us [Catholics] from bringing any such case by our own efforts before your court.'[137] He still wished for the Donatists to be brought to trial, but then 'be persuaded and informed' rather than 'led through force alone' to 'bend their will to a better course.' This is because, even when he advocated coercion, Augustine still realised that 'when people are led through force alone and not through teaching even to abandon a great evil and embrace a great good, the efforts expended prove burdensome rather than profitable.'[138]

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[135] Markus, *Saeculum*, 144.
[136] In his *Confessiones*, Augustine pleads: 'If only someone could have imposed restraint on my disorder' (*Conf.* II. ii (3)), and later says that 'You [God] 'fashion pain to be a lesson' (Ps. 93:20 LXX)' (ibid., II. ii (4)). On similar lines, in *Ep.* 104. 7, Augustine asks: 'If, as little boys, or even as bigger ones, we had been let off by our parents or teachers whenever we pleaded for pardon after committing some sin, would any of us have been bearable as an adult? Who would have learnt anything useful? These things are done out of care, not cruelty.'
[137] *Ep.* 100. 2.
[138] Ibid.

For Augustine, it is a matter of regret that our authority structures require 'reinforcement by mechanisms of compulsion'[139] but this is due to our fallen state. However, he is also aware that there is no guarantee that punishment would work: 'I don't know whether more people are reformed than slip into worse ways through fear of impending punishment ...'.[140] Augustine is caught between the ideas that punishment could lead to a person's destruction, but that leaving that person unpunished could 'lead to someone else being destroyed'.[141] Therefore, we can see that while Augustine is clear in his 'unambiguous approval of the official use of force ... there are times when he makes no secret of his misgivings'.[142] Williams points out that the power of coercion that 'so readily converts itself into a tool for selfish interest, a means of exercising the *libido dominandi*, is a sign of how far fallen we are.'[143] Coercion certainly has its downside.

> Cruelty, he [Augustine] agreed, had no place in official policy or religious conversion, but if authorities had been moved by mercy or pity, moved *ex caritate*, to rescue errant Christians from their errors, Augustine ... saw God's hand in the matter.'[144]

Augustine lived in a coercive, not to say violent, society, and his thoughts on the necessity of coercion spread further than the church. Indeed, Augustine expected Christian soldiers to fight and kill for their Emperor – not for him the pacifism of earlier Christian writers[145] – so coercion was certainly part of Augustine's *civil society*, and, as Christians were to be in the earthly city (even if they were not to be of it), they and their leaders must know when and where to use coercion. Motive again is the key:

> [We need] to remember what St. Augustine taught: war and strife, however just the cause, stir up temptations to ravish and to devour, often in order to ensure peace. Just war is and must remain a cautionary tale of domestic and international order, a story of the requirements and purposeful uses of power and order, a lens through which to look at the heart of what constitutes peace ... In a world of

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[139] Rowan Williams, 'Politics and the Soul', 63. Cf. Deane, 189.
[140] *Ep.* 95. 3.
[141] Ibid.
[142] John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 226.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Peter Iver Kaufman, 'Redeeming Politics: Augustine's Cities of God', in Donnelly, *The City of God*, 83.
[145] Although Augustine 'makes war much harder to justify than many just-war thinkers do ...'. Elshtain, *Limits*, 111.

> discontinuities and profound yearnings, of sometimes terrible necessities, a human being can yet strive to maintain or to create an order that approximates justice, to prevent the worst from happening, and to resist the seductive lure of imperial grandiosity.[146]

For Augustine, the person best equipped to create that order and resist imperial grandiosity, is the person who has been educated in the Christian *paideia*. Williams points to Augustine's eulogy of the (almost) ideal Christian emperor

> whose motive in all he does is love and not the lust for glory. Theodosius I is regarded ([*De Civitate Dei*] V, 26) as a ruler well on his way towards this ideal ... [W]e should note what exactly it is that Augustine picks out as the marks of good government – law and coercion employed for the sake of the subject by one who is manifestly not in thrall to *libido dominandi* or vainglory, because he is capable of sharing power and accepting humiliation.[147]

Broadly speaking, it seems that Augustine accepts that all leaders will use coercion in civil society, but the means and motives for the use of coercion will be different for Christians than for others. Coercion will be used to set people on the right path, not as mere punishment. Perhaps the only observable difference for those on the outside would be the fact that the Christian leader uses his power and authority to promote the Catholic Church. Finally, for ordinary people, we must note that 'the most effective guarantee of the quality of authority is not only that those who wield it should be sensitive and scrupulous men; but that they should be in the habit of wielding it.'[148] Ordinary people are to be educated, it seems even according to Bathory, simply to deal with 'the events that controlled their lives' (127). Those who were able, and in a position to lead, should exercise their God-given authority. This is, of course, not a democratic ideal, and would not in itself appeal to liberation theologians, but the question is how does that concern manifest itself. Bathory thinks it involves 'political therapy.'

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[146] Ibid.

[147] Williams, 'Politics and the Soul', 64-5. Von Heyking insists that both church and Emperor 'would have benefited politically from Theodosius's repentance' as the Emperor needed a power base against overweening courtiers; this could now come from the people – mediated by the church. (*Augustine and Politics*, 213-14.) While this cynical view may hold an element of truth, it appears that Augustine's purpose in recording the incident is (as Williams notes) to point to the lack of *libido dominandi* in this particular Emperor.

[148] P.R.L. Brown, 'St. Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion', *Journal of Roman Studies* 54 (1964), 115.

3.7.5 Augustine as Political Therapist?

Bathory tries to make the case for the church's ability to make more than a minimal difference – Augustine, for him, is the 'civic or political therapist':

> He defines and seeks to influence those objects that a people share or love in common. He describes thereby the most basic substance of a commonwealth, and he offers instruction in the reformation of that basic substance.' (128).

Most of this statement is perfectly acceptable: people either love themselves to the exclusion of God, or they love God to the exclusion of themselves; the commonwealth is thereby defined by that love. But the two commonwealths so defined are the city of God and the earthly city, and there is no reformation to offer. People are either going to hell, or to heaven.[149] For those going to hell there is only repentance – the earthly city is not, in and of itself, going to be 'reformed': it will be destroyed in the fullness of time. If Christians are involved in the cities in which they live as pilgrims, it is because they love their fellows and wish to do the best they can for their neighbours: it is not primarily to seek a structural reformation of the city itself. In other words, Christians cannot turn their backs on their fellow human beings even while they do not 'allow their souls to be molded [*sic*] and determined by the taste and opinions of the regime under which they happen to live.'[150] The best that anyone can do for their fellows is to bring them into – or, to retain Augustine's pilgrim approach, to point them in the direction of – the city of God.

The eschatological note of Augustine's work cannot be ignored. Christianity, certainly Augustinian Christianity, supplies the believer with 'standards of judgment that are ultimately independent of the regime and the pervasive influence of its principles.'[151] This will always create tension. The earthly city – because of the foundation of its love – will seek the ultimate in loyalty, dedication and even worship, from its citizens. It will not, therefore appreciate anyone who – however obedient to its laws – has in the final analysis, a different loyalty. This is why Peter Burnell is wrong to state that '[t]rying to guarantee a succession of saints in public office would ... be ... a form of

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[149] *DCD*, XV.1.
[150] Fortin, 'Political Idealism and Christianity', 33.
[151] Ibid.

defending the state by divine grace.'[152] Williams points out that 'no state can rightly be defended as an absolute 'value' in itself',[153] which means that no 'succession of saints' would, or should, defend the state against the values of the heavenly city.

There is no evidence that Augustine ever supposed that any commonwealth would be perfect – 'the transition from oldness to newness is never completed.'[154] However, *De Civitate Dei* is 'a total attack upon the value system of Rome ...'[155] (a sentiment with which Bathory would agree) which leads, according to Eugene TeSelle, to a new political theology:

1. Neither pagan nor Christian religion ensures a state against the temporary and military vicissitudes common to states as such.
2. As regards religion, the Roman empire can do nothing better than to be a Catholic Christian empire and thereby further among men the worship of the true God.
3. The ultimate destiny of Catholic Christianity is not in the slightest degree tied to the fortunes of the Roman Empire.[156]

The political therapy that Augustine issues is much stronger medicine than Bathory realises, and takes account of the possible (or, eschatologically, definite) destruction of the state. In the end, although according to Augustine the state would do best with saints in office (and anywhere else in society),[157] the earthly city will fall, so seeking to defend the state by divine grace will be counter productive for the Church as it looks to the *parousia* of Christ.

3.8 The Quietist Approach

Having looked at, and criticised, Bathory's idea of a universal Christian prepolitical *paideia*, we return to Deane's quietist view. Deane presents

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[152] Peter J. Burnell, 'The Status of Politics in St. Augustine's *City of God*', *History of Political Thought* 13 (1992), 28.
[153] Williams, 'Politics and the Soul', 66.
[154] TeSelle, *Living in Two Cities*, 42.
[155] Ibid, 16.
[156] After Evans in ibid, 20.
[157] See *Epp.* 138.15, 91.3, *DCD*, II. 19. Cf. Fortin, 'Political Idealism', 27.

Augustine as promoting both a 'political and social quietism':[158] 'the true Christian must be prepared "to endure even the most wicked and most vicious commonwealth"'.[159] Whatever the regime, Augustine allows 'no scope for any limitations of his [a ruler's] power by his subjects or for any disobedience or resistance to his commands'.[160] Although Deane states that Christians have 'a positive duty to participate in the State's work ... if they had the talents that fitted them for these duties';[161] these duties are merely for the maintenance of the peace of Babylon, and as a defence against anarchy; 'there is little room for the idea that power may be used to improve the lot of man on earth ...'.[162] Deane appears to have little use for the idea that power is to be used for the benefit of the church and its programme to bring people into the city of God and thereby (if indirectly) improve their lot.

This quietist doctrine, for all it takes due account of Augustine's priorities as a Christian, is unsatisfactory when examined in the light of Augustine's own willingness to intervene with the political authorities, for example, in mitigating capital punishment (though there appears to be no evidence that Augustine ever questioned the right of the authorities to commit someone to their death, he clearly argued against that sentence being carried out).[163]

There is also his clear change of mind about the use of political power to coerce the schismatic Donatists back into the Catholic Church – once he was prepared to advocate the use of force, he was clearly involved in the political process and did more than merely obey as he was quite prepared to remind the authorities of their duty to exercise that force against the Donatists. This was more than a religious quarrel as the Circumcellions – the 'shock troops' of Donatism – were clearly breaching the civil, as well as the religious, peace. But Augustine goes further than this in relating religious to civil disturbance. The Donatists,

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[158] Deane, 151.
[159] Deane, 124.
[160] Deane, 143.
[161] Deane, 224.
[162] Deane, 151.
[163] See *Ep.* 100.2 quoted above at 3.7.4, and Bonner, *Life and Controversies*, 267.

> refused to obey the laws passed by emperors and circulated by their deputies, refused to accept that diligent public officials were God's ensigns and champions of the church. Could such refusals, Augustine wondered, amount to anything other than sedition?[164]

Clearly, for Augustine religious and political quarrels influenced each other, so coercion in one implies coercion in the other. The same is true for action: Dodaro, as noted above, has pointed to Augustine's activism in doing his best to alleviate the plight of slaves and the poor who came to his church.[165] This action had implications outside the church – not least because Augustine would write letters on his congregants behalf to civil authorities.[166] A passive, quietist approach is not what Augustine is necessarily about – and certainly not when we look at his own record.

3.9 Challenging the Consensus

Peter Burnell states that there is a broad consensus – which includes Deane – that Augustine regards humanity as intrinsically social, but not political (that is, politics only arrived after the Fall).[167] Against this consensus, Burnell argues that 'in principle for Augustine the civil state is the chief natural means of justice' even though 'in practice the goodness of civil society ... has been much diminished (though not annihilated) by the Fall ...'[168] Given these conclusions, Burnell surprisingly also concludes that Christianity has 'little ... politically reformative power.'[169] This second conclusion is even more surprising if Burnell is indeed arguing (as he appears to) that 'politics' and 'civil life' are two ways of saying the same thing.[170] However, politics, is about trying to reconcile differing views about what should be done: differing views that are based not just on disagreements over what is most effective or efficient, but also about what is right.[171]

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[164] Kaufman, 'Redeeming Politics', 84.
[165] Dodaro, 'Eloquent Lies', 113. Gaylon L. Caldwell documents Augustine's concern for a poor tenant farmer, Faventius, who had sought sanctuary, but been abducted. Augustine writes several letters to relevant authorities in his concern for Faventius, not least because of the lack of concern for the "due process of law" ('Augustine's Critique of Human Justice', *Journal of Church and State* 2 (1960), 14-15).
[166] See Caldwell, 14-15.
[167] Burnell, 'The Status of Politics', 14.
[168] Ibid, 28-9.
[169] Ibid, 29.
[170] Ibid, 22.
[171] See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xvi, quoted at 1.4 above.

If we lived in a natural (pre-Fall) state then our interests and values would surely be the same – so no conflict, and therefore, no politics. If, to return to Burnell's argument, the civil state is the chief *natural* means of justice, then surely the whole point of Christianity would be to point back (or forward) to this natural state where people will, presumably live in political institutions, behind political boundaries in a completely non-coercive manner.

Looked at in this way, the flaw in Burnell's argument is obvious: Christianity points to a city of God where people exist, as brothers and sisters, in a state without boundaries. All civil states have fought over their boundaries (or had them imposed from outside by other, more powerful states) so the ultimate justice of those boundaries must be open to question.[172] If these boundaries are open to question, then these civil states cannot be as natural as Burnell claims. We are, therefore, back where we started: with the consensus view that, for Augustine, humanity may be naturally social, but not naturally political.[173] This at least means that a minimal influence (Burnell's last conclusion) seems reasonable. How minimal that influence would be under Bathory's thesis is open to question and would depend on how well the prepolitical education was disseminated amongst the congregation, and how many people were motivated by, and able to take action, because of that education.

3.10 A Prepolitical *Paideia*?

Bathory's work certainly has a 'rightness and corrective importance'[174] about it when it is taken against the passive obedience line advocated by Deane and others. The shortcomings of *Political Theory as Public Confession* have been noted above, but I now wish to point to those aspects of the work that deserve praise.

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[172] See Fortin, 'Political Idealism', 32.
[173] *DCD*, XIX. 5 begins with Augustine's agreement with the philosophers that 'the life of the wise man is a social one', and ends with the plight of a city full of law-suits and criminal trials: even when it is 'at peace' (see also *DCD*, XV.4, for more on strife in the earthly city). *DCD*, XV. 5 points out that Cain founded his city after the Fall, on the other hand, goodness is possessed 'more abundantly in proportion to the fullness with which he loves his partner in it.'
[174] Burnell, 'The Status of Politics', 24 n. 68.

3.10.1 Education

The education of the individual, or any group of people, and the influence of others over them (especially in their formative years), is vital for the 'relationship between the developing individual and his human, social environment ...' (93). Augustine was aware of this – as is shown by Bathory's treatment of the parallels between *Confessiones* and *De Civitate Dei.* Bathory is not the first to note that *De Civitate Dei* is an 'expansion of the *Confessions*',[175] but his tying together of the educational aspects relating the preparation of Augustine himself for public life with the preparation of the peoples of Rome, of the Old Testament, and of Christ, is worthy of attention. Education is, of necessity, prepolitical. This is because, whether for good or ill, our education – whether it is formal schooling, or the more informal influence of our home life – lays down our attitude towards involvement in public life. Whether we accept 'any plausible leader' who promises us more in the way of 'bread and circuses', or whether we look for leaders who offer less selfish and more public, inducements, depends more on our background and education (in the broadest sense) than on rational thought at the time the decision is required.

Of course, if we assume that people come into church flawed (and, given Augustine's views on human nature, this is a safe assumption), then people need to be reformed, as Augustine himself needed to be after his conversion. *Confessiones* stand as witness to the fact that Augustine believed that personal change was possible, the theme of reform was expanded in *De Civitate Dei* to emphasise that congregations of the Christian church could be reformed towards the true public service of neighbour-love, and it was the job of Christian leaders in the church to act as the intermediaries, the prophets, recalling the congregation to its founding principles. Michael Loriaux tells us that a 'Christian statesman takes it as his or her moral task to strive to contribute to the *quality* of the earthly or secular peace ...' – just as Christians

[175] Figgis, quoted in Dodaro, 'Eloquent Lies', 120 n. 24. Figgis published in 1921.

can 'intervene on the model of the Roman *paterfamilias* to assure the education (and correction) of people who are in his or her charge.'[176]

3.10.2 Motivation

Why we wish to act in a particular way in society, Augustine argues, is as (if not more) important than what we wish to do. Even though it may often appear that Christians and non-Christians behave in the same way, their motivation is different, and this 'internal' difference is vital. In the end, the motivation will count, as, for example, coercion will be applied for different reasons – even if, to the one being coerced, it will feel just as painful.

The coercive nature of life in civil society is the most difficult part of Augustine's thought to come to terms with. If Christians are to 'get involved in politics', how do they cope with the apparently arbitrary use of force? Augustine's only answer seems to be that Christians are involved unhappily. Augustine ends *De Civitate Dei* XIX. 6 with a description of a judge who may have to torture the innocent and act in ignorance against justice:

> we certainly have an instance of what I call the wretchedness of man's condition ... [though the judge] is not guilty ... is he also happy? Surely, it would be more compassionate, and more worthy of the dignity of man, if he were to acknowledge that the necessity of acting in this way is a miserable one: if he hated his own part in it, and if, with the knowledge of godliness, he cried out to God, 'From my necessities deliver Thou me.'[177]

Christians are also in the invidious position of trying 'to live a Christian life and practise the Christian faith while at the same time struggling to maintain the shadowy peace of the *saeculum*.'[178] Christians 'are authorized to use their "love" to maintain social structures, though ... not to change them'.[179] Augustine would regard membership of the pilgrim city of God as more important than any political initiative in civil society, but he would (however

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[176] Michael Loriaux, 'The Realists and Saint Augustine: Scepticism, Psychology and Moral Action in International Relations Thought', *International Studies Quarterly* 36 (1992), 414. Cf. *DCD*, XIX. 14 (not XV, 22 as Loriaux states).
[177] *DCD*, XIX. 6.
[178] Rist, *Ancient Thought Baptized*, 230.
[179] Ibid. Rist uses the example of slavery, but as Dodaro points out that, although Augustine did not oppose the institution, 'he did complain to officials of abuses of the laws permitting slavery ...' (Dodaro, 'Eloquent Lies', 113.)

secondarily, and following Bathory) still advocate the minor improvements that he, or his fellow bishops, could persuade the authorities to make.[180]

3.10.3 Political Involvement

In that it seeks to teach its congregations, the church is politically involved. However, we must note that Augustine would probably put more emphasis on church leaders being involved (as people who would, in his society, have authority to take some action), and less on 'ordinary' people. Ordinary people would, however, be educated to be – as we have seen – wary of the mob, and of leaders whose motivation would be open to question. Augustine would also be aware of how incremental any change would be. As I have noted above, he never advocated attacking or undermining any existing social structures. He was happy to support social justice, and would write to civil officials in defence of the poor when their legal rights were being flouted; but civil disobedience or revolution were not part of his strategy.

Augustine's writing clearly does involve a radical critique of all classical politics. And even if he does have a pessimistic view of human nature and therefore of the amount of progress that can be expected in civil society, he does not, as Bathory points out, want his congregation frozen in inaction and (negative) anxiety. If Christians are called to love their neighbour as well as their God, then the attempt to improve their neighbour's political lot must (from Bathory's view of Augustine) not only be made by church leaders, but also the whole congregation must be educated to play its part as well.

3.11 Conclusion

Bathory's thesis leaves us with the question of how a prepolitically educated congregation would find new leaders if they realised that their present ones were not fit to carry out the task before them? In Augustine's time, the only 'power' the ordinary congregant would have is the self-control not to be

[180] See Dodaro, 'Between the Two Cities 11-12.

caught up by the emotional fury of the mob, and the wisdom to recognise a good leader when one appeared.[181] However, Augustine would expect that those who *had* power and influence to use it wisely according to the dictates of Christ.[182] Augustine himself, as we have seen, used his influence to help the poor of Hippo.

There is no suggestion that the ordinary congregant sitting under Augustine should, or could, seek power – even if they (and Augustine) could be sure that they would use that power correctly in the service of the Church and their neighbours. Whether this suggestion is not forthcoming from Augustine because he failed to consider the possibility for theological or practical reasons is a question that remains open. Theologically it could be argued that Augustine thought the seeking of political power so open to *cupiditas*, to the self-love upon which the earthly city is based,[183] as to risk a soul's salvation.[184] Practically it could be argued that Augustine did not live in our contemporary democracy where political power can legitimately be sought, so the problem of 'ordinary people' seeking political power just did not occur to him. Any answer to this debate would, of necessity, have to be both tentative and speculative. What we can conclude from the past two chapters is that Augustine never advocated turning our backs on society however it was construed or governed.[185] Nor did he, as I have noted, advocate revolution. He sought to do what he could, within the law, to assist people, to increase social justice (if only incrementally), but any political education for his congregation came through his example to alleviate the plight of the poor, and through his teaching on the command to love our neighbour.

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[181] Though this would only be by the grace of God. All leaders, including tyrants, were to be served.

[182] This does not mean that the church itself trains leaders in or for civil society. The church's education (in the broadest sense of that term) is about living as pilgrims in an evil and fallen world. Involvement in civil society is based on the love that is due to one's neighbour – and not about seeking power.

[183] See Rist, *Ancient Thought Baptized*, 222 and 224.

[184] 'Although "no man is prevented from devoting himself to the pursuit of truth (which) involves a praiseworthy kind of love," the same is not the case for the pursuit of office: high position in itself is "not a respectable object of ambition." Once "wise rule" is desired for the honor or power, even when exercised in a manner worthy of respect, it is an occasion and cause of sin' (William P. Haggerty, 'Augustine, the "Mixed Life," and Classical Political Philosophy', *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), 154).

[185] '[T]he "compulsion of love" ... undertakes "righteous engagement in affairs"' (ibid.).

Chapter 4

THE POWER OF THE OPPRESSED: GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ AND *A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION*

4.1 Introduction

Liberation theology takes a very different view to the 'powers that be' from Augustine, and seeks to 'conscientize' the poor, so that they become aware of their oppression and begin to seek ways to combat it. Again in contrast to Augustine, liberation theology emphasises the sinfulness of structures, not just of the individual. It is these structures – and those who use these structures to oppress the poor – that are to be opposed and overcome if the oppressed are to be liberated.

Liberation theology has, therefore, been criticised for reducing salvation to the political.[1] Certainly in its base communities and in its conscientization of the poor, it can be said to be providing a pre-political (if not a directly political) education for the poor.[2] It is the ordinary person who, according to this theology, needs to be made aware of his or her situation in order to be able to overcome it. It must also be said, as we shall see, that liberation theology does not view itself as a political theology in this reductionist fashion, but opposes 'apolitical' theology on the ground that this view 'requires self-deceit and is itself a political position providing covert support for the status quo.'[3]

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[1] Cf. Cardinal Ratzinger of the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Defence of the Faith; whether his criticisms are accurate is doubtful (see below).

[2] Paulo Freire 'saw education as having a political end because it can help construct a new society that facilitates the realization of a new human being' (Scott Mainwaring, *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916-1985* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1986), 69-70). As we shall see, Gutiérrez (and other liberation theologians) regard Freire's pedagogical work very highly.

[3] Ian Linden, *Liberation Theology: Coming of Age?* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1997). Raymond Plant points out that 'if Christian theology has a theory of man or human nature, it is difficult to see how such a theory could be developed without having a view about the institutions, both social and political, within which the human personality is nurtured' ('The Anglican Church and the Secular State', in George Moyser (ed.), *Church and Politics Today*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 319). Oliver O'Donovan states that '[t]heology must be political if it is to be evangelical. Rule out the political questions and you cut short the proclamation of God's saving power; you leave people enslaved at points where they ought to be set free from the power of sin ...' ('Political

Liberation theology makes much of the idea of community – specifically of solidarity with the poor. As such, the Western idea of a privatised faith is (correctly in my view) attacked.

In this chapter I have chosen to concentrate on the writings of Gustavo Gutiérrez as he is the best-known liberation theologian,[4] and because of the influence that Paulo Freire had on his work.[5] As Gutiérrez's seminal book, *A Theology of Liberation*, is still regarded as one of the best expressions of what he calls a '*new way* to do theology',[6] I shall look at Gutiérrez's liberation theology mainly, though not solely, through this work.[7] I will then look at some of the criticisms of Liberation Theology. Finally, I will examine Gutiérrez's work in terms of the three topics we looked at previously when we examined Augustine's twentieth century interpreters: that is, Gutiérrez's eschatology and how this affects his ideas of Christian involvement with the world. Secondly, the relation of the Christian individual with the civil society in which they find themselves. And, thirdly, how the church (in the light of the attitudes seen from the two other topics) should seek to educate that individual for political involvement. This last section, in particular, will enable us to examine more closely the debt that Gutiérrez owes (and which he acknowledges) to the work of Paulo Freire in educating the poor and oppressed.

Theology, Tradition and Modernity', in Christopher Rowland (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 241). O'Donovan goes on to offer his own critique of liberation theology, principally its 'acephalous idea of society' and its views (or lack thereof) of authority (see ibid., 245-7).

[4] Alfred T. Hennelly describes him as such in his 'General Introduction' to *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990). He goes on to say '[t]he very title of the liberation movement is taken from his book, *A Theology of Liberation* ...' (xxiii).

[5] Paulo Freire spent his life as an educator of the poor and oppressed – conscientizing them for political involvement. I shall look at his work in the next chapter; here I shall look at the theology that has been built (at least partly) on his work. The other liberation theologian influenced by Freire is Juan Luis Segundo, whose work will also be discussed briefly in section 4.6.3 below.

[6] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (London: SCM Press, revised edition 1988), 12, emphasis original.

[7] It must be said that Gutiérrez often repeats his points in later books. This is partly in response to criticism and partly for clarification. There is also, as we shall see, evidence of progression – in his later book *On Job*, Gutiérrez is clearly less idealistic than he is in *A Theology of Liberation*: fighting against injustice may not lead to temporal victory (see below). *A Theology of Liberation* was reprinted in a revised edition in 1988. All references,

4.2 *A Theology of Liberation*

Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian priest and theologian, lives and works in a world where the majority of the poor and impoverished, those he terms 'the oppressed', are Christian. His theology is born out of praxis – what Christians do and practise in the world – and reflection on God's Word in his Latin American culture.[8] Gutiérrez is insistent that he deals first and foremost with his own culture and situation, though he notes with approval in his introduction to the revised edition that 'the liberation perspective' has been adopted across denominational, cultural and religious boundaries (xix). His original, and remaining, purpose is to seek a response to the plight of the oppressed which would compare with the biblical presentation of 'liberation – salvation – in Christ as the total gift, which ... gives ... liberation its deepest meaning and its complete and unforeseeable fulfilment' (xiv). I shall first examine Gutiérrez's work, following the format he set up in *A Theology of Liberation*, but concentrating on the fourth part – the theological core[9] – where Gutiérrez puts forward his answer to the problems he raises earlier.

4.2.1 Parts 1 to 3: Theology, Liberation and the Latin American Church

In the opening chapter of *A Theology of Liberation*, 'Theology: A Critical Reflection' (3-12), Gutiérrez looks at theology as wisdom, as rational knowledge and, differentiated from the afore-mentioned classical tasks, as 'Critical Reflection on Praxis' (5ff.). This last aspect is seen as having its roots in the early church, and hopeful signs are seen in the Vatican II documents, but 'the influence of *Marxist thought*' (8, emphasis original) is also mentioned. (Marx, Marxism, and, more generally, socialism is approvingly, though not uncritically, mentioned throughout this book.)[10] Gutiérrez, in this chapter, wants to see the idea that theological premisses precede pastoral activity

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unless otherwise indicated, will be to this edition: further, unattributed page numbers in this chapter (given in brackets after each reference to the text) refer to the 1988 edition.

[8] This reflection while it is 'a *second* stage' is not to be seen as '*secondary*' (xxxiii, emphasis original).

[9] Cf. Alfred T. Hennelly, *Liberation Theologies: The Global Pursuit of Justice* (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1995), 13.

[10] This aspect of Liberation Theology has, as we shall see, caused considerable disquiet in many establishment quarters. See 4.3.1 below.

overturned and replaced with the idea that it *follows* pastoral activity (9). From this, Gutiérrez argues, Liberation Theology can be seen as 'part of the process through which the world is transformed' (12).

In Gutiérrez's liberation theology, the transformation of the world leans in a socialist direction. As far as Gutiérrez is concerned, authentic development can only come 'if there is liberation from the dominion exercised by the great capitalist countries, and especially by ... the United States of America' (54). Socialism, on the other hand, 'represents the most fruitful and far-reaching approach [to liberation]' (55). This far-reaching approach extends to utilising a Marxist class analysis of the situation: indeed, '*only* a class analysis will enable us to see what is really involved in the opposition between oppressed countries and dominant peoples' (54, emphasis added).[11] In this light, the theories of development are seen as too closely tied to capitalism and fail to address the real, deep-seated problems of the underdeveloped Latin American societies. Furthermore, the socialist revolution will be a "Latin American socialism that will promote the advent of the New Humanity." Gutiérrez does point out that socialism will 'not deliver humanity from injustices caused by personal attitudes ...' but he does see it as providing 'a fundamental equality of opportunity' (66). And any government which is seen as moving in this, more just, direction should be given the backing of the church, with the consent and involvement of the poor themselves 'who must be the protagonists of their own liberation' (67).

Of course, there is the possibility that 'the [Roman Catholic] Church will become linked to the future established order' (76) but, in response, Gutiérrez points out that not exercising the Church's social influence on behalf of the oppressed 'is really to exercise it against them ...' (76). The Church's overall task, as it faces the options and oppression before it, comes in four parts: a prophetic denunciation, a conscienticizing evangelisation (the Exodus theme

[11] Though Gutiérrez's Marxism is not very far reaching: see 4.3.1 below.

referred to here is taken up in chapter 9), a right attitude to poverty (discussed in chapter 13), and a need to look at the ecclesial structures (68-71).

4.2.2 *A Theology of Liberation* Part 4: 'Perspectives'

4.2.2.1 Introduction

The next part of Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation*, 'Perspectives', looks at Christianity and the Church's mission in the light of 'the process of liberation' (79). This discussion takes up most of the remainder of the book – apart from a short conclusion – and is itself divided into two parts: 'Faith and the New Humanity', and 'The Christian Community and the New Society'. There are, however, consistent themes. These include: the idea that commitment to political action must be balanced with other aspects of the Christian life (81); the idea that the goal of liberation (and here Gutiérrez looks to Vatican II for support) includes the creation of a new humanity (81); and the idea that Christians are to identify with the oppressed, not to struggle paternalistically on their behalf (82). This last idea, as we shall see, is easier to talk about than to do. Gutiérrez's own writing can appear to carry a certain elitist tone (though nowhere near as elitist as Augustine) – this elitism is problematic when placed alongside the ideal of equality that he seeks to create among the liberated oppressed.[12] However, with regard to the Church's belief in the possibility of universal salvation (that is, a salvation open to all – not one in which all will be saved whatever they think or do), Gutiérrez regards human existence as 'nothing but a yes or a no to the Lord' (84), and one in which we must all seek liberation in this life, and not confine it to the next.

[12] See 4.6.3 below. It must also be noted that nowhere does Gutiérrez, or other liberation theologians, seek to disassociate themselves from the hierarchical church structure to which they belong – hence the considerable effort in engagement with their critics in the Roman Catholic hierarchy – but this does mean that there is an implicit tension in seeking to raise the voice of the (lay) poor and put it on a par with well educated clerics used to a hierarchical structure.

4.2.2.2 New Humanity, Oppression and Sin

We must note, however, that Gutiérrez regards the creation of a new humanity as the *second* level of liberation.[13] The first level is the 'economic, social and political liberation' (137), and the third is 'liberation from sin and entrance into communion with God and with all persons' (137). In discussing the three levels of liberation,[14] Gutiérrez stresses the interdependence and interrelationship between them. Gutiérrez does refer both to a 'liberation which leads to the creation of a new humanity in a new society of solidarity' (137) and to a 'confidence in the future' (121). However, any suggestion that Gutiérrez believes in a humanity that can improve itself without the intervention of grace – or that this self-improvement can occur before humanity's need to face its sin is dealt with – is strongly rejected by Curt Cadorette:

> Gutiérrez sees a correlation between Jesus' message of God's approaching reign and the utopian hopes of people throughout history. He views them as related in the sense that both "postulate the unceasing search for a new kind of man in a qualitatively different society," but ultimately distinct to the extent that "there is close relationship but no identification." This is a key methodological point since Gutiérrez refuses to absolutize any utopian vision or political action on its behalf. By stressing the distinction between our relative, sometimes flawed efforts on behalf of liberation and the absolute symbols of God's reign as preached by Jesus, Gutiérrez avoids the pitfall of "idolatry toward unavoidably ambiguous human achievement" as well as the trap of Pelagianism.[15]

For Gutiérrez then, even as he examines the Exodus as a political liberation, during which the Israelites needed 'to become aware of the roots of their oppression' (88), he is aware that the work of Christ follows on 'as a liberation

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[13] At this level, 'liberation can be viewed in relation to a history of human beings who assume conscious responsibility for their own destiny, and create their own selves throughout history ... Although he does not mention it explicitly, it is clear that Gutiérrez has in mind the process of conscientization developed by ... Freire' (Hennelly, *Liberation Theologies*, 17).

[14] For example see the chapter on 'Eschatology and Politics', (121-40).

[15] Curt Cadorette, *From the Heart of the People: The Theology of Gustavo Gutierrez* (Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988) 118, quoting *A Theology of Liberation* (First Edition), 231, 171, 238. This book is an excellent examination of Gutiérrez's theology. It is a very sympathetic work – the few criticisms are offered somewhat apologetically and are carefully qualified. Cadorette has, like Gutiérrez, experienced the brutal treatment meted out to Peru's poor (see xv-xvii).

from sin and from all its consequences ...' (90). However, the struggle for the Kingdom of God cannot occur without a struggle for social justice (97).

Gutiérrez also deals with the 'personal and intrahistorical reality' of sin (85). Sin is not considered as an individual private or merely internal reality. It 'is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of fellowship and love in relationships among persons [and] ... with God ... and, therefore, an interior, personal fracture' (102-3). Sin therefore needs 'a radical liberation, which ... implies a political liberation' (103). This is not to say that building a more just society *is* the coming of the Kingdom, nor that it is *all* of salvation, but that building a more just society can be seen as contributing to the Kingdom and therefore, '[i]t is a salvific work, although it is not all of salvation' (104). This is why 'all struggle against exploitation and alienation, in a history which is fundamentally one, is an attempt to vanquish selfishness, the negation of love' (103-104).[16]

4.2.2.3 Liberation, the Church and the *Status Quo*

One reason that Gutiérrez gives for having the three levels of liberation, with 'economic, social and political liberation' as the first level, lies in his argument that hearts can, and often are changed *after* a new situation is forced upon, or created for, society. 'Peace, justice, love, and freedom are not private realities; they are not only internal attitudes.' (97). Indeed, contrary to certain Western privatisation and individualist tendencies, in a damning passage, Gutiérrez tells us that:

> Those who reduce the work of salvation are indeed those who limit it to the strictly "religious" sphere ... It is those who in order to protect salvation (or to protect their interests) lift salvation from the midst of history, where individuals and social classes struggle to liberate themselves from the slavery and oppression to which other individuals and social classes have subjected them. It is those who refuse to see that the salvation of Christ is a radical liberation from all misery, all despoliation, all alienation. It is those who by trying to "save" the work of Christ will "lose" it. (104)

[16] Gutiérrez cites Vatican II (*Gaudiam et Spes*) in support of this 'one history' approach (see 99).

Gutiérrez makes his position explicit in *The Power of the Poor in History*:

> ... "What is the good of changing the structures without a change in the human heart?" This is only a half-truth, for changing social and cultural structures is a way of changing the human heart. There is a mutual dependency, and reciprocal demands, between the human heart and its social milieu, based on a radical unity. It is no more "mechanistic" to think that a structural change automatically makes for a new humanity, than to think that a "personal" change guarantees social transformations. Both assumptions are unreal and naive.[17]

Arthur McGovern writes in support of this thesis, pointing out that '[o]ver the centuries not many wealthy landowners in Latin America have been "converted" to distributing their land.' While it is true that hearts need to be converted as well, conversion has not 'proved an efficacious means for changing structures.' McGovern continues:

> Moreover, changes of heart often follow, rather than precede, changes in structures. The issue of racism in the United States provides an example. Prior to the 1950s, laws in many states legitimized racial segregation. Only by changing these laws, by "transforming sinful structures," could real progress toward justice be achieved.[18]

For someone who argues so strongly (and correctly) that poverty and oppression must be opposed if people are to attain freedom even to think, it is unsurprising that Gutiérrez should say that social and structural change is necessary. However he also states (as we have noted) that it is not everything – all three levels of liberation are required.

As far as political involvement and its relation to faith is concerned, there is the further argument for the Church to consider:

> ... can it honestly be said that the Church does not interfere in "the temporal sphere"? Is the Church fulfilling a purely religious role when by its silence or friendly relationships it lends legitimacy to a dictatorial and oppressive government? ...' (40)

Even Paul VI's encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* – a Vatican document usually quoted with favour by Gutiérrez as it follows the liberationist themes

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[17] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 47. For a similar point, see Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Toward a Theology of Liberation', in Hennelly, *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, 70.

and the idea of the preferential option for the poor – is criticised as 'ultimately it addresses itself to the great ones of this world urging them to carry out the necessary changes' (23). Gutiérrez expects change to come from below, rather than from above – particularly as those at the top will often see the required changes as detrimental to their interests.

That the privileged and powerful will resent popular[19] demands for change is perhaps inevitable, but Gutiérrez argues however that the demanded changes are not detrimental to their real interests. The oppressor also needs to be set free from their own oppression: the actions of the bishops against certain 'Christians who deliberately ignore the demands of the gospel concerning respect for life ...' are to be seen in the context of 'the love that the bishops have for brothers and sisters who have strayed from the right path' (160). Therefore, it is clear that 'Gutiérrez insists that class struggle, as a struggle for justice and human dignity, is totally consonant with Christian love.'[20]

> The universality of Christian love is only an abstraction unless it becomes concrete history, process, conflict; it is arrived at only through particularity. To love all men does not mean avoiding confrontations ... Universal love is that which in solidarity with the oppressed seeks also to liberate the oppressors from their own power ... But this cannot be achieved except by resolutely opting for the oppressed, that is, by combating the oppressive class. It must be a real and effective combat, not hate. This is the challenge, as new as the Gospel: to love our enemies.[21]

The above quotation does not appear in the second edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, but even in the new (and somewhat toned down version), Gutiérrez still insists that:

> The universality of Christian love is ... not incompatible with a preferential option for the poorest and most oppressed ... There are oppositions and social conflicts ... but they do not exclude respect for persons, for as human beings they are loved by God and are constantly called to conversion (160).

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[18] Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 225.
[19] I am following Gutiérrez in using 'popular' to mean 'of the people.'
[20] Cadorette, *From the Heart of the People*, 109.
[21] *A Theology of Liberation*, First Edition, 275-6.

Gutiérrez does not, therefore, see liberation as the rise of the proletariat and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Nor does he see a simple linear progression from one level of liberation to the next. He expects, and has experience of, the struggle involved in liberation. However, his stress on the inter-relation of the levels of liberation is to show that one cannot (like some of the development and Marxist-type theories) have political action separated from faith, or – more to the point for Western humanism – faith separated off from all other aspects of life, including from political action. On the other hand, Gutiérrez denies a simple connection between these two: he does not support the idea that one should 'seek from faith norms and criteria for particular political options' (138).

Gutiérrez is keen, however, to see a new 'Utopia'. This is not a return to some lost paradise, but is something that can be achieved (135). It links faith and political action 'through the effort to create a new type of person in a different society' (138). Not only is Gutiérrez's utopia intended to be 'the arena of the permanent creation of a new humanity ...' but also this creation 'is the place of encounter between political liberation and the communion of all persons with God' (139).

The emphasis on socialism and utopia has led to criticism, not least because Gutiérrez and the other liberation theologians look to the ideals of utopia and socialism without saying much about how those ideals translate 'into realistic "approximations"'.[22] This criticism tends to come from those whose experience of capitalism is more favourable than the Latin American experience of 'foreign domination, exploitation of workers, human needs subordinate to the drive for profits, and concentration of power and wealth',[23] and so does not reflect the true Latin American experience – nor the fact that Liberation

[22] McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics*, 182.
[23] Ibid., 180.

theologians emphatically do not wish to see a socialist state created in Latin America after the Soviet model.[24]

Although he 'does not consider an option for socialism essential to liberation theology',[25] Gutiérrez considers that the spirituality of liberation does have implications for the Church.[26] It is to become an "*institution of social criticism*"[27] (a critique which must extend to itself – its own internal structures must be liberating). The Church must also be aware that its identification with the oppressed will lead to opposition from the powerful. In the re-written section on 'Faith and Social Conflict' (156-61), Gutiérrez argues, with support from Marx and papal encyclicals, that although 'none of us can accept with unconcern ... a situation in which human beings live in confrontation with one another' (157), social, class-based, conflict is a fact. Therefore the church must take sides, or it risks supporting the (oppressive) *status quo* (159). However, this does not mean that Gutiérrez is

> identifying the preferential option for the poor with any ideology or specific political program. Even if they represent legitimate options for the Christian laity, they do not at all satisfy fully the demands of the gospel. (160)

On the other hand, '[a]ny claim to non-involvement in politics ... is nothing but a subterfuge to keep things as they are' (151). So the question must be 'in what direction and for what purpose is it [the Church] going to use its influence ...?' (152) 'For if we are concerned that peace indeed supposes the establishment of

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[24] 'Liberation theologians do tend, however, to give existing socialisms much higher marks than most North Americans would give' (ibid, 182). McGovern, seeking a more balanced approach, states that we 'can certainly learn from socialist models, but also from more positive aspects of capitalism ...' (ibid., 183).

[25] Ibid., 180-1.

[26] I will discuss the socialist, and, more specifically, the Marxist tenor of liberation theology below. For a liberationist approach to the socialism verses capitalism debate, see Juan Luis Segundo, 'Capitalism Verses Socialism: Crux Theologica', in Rosino Gibellini, *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 240-59. Unsurprisingly, socialism is preferred, and robustly defended: 'The European advocates of political theology demand that we Latin Americans present them with a proposal for a socialist society that is guaranteed in advance to avoid the defects evident in existing brands of socialism. Why do they not demand the same thing of Jesus? Why do they not demand that Jesus, before telling someone that his faith has saved him and curing him, provide some guarantee that the cure will definitely not be followed by worse illnesses?' (ibid., 255).

[27] *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 128 (emphasis original to Gutiérrez, quoting J.B. Metz).

justice, we cannot remain passive or indifferent when the most basic human rights are at risk' (159).

In support of his position, Gutiérrez looks at Jesus and his political world. While accepting that Jesus was not defined by political militancy, he states that it is as a political militant that Jesus was tried (133). Jesus encountered political opposition with his radical challenge to the groups in power (132). Therefore, his call to personal conversion cannot be separated from 'its social, vital, and concrete context' (134). Gutiérrez states that, although Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom 'must not be confused with the establishment of a just society, this does not mean that it [the Kingdom] is indifferent to this society' (134-5).

4.2.2.4 The Poor of the Beatitudes

A just society must seek to alleviate poverty, but in Christian circles, poverty is an ambiguous term. It is seen as both good for the spirit and 'a scandalous condition' (165). Gutiérrez's solution is to distinguish between material and spiritual poverty.[28] The former deserves prophetic denunciation; the latter is to be viewed as a route to God and a counter to pride (165-73). As an example of this, Gutiérrez points to the attitude of the believers in Acts 4 – who shared what they had so that 'there were no poor' (173) – this is a spiritual poverty that will lead to 'authentic solidarity with the poor' (173).

Gutiérrez is, of course, aware that there are two versions of the beatitudes, and is considerably exercised by the Matthean beatitude in favour of 'the poor *in spirit*' (164, emphasis added). He returns to the discussion in *The Truth Shall Make You Free*. The question is whether, as some think, Matthew has '"spiritualized" Luke's version'. This, according to Gutiérrez, has to be doubted because

[28] This approach can also be seen in Jorge Pixley and Clodovis Boff, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1989), 139-56. Pixley and Boff, however, differentiate usefully between spiritual poverty (the inner attitude) and evangelical poverty (which this inner attitude produces). Gutiérrez, as he does not have this third category, tends to merge evangelical poverty with spiritual poverty.

> no one can deny that the Gospel of Matthew is notably insistent on the need for concrete and "material" actions toward others and especially toward the poor (see Mt. 25:31-46). This emphasis does not seem to be compatible with a supposed Matthean "spiritualism."[29]

Gutiérrez equates spiritual poverty with spiritual childhood, and therefore, as '[s]piritual childhood is the attitude of those who know themselves to be sons and daughters of God ...', spiritual poverty is synonymous with discipleship.[30]

> In the perspective just explained (poor in spirit = disciples), it makes sense to say that Christians should choose a poor lifestyle. The reason is not that being poor is an ideal to be striven for but that to be a disciple *today* includes being in solidarity with the real poor, those who lack the necessities for living in the way that their dignity as human beings and children of God calls for. As Medellín reminds us, poverty according to the Bible is an evil, a situation not desired by the God of life.[31]

There follows a discussion of the 'theme of justice in the Matthean Beatitudes'.[32] Justice is seen both as a gift of God and the task of humanity. Therefore '[t]he practice of justice is required of the disciples of Christ'.[33] This 'finds expression in life-giving actions in behalf of the neighbor and especially the most defenceless: the poor'.[34] These actions are to 'be seen by others in order that the latter may receive the message of the Beatitudes'.[35] The disciples are blessed 'because by means of concrete actions they give life and thus proclaim the kingdom'.[36]

Gutiérrez concludes by telling us that

> The Beatitudes in Luke put the emphasis on the gratuitousness of the love of God, who has a predilection for the poor. The Beatitudes in Matthew fill out the picture by specifying the ethical requirements that flow from this loving initiative of God. The two approaches are complementary. Matthew does not "spiritualise" the Beatitudes ... he "disciple-izes" them. The Matthean approach is especially demanding ...[37]

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[29] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990),160.
[30] Ibid., 161.
[31] Ibid., emphasis original.
[32] Ibid., 162.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 163.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 164.
[37] Ibid.

In *The Power of the Poor in History*, Gutiérrez returns to this theme telling us that there is a danger of spiritualizing the Beatitudes "too soon".

> But if, instead, we take the gospel statements at face value, unflinchingly and courageously, then what we have is God's love for the poor first and foremost simply because they are poor, simply because they are literally and materially poor. Now we have no easy God at all. Now we are faced with the mystery of God's revelation, and the gift of his Kingdom of love and justice.[38]

For Gutiérrez therefore, a spirituality of liberation leads away from any received orthodoxy which separates religion from the rest of life to a '*conversion* to the neighbor' (118, emphasis original) and in them, to God. This is an active – and activist – faith, but one which requires the Christian 'to find the way to real prayer' (119). Gutiérrez admits this way to prayer can be difficult, but none the less expects the attempt.

4.2.3 Conclusion

In this brief overview of Gutiérrez's new way of doing theology, we have seen how he works to ground his theology in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church (especially Vatican II) and in the Bible. The Church must abandon its alliance with the establishment and seek solidarity with the poor – at whatever cost to itself. Although Marxist analysis is utilised, and a socialist approach generally favoured, no specific political program is endorsed. The key to it all is that the poor and oppressed must be made aware of, in order to be freed from, their oppression. This is a laudable aim, but Gutiérrez, and his colleagues, have faced considerable criticism, not least from the Vatican.

4.3 Criticisms of Liberation Theology

Gutiérrez's work makes fascinating reading. He is clearly reacting against a Church which he sees as allying itself to the governing authorities (and thereby with the oppressors) and, as such, fails to stand up for the majority of its people.[39] For all his criticism however, Gutiérrez is keen to keep the Church on

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[38] *The Power of the Poor in History*, 95.

[39] In Latin America, about 80 percent of the population live in poverty (Pixley and Boff, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor*, 1).

his side – his continual references to Vatican II and other church documents are evidence of this – but he is not confident of the Church's reception of his work. It perhaps stands more as an unwitting indictment of the Vatican than of Gutiérrez and his colleagues, but the Vatican's response to liberation theology has not been noted for its warmth.[40] It was particularly suspicious of what it saw as hints of Pelagianism, and, more importantly, of liberation theology's use of Marxist analysis.

4.3.1 Gutiérrez as Marxist?

4.3.1.1 Gutiérrez as Too Marxist

With its demand for solidarity with the poor and oppressed, and its recognition that doing nothing supports the *status quo*, it is difficult to disagree with *A Theology of Liberation*. However, the Marxist and socialist tenor of a lot of Gutiérrez's comments has led to questions being asked of how much of his Biblical thought is influenced by Marx, and how much Marxist thought is influenced by Biblical considerations. 'The first statement on liberation theology issued by Rome states that certain theologians, and one can only presume that Gutiérrez is among them, are naïve about the limitations of social analysis, particularly the Marxist variety.'[41] There has, therefore, been considerable criticism of Liberation Theology from the Roman Catholic Church over this Marxist issue –particularly and especially from the two instructions on Liberation Theology issued by the 'Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of

[40] The responses have, however, become more measured, not to say more accepting of the validity of liberation theology over time. The 'Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez' (reprinted in Hennelly, *A Documentary History*, 348-50) seems hysterical when compared with the 'Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation' (reprinted in ibid., 461-97). How much of this change is due to the fact that, as Alistair Kee puts it, because of 'its support among the Latin American hierarchy, there was no alternative but to adopt the Vatican fall-back position of incorporation' (*Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 200), and how much to recognition of the good in liberation theology – we shall probably never know. What is certain is that all the Vatican's documents on liberation theology have criticisms to make.

[41] Cadorette, *From the Heart of the People*, 83. Cadorette writes his next 34 pages to show that the Vatican instruction is wide of the mark. Robert McAfee Brown also writes in defence of Gutiérrez ('Spirituality and Liberation: The Case for Gustavo Gutiérrez', *Worship* 58 (1984), 397). Brown correctly asserts that Gutiérrez merely accepts 'certain interpretative themes of Marx' (ibid, 398), and defends him against the Vatican's accusations.

the Faith', led by Cardinal Ratzinger,[42] in 1984 and 1986. The main objection that the first Vatican *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation* makes is against 'certain forms of liberation theology which use, in an insufficiently critical manner, concepts borrowed from various currents of Marxist thought.'[43] The Vatican Instruction is concerned that 'ideological principles [of Marxism] come prior to the study of social reality and are presupposed in it' and that one cannot take just one part of Marxism – the analysis – without accepting the whole (atheistic) ideology.[44]

This criticism misses the point. Criticism derived from liberation theology's use of Marxism could be a convenient handle for conservatives in the Roman Catholic Church and elsewhere to hang their antagonism. However, to defend the Vatican position, Marxism must properly be seen as a failed ideology.[45] And for all Gutiérrez's defence of 'utopia' (and its distinction from 'ideology'), Marxist socialism – of a Latin American or any other variety – has not yet led to the creation of any 'New Humanity.' All this, however, is to over-simplify Gutiérrez's position. The class struggle that Gutiérrez calls for, as we have already seen, cannot be identified with class warfare.[46] Gutiérrez does not assume that the bourgeoisie, or any other class, will be destroyed, nor (as noted above) does he assume that people can improve themselves without God's

[42] Though closer to home for Gutiérrez, Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, a past president of the general Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) is also a prominent critic, saying that 'the liberation theology movement promotes Marxist revolution, not true Christian liberation' (McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics*, 49).

[43] Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"', in Hennelly, *A Documentary History*, 394. The second instruction, 'Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation' (in ibid, 461-97), is a more balanced document, but points to the reality that, after such liberating events as the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, 'the progress achieved is far from fulfilling the original ambitions' (ibid., 464), and would still wish to put Gutiérrez's third level of liberation (from sin) first (see ibid., 476-7). Social sin is still secondary, and Marxism is mentioned only implicitly in a warning against the imposition of 'an imported ideology' (ibid, 486).

[44] Ibid, 402, and see Rosino Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1987), 44.

[45] It probably does not help that a Polish Pope who has experienced Marxist-Leninism at first hand now leads the Church. This does not mean that John Paul II is necessarily antagonistic towards liberation theology (see the discussion in McGovern, 14-19). The Pope's concern is to avoid a situation where a 'collectivist socialism [that] only takes power from a wealthy capitalist elite and transfers it to a new bureaucratic elite' (ibid., 181, referring to *Laborem Exerens*).

grace acting in them. The debate over the use of Marxism[47] merely serves to emphasise how differently Marxism (like capitalism) is perceived in Latin America compared with the first world.[48]

It may be that a Marxist analysis 'of the structures of oppression in the Third World'[49] is appropriate. The danger is, on the one side, in not accepting that there may be other analyses, and, on the other, of throwing out the baby of liberation praxis and its preferential option for the poor with the Marxist bathwater. Gutiérrez, at least according to Cadorette, will incorporate ideas, even ones derived from Marxism, into his theology, but those ideas that do not 'advance the cause of liberation ... are left out.'[50]

4.3.1.2 Gutiérrez as Not Marxist Enough

There is another side to this debate, exemplified by Alistair Kee, which takes the line that Gutiérrez, and all other liberation theologians, are not Marxist enough. This is because they do not take into account Marx's critique of religion.[51] Kee argues that Marxist social analysis began with his (Marx's)

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[46] See *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 157-9.

[47] Juan Luis Segundo, for one, denies that Marxism belongs 'to the "people" of Latin America' (*Theology and the Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), 139), but states that the Church has 'a considerable popular movement within its own walls' (ibid., 141), which '*does not stem from* any kind of social analysis' (ibid., 142, emphasis original). However, he recognizes that the mixture of Marxist analysis with popular faith 'led the faithful ... to recognize class enemies' (ibid., 144). Marxist analysis may or may not be necessary, but he rightly believes *conscientization* is.

[48] See McGovern, xix. Also José P. Miranda tells us that 'in both Marx and the Bible the possibility of ... definitive liberation is absolutely the basis of all the thinking' (*Marx and the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 254). Alistair Kee regards Miranda as a theologian who is committed to Marx's philosophy (*Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology*, 202-3). However, as J. Emette Weir rightly points out, Miranda's work is heavily skewed in favour of exegesis and theology over socio-economic analysis ('The Bible and Marx', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35 (1982), 340). Although his demonising of capitalism denies any positive influence it may have, Miranda clearly feels he has biblical warrant to parallel Marx with Biblical themes.

[49] Denys Turner, 'Marxism, Liberation Theology and the Way of Negation', in Rowland (ed.), *Cambridge Companion*, 202.

[50] Cadorette, 98.

[51] Though Juan Luis Segundo asserts that this critique is not consistent. Sometimes religion must be suppressed before the revolution, sometimes it will be suppressed 'precisely by the establishment of socialist society ...' (*Signs of the Times* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 14-15).

analysis of religion. Religion, as any Marxist will know, was found to be wanting as it was a 'reversal of reality'.[52]

However, as Kee himself notes, liberation theology represents a religion, a Christianity, that has committed itself to the poor and is therefore 'no longer susceptible to Marx's criticism that religion is reconciliation with injustice and an ideological legitimation of the structures of oppression.'[53] Further, as I have noted, Gutiérrez critiques 'apolitical' religion as one that supports the *status quo*. Similarly, Gutiérrez opposes an individualist religion that promotes a highly 'other-worldly' eschatology (this anti-individualism can also be seen in Gutiérrez's emphasis on the social aspects of sin). These points can be taken, at least implicitly, as a critique of a religion that is a 'reversal of reality' – but (against Kee) if the religion has changed, then the criticism must either fall, or change to match the new conditions.

Without defining it, it seems that Kee wants a very different liberation theology. This liberation theology would accept capitalism, or at least, to be more consistent with Marx,[54] it would accept having to go through capitalism to get to socialism. A similar process is required for religion: religion must accept that the mystery of the 'religious essence of the human' is not to be found in the supernatural but as an 'experience [which] is both subjective and a response to the objective.'[55] Whether or not religious experience is correct to see itself in this way remains to be seen but, ultimately, Kee fails to show how, by being more ontologically Marxist, the liberation theologians can do any better at serving the poor they seek to liberate. It is by this standard, not by their adherence to Marx, that the 'failure' of liberation theology is to be measured.[56]

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[52] Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology*, 169, and elsewhere.
[53] Ibid., 175.
[54] See ibid., 271.
[55] Ibid., 282.
[56] Cf. D.P. Davies, review in *Modern Churchman*, 32 (1992), 57.

It seems that Kee, in seeking to critique liberation theology, has failed to exercise any critique of Marx.[57] There is no answer to Marx's own atheism (other than it was personal to Marx), the secular 'Pelagianism' in Marxism is unaddressed, and no answer is given to the Marxist violent rise of the proletariat necessarily meaning the fall (or death) of the bourgeoisie.[58] Therefore Kee's critique and assumption of the failure of liberation theology is itself extremely questionable.

4.3.2 Violence

Alongside the Marxist theme, there is the suggestion that Gutiérrez espouses violence. This is incorrect. Gutiérrez is aware of the violence in society around him, and he distinguishes between three types of violence: institutional violence, and repressive violence, which both come from the state or its agents, and counter-violence. This is 'the violence that the masses resort to when all other options to achieve justice and liberation ... have been exhausted.'[59] This is not advocacy of violence, but a recognition that it exists, and that this third type of violence requires understanding, and not condemnation, when the state's violence remains unchallenged and uncondemned – especially by the church. He also accepts that when people become involved in seeking their liberation, 'and thus assuming a political task', they will find that their involvement 'turns out to be ... more conflictual than it appeared in the first stages of political involvement.'[60] Whether this conflict leads to the violence of martyrdom will depend on the reaction of the authorities to the drive for liberation, but it is (in the Latin American situation) a constant threat.

Paul Germond tells us that the Medellín Conference was realistic: 'violence may be regarded as theologically legitimate – but it is more desirable to attain justice by ... non-violent strategies ...'. This does not lead to a 'blind baptism of violence' but a painful recognition that, because institutional and repressive

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[57] Cf. anonymous review in *Expository Times*, 101 (1990), 353-4.
[58] Even if it argued that, theoretically, a Marxist overthrow of the ruling classes could happen peacefully, in practice, all Marxist inspired revolutions have involved violence and death.
[59] Anne Hieber, 'Peace Profile: Gustavo Gutiérrez', *Peace Review*, 13 (2001), 298.
[60] *The Power of the Poor in History*, 46.

violence 'are so entrenched that revolutionary violence must be part of the struggle to destroy such structures, if liberation and justice are to be achieved.'[61] This is far short of an advocacy of violence, and contains, as far as I can see, parallels with the Western recognition of the legitimate use of force given in the Just War theory.[62]

4.3.3 Making History Come Out Right

The Marxist issue remains a point of controversy, but the creation of a 'New Humanity' raises other questions. The very idealism which seems to think that a New Humanity can be created by any utopia or liberation this side of the Second Coming appears suspect. James Nickoloff's assertion that Gutiérrez is referring to a new humanity that is 'not dissimilar, nor indeed, unrelated to shifts which have *already* occurred in Western history',[63] is open to considerable doubt: the nature of humanity has seemed constant since the Fall – selfish and sinful – and has not changed whatever the political situation.[64] And Gutiérrez is aware of this when he points out that humanity (including Western humanity) is still looking for liberation from exterior and interior pressures, on a social and a psychological plane (20). This clearly goes beyond any shift that has already occurred in the West.

The idea of a 'New Humanity' opens up two inter-related criticisms. Firstly, does Gutiérrez (in spite of what has been said above) advocate Pelagianism; and secondly, how easy is liberation (whether it is of a Pelagian variety or not)?

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[61] Paul A. Germond, 'Liberation Theology: Theology in the Service of Justice', in Charles Villa-Vicencio (ed.) *Theology and Violence: The South African Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 229-30. José Miranda goes so far as to include capitalism as part of institutional violence: 'capitalism as a system does not permit existing resources to be directed to the satisfaction of needs ... Capitalism has seized the resources of humanity, and physically kills millions of human beings day by day with hunger, or leaves them lifelong mental defectives' (*Communism in the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1982), 74). This somewhat radical approach does leave me wondering where revolutionary violence should be directed, and how full liberation could be achieved, given capitalism's global reach.

[62] For parallels between Gutiérrez and Augustine – from whom a Just War Theory is derived – and their recognition of the use of violence in society, see Henry Higuera, 'Gutiérrez v. the Vatican', *This World* 25 (1989), 59-72.

[63] James B. Nickoloff, 'Church of the Poor: The Ecclesiology of Gustavo Gutiérrez', *Theological Studies*, 54 (1993), 519, emphasis original.

[64] This is not to say that societies cannot change, or that some societies are not better than others.

4.3.3.1 The Charge of Pelagianism

To take the first point first: Gutiérrez states that one level of liberation 'does not occur without the others' (137) and the third level of liberation, 'liberation from sin and entrance into communion with God and with all persons' (137), is a necessary part of liberation. As far as Gutiérrez is concerned '[a] change of social structures can help to bring about this personal change [of heart] but does not automatically bring it about.'[65] However, he also states that '[t]o know God is to work for justice. There is no other path to reach God' (156). It could be inferred from this that if humanity works hard enough, a perfectly just society would be created which would bring, in a somewhat Pelagian manner, the Kingdom of God on earth.[66]

The Vatican in particular charges liberation theology with the tendency to substitute 'a figure of Jesus who is a kind of symbol who sums up in himself the requirements of the struggle of the oppressed' for '[f]aith in the incarnate word, dead and risen for all'.[67] In other words, Gutiérrez has fallen into 'the trap of Pelagianism.'[68] However as I have noted above, Gutiérrez does not leave liberation at this second stage – the third stage is fundamental.

While Gutiérrez is consistently careful to point to the distinction between working for a just society on earth and the Kingdom of God, his desire to try to 'make history come out right'[69] leads him, in *A Theology of Liberation*, to appear to blur the distinction between earthly and heavenly justice. However Gutiérrez defends his position in *The Truth Shall Make You Free*. After several references to *A Theology of Liberation*, he states bluntly that '[t]he faith does not permit a reduction of the kingdom to any historical embodiment, however human and just we think it to be.[70] In other words, he wishes to emphasise the

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[65] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations*, 133.
[66] The idea of temporal progress is discussed further below, see 4.4.3.
[67] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"', in Hennelly, *A Documentary History*, 408.
[68] Ibid., 118.
[69] To use Stanley Hauerwas's phrase.
[70] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 146. This book was written as a response to the major criticisms brought against him and against liberation theology, by the Vatican (and others).

link between 'the Christian message and human liberation' *without* making them identical.

4.3.3.2 An Easy Liberation?

As for the second criticism, the ease of liberation, we need to see that today, in spite of many governmental changes (some supported by the church); there are still countless numbers of poor people in Latin America. However, *A Theology of Liberation* makes no actual mention of an automatic or easy liberation – if liberation were either, there would be no need to write of a class struggle. Nor would there be any need to refer to martyrdom:

> we must pay a high price for being an authentic church of the poor. I am referring not to the cost entailed in the manner of life and action proper to the church, but to that inflicted by the hostile reactions that the church meets in its work. In present day Latin America this means frequent attacks on the church and its representatives ... [including] assassination. (xliii)

The above quotation comes from the 1988 introduction to *A Theology of Liberation*, it seems that Gutierrez is (possibly in the light of experience) withdrawing from any idea that liberation might be easy, but he maintains his positive outlook on history. This is an outlook that may not be borne out by events. In sum, we can say that, for Gutiérrez, faith is a pre-requisite of liberation. However, we are left to wonder how his theology copes when history does not seem to be on his side?

4.3.4 When History Turns Out Wrong

While the charge of Pelagianism may be easy for Gutiérrez and his supporters to refute, he does have to struggle with Theodicy – how can we worship a good God when, for the poor of Latin America, the world continues to be evil? This is problematic especially when we consider Gutiérrez's progressivist view of history. If we refer to Gutiérrez's book *On Job*, we can see a clarification, if not a development, in Gutiérrez's thinking. In this book, subtitled *God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, Gutiérrez tells us that the nature of the gift

of God's love is not one that operates 'in a world of cause and effect'.[71] Using a new translation of Job 42:6,[72] Gutiérrez tells us that Job did not repent as God has not accused him of any injustice, but that Job is saying "I repudiate and abandon ... dust and ashes".[73] For Gutiérrez, 'in his final reply what Job is expressing is not contrition but *a renunciation of his lamentation and dejected outlook.*'[74] In other words, and to release Job (and liberation theology) from any idea that God must be tied to retributive justice – even in its positive form that those who work for justice must see justice brought about for them and others – Job has to be 'delivered from the envy that paralyses reality and tries to put limits to the divine goodness...'[75]

> It should, however, be evident that in rejecting the theology of retribution Job has not been freed from the necessity of practicing justice, but only from the temptation of imprisoning God in a narrow conception of justice. He has been delivered, at least in principle, from the most subtle form of idolatry, a danger that has been mentioned at various points in the Book of Job. God is now seen by Job as completely free, untrammelled by the narrow theological categories in which Job had been trying to enclose God's dealings with humankind.[76]

Gutiérrez recognises the challenge that he and others face in having to do theology while facing 'a cruel present and a dark tunnel with no apparent end.'[77] So, what to do when, in spite of all our efforts, history does not work out right is *not* to abandon our search for justice, but to continue, even in the midst of our own innocent suffering, to care about the oppression of others, and recognize that we have no power to force God to act.

4.3.5 Conclusion

We may dismiss the charges of Pelagianism and the advocacy of violence against Gutiérrez relatively easily. The charge of Marxism requires a more

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[71] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 87.
[72] Proposed by Dale Patrick, and endorsed by N.C. Habel (see ibid., n. 14 and 15, 126).
[73] Ibid., 86. This translation is completely defensible in Hebrew idiom (conversation with Dr. R.W.L. Moberly, 07/08/01).
[74] Ibid., 87, emphasis original.
[75] Ibid., 91.
[76] Ibid. According to Walter Moberly, the interpretation Gutiérrez puts on the new translation of Job 42:6 'is as likely as any' (conversation with Dr. R.W.L. Moberly, 07/08/01).
[77] Ibid., 102.

refined approach: Gutiérrez is no Marxist, but he does use Marxist analysis, and (given that the options before him are either capitalism or socialism)[78] he rightly favours a socialist approach as tending to a more egalitarian distribution of wealth. For those who choose to be suspicious of any form of Marxist or socialist nuance in Liberation Theology, Liberation Theology can then be viewed with disfavour: but this negative attitude can only be sustained if the radical nature of the Bible is also deliberately ignored.

In the sense that it promotes revolutionary behaviour, Marxism is a revolutionary force – in a similar way Liberation Theology seeks to be revolutionary. But the revolution it promotes is a very different one from, say, the French Revolution. As I have noted, Gutiérrez's class struggle is not the same as class warfare. There is no sense that the triumph of the oppressed (or proletariat) requires the demise of the bourgeoisie. It is perhaps worth noting that the integration of Aristotle's thinking into Christianity by Aquinas was not universally welcomed at the time – perhaps the same might occur with Marxist analysis in Liberation Theology.[79]

Whether Marxist analysis is used or not, the continuing suffering of the poor is clearly a problem: for Gutiérrez, the church must continue to seek liberation for the poor, even if at present, it can only seek to share the poor's suffering. Working for a just society does not require God to bring it about, but the poor will see and note where God stands if the church will stand with them. However, if Gutiérrez does wish to work for a just society, questions of how he expects God to act, and when, are inevitably raised: it is to these questions that I now turn.

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[78] For Gutiérrez, and other liberation theologians, capitalism 'evokes foreign domination, exploitation of workers, unbridled greed for profit and concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the elite' (Peter C. Phan, 'Peacemaking in Latin American Liberation Theology', *Theology Digest* 42 (1995), 226).

[79] Although he is very circumspect in his use of what may be seen as Marxist terminology (see for example the Encyclical letter, *Centesimus Annus*, 41, where he discusses 'alienation' (www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus_en.html (06/12/2002))), Pope John Paul II does appear to have incorporated liberation theology into his thought; see Pope John Paul II, 'Excerpts from "On Social Concern" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*)', in Hennelly, *A Documentary History*, 521-8.

4.4 Gutiérrez's Eschatology

4.4.1 Introduction

Gutiérrez clearly does not regard his fellow Christians as mere pilgrims looking for a new city at some point and time in the future, he wants action now to bring about the growth of the kingdom on earth, a kingdom that brings justice for the poor, allows them to 'irrupt' into history, and which challenges the current social and political establishments and their representatives wherever they may be found (including in the church). This approach raises questions of what sort of eschatology Gutiérrez expounds, so, as I did in chapters two and three regarding Augustine (and his interpreters), I will now consider Gutiérrez's eschatology.

4.4.2 'Up There' and 'Down Here'

This eschatological dimension appears in the early stages of *A Theology of Liberation.*

> [T]he rediscovery of the *eschatological dimension* in theology has also led us to consider the central role of historical praxis. Indeed if human history is above all else an opening to the future, then it is a task, a political occupation, through which we orient and open ourselves to the gift which gives history its transcendent meaning: the full and definite encounter with the Lord and with other humans ... (8, emphasis original).

We can see already that Gutiérrez is interested in a dialectical approach to eschatology – and one that emphasises the 'now' over the 'not yet'. He quotes Edward Schillebeeckx: "The hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God ... consists especially in making the world a better place ..." (10-11). For Gutiérrez, 'salvation is already here' and 'the prophetic perspective (in which the Kingdom takes on the present life, transforming it) is vindicated *before* the sapiential outlook (which stresses the life beyond)' (85, emphasis added).

When he examines the history of the people of God and God's covenant with his people, Gutiérrez is concerned to show that '[t]he eschatological horizon is present in the heart of the Exodus' (89), and (against what can be seen as an Augustinian approach),

> building the temporal city is not simply a stage of "humanization" or "pre-evangelization" as was held in theology until a few years ago. Rather it is to become part of a saving process which embraces the whole of humanity and all human history (91).

Gutiérrez explicitly criticises establishment Christianity, with its emphasis on an other-worldly eschatology, in *The Power of the Poor in History*:

> Of course its [this transitory world's] unreality did not prevent those who claimed to live only for the world "up there" from solidly installing themselves in the world "down here." Such installation was necessary, it would seem, as the platform from which to proclaim to others that *they* ought not to become attached to anything ephemeral and corruptible.
>
> Eternal life was seen exclusively as a future life and not as present in an active and creative form within our concrete historical involvement as well. It was a contracted, partialized view of human existence, the product of a gospel carefully reduced to suitably narrow, myopic dimensions.[80]

In *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez takes his lead from the work of Gerhard Von Rad in order to emphasise the 'as well' of eschatology. Gutiérrez views the Old Testament prophets as orientating present actions of God toward the future, but based on his past initiatives on behalf of his people (93-94). Gutierrez concludes that there is both a present and future aspect to the 'eschatological perspective'. 'The self-communication of God points to the future, and at the same time this Promise and Good News reveal humanity to itself and widen the perspective of its historical commitment here and now' (95).

4.4.3 The Kingdom of God and Temporal Progress ...[81]

It is with this understanding that Gutiérrez regards temporal progress and growth of the Kingdom of God as related – though he is careful to follow the Vatican II line and state that they are not to be equated with one another ('the growth of the Kingdom goes beyond temporal progress' (99)). However, if we refuse to get involved with the poor, with the oppressed, if we refuse make these our neighbour, then we have abstained from serving, and this 'is to refuse

[80] *The Power of the Poor*, 39, emphasis original.
[81] Cf. 4.3.3.1, above.

to love: to fail to act for another is as culpable as expressly refusing to do it' (113). Thus our actions in the temporal world, our desire to see temporal progress is tied in with the growth of the Kingdom of God. It is interesting to note that these actions, as Gutiérrez realises in his introduction to the second edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, written in 1988, do not have to be expressly or overtly political:

> I have learned much in recent years ... The struggles of those who reject racism and machismo ... as well as of those who oppose the marginalization of the elderly, children, and other "unimportant" persons in our society, have made me see, for example, the importance of "being with" that some may regard as having little political effectiveness (xxx).

However, our 'commitment to the creation of a just society and, ultimately, to a new humanity, presupposes confidence in the future' (121). Here, eschatology and politics meet. In chapter 11 (121-140) of *A Theology of Liberation*, entitled 'Eschatology and Politics', Gutiérrez discusses this very issue. With his 'this-worldly' aspect to eschatology and relationship between temporal progress and the growth of the Kingdom of God, it is inevitable that there would also be a relationship between eschatology and politics. Earlier, Gutiérrez has given us a broad and narrow definition of 'politics'.

> The construction – from its economic bases – of the "polis," of a society in which people can live in solidarity, is a dimension which encompasses and severely conditions all human activity ... Only within this broad meaning of the political sphere can we situate the more precise notion of "politics," as an orientation to power ... The concrete forms taken on by this quest for and exercise of political power are varied. But they are all based on the profound aspiration of a humankind that wants to take hold of the reins of its own life and be the artisan of its own destiny. (30-1)[82]

It is under this definition that Gutiérrez is prepared to have 'confidence in the future' and to say of his Latin American situation that the 'thrust toward the future occurs *above all* when one participates in the building up of a just society ...' (122, emphasis original). Eschatological hope is defined as accepting the future 'as a gift ... accepted in the negation of injustice ...'

[82] Note it is only in the broader dimension that Gutiérrez says that '[n]othing lies outside the political sphere ...' (30). Faith is not being reduced to politics – and especially not to politics as 'orientation to power'.

(125).[83] It is this eschatological hope that leads actions of faith and charity in the present, and which also (here Gutiérrez follows J.B. Metz) leads to 'the "eschatological proviso"... whose role is to stress the "provisional" character of "every historically real status of society"' (128).[84]

Gutiérrez then turns, in chapter 11 of *A Theology of Liberation*, to examine Jesus' own approach to politics. He concludes that Jesus was neither an icon, nor a zealot, but that he did confront the groups in power. For Jesus, the attitude towards the poor 'determines the validity of all religious behaviour; it is above all for them that the Son of Man has come' (132).

> For [Oscar] Cullmann ... the key to the behavior of Jesus in political matters is ... "eschatological radicalism," which is based on the hope of an impending advent of the Kingdom. Hence it follows that "for Jesus, all the realities of this world were necessarily *relativized* and that his allegiance, therefore had to lie beyond the alternatives of 'existing order' or 'revolution.'" (133; emphasis original).

Gutiérrez, however, does not agree with Cullmann's "consequent eschatology" that expects such an imminent arrival of the Kingdom, and therefore that structural reform, for Jesus, is unnecessary. For Gutiérrez, Jesus 'by freeing us from sin ... attacks the roots of an unjust order' (134), therefore, '[t]he political is grafted into the eternal' (135), as 'to preach the universal love of the Father is inevitably to go against all injustice, privilege, oppression, or narrow nationalism' (135).

4.4.4 ... or the Lack of Progress

Of course, the above opens the question of what is to be done if history does not improve, in spite of Christian action: but, for Gutiérrez, this is where the solidarity with the poor – and a continuing eschatological hope – enters into the equation. In *The Power of the Poor in History*, Gutiérrez is explicit:

> Building the earthly city actually immerses human beings in the salvation process that touches all humanity. Every obstacle that

[83] Here we can see, in embryo, Gutiérrez's position outlined in *On Job* discussed in 4.3.4 above.

[84] Gutiérrez criticises Metz's new political theology, and states, fairly obviously, that it does not translate directly to the Latin American situation, but finds it a useful 'jumping off point' for his own approach.

> degrades or alienates the work of men and women in building a humane society is an obstacle to the work of salvation...
>
> The prophets proclaim a reign of peace. But peace presupposes the establishment of justice ... The conquest of poverty and abolition of exploitation are signs of the Messiah's arrival and presence ... To work for a just world where there is no servitude, oppression, or alienation is to work for the advent of the Messiah.[85]

This working for a just world has to be undertaken without, as we have seen in the examination of *On Job*,[86] demanding that God must act – or that he must act in a particular way. For Gutiérrez, Christian solidarity with the poor is to be prepared to go as far as entering into their suffering, it is to be prepared to suffer with the poor to the point of death: martyrdom, while not to be sought, is, like conflict, a painful reality for those who seek to stand alongside the oppressed.[87] Indeed the years since *A Theology of Liberation* was first written has seen much blood spilled and many martyrs (of whom Archbishop Oscar Romero is perhaps the best known example) have fallen. It can be said that the situation of the poor has not changed all that much, but this does not mean that liberation theology has failed, nor that Christians should no longer stand with the oppressed. As Gutiérrez tells us, this suffering, this martyrdom, acts as a profound witness to the poor:

> They see in the surrender of these lives a profound and radical testimony of faith; they observe that in a continent where the powerful spread death in order to protect their privileges, such a testimony to God often brings the murder of the witness; and they draw nourishment from the hope that sustains these lives and these deaths. According to the very earliest Christian tradition the blood of martyrs gives life to the ecclesial community, the assembly of the disciples of Jesus Christ. This is what is happening today in Latin America. Fidelity unto death is a wellspring of life. It signals a new demanding, and fruitful course in the following of Jesus.[88]

Due to this suffering both of the poor and those who speak out on their behalf, Gutiérrez cannot be accused of promoting 'an easy optimism' in his theology, nor in his eschatology. However he does see change taking place, and 'despite

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[85] *The Power of the Poor*, 32.
[86] See 4.3.4 above.
[87] See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 117 and n. 8, 167.
[88] Ibid., 23.

– or thanks to – the immense price that is being paid, the present situation is nourishing new life, revealing new paths to be followed, and providing reason for profound joy.'[89]

4.4.5 Conclusion

Liberation theology works to create a just society on earth. Therefore it espouses a progressivist eschatology, where 'secular history [functions] as part of the coming of the kingdom of God'[90] – the kingdom of God is to be sought 'down here' as well as 'up there'. This searching for, and demands for, change in society so that the kingdom of God can be brought closer must continue despite all the hardship and persecution afflicted on those who have solidarity with the poor (and on the poor themselves) by those who feel their privileged place in society is under threat. A church prepared to suffer, to act in solidarity with the poor, offers those poor a powerful witness of the God who Gutierrez sees as having a preferential option for the poor.

4.5 The Church and Civil Society

4.5.1 Introduction: The Political Power of the Poor

In *The Power of the Poor in History*, following a paragraph discussing the parable of the Good Samaritan, Gutiérrez discusses the awareness that Christians are developing of the nature of the class structure and the injustice inherent in that structure. This in turn requires 'a new understanding of politics.' Gutiérrez continues by telling us that for a lot of Christians this means 'taking a revolutionary, socialist option, and thus assuming a political task, in a global perspective, that turns out to be more scientific and more conflictual than it appeared in the first stages of political involvement.'[91] Gutiérrez critiques the idea that only an elite has the charism of political leadership, or that it a distinct, spare time, activity. For him '[p]olitics is the global condition ... of human accomplishment.'

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[89] Ibid., 25.

[90] Robert C. Doyle, *Eschatology and the Shape of Christian Belief* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 274.

> All human reality, then, has a political dimension ... For it is within the context of the political that the human being rises up as a free and responsible being, as a truly human being, having a relationship with nature and with other human beings, as someone who takes up the reins of his or her destiny, and goes out and transforms history.[92]

From this we can see in it that Gutiérrez moves us from a consideration of the global nature of politics to a consideration of the power of a single person – though working with others – to transform history.[93] As I shall discuss further below, the poor are educated or 'conscientized' into understanding that not only are they oppressed, but that history has moved on from the days (prior to the French and Russian revolutions) when political decisions were in 'the hands of an elite who were "destined" to rule' (30). And if this is so, then the poor have the means within their grasp to change their situation. For Gutiérrez,

> The praxis of liberation, therefore, inasmuch as it starts out from an authentic solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, is ultimately a praxis of love – real love, effective and concrete, for real, concrete human beings. It is a praxis of love of neighbour, and of love for Christ in the neighbor, for Christ identifies himself with the least of these human beings, our brothers and sisters. Any attempt to separate love for God and love for neighbor gives rise to attitudes that impoverish both.[94]

Gutiérrez is interested in the personal, but not in individualism.[95] Freedom for the person is freedom in a society of 'new structures', not freedom for the individual to do as he or she wills without regard for the other.[96] For although 'structures always depend on concrete persons, and the latter must be involved if we want real change ...', any (new) society must have justice and freedom at its core.

> That is why I wrote: "These personal aspects – considered not as excessively privatized, but rather as encompassing all human dimensions – are also under consideration in the contemporary debate concerning

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[91] *The Power of the Poor*, 46.
[92] Ibid., 47 (and see *A Theology of Liberation*, 30-31, quoted at 4.4.3).
[93] Though Gutiérrez does not say how that transformation is to be achieved..
[94] Ibid, 50.
[95] For Gutiérrez, life is social, it 'implies communion' (Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 12).
[96] Elsewhere Gutierrez refers to Bonhoeffer's writing in defining freedom: "In the language of the Bible ... freedom is not something man has for himself but something he has for others ... Being free means 'being free for the other' ..." (*A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 24, quoting *Creation and Fall, Temptation.*)

> greater participation of all in political activity ..." The requirement is a universal one that knows no exceptions.[97]

Gutiérrez sees this requirement, and the interplay between faith and political commitment, in the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. 'The intense degree of Bonhoeffer's political commitment during the last ten years of his life only served to sharpen his concern for the proclamation of the Christian message.'[98] Gutiérrez approves of Bonhoeffer's ideas – even if he had failed to carry 'his intuition to its mature theological implications' – of doing theology 'from beneath', for Gutiérrez,

> [Bonhoeffer] had moved toward a theological outlook whose point of departure is in a faith lived by exploited classes, condemned ethnic groups, and marginalized cultures. The heretofore "absent from history" are making the free gift of the Father's love their own today, creating new social relationships of a communion of brothers and sisters. This is the point of departure for what we call "theology from the underside of history."[99]

This free gift and the new social relationships can be viewed as the basis of the poor's political power – a power that the church, with its preferential option for the poor, should seek to give them.

4.5.2 The Preferential Option ... for All

The phrase 'a preferential option for the poor' has become something of a cliché since Gutiérrez and his liberation theologian colleagues introduced it to the world. As I have noted above, Gutiérrez spends some time in defending this option for the poor as one that leads to an expression of God's universal love for all. In his 1988 Introduction to the second edition of his *A Theology of Liberation*, he betrays some defensiveness towards his position.

> The very word "preference" denies all exclusiveness and seeks rather to call attention to those who are first – though not the only ones – with whom we should be in solidarity. In the interests of truth and personal honesty I want to say that from the very beginning of liberation theology, as many writings show, I insisted that the great challenge was to maintain both the universality of God's love and God's predilection for those on the lowest rung of the ladder of history. To focus

[97] *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 133, quoting *A Theology of Liberation* First Edition, 51.
[98] *The Power of the Poor*, 228. (Bonhoeffer is the subject of chapter 6.)
[99] Ibid, 233.

> exclusively on the one or the other is to mutilate the Christian message. Therefore every attempt at such an exclusive emphasis must be rejected (xxv-xxvi).[100]

This preferential option for the poor situated *within* God's agapeic love also explains Gutiérrez's concerns for class struggle:

> [Although] class struggle is meant to fight against the oppressors' power and blindness ... Class struggle *calls the oppressors to conversion.* But it does not and may not threaten them with hatred or death without contradicting its own principles and purpose.[101]

However, on reading *A Theology of Liberation*, we can see that Gutiérrez is keenly aware of the Biblical texts that condemn those who by their unjust actions, cause poverty. 'They are not merely allusions to situations; the finger is pointed at those who are to blame' (167). Gutiérrez then gives three principal reasons why poverty is given such a 'vigorous repudiation': firstly it 'contradicts the very meaning of *the Mosaic religion*'; secondly, it goes 'against *the mandate of Genesis*' (167-8, emphasis original),

> And finally, humankind not only has been made in the image and likeness of God; it is also *the sacrament of God* ... The other reasons for the Biblical rejection of poverty have their roots here: to oppress the poor is to offend God; to know God is to work justice among human beings. We meet God in our encounter with other persons; what is done for others is done for the Lord (168, emphasis original).

For all Gutiérrez's passion about justice, some of his readers might be uncomfortable with this approach. However, it is clear that Gutiérrez has a Biblical mandate for his line of attack – a mandate, moreover, that comes from both Testaments (see 167). We have already seen that Gutiérrez does not regard Matthew as "spiritualising" the Lukan Beatitudes[102] – and certainly not in a manner which allows anyone to shirk their responsibility for their neighbour. Gutiérrez is very aware – after all, he lives and works among the poor of Peru – that poor people are also sinful,[103] but he believes that the society he lives in is fundamentally oppressive and, to paraphrase Marx, that the point is not to interpret that sinful society, but to change it. This of course

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[100] Cf. *On Job*, 94 and *The God of Life*, 115-17.
[101] Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 111, emphasis added.
[102] See 4.2.2.4 above.
[103] See *We Drink from our Own Wells*, 125.

raises (Augustinian) questions about whether any new society would be any less sinful than the one that preceded it.[104] However Gutiérrez, arguing in favour of a socialist approach, quotes a group of Santiago priests with approval:

> We do not believe persons will automatically become less selfish, but we do maintain that where a socio-economic foundation for equality has been established, it is more possible to work realistically toward human solidarity than it is in a society torn asunder by inequality ... In other words, today the gospel of Christ implies (and is incarnated in) multiple efforts to obtain justice (66).[105]

In his desire for a radical liberation of the poor, what Gutiérrez (for all he is aware of it) takes less cognisance of, is their 'partial penetration'[106] by the ideology of the oppressors. Many of the poor decide to accommodate themselves to the *status quo*. As Curt Cadorette points out, Gutiérrez's writing often seems to make the rich and poor 'two antagonistic, irreconcilable social groups'[107] whereas the reality is more complex. Gutiérrez, as Cadorette points out, fails to deal with the middle classes and how they mediate the dominant, capitalist structure to the poor.[108] And there are, of course, those few poor people who 'make it' in the capitalist society, even if for most it is a struggle to survive. The ultimate paradox is that any struggle to overcome the system has to exist alongside the accommodations made by the very same poor people with that system as they seek to provide daily necessities for their families.

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[104] Gutierrez is aware 'that a social transformation, no matter how radical it may be, does not automatically achieve the suppression of all evils' (24), but he appears to assume that some evils would be suppressed. The unaddressed danger is that if one evil is suppressed another may rise to take its place.

[105] We should note, however, that there is less emphasis on a specifically socialist approach in Gutiérrez's later writings, but the desire for justice remains.

[106] This phrase is taken up by Paulo Freire (see chapter 5). Partial penetration of the poor occurs when the poor are so oppressed (or so used to the situation) in which they find themselves that they cannot conceive of any way of improving or changing their situation – they often feel that they 'deserve' their poverty. This can be expressed in opposition by the poor to any attempts to conscientize, or help them to help themselves.

[107] Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 57. Although Pixley and Boff state that, in Latin America 'some 15 percent might be called "middle class"' (Pixley and Boff, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor*, 1), they generally take the same approach to rich and poor.

[108] Ibid., 57-8. Nor does he (or other liberation theologians) explain how a society is to get to socialism without (as Marx says we must) first going through a capitalist stage.

4.5.3 Base Ecclesial Communities

Whatever the 'partial penetration' of the poor by the society in which they live, Gutiérrez clearly believes that the key for the ordinary Christian in society, whether rich or poor is to be liberated from oppression and sin.[109] One way for this to start to happen is in the Base Ecclesial Communities. These new communities have become a major means of proclaiming the gospel to and by the poor. Gutiérrez refers to them as 'a major source of vitality within the larger Christian community and have brought the gospel closer to the poor and the poor closer to the gospel – and not only the poor but, through them, all who are touched by the church's action, including those outside its boundaries' (xli). He states in *The Power of the Poor in History* that '[f]aith has liberating potential, but it must be developed ...'.[110]

> The potential of a liberating faith, and the capacity for revolution, are intimately bound up together in the concrete life of this poor and oppressed people. Hence it is impossible to cultivate the one without the other as well, and this is what many find so unsettling. The development of the people's political awareness and its Christian awareness go hand in hand. The life and work of many of Latin America's new basic Christian communities have been strongly marked by the experience of this intimate link between faith and revolution.[111]

Both 'religious' and political reductionism is rejected, though Gutiérrez accepts that 'the development of the political dimension and the faith dimension will not always be in step' as the process, and the reality on which it is based, is complex.[112]

4.5.4 Conclusion

Gutiérrez, although he is clearly against any form of individualism, believes that an individual 'in relationship with ... other human beings' can 'transform history'. While I have already shown that Gutiérrez recognises that changing history is not as easy as some of his writing may suggest, he clearly expects himself, his church and others to work in solidarity with the poor, not least in

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[109] Gutiérrez's critics in the Vatican would also believe this, but they would regard freedom from sin as a first level of liberation, whereas Gutiérrez puts liberation from sin at the third level.

[110] *The Power of the Poor*, 97.

[111] Ibid., 98.

the Base Ecclesial Communities. This expectation is based on the command to love our neighbour. The poverty that the neighbour lives under is to be denounced,[113] and the poor themselves must be empowered to be agents of their own liberation. For Gutiérrez, the church is called to stand in solidarity with the poor so that they can not only become aware of their oppression (be 'conscientized'), but also take action in order to remove that oppression. Thus we turn to our final topic of educating the poor.

4.6 Educating the Poor for Political Involvement

4.6.1 Introduction

The "pedagogy of the oppressed", as Gutiérrez recognises (57), is the work of Paulo Freire. However, as Freire is the subject of the next chapter, I shall confine myself in this section to a few comments based on Gutiérrez's work, as an introduction to the idea of how the poor should be "conscientized"[114] and thereby make some effort at overcoming their oppression. Part of that conscientization must involve overcoming the 'partial penetration' of the poor by the dominant culture (as discussed above). Therefore, the process of conscientization can be described as a means of making the poor aware of their oppressive situation, and the realisation that they have the means to do something about creating a better, freer society. Gutiérrez recognises that:

> The participation of the oppressed presupposes an awareness on their part of their unjust situation. "Justice, and therefore peace," say the Latin American bishops, "conquer by means of a dynamic action of awakening (*concientización*) and organisation of the popular sectors which are capable of pressing public officials who are often impotent in their social projects without popular support."
>
> ... Consequently, the Church feels compelled to address itself directly to the oppressed – instead of appealing to the oppressors – calling on them to assume control of their destiny, committing itself to support their demands, giving them an opportunity to express those demands, and even articulating them itself...(67-8).

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[112] Ibid., 98-9.

[113] See 4.2.2.4 above.

[114] Although he did not invent the word, Paulo Freire makes considerable use of it and the concept it embodies – see the next chapter.

There is no mention here of how the poor are to be 'conscientized', but Gutiérrez is aware that this process is necessary – and that it is a process. In his discussion of the Biblical Exodus, he tells us that '[a] gradual pedagogy of successes and failures would be necessary for the Jewish people to become aware of the roots of their oppression, to struggle against it, and to perceive the profound sense of the liberation to which they were called' (88). However, this requires both struggle with, and an education of, the poor for a better life.

4.6.2 Solidarity or Identity?

From the above we can see that Gutiérrez regards the Gospel itself as having 'a conscienticizing function,' or, in other words, a pedagogical function, but that this will depend on it being announced by someone (or some people) operating 'from within a commitment to liberation' and within an 'effective solidarity' with the oppressed. This shows a distinction from his expressed support for the (Freirian) idea that only the poor can do the announcing and denouncing of the liberating utopia. It also raises questions as to how far the 'solidarity' with the poor should go, as the implication of the quoted passage above is that the Gospel is announced *to* the poor, even if it is only the poor who, as Gutiérrez believes, can liberate themselves.

> Poverty is an act of love and liberation. It has redemptive value. If the ultimate cause of human exploitation and alienation is selfishness, the deepest reason for voluntary poverty is love of neighbor ... as Ricoeur says, you cannot really be with the poor unless you are struggling against poverty. Because of this solidarity – which manifests itself in specific action, a style of life, a break with one's social class – one can also help the poor and exploited to become aware of their exploitation and seek liberation from it. Christian poverty, an expression of love, is solidarity *with the poor* and is a protest *against poverty* (172, emphasis original).

There is a parallel passage in *We Drink from Our Own Wells* which is also worth quoting as it emphasises the nature of the solidarity Gutiérrez seeks with the poor.

> The solidarity is not with "the poor" in the abstract, but with human beings of flesh and bone. Without love and affection, without – why not say it? – tenderness, there can be no true gesture of solidarity. Where these are lacking there is an impersonality and coldness (however well intentioned and accompanied by a desire for justice) that the flesh and

> blood poor will not fail to perceive. True love exists only among equals ...[115]

In the same work, Gutiérrez goes on to recognise that real identity with the poor will not occur in this life. 'The will to live in the world of the poor can therefore only follow an asymptotic curve ... [that] can, however, never reach the point of real identification with the life of the poor'.[116]

The above reveals a certain dichotomy in Gutiérrez's thought, and one that he has yet to solve. It also raises questions of how far he is unintentionally influenced by elitism. The solidarity with the poor still carries a certain awareness of difference from the poor – a sort of being with the poor without being of the poor – Gutiérrez himself, having been able to choose his vocation is part of the 'not poor'. He may be seeking to lead the poor by showing them what he believes liberation to mean, but he is not intrinsically one of them. The very fact that he can choose to live among them, whereas the poor themselves do have that choice, shows his difference from the poor. The question then arises as to how this difference would be perceived by the poor, especially as they become more conscientized, more aware of their need for them to take action themselves to further their liberation – when would be the moment for them to drop their teacher and become the agents of their own liberation?

It is not evident from Gutiérrez's writings, but Cadorette tells us that Gutiérrez spends a great deal of time in leadership training:

> Among the poor are people [called "organic intellectuals"] with charisms of self-awareness, integrity, and a will to political change... Gutiérrez and the members of his team have learned from experience that without such people the processes of conscientization and social change will invariably flounder. For this reason they devote a great deal of their time in the *pueblos jovenes* to leadership training, which includes both socio-political analysis and theological education.
>
> The challenge for the "organic intellectual" and the conscienticized [*sic*] poor is to tap the power of their culture and belief in such a way that

[115] *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, 104.
[116] Ibid, 126.

> they point to "the urgency of a revolutionary process" and stimulate appropriate socio-political action on its behalf.[117]

The problem, as I see it (and one which will be further explored in the next chapter), is how much the pedagogue inputs, or influences, the outcome of the training. It may be that the students will come to reject the ideas put to them, and come up with their own, but the teacher's ideas will have – at the very least – influenced the discussions. A further question to ask is this: when does the pedagogue yield to the "organic intellectual"? One supposes that a good teacher should know when to allow his or her pupils to continue on their own, but defining the moment when one who has solidarity with the poor should yield place to the poor themselves is not a question that Gutiérrez addresses, though he does demonstrate the need to find the right people within the masses:

> Nothing can replace a serious, scientific knowledge of the nature of the exploitation that the popular masses are suffering. It is equally urgent that we be able to differentiate between various strata and groups within the popular masses – that we come to recognise which are more advanced and which are more backward, both in terms of their basic relationship to the productive process, and in terms of their potential for mobilization ...[118]

Presumably it is the more advanced members of the popular masses who would become the "organic intellectuals". Though we are told that '[t]hey are committed to the cause ... not as a revolutionary elite, but as persons of and for the poor',[119] it does seem that there is a certain amount of elitism in Gutiérrez's thought: there is the pedagogue, the "organic intellectual" and the more backward popular masses. This elitism, as I have shown, works against Gutiérrez's statements that only the poor can liberate themselves. Gutiérrez's 'hierarchy' can be viewed as an unconscious echo of the Leninist vanguard: and like Lenin's vanguard, there is a danger that the pedagogue and organic intellectual 'classes' could become self-perpetuating – which would leave the poor simply having changed one set of masters for another.[120] This is clearly

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[117] Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 49.
[118] *The Power of the Poor*, 97.
[119] Cadorette, *From the Heart*, 49.
[120] For a discussion on Lenin's vanguard, see Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), 421.

not Gutiérrez's intention; any hierarchy cannot be described as a 'status' hierarchy, but merely the practical result of trying to conscientize the poor and exist in solidarity with them. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, for anyone who is not of the poor, exercising solidarity with the poor, especially if it is supposed to involve committing 'class suicide', is a very difficult exercise.[121]

All the above notwithstanding, what cannot be denied, however, is that Gutiérrez is committed to a church of the poor, where ideally all the poor would be conscientized and there would be no difference between the pedagogue and the "organic intellectual." Liberation theology, and the Base Ecclesial Communities have led to a revitalisation of the church in the poor communities, and to demands from the poor to be treated as human beings, and this in turn has led to persecution and martyrdom for many as the privileged power brokers (including some of the ecclesial hierarchy) react against this new phenomenon. These demands, in spite of opposition, have been made by many other liberation theologians. One who also follows Freirean lines is Juan Luis Segundo.[122]

4.6.3 Juan Luis Segundo

Segundo clearly re-iterates the Freirean critique of imposed literacy training – where the program is imposed from outside and where no account is taken of illiterate pupils' own intelligence.[123] He then goes on (where Freire, writing as a humanist, does not) to say that '[a]n evangelization committed to man's liberation is deeply tied up with the new form of literacy-training: i.e., one

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[121] Apart from tracing liberation theology's descent from the Catholic Action movement in Latin America, Milagros Peña, notes that the intellectuals have 'an integral role in social movements by articulating and elaborating broader sentiments that other may find appealing' ('Liberation theology in Peru: An Analysis of the Role of Intellectuals in Social Movements', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33 (1994), 43). Peña concludes that '[w]hen intellectuals are in positions where they can use their social location within the larger society to their advantage, they further enhance their movement's mobilizing potential' (ibid, 44). This is clearly a role not given to the popular masses.

[122] Segundo was publishing papers on liberation theology before Gutiérrez. See his, 'The Future of Christianity in Latin America' (1962), reprinted in Hennelly, *A Documentary History*, 29-37.

[123] See Juan Luis Segundo, *Our Idea of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974), 172-4.

incorporated within a process of consciousness-raising.'[124] Both the education and the evangelisation are seen as part of one process, and, as far as Segundo is concerned, the church should involve itself with conscientization – despite the political implications.

The political implications, as I have shown, have caused opposition, not least from the Vatican. In his response to the (first) Vatican Instruction, Segundo mounts a strong defence of conscientization and the Base Ecclesial Communities where 'the people practice for themselves an analysis of their own praxis.'[125] Segundo is clear that the people are not manipulated (this was one of the Vatican's concerns) – but this does raise the question of how far he thinks that Liberation Theology, and the education or conscientization it engenders, is from the people or from the intellectuals.

Alfred Hennelly tells us that '[e]ither it is asserted that the "base communities are liberation theology put into practice" or "liberation theology has emerged from reflection on the experience of the base communities".'[126] Segundo himself talks of two theologies of liberation, the first coming from the university students, the middle classes 'who received the first features of this liberation theology as a joyful conversion and a new commitment.'[127]

Unfortunately, this first theology of liberation met obstacles: it became evident that 'common people had neither understood nor welcomed anything from the first theology of liberation ...'[128] It seems that the intellectuals had tried to think *for* the people, and not *with* them. 'It appeared then that if theologians were still to be the "organic intellectuals" of the common people ... they were obliged to learn how oppressed people lived their faith.'[129] This indicates that

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[124] Ibid, 174-5.
[125] Segundo, *Theology and the Church*, 144.
[126] Alfred Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1989), 28.
[127] Segundo, 'Two Theologies of Liberation', in Hennelly, *A Documentary History*, 357.
[128] Ibid., 359.
[129] Ibid., 360.

this 'second line' of liberation theology is trying to be more of, and with, the people. But for Segundo, like Gutiérrez, there is an intellectual struggle and a certain critical distance required. The 'intellectual cannot totally renounce the exercise of a certain criticism' and the theologian has to be immersed in popular culture, 'but not with closed eyes.'[130]

In the end, Segundo remains unsure about how compatible these two lines of theology are, but Hennelly is more sanguine. He regards the two lines as in a 'profound dialectical relationship ... resulting in a symbiosis that stimulates constant growth and maturation in both partners in the dialectic.'[131] It is to be hoped that both partners will move towards liberation together, but whatever else there must be, there needs to be a radical conversion to the poor:

> Christ's reconciliation constitutes a call for the concrete reconciliation of all those on one side of the dividing line of the Beatitudes ... the poor, the hungry, the exploited, and the persecuted, in order that the radical conflict of the gospel with the opposite categories may be a universal, mighty call for the *conversion* of persons and peoples.[132]

4.6.4 Conclusion

I have shown here that both Gutiérrez and Segundo believe that the poor should be 'conscientized'; they should be made aware of their oppression and be given the tools to form 'an articulate agenda for social action' under the guidance of their own "organic intellectuals." This is not to say that either theologian recommends a specific political program – indeed, Gutiérrez carefully avoids advocating specific political policies, and states that this is beyond the church's remit – but the search for justice 'from below' must continue as long as oppression lasts. Gutiérrez believes that the poor deserve the right, and the education, to be able to think and act for themselves in society.

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[130] Ibid., 363.
[131] Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 28.
[132] Segundo, *Signs of the Times*, 52.

4.7 Conclusion

It cannot be denied that Liberation Theology has had a lasting and deep impact. Liberation theology has spread across cultural, denominational and even religious barriers. Talk of the 'preferential option for the poor' has become theologically commonplace. Indeed the danger for Liberation Theology is not perhaps so much the Vatican's policy of placing conservative bishops into positions of authority in the Latin American Church (and whatever that might mean for the Base Ecclesial Communities), but the danger of domesticity.

The universal adoption of the 'preferential option for the poor' can mean that it becomes a mere knee-jerk phrase which does little for the liberation of the very poor it was supposed to assist. Or, what I fear may be happening especially in the West, the language of liberation theology can be co-opted and emptied of its content.[133] This may be an attempt to answer Gutiérrez's emphasis on the social nature of sin (though he never states that sin is wholly social – 'sin is *a personal* and social intrahistorical reality' (185, emphasis added)), it allows a Western, individualist approach to the gospel to continue in essence unimpeded and unthreatening to the establishment. Both of these reactions can be seen as an attempt by those in power (within or outside the church) to ask for change without that change affecting fundamentally those in power. As Gutiérrez states:

> One manifestation of our break with injustice and exploitation, which the present economic and social structures foist upon the vast majority of our people under the guise of law, should come from the bishops. They must turn to the oppressed, declaring their solidarity with them and their desire to join with them in their struggle. This is what they must do [even if it means persecution from those in power] instead of what they have done in the past, when they turned to those in power and called for necessary reforms while implying that their own position need not be affected by such change.[134]

Liberation Theology seeks to challenge the establishment, and expects church leaders to be a part of that challenge. However, under this leadership, the poor are to be given the power to think for themselves, to recognise their oppression

[133] See Hennelly, *Liberation Theologies*, 6.
[134] *The Power of the Poor*, 29.

and to demand change. These demands for change echo the prophetic demands for justice that emanate from the Old and New Testaments. The gospel, under Liberation Theology, has been radicalised and Gutiérrez's theology looks forward to a situation when 'the poor themselves become its [the gospel's] messengers.'

> That is when we shall see the preaching of the gospel become a stumbling block and a scandal. For then we shall have a gospel that is no longer "presentable" in society. It will not sound nice and it will not smell good. The Lord ... will speak to us then, and only at the sound of his voice will we recognise him as our liberator.[135]

This new way of doing theology has brought surprising results, as well as considerable pain for many: martyrdom continues to be a Latin American reality. Liberation theology, however, still seeks to conscientize the poor, and, in order to examine this process of education – with its political ramifications – that I now turn to the pedagogue who has influenced Gutiérrez: Paulo Freire.

[135] Ibid, 22.

Chapter 5

PAULO FREIRE AND THE BASE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall show that Paulo Freire's work has been influential on liberation theologians (Gutiérrez and Segundo in particular), and more generally on the Base Ecclesial Communities discussed briefly in the last chapter. I shall discuss the role of the Base Ecclesial Communities in more detail here, focusing on their general educational – or 'conscientizing' – role.[1]

Like liberation theology itself, Paulo Freire's work faces its biggest danger in domesticisation, or conversion into one 'method' among many. Freire was exiled from Brazil following the 1964 military coup because of his literacy work among the poor,[2] work in which he aimed to raise the awareness of the poor to their oppression and to give them the tools to act on their knowledge. Indeed, in teaching the poor to read and write, he had already given them one tool – literacy was a requirement for enfranchisement.[3]

For Freire, the key to his work is conscientization:[4] it is only by this process of moving the learner towards his (or her)[5] own 'critical consciousness' that real education takes place. Freire is not interested in what he calls 'banking education' or 'domestication', where the students are treated as mere objects to be filled with requisite facts, and thereby conditioned to be content with

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[1] 'Education' and 'conscientization' are not exact synonyms, but Freire and liberation theologians insist that conscientisation is a necessary part of education, especially of education for political involvement, which is the focus of this thesis. 'Education' can be used to domesticate people, as well as to liberate, conscientize, them. In other words, one can educate without conscientizing, but you cannot conscentize someone without educating them.

[2] Later, he was also declared *persona non grata* by the Pinochet government in Chile. See Raff Carmen, 'Paulo Freire 1921-1997 – a Philosophy of Hope, a Life of Practice', *Development in Practice* 8 (1998), 65.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Freire, concerned that the term 'conscientization' had been 'co-opted by mainstream adult education programs aiming to preserve the *status quo*', stopped using the word in 1972, but the concept remained a key part of his thought. See Daniel Schugurensky, 'The Legacy of Paulo Freire: A Critical Review of his Contributions', *Convergence – Toronto: Tribute to Paulo Freire*, 31 (1998), 27, n.7.

[5] Freire has been criticised for the sexism apparent in his early works. Such criticism was accepted, and evidence of more inclusive language can be found in Freire's later works (see 5.3.7 below).

their allotted place in society – a place allotted to them by the dominant class. Freire's conscientizing approach, of course, requires a different attitude from the teacher: on the one hand the teacher is to be a learner in dialogue with his or her students – an authoritarian approach is not one Freire would approve of, as it denies the students the status of 'subjects' – but on the other, the teacher does have an authority, and is expected to lead the class towards their critical consciousness. In Freire's later works,[6] the authority of the teacher has come more to the fore, perhaps to counter the impression given in the early work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, that the teacher was to be just a fellow learner with the students. 'The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in their turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.'[7] Freire has, however, never denied a teacher's responsibility, but redefined it to counter an establishment education that reinforced the *status quo*.

It is at this point that opposition to Freire's methods becomes understandable: it is the establishment that sets up and maintains any education that exists. To have, therefore, someone advocating a (revolutionary) educational process that encourages people to challenge the establishment, is not something that any establishment will willingly entertain. As Freire notes, even when the dominant classes are constrained to allow some education for the dominated poor, they do not want the oppressed to think.[8] What would be even worse, from the establishment point of view, is that Freire clearly expects the oppressed to think along revolutionary lines, with the encouragement of their revolutionary leaders.[9] Given also Freire's reading of (and influence by) Marx,[10] it is unsurprising that the military governments of Latin America

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[6] See, for example, Miles Horton and Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 186-9, where the 'difference between having authority and authoritarianism' is discussed.

[7] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 53.

[8] Ibid., 102.

[9] See ibid., 102-3. In later works, Freire makes fewer assumptions that conscientization would automatically lead to revolutionary thought or action.

[10] Freire had also appropriated other Marxist thinkers in his thought, including Western Marxists such as Gramsci and Althusser. For a list of the people and the schools of thought evidenced in Freire's writings see Daniel Schugurensky, 'The Legacy of Paulo Freire', 19-20.

wanted nothing to do with him, and much preferred the 'culture of silence' that the dominant impose on the dominated.

Freire's exile did not mean that Latin America lost Freirean thought entirely. The Base Ecclesial Communities carried on with his thought. For a time in Brazil, they were the only means of opposition to the military junta that governed that country.[11] How much influence Freire had on these base communities is possibly debatable, but to suggest – even implicitly[12] – that he had no influence, given the way in which these communities functioned especially in the period from 1968 (when military rule was at its most harsh)[13] is untenable.[14] This is not to say that base communities did not exist prior to Freire, nor that, without him, they would not have existed at all; but it is to say that they would not have existed in the same way, nor as such a challenge to the military government. As Andrew Dawson demonstrates, the forerunners of the Base Ecclesial Communities were set up by the Catholic hierarchy as a response to a shortage of priests, and as a means of propagating Catholic doctrine in the face of 'the challenges of rapid demographic shift [due to rapid urbanisation], Protestant growth and a perceived communist threat ...'.[15] Catechists were trained to read and repeat the Church's official line in written material, and were only utilised in the absence of a priest. They were not meant to interpret or advocate any action, nor were they meant to question the official line taken by the ecclesial authorities.[16] Although there were inevitably tensions between the communities and the hierarchy that created them, these

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For a discussion of Freire's Latin American pedagogical-political roots, see Edgar Gonzalez Gaudiano and Alicia de Alba, 'Freire – Present and Future Possibilities', in Peter L. McLaren and Colin Lankshear (eds.), *Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire* (London: Routledge, 1994), 124-7.

[11] Freire makes this point in Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez, *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 65-6.

[12] Andrew Dawson manages to write an entire chapter on 'The origins and character of the base ecclesial community: a Brazilian perspective' without mentioning Freire, but as I shall show, Freirean influence is not so easily omitted. See Dawson in Christopher Rowland (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 109-28.

[13] Ibid., 115.

[14] See 5.7 and 5.8 below.

[15] Ibid., 111.

[16] Who were still, at that time, advocating an 'Augustinian' approach to obedience to one's elders and betters, and were part of the establishment. Further, part of the reason for setting up such limited lay participation was to counter, as I have noted, a 'perceived communist threat'.

'Base Ecclesial Communities' were nowhere near the liberating organisations they became once the oppressive military government stamped down on all opposition to its rule.

Against Dawson, Peter McLaren credits Freire with 'designing the literacy methods for "base communities" organized worldwide by priests and lay workers responsive to the initiatives of Liberation Theology'.[17] He, therefore, can be said to have, at the very least, played a part in the progress of base communities in moving the oppressed towards a critical consciousness. In order to examine the influence of Freire on base ecclesial communities, I will first examine Freire's pedagogical methods, and then look at some of the criticisms his work has encountered. I will also examine Freire's work in terms of the three themes I am following in this thesis: Freire's eschatology, his view on how the church should relate to civil society, and (as something of a recapitulation) his ideas on educating the individual Christian for political involvement. The latter two themes will also encompass his influence on the formation and running of the base ecclesial communities. (As I noted in the previous chapter, recent, more democratic, developments in Latin America, combined with the Vatican's approach in placing conservative bishops in vacant sees in the continent have meant that base communities became less politically active, but as there are now other channels open for legitimate protest, this might have been expected without any Vatican action or approval). I will then conclude with a few thoughts on Freire's contribution to education in the Christian context.

5.2 Freire's Pedagogical Method

Freire tells us that he always wanted to teach, but he cannot have foreseen how far his ideas would have taken him. His ideas have spread even further (though often without the revolutionary fervour that made them, and Freire himself, so many enemies and detractors).[18] Freire's work has, above all, concentrated on

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[17] Peter McLaren, 'Paulo Freire and the Academy: A Challenge from the U.S. Left', *Cultural Critique*, 33 (1996), 156.

[18] 'Freirean programs in this country [the United States] have "raised consciousness," but seldom directly influenced social change.' Tom Heaney, 'Issues in Freirean Pedagogy' from http://nlu.nl.edu/ace/Resources/Documents/FreireIssues.html (03/12/2002) 4. Also 'too many

literacy programmes for adults, and developed on the theme of 'conscientization' – this word, upon which so much of Freire's work is based is notoriously difficult to define. Freire himself spends much time in defining it, not least in an effort to refute easy or partial definitions that others may wish to place upon such a 'great mouthful of a word'.[19] Conscientization is more than consciousness-raising, more than the 'apprehension of reality' meant by the French '*prise de conscience*'[20] – it includes these, but goes further: 'there is no conscientization without historical commitment.'[21] That commitment involves action to 'transform the concrete situation where I find myself oppressed.'

> Obviously, I can't transform it in my head: that would be to fall into the philosophical error of thinking that awareness "creates" reality, I would be decreeing that I am free by my mind. And yet, the structures would continue the same as ever ...[22]

Freire is clearly no 'ivory tower' academic, and he realises that conscientization is 'a painful birth' and that lots of people, both of the oppressed and of the oppressor classes, recoil from it. However, Freire tells us (in one of his rare explicitly Christian comments) that it is our Christian calling: 'our position ... [is] the position of a church that must not forget it is called by its origins to die shivering in the cold.'[23]

5.2.1 The Process of Education

This utopian denunciation and announcement, Freire calls 'heroism in love'. In his early, defining work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), he calls Christians (and others)[24] to a process of education.

> Indeed ... men know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness. In this incompleteness and this awareness lie the

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Freirean programs [in the U.S.] have become little more then low-budget versions of the senior institutions upon which they have come to depend ...' (ibid.).

[19] Paulo Freire, 'Conscientizing as a Way of Liberating', in Alfred T. Hennelly (ed.), *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 5-13.

[20] Ibid, 7.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid, 13

[24] For the most part, Freire does not write explicitly as a Christian. There are however, sections in his work, such as 'My Faith and Hope' in Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 101-7, where he discusses his Christian faith. He criticises the traditional Catholic Church and supports liberation theology: see *The Politics of Education* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 121-40, and 5.4.2 below.

> very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation. The unfinished character of men and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity.[25]

Freire sees this defining educational activity as revolutionary activity. The education he advocates he calls a 'problem-posing' education. It is an education that seeks not to fill students with pre-digested bits of knowledge (what Freire calls 'banking' education), but to get both teachers and students to ask questions of the reality in which they find themselves. This sort of education – one that positively encourages people firstly to ask 'why?', then to critique their situation, and thirdly to seek to change that situation – is one, Freire insists, that only a genuinely revolutionary government could or would tolerate.[26]

In spite of the foregoing, Freire's method was not to gather a group of poor people together and teach them how to be revolutionaries. His job was to teach them how to read and write. The problem was that he was successful in both doing the job and in the methods employed in doing that job. In a sense (and in a sense only) any 'revolutionary' action on the part of the people was incidental. For Freire did not see directing the form of action that the conscientized people undertake as part of his remit. But how does a literacy programme conscientize the poor?

In order to read the word, Freire believes, one has to read the world. To use an example given in *Cultural Action for Freedom*, the sentence 'Eva saw the grape'[27] makes no sense to the poor – being taught to read such sentences becomes a meaningless exercise divorced from their reality. On the other hand, words such as '*favela*' ['slum'], do make sense as it represents 'the same social, economic, and cultural reality of the vast numbers of slum dwellers in those [Brazil and other] countries.'[28] So it is words such as this that allow the poor to read both the word and the world.[29] It is once the poor can read the

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[25] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 57.
[26] See ibid., 58-9.
[27] Paulo Freire, *Cultural Action for Freedom* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 24.
[28] Ibid., 38-9.
[29] For a detailed account of how Freire teaches the poor how to read using 'generative words' (words generated from the poor's own context), see ibid., 85-8. See also Paulo Freire,

word and the world that they begin to reject the image of themselves that has been imposed on them by their oppressors.

5.2.2 The Assumptions of Conscientization

The process, begun by a literacy program, of conscientizing the poor, begins with an assumption on the part of the educator: that the poor person is indeed an illiterate 'oppressed within the system'.[30] This is opposed to the assumptions of other literacy programs whose authors

> ... do not recognize in the poor classes the ability to know and even create the texts which would express their own thought-language at the level of their perception of the world. The authors repeat with the texts what they do with the words, i.e., they introduce them into the learners' consciousness as if it were empty space – once more, the 'digestive' ['banking'] concept of knowledge.[31]

The effect of this lack of recognition is that the students are domesticated; that is, they are prepared 'for a life of political alienation in society',[32] rather than empowered. Given the above dichotomy (that either the teacher assumes that his or her students are to be filled with the required knowledge so that the students become 'good' passive members of society, or the teacher assumes that the students are to be conscientized – to recognise how the *status quo* treats them, and *not* to be content within that system) then it is unsurprising that Freire assumes that education *is* politics. Neutrality is not an option, the educator must ask him or herself,

> What kind of politics am I doing in the classroom? That is, In favor of whom am I being a teacher? ... Of course, the teacher who asks in favor of whom I am educating and against whom, must also be teaching in favor of something and against something ... After that moment, the educator has to make his or her choice, to go farther into opposition politics and pedagogy.[33]

Education: The Practice of Freedom (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1974), especially 49-58 and 82-4.

[30] Ibid., 29.

[31] Ibid., 26.

[32] Ira Shor, 'Education is Politics: Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy', in Peter McLaren and Peter Leonard (eds.), *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter* (London: Routledge, 1993), 25.

[33] Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1987), 46. Freire makes a similar point in Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 73.

These questions and choices are not usually in the forefront of an educator's mind (and, presumably, an educator is free to choose *not* to go into opposition politics). Indeed, Freire found that the 'banking,' or 'domesticating,' system is so universally adopted that the biggest difficulty he faced in his adult literacy programs was training the teams of coordinators.

> Teaching the purely technical aspect of the procedure is not difficult; the difficulty lies rather in the creation of a new attitude – that of dialogue, so absent in our own upbringing and education. The coordinators must be converted to dialogue in order to carry out education rather than domestication ... The period of instruction must be followed by dialogical supervision, to avoid the temptation of anti-dialogue on the part of the coordinators.[34]

Freire's methods face criticism, often from those it is intended to help, because they have 'internalised' their oppression so effectively that the poor assume that they are totally ignorant,[35] and (in a school situation) if a teacher asks the students 'to co-develop the class with her or him, the students often doubt that this is 'real' education.'[36] The students are so indoctrinated with how education ought to be done to them, that they find it difficult to visualise how a different approach to their schooling could be appropriate. Under this new cooperative system, the teacher has (as Freire admits in *Learning to Question*) a difficult balancing act to complete.

> I have never said that not having a truth to impose implies that you don't have anything to propose, no ideas to put forward ... Educators cannot refrain from putting forward ideas, nor can they refrain either from engaging in discussion with their students on the ideas they have put forward. Basically, this has to do with the near mystery of the praxis of educators who live out their democratic insights: they must affirm themselves without thereby disaffirming their students ...[37]

What Freire goes on to say provides the link between his work with students in school, and his adult literacy work. He states,

> the demands I make of myself of living out my democratic principles in my relations with the students with whom I am working, I also look for in revolutionary leaders in their political-pedagogical relations with the working classes, the popular masses.

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[34] Paulo Freire, *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, 52.
[35] Freire discusses this 'self-depreciation' in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 38-9.
[36] Ira Shor, 'Education is Politics', 29.
[37] Freire and Faundez, *Learning to Question*, 34.

> I do not believe that education is something done for students or to them. I do not believe either ... that revolutionary change is something done *for* the popular masses but *with* them.[38]

5.2.3 Progressive Education

If people, in other words, are to be conscientized, they have to have *their* own consciousness raised, and not a pseudo-consciousness that merely reflects how the educator thinks the popular masses ought to react to their situation. Here we move into a difficulty of Freirean education: the many requirements of an educator. In his fourth letter to those who dare teach,[39] Freire lists the following 'indispensable qualities' that progressive teachers need to develop in order to carry out their work. He lists humility, which is the understanding that '[n]o one knows it all; no one is ignorant of everything.' Then there is courage, tolerance, decisiveness, security, 'the tension between *patience and impatience*' and the joy of living. The tension between patience and impatience as one quality is intriguing, but Freire insists that

> Neither *patience* nor *impatience* alone is what is called for. Patience alone may bring the educator to a position of resignation, of permissiveness that denies the educator's democratic dream ... Conversely, impatience alone may lead the educator to blind activism, to action for its own sake ... Isolated patience tends to hinder the attainment of objectives central to the educator's practice, making it soft and ineffectual. Untempered impatience threatens the success of one's practice, which becomes lost in the arrogance of judging oneself the owner of history. Patience alone consumes itself in mere prattle; impatience alone consumes itself in irresponsible activism.[40]

Apart from this tension between patience and impatience, there is a further, more basic, tension on the progressive educator. On the one hand there has to be a (political) assumption on the part of the educator about the people he or she is educating, but on the other, these same people have to be free to make their own choices without dependence on the educator. This seems to require an almost impossible juggling act on the part of the educator – who is required to conscientize the students without directing the action that those students

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[38] Ibid.
[39] For the following, see Paulo Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1988), 39-46.
[40] Ibid., 44, emphasis original.

should take once they are conscientized (except as one member of the conscientized group).[41]

> Underlying Freire's definition of education as politics is a critique of domination and a commitment to challenge inequality and justice. From a democratic point of view, Freire sees society controlled by an elite which imposes its culture and values as the standard. In schooling, this imposed standard is transferred by required syllabuses, mandated textbooks, tracking, and standardized exams... After years in passive classrooms, students do not see themselves as people who can transform society.[42]

It would be difficult to find a more accurate, and more succinct, summary of Freire's politico-pedagogical approach. Students trained at school to be passive in class tend to remain passive as oppressed adults. As Freire has said – in response to Faundez's assertion that only by asking questions and taking risks (including the risk of making mistakes) that education becomes creative and stimulating – '[a]ny educational practice based on standardization ... on routine ... is bureaucratising and thus anti-democratic.'[43] If people do not believe that they can make a difference, it is difficult to see how they could be persuaded to take part in the democratic process. This does not mean that people will necessarily become revolutionary once they have been conscientized. Freire's own expectations of the effects of conscientization were much reduced by the time he was appointed Secretary of Education in São Paulo in 1988 (Freire had returned from exile in 1980): 'I am struggling to make at least a minimum contribution in the radical line of the pedagogy of liberation.'[44] There is no mention of continual revolution here, as in Freire's early work, but the list of his achievements while in office is still impressive for a city the size, and with the problems, of São Paulo.[45]

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[41] This difficult balancing act will be further discussed at 5.3.8 below.
[42] Shor, 'Education is Politics', 28.
[43] Freire and Faundez, *Learning to Question*, 41.
[44] Carlos Alberto Torres and Paulo Freire, 'Twenty Years after *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*', in McLaren and Lankshear (eds.), *Politics of Liberation*, 106.
[45] See ibid., 102. Also see Tim Sieber, 'Pedagogy, Power, and the City: Paulo Freire as Urban School Superintendent', in Paulo Freire (ed.), *Mentoring the Mentor: A Critical Dialogue with Paulo Freire* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 273-82. For Freire's own account of his work see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the City* (New York: Continuum, 1993), where, interestingly, he talks of opposition to his work – without naming where that opposition comes from, or why he was opposed.

5.3 Criticisms of Freire's Work

5.3.1 Introduction

A writer as prolific as Freire, and one who has faced opposition to the extent of being exiled, has obviously generated considerable criticism (as well as support). In this section I will examine some of those criticisms and evaluate how pertinent they are. It is clear that some criticisms may be valid for Freire's early work, but need modifying (at the very least) if his later work is taken into account. Freire himself was open to criticism, and tried to modify his stance if he felt such criticism was valid.[46] This does not mean that criticism ceased, nor that some criticisms did not retain their credibility. As I shall show, his dualistic thinking still leads to difficulties, as does his (apparent) lack of results.

5.3.2 The Limits of The Revolution

In a clear, and welcome, change from his early work, in a discussion about his role as Secretary for Education, Freire argues paradoxically that 'the strength of education lies precisely in its limitations.'[47] It is because of these limitations that he feels he is efficient in his job: as he cannot do everything, he can be efficient at what he can do. This idea of 'limitation' (which does not appear in Freire's early work) not only points towards the limitations of his early subjectivist thinking,[48] but also more generally, of his revolutionary, dialectical thinking. For Freire, a person is either oppressed or oppressor, one's educational methods are either 'banking' methods, or they are democratic, liberationary methods. This duality denies the complexity of humanity and of the situation: often people can (in different situations) be both oppressor and oppressed.[49]

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[46] For a clear example of this openness, see bell hooks, 'bell hooks Speaking about Paulo Freire – the Man, his Work', in McLaren and Leonard, *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*, 146-54.

[47] Torres and Freire, 'Twenty Years after *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*', 106.

[48] In later works, Freire realised that 'a more critical understanding of oppressive situations ... does not yet liberate the oppressed'(Schugurensky, 'The Legacy of Paulo Freire', 20).

[49] On this point see especially Peter Mayo, 'Gramsci, Freire, and Radical Adult Education: A Few "Blind Spots"', *Humanity and Society* 18 (1994), 92.

The revolutionary language and approach especially evident in Freire's early work has rightly generated criticism on two counts. Firstly, Freire's positive and uncritical endorsement of revolutionaries such as Guevara, Castro and Mao makes no mention of the negative, non-dialogical aspects of their revolutions. In defence of Freire, it must be noted that the negative side of these revolutions was less evident in the 1960s.[50] Secondly, Freire tended (especially in his early work) to write in a revolutionary manner, that is he writes as if he expects educators to work *against* an established government, but for most of his life he worked *with* governments – these governments were radical or revolutionary governments, but none-the-less Freire tended to be, in action, radical and willing to work within the system, rather than the revolutionary and rejecting of the system as a whole. However, his later work, such as *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, Freire still gives the impression that social movements can exist 'outside' the system:[51] he does not seem to realise that, in spite of his experience, if a government is against an organisation, it is very difficult for that organisation to operate.[52]

5.3.3 Black and White, or Shades of Grey

Freire's work, as noted above, tends to present 'a dualistic view of reality through pairs of opposites in which one is the preferred option ...'.[53] Freire's dualistic thinking has led some of his followers 'to advocate a monolithic rejection of banking education ...'.[54] Educational methods, however 'democratic' in theory, will often contain at least an element of 'banking' information as long as there is one person, or group of people, in a leadership, teaching, or coordinating role.[55] The guidance (to put it no stronger) of these leaders will point the rest of the group in a particular direction, even if it is in a liberating direction. It is in defining the point at which 'direction' becomes

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[50] Also, as I noted in chapter 4 above, in the first world we tend to be much more critical of communist and other revolutionary socialist approaches than is the case in Latin America.
[51] See Shor and Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*, 38-9.
[52] For a discussion on the 'taming' of Freirean organisations in the U.S., see Tom Heaney, 'Issues in Freirean Pedagogy', 4-5.
[53] Schugurensky, 'The Legacy of Paulo Freire', 24.
[54] Ibid., 25.
[55] In both *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Cultural Action for Freedom*, Freire makes numerous references to the oppressed's relationship with the revolutionary *leadership*. In this aspect he is not as democratic, or anti-elitist, as he might like to think he is.

'directives' that is difficult for those following Freire, as it appears to be for Freire himself. On the other hand, as Freire himself recognised, some form of direction is required:

> [If an educator] washes his or her hands and says in effect: "Since I respect students and I am not directive, and since they are individuals deserving respect, they should determine their own direction." This educator does not deny the directive nature of education that is independent of his own subjectivity. He simply denies himself the pedagogical, political, and epistemological task of assuming the role of a subject of that directive practice. He refuses to convince his learners of what he thinks is just. This educator, then, ends up helping the power structure.[56]

What we are left with, then, is an educator, who must not be authoritarian, who should never 'transform learners' presences into shadows of the educator's presence.' But neither should the opposite situation occur. 'The educator' according to Freire, 'has to stimulate learners to live a critically conscious presence in the pedagogical and historical process.'[57] This balance cannot be easy to achieve, and although Freire did try to address the issue, he clearly failed to come up with a satisfactory solution. Indeed, he seems to deliberately leave us to work out how this balance is to be achieved as he notoriously refused to write any 'how-to' books.

5.3.4 How to 'Do' Freire

This gap in Freire's (large) output of books is controversial. Freire himself consistently argued that his ideas were to be adapted and critically reapplied to the new context in which the teacher found him or herself. Daniel Schugurensky refers to this when he recalls the comment of an adult educator saying that she did not want Freire to give her a recipe, but "to help me cook dinner."[58] There is the appendix at the end of *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, which follows the chapter on 'Education and Conscientização'

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[56] Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 139.
[57] Ibid, 140.
[58] Quoted in Schugurensky, 'The Legacy of Paulo Freire', 25. In his note (28, n. 27) Schugurensky points out that 'popular education groups inspired by Freire' provide plenty of material; but this does not answer the criticism that Freire himself did not provide it.

where Freire goes through the phases of his literacy approach,[59] but this work clearly applies to a Latin American context. One can understand the frustration of educators who do not have a manual at their fingertips, but I suspect that Freire would say they are victims of banking education who would wish to pour the contents of the manual into their students heads and expect them to be conscientized at the end of the process – rather than having been conscientized by a dialogue set up with the students. Freire always refused to allow his 'substantive ideas' to be reduced to 'a mere technique', especially in areas (geographically or intellectually) where he himself does not feel proficient.

> Therefore, in not being familiar, let us say, with the New York City context ... it would be preposterous of me to provide what many North Americans often so anxiously ask for, recipes in terms of techniques and tactics for action. The only thing that I could offer is to work with North American educators so as to enable them to understand more deeply what it means to struggle against sexism [for example] as a substantive object of knowledge. Hence North American educators who dare to be progressive educators ... have the responsibility of analysing both the possibility and limitations of actions within their own context so as to not sacrifice the force that gave rise to the struggle against sexism, racism, and other isms in the first place.[60]

In itself, Freire's point is valid. However, as he seems not to have solved the tension between 'possibility and limitations' in his own context, anyone following Freire is still left wondering how far a dialogue can go, and how far conscientization can go, given that Freire regards it (especially in his early work) as a revolutionary process. In *A Pedagogy for Liberation* Freire is insistent that educators could work within the system, the schools, that they find themselves: 'but even there it is necessary to be critical inside the system.'[61] In the same book, Freire tells us that he works both in schools and

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[59] See Freire, *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, 49-52. The Appendix (61-84) gives the ten situations and seventeen 'generative words' used by Freire in Rio state, Brazil.

[60] Paulo Freire, 'A Response', in Freire (ed.) *Mentoring the Mentor*, 326-7.

[61] Shor and Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, 39. However, Henry Giroux points to the danger of just using the 'language of critique.' 'By viewing schools as primarily reproductive sites, they [radical educators] have not been able to develop a theory of schooling that offers a viable possibility for counterhegemonic struggle and ideological contestation' (Henry A. Giroux, 'Schooling as a Form of Cultural Politics' in Henry A. Giroux and Peter L. McLaren (eds.) *Critical Pedagogy, The State, and Cultural Struggle* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 130). Giroux argues that the key is a new (dialectical) meaning for authority: 'For radical educators and other working in oppositional social movements, the dominant meaning of authority must be redefined to include the concepts of freedom, equality, and democracy. Furthermore, the more specific concept of emancipatory authority needs to be

'with the social, popular movements in the periphery of the cities'.[62] However, whether he has worked within, or outside formal schools – he has always worked with, or at the invitation of, governments and duly elected authorities.[63] This work has not always been as successful as might have been hoped: when Freire went to Guinea-Bissau to help an (admittedly revolutionary) government with its literacy program, the outcome was not an unqualified success, as the literacy was taught in the colonizers' Portuguese tongue, and not Creole, or other indigenous languages. *Pedagogy in Progress: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau* clearly 'talks up' the success of the mission – the tying in of education and production, the notebooks the students produced, the political awareness of the leaders in Guinea-Bissau – but Freire did not then publish a letter he wrote to Mario Cabral in which he questioned the use of the Portuguese language in the program.

> Nevertheless, what our practice is demonstrating is that learning the Portuguese language obviously works ... in cases in which Portuguese is found not to be totally foreign to the social practice of those becoming literate ... But this is not the situation in the rural centres of the country, where one finds the oppressed majority of the national population ... In truth, the Portuguese language is not the language of the People of Guinea-Bissau.[64]

This letter was published as an Appendix in *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, four years after *Pedagogy in Progress* appeared. It seems obvious that, had it been published with *Pedagogy in Progress*, it might have lessened the criticism Freire faced that he was not interested in native languages. Unfortunately this criticism still exists, and has validity, as there is no evidence that Freire engaged with the native languages in Brazil.[65]

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seen as the central category around which to construct a rationale for defining teachers as transformative intellectuals and teacher work as a form of intellectual practice related to the issues, problems, concerns, and experiences that link classroom life to the daily concerns of the wider community and society' (ibid., 137-8). It remains to be seen how this sort of authority could be effective in today's classrooms.

[62] Shor and Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, 38.

[63] Even in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, his revolution has to be seen as more theoretical than one he has lived out in practice. This is in spite of Freire's exile from Brazil and Chile by reactionary regimes.

[64] Paulo Freire, 'Letter to Mario Cabral', in Freire and Macedo, *Literacy*, 162.

[65] See, for example, Mayo, 'A Few 'Blind Spots'', 87.

The reason given for continuing the Guinea-Bissau program in Portuguese is that there was a lack of materials in Creole (this was not least due to the fact that Creole was not a written language).[66] This did not (or did not any longer) impress Freire. His solution would be for the learners to produce the material they needed themselves. For him, literacy must begin with the people's mother tongue. Literacy in other languages can follow later, as those languages become important to the people. In Guinea-Bissau, once people were proficient in reading and writing Creole, *then* they could have been introduced to Portuguese, the language of the elite. This, of course, would have taken longer, but Freire wished to start where the people were, rather than where the government wished they were: it seems he was over-ruled, with disastrous results.[67]

5.3.5 Judgement by Results

This is one basic criticism of Freire that is still made: the lack of results.[68] The poor, one might say, are still with us. This is true in Brazil where he lived, worked, and, towards the end of his life, held political power. It is also true in other countries, from the United States to Guinea-Bissau, where he worked or had influence. The fact that the oppressor mentality needs to be opposed (not least by the church) does not deny the fact that its grip on power, and over the life of others, is tenacious. One author tells us that Freire had to admit that he had not come across a single case of the oppressed overcoming their oppression.[69] However, in Freire's defence, we must note that

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[66] Carlos Alberto Torres, 'From the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to *A Luta Continua*', in McLaren and Leonard (eds.), *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*, 132.

[67] Freire returns to this theme in a dialogue with Donaldo Macedo, where he argues that Creole is a valid language, and points to the dangers of elitism if education is solely done (in this case) in Portuguese (see *The Politics of Education*, 184-6).

[68] '[O]f the 26,000 students involved in literacy training [in Guinea-Bissau] practically none became functionally literate' (Carlos Alberto Torres, 'From the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to *A Luta Continua*', 133). Reasons for this include the undeveloped state of Guinea-Bissau materially and politically, reliance on a 'colonial bureaucracy' that had not supported the current government in its struggle for power, and (most importantly for Freire) the language question (see ibid., 133-5).

[69] See G. MacGoin quoted in John Lockhart, *After Freire: A Continuing Pedagogy?* The William Temple Foundation Occasional Paper 26 (Manchester: William Temple Foundation, 1997), 30.

> Part of the force of Freire's critique was also his denunciation of undemocratic and authoritarian regimes ...[70] So it is important to note that Freire's own participation in politics in recent years has led him to pursue, in effect, radical social-democratic, rather than revolutionary goals.[71]

Social democracy, as opposed to revolution, is prepared to accept incremental improvements in society. In facing the question towards the end of his life, of how he could retain his hope with all the problems remaining in Brazil, Freire states

> Only the improvement of democracy, which implies overcoming social injustice, can demonstrate how worthwhile all the hope we put into the fight was ... We now need to consolidate democracy, shore up its institutions, ensure a return to development, and ensure economic balance, with which we may face the social problems that afflict us.[72]

The enormity of the task still to be accomplished should not blind us to how far Freire's Brazil had come. Further, the enormity of the task of the peasantry in 'overcoming their oppression' must not blind us to the work that Freire has done in setting them on the road to overcoming that oppression.

It also does not deny the fact that, in the 1960s, he was capable of teaching illiterates to read and write in a matter of days. If the revolution has not happened, it does not mean that Freire's methods and life has to be regarded as a complete failure: consciousness has been raised, and if Freirean educational organisations have been 'tamed' in the United States,[73] it was at least because the authorities felt that these organisations required taming. Freire himself did not expect the revolution to be completed: if liberation is achieved on one level, the hope born of that struggle, 'will continue to have meaning when, and only when, it can in its own turn give birth to new struggles on other levels.'[74]

In sum, we must note that although there have been no dramatic results of Freire's life and work, there have been results: the people in the Base Ecclesial

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[70] It is important to recall that, when I critiqued Augustine's political 'quietism', there was no democratic alternative to authoritarian regimes then in existence.
[71] John Lockhart, *After Freire: A Continuing Pedagogy?*, 30.
[72] *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 107.
[73] As noted above.
[74] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 198.

Communities of Brazil and elsewhere,[75] have had their consciousness raised, which meant that '[t]hey came to realise more clearly that they were persons, that they ought to have a role in society, that they could make decisions, and that they had a right to make their presence felt.'[76] This in itself is no small step on the road to freedom from oppression.

5.3.6 There is No Neutrality

It should be clear from the above that Freire does not claim 'ideological neutrality'. His work is with radical governments and organizations of the political left; and, like the liberation theologians, he favours a socialist against a capitalist approach, and communitarian ideas against individualist ones in order to break 'the culture of silence.'

Freire's idea of a culture of silence has been criticised: James Blackburn argues that the powerless may express 'power' in terms of 'sabotage, non-cooperation, and the secret observance of a distinct culture and identity.'[77] Such 'power' does not strike me as being very powerful or effective as it usually only succeeds in bringing the wrath of the dominant down on the (already) dominated. The power of the poor is really only power to sabotage,[78] or to drop out,[79] which, in the end – as both Ira Shor and Michelle Fine demonstrate – only leads to a perpetuation of the oppressed state. In the first case, the 'students see their future already in their present, a life of squalor, disregard, going nowhere' so they find no motivation for cooperating with an

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[75] For Freire's influence on Base Ecclesial Communities, see 5.7 and 5.8 below.

[76] Ranulfo Peloso da Silva, 'Personal Experiences', in Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (eds.), *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 215. For Freire's own description of the peasants' response to conscientization see, for example, *Cultural Action for Freedom*, 43-6.

[77] James Blackburn, 'Understanding Paulo Freire: Reflections on the Origins, Concepts, and Possible Pitfalls of his Educational Approach', *Community Development Journal*, 35 (2000), 10.

[78] For a discussion of this 'power' in U.S. schools, see Freire and Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, 123-9.

[79] For a discussion on this (again in a U.S. context), see Michelle Fine, 'Silencing and Nurturing Voice in an Improbable Context: Urban Adolescents in Public School', in Giroux and McLaren (eds.), *Critical Pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle*, 152-73. Fine points out that this 'power' merely reinforces, for another generation, the lack of opportunity for the poor of the community.

alienating system.[80] In the second case, the students, Fine argues, are reacting to an imposed culture of silence, but even those who fled the school system 'with resistance, energy, and vision' were 'silenced, withdrawn, and depressed by age twenty-two.'[81]

Blackburn's second point, that the Freirean educator possesses 'the secret formula of a power to which they must be initiated'[82] and 'that this formula ... is universally applicable and unquestionably justifiable ... regardless of the cultural or religious context of the population that is perceived to be oppressed'[83] is also questionable in the light of Freire's refusal to produce 'how to' manuals for his work,[84] and his concern to educate the educators in dialogical education. The fact that his ideas have been misapplied[85] does not mean that the ideas themselves are flawed. If people are to break out of their 'magical' or 'fatalist' approach to life and faith, then some form of conscientization (appropriate to that situation) must be taught. However, as I shall discuss below, to assume that people will blindly accept everything from the conscientizing educator grossly underestimates their intelligence.

Blackburn's insistence on the power of the poor is symptomatic of those who want to praise the poor while keeping separate from them. An example of this attitude can be found in Donaldo Macedo's article in *Mentoring the Mentor*. He tells us of a colleague who addressed a conference along the lines that

> community people don't need to go to college because, since they know so much more than do members of the university community, there is little that the university can teach them. While making such public statements, this colleague was busily moving from the inner city to an affluent suburb, making sure that her children attend better schools.[86]

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[80] Freire and Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, 128. The better off students are still alienated, but 'playing by the rules in an elite school can pay off in your future' (ibid.).
[81] Fine, 'Silencing and Nurturing Voice', 169.
[82] Blackburn, 'Understanding Paulo Freire', 10, quoting M. Rahnema.
[83] Blackburn, 'Understanding Paulo Freire', 10.
[84] See above.
[85] Blackburn supplies us with two examples of this; see 'Understanding Paulo Freire', 11-12.
[86] Donaldo Macedo, 'An Anti-Method Pedagogy: A Freirean Perspective', in Freire (ed.), *Mentoring the Mentor*, 6.

This 'false generosity of paternalism' ensures that any power the oppressed holds is of a completely inferior league to the power and 'cultural capital' of the better educated. It seems that Blackburn is guilty of the same sort of paternalism, and, as such, his criticisms must be dismissed.

5.3.7 The Complexity of Life and Oppression

Another aspect of Freire's work that grates somewhat, and has not received comment, is that he talks of opposition and persecution while ignoring the fact that, although he was exiled, others were not given the option of flight. Freire tells us that we must expect a violent reaction from the dominant classes, and there will be some who leave and some who stay.[87] At this point, Freire should have been more careful before making clear his support for those who stay. These people have to face persecution up to and including martyrdom for standing up for their beliefs. This is not to downplay the shock and trauma for Freire of being forced into exile, but it did become a learning experience for him,[88] and he was able to go back home: something (obviously) denied the many who were killed. By denying those who leave an acceptance of 'the dramatic tension between past and future, death and life ... between saying the word and mutilating silence ...',[89] he clearly forgets that he himself left Brazil in 1964 (whether willingly or not), but yet, in his life and work, clearly still accepted this 'dramatic tension'. It is, I fear, another case of Freire's dualistic thinking running away with him, and he forgets that there are complexities that need to be explored even in his own life.

Other criticisms of Freire's work include his lack of 'sustained discussion on gender, race, and sexuality issues.'[90] Although there is comment on these aspects of social difference in Freire's work, I must agree that he does not go into these aspects in depth. Further, I too wince, with Mayo, at Freire's comment that "I, too, am a woman",[91] but it is, I think, too much to ask of one

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[87] *The Politics of Education*, 128.
[88] See *Learning to Question*, 4-26. Also see *The Politics of Education*, 180-2.
[89] *The Politics of Education*, 128-9.
[90] Mayo, 'A Few 'Blind Spots'', 87.
[91] Quoted in ibid, 88. For a discussion of Freire's sexist language, see especially bell hooks, 'bell hooks Speaking about Paulo Freire – the Man, his Work', 146-54. Michelle Fine is even more forgiving: 'I excuse you "the man," assuming you know and share my concerns for the

person (however prolific a writer) to attend in depth to *all* aspects of oppression that exist in the world. Here it will suffice to note that Freire was aware of these issues, and strove to see how they could be overcome[92] – though his solution involved the rather drastic measure of 'class suicide' by any and all oppressors.

5.3.8 Class Suicide

The 'class suicide' of the oppressors[93] (which may or may not include educators) has, needless to say, yet to occur in any society. Peter Mayo makes the point well that 'so many factors' need to be rejected

> like one's habitus (values, norms, taste for culture, 'master patterns' of thinking and speaking, relationship to language and culture, etc.), one's educational background, the nature of one's everyday work... possibly even one's acquired coherent and systematic view of the world... that can distinguish the adult educator from the working class participant with whom he or she is working.[94]

This gap between educator and 'educatee' is one that is extremely difficult to close. Peter Leonard, in his work at the Department of Applied Social Studies in the University of Warwick (the Warwick School), sought to overcome 'the student-teacher contradiction', but was faced with 'considerable instability and tension.' The idea that student input was valued so highly led one year to no curriculum being written before the start of the year. This led to such 'intolerable anxiety and strain on both students and teachers' that the experiment was abandoned.[95] Even as the Warwick School tried to achieve some balance, it faced 'the dangers of charisma, the certainty, the dominance of ideas over practice, the compelling belief system' that Freire (and Gramsci)

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symbols and meanings of language and exclusions' (Michelle Fine, 'A Letter to Paulo', in Freire (ed.) *Mentoring the Mentor*, 91).

[92] Freire did 'not accept that he should be criticised with hindsight ...'. This would assume that he would not, or could not, change, and his later works avoid sexist language as he 'evidently becomes more aware of the criticisms raised by feminists' (John Lockhart, *After Freire: A Continuing Pedagogy?*, 28).

[93] See Freire, *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau* (New York: Continuum, 1983), 78ff., where Freire comments approvingly on Amilcar Cabral's call for the 'class suicide' of middle class people who need 'to integrate' themselves 'with the reality of his country, with his people ...'.

[94] Peter Mayo, 'A Few 'Blind Spots'', 90.

[95] Peter Leonard, 'Critical Pedagogy and State Welfare', in McLaren and Leonard (eds.), *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*, 164.

presented.[96] Leonard has to admit that they 'faced, but never fully escaped from, the dangers inherent in traditional bourgeois intellectual activity – elitism, the cult of the expert, the belief in the superiority of mental over manual labour.'[97]

There are, according to James Blackburn, only one group of educators who have managed, or who manage better than most, to 'shed ingrained attitudes of 'anti-dialogue' which may have become automatic.' These are 'the progressive Christian groups', especially liberation theologians, who

> By virtue of their spiritual vocation to 'merge with the people' – as Christ himself is purported to have done[98] – in an act of humility and sacrifice, Jesuit priests (among others) – even those armed with Phd's [*sic*] – seem to have a rare ability to engage in the kind of dialogue Freire writes about. Others may find it far more difficult to shed their self-image as intellectual superiors.[99]

On the other hand, and inevitably, those who use the Bible, or who approach conscientization from a Christian angle, are criticised for their indoctrination of the people by those who are less sympathetic to faith or 'other-worldly' schemes of thought. (Christianity is, after all, in Leonard's phrase, a 'compelling belief system'.) The problem is, according to Blackburn, that 'any pre-determined vision of liberation introduced from the outside is ultimately paternalistic, since it presupposes that the oppressed are incapable of determining their own endogenously produced vision of liberation.'[100] However, what needs to be remembered is that in Latin America, where Freire was born and where Liberation Theology first took root, most of the oppressed (and, incidentally, most oppressors) call themselves Christian. Gustavo Gutiérrez informs us that

> The situation of oppression does not eliminate the people's character as believers. The possibilities of a liberative faith are bound up with their revolutionary capacity, and vice-versa ... Hence one cannot try to develop one of these capabilities without taking the other into account.

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[96] Ibid., 166.
[97] Ibid.
[98] By 'merging', I assume Blackburn means that Christ became a part of suffering humanity. Christ certainly did not sacrifice his identity by merging with the people. Nor do I expect that the Jesuits feel they are sacrificing their identity as they 'merge with the people'.
[99] Blackburn, 'Understanding Paulo Freire', 8.
[100] Ibid., 12.

> Herein lies the real meeting ground between organizations of the common people and Christian communities of the common people.[101]

Carlos Mesters, in partial answer to the ideas of 'indoctrination', also makes the pertinent point that the people 'are far smarter than you would think' and are capable of 'discovering things in the Bible that other readers don't find.'[102] In other words, once people start to be conscientized, they start to develop their own opinions along with their own critical faculties. Also, the fact that these opinions may not necessarily coincide with those of the educator is not something to be concerned about in a situation of dialogue.

5.3.9 Conclusion

The criticisms of Freire range over a wide area, and some are more pertinent than others. Those that still need answering relate to the practical application of a Freirean system – especially as Freire shifted his ground from a revolutionary to a more radical democratic approach. Also, he never solved the dilemma about how much he was inside, and how much outside, the 'system.' However, Freire has given us an approach to education and liberation that has led to people gaining a feeling of worth, and wanting a place in society,[103] which in itself is a positive result of his life's work – a life spent within (though critical of) the Catholic church. As such, he would have had no problem with Gutiérrez's comments or Mesters observations (cited above). His own faith, as I have said, was not overtly displayed, but there are occasion when he does make explicitly Christian comments, or when he comments on the Catholic Church as he saw it: it is to some of these comments that we now turn.

5.4 Freire's Christian Belief

Throughout his life, though there was a time when he 'fled the church on seeing that the village priest served the rich but abandoned the poor of the

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[101] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'The Irruption of the Poor in Latin America and the Christian Communities of the Common People', in Torres and Eagleson (eds.), *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, 114.
[102] Carlos Mesters, 'The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People' in ibid., 207.
[103] See 5.3.5 above, especially da Silva's coments.

Gospel',[104] Freire was happy to claim that he had been influenced by both Christ and Marx.[105] Even in 1990, he saw no problem in the 'contradictory' nature of his position: 'my "meetings" with Marx never suggested to me to stop "meeting" Christ.'[106]

When Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in exile in the 1960s, he was 'certain that Christians and Marxists, though they may disagree with me in part or in whole, will continue reading to the end.'[107] He admits his work is radical, and contains numerous references to guerrillas and revolutionary leaders, including 'another loving man: Camilo Torres, "the guerrilla priest."'[108] He is, on the other hand, clearly against the sort of faith that encourages a fatalistic acceptance of one's (miserable) lot. In discussing how the mind-set of the oppressor is 'housed' within the dominated peasant, Freire says that the peasants become 'fearful of freedom',

> They resort ... to magical explanations or a false view of God, to whom they fatalistically transfer the responsibility for their oppressed state. It is extremely unlikely that these self-mistrustful, downtrodden, hopeless people will seek their own liberation – an act of rebellion which they will view as a disobedient violation of the will of God ...[109]

It will be clear from this that Freire is on the side of the liberation theologians (and with their critical use of Marxism) when it comes to the religious situation in Latin America. As I have noted in the previous chapter, and above, the Latin American people's faith cannot be separated from their liberation, so it must be radicalised and the 'false view of God' corrected.

5.4.1 Freire's Christian Marxism

As I have noted above, scholars have discerned many influences on Freire's work. Freire's genius was 'to combine their ideas into an original formulation.'[110] This can allow for scholars (outside of direct, acknowledged

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[104] Adriana Puiggrós, 'Paulo Freire and the "Pedagogy of Hope"', *Media Development* 4 (1997), 24.
[105] See for example, Horton and Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking*, 245-7.
[106] Ibid., 246.
[107] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 17.
[108] Ibid., 138.
[109] Ibid.,132.
[110] Schugurensky, 'The Legacy of Paulo Freire', 20.

quotes in his work), to discern different influences as predominant: Henry Giroux tells us, for example, that Freire's 'commitment to Marxism has not been displaced but is tempered by his commitment to the critical traditions of liberation theology, Freudianism, existentialism, radical humanism, and the more open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci and Amilcar Cabral.'[111] This statement obviously privileges Marxism over other influences. Peter Roberts, in a somewhat skewed article (in that it discusses Freire's moral philosophy without once mentioning his Catholicism), tells us that 'Freire is thoroughly Marxist' when he presents liberation as something taking place 'in the transformative action of human beings on the world, within specific historical and social circumstances.'[112] While this line of thought may be Marxist, it can also be seen as a Christian liberation where people are called (in specific contexts) to 'defend the cause of the fatherless'[113] and to seek justice.[114]

If Freire had been an orthodox Marxist, we would expect him to reject religion as being opposed to the emancipatory interests of the oppressed, but instead we find him speaking highly of the Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs). In his discussion of BECs (and other social movements, 'some of them linked with the church and some not') in *Learning to Question*, Freire goes so far as to state that '[i]t is my opinion today that either the revolutionary parties will work more closely with [all] these movements and so prove their authenticity within them ... or they will be lost.'[115]

This ignoring of Freire's Catholicism (which even occurred in tribute articles after his death)[116] could be symptomatic of what Stanley Hauerwas calls 'the sheer prejudice of many secular thinkers ... [that] any reflection informed by

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[111] Henry A. Giroux, 'Radical Pedagogy and Prophetic Thought: Remembering Paulo Freire', *Rethinking Marxism* 9 (1996/97), 80.
[112] Peter Roberts, 'Knowledge, Dialogue, and Humanization: The Moral Philosophy of Paulo Freire', *Journal of Educational Thought* 32 (1998), 108.
[113] Isaiah 1:17.
[114] Peter Roberts, 'Knowledge, Dialogue, and Humanization: The Moral Philosophy of Paulo Freire', 108.
[115] Freire and Faundez, *Learning to Question*, 66.
[116] See, for example, Moacir Gadotti, 'Paulo Freire: dreaming of a world of equality and justice', *Media Development* 44 (1997), 26-9.

religious claims cannot possibly be serious.'[117] However, Hauerwas also notes 'the lack of attention [given] to the inability of Christian theologians to find a sufficient medium to articulate their own best insights for those who do not share their convictions.'[118] This inability may well be increased for those (like Freire) who do not call themselves theologians. Indeed Freire tells us that 'I do not feel very comfortable speaking about my faith',[119] but he does none the less speak about it, and Christ's influence on his work.

Therefore, this privileging of his Marxism, given Freire's life-long (although critical) commitment to the Catholic Church, is clearly open to question. As John Elias tells us, Freire does 'appeal to an existentialist or Marxist view of human nature' in order to correct 'a distorted Christian notion of humans and their relationship to God',[120] but this does not imply that Freire has abandoned his Catholic faith or its influence over his work. He was thankful that many Christians were 'vigorously reacting' against the attitude that it is God's will for the oppressed to suffer. 'But as a child, I knew many priests who went out to the peasants saying: "Be patient. This is God's will. And anyway, it will earn heaven for you."' Freire continues:

> How could we make God responsible for this calamity? As if Absolute Love could abandon man to constant victimization and total destitution. That would be a God such as Marx described.[121]

Freire goes on to reiterate the point that this sort of faith only assists the oppressor.[122] 'Whenever men make God responsible for intolerable situations, for oppression, then the dominating structures help to popularise that myth.'[123] It is Freire's Christianity that leads him to espouse conscientization, and

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[117] Stanley Hauerwas, *Against the Nations* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 26.
[118] Ibid.
[119] *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 104.
[120] John L. Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation* (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger, 1994), 51.
[121] Paulo Freire, 'Conscientizing as a Way of Liberating', in Hennelly (ed.), *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, 11.
[122] Freire makes a similar point from a different perspective in *Learning to Question*: 'These considerations remind me of what Marx and Engels say in *The Holy Family*: "The class which rules a society materially also rules spiritually"' (Freire and Faundez, *Learning to Question*, 74).
[123] Paulo Freire, 'Conscientizing as a Way of Liberating', in Hennelly (ed.), *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, 11.

'conscientization shows us that God wants us to act'[124] and to work *with* the oppressed.

> Conscientization ... involves an excruciating moment ... in those who begin to conscientize themselves, the moment they start to be reborn. Because conscientization demands an Easter. That is, it demands that we die to be reborn again. Christians must live their Easter, and that too is a utopia ... That is why Christianity is, for me, such a marvellous doctrine. People have accused me of being a communist, but no communist could say what I have just said.[125]

Freire might not be a communist, but he is certainly utopian. His utopia, however, takes very little account of the darker side of human nature.[126] It often seems that as soon as people are released from oppression, they – contrary to all history – will not oppress others. This is idealistic, and not what traditional Catholicism teaches. Freire does seek to look briefly at the complexity of the oppressed who are also oppressors in his response to *Mentoring the Mentor*, but it seems that all is needed is more teaching so that the oppressed oppressor becomes less incomplete, and engage in 'the search for coherence.'[127] It seems that his dualistic thinking (referred to above) is intact.

His Marxist influences also allow him to approach the possibility of violent revolution with more equanimity that we might expect from a traditional Catholic. Ché Guevara is one example of the revolutionaries cited by Freire:[128]

> Guevara did not create dichotomies between the methods, content and objectives of his projects. In spite of the risks to his and companions' lives, he justified guerrilla warfare as an introduction to freedom, as a call to life to those who are the living dead. Like Camilo Torres, he became a guerrilla not out of desperation, but because, as a lover of men, he dreamt of a new man being born in the experience of liberation. In this sense, Guevara incarnated the authentic revolutionary utopia as did few others.[129]

Even here, as he praises a socialist revolutionary, Freire uses religious language. It seems that Freire 'is essentially a Christian thinker who has

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[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., 12-13.
[126] See Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation*, 56-9.
[127] Paulo Freire, 'A Response', in Freire (ed.), *Mentoring the Mentor*, 312.
[128] Especially in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and *Cultural Action for Freedom*.
[129] *Cultural Action for Freedom*, 75.

assimilated Marxist ideas'[130] rather than the other way round. As with his Christianity, Freire is critical in his approach[131] – particularly of 'the mechanistic Marxists' who assumed that 'education had no role to play before society is radically transformed.'[132] However, his assimilation of Marxist ideas has led to questions, not least from certain Christian quarters, over his utopian view of human nature, and how perfectible that nature might be.

5.4.2 Freire's Critical Catholicism

Freire tells us, in his chapter on 'Education, Liberation and the Church' in *the Politics of Education*, that, like all other organisations, the church cannot regard itself as neutral. Members (and leaders) of the church cannot wash their hands of the conflict between oppressed and oppressor, lest they side themselves with the oppressor. 'The illusion that suggests it is possible, by means of sermons, humanitarian works, and the encouragement of otherworldly values, to change men's consciousness and thereby transform the world exists only in those we term naïve...'.[133] The naïve must go through an apprenticeship of 'their own Easter' during which

> they die as elitists so as to be resurrected on the side of the oppressed ... Such a process implies a renunciation of myths that are dear to them: the myth of their superiority, of their purity of soul, of their virtues, their wisdom, the myth that they save the poor, the myth of the neutrality of the church, of theology, education, science, technology, the myth of their own impartiality ...
>
> They will also discover to what extent their idealism had confused any number of concepts – for example, "conscientization" ... – when they tried to offer magic remedies for healing the hearts of mankind without changing the social structures, or, equally idealistic, when they claimed that conscientization was a similarly magic means of reconciling the irreconcilable.[134]

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[130] Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation*, 42.

[131] However, the statement that 'Freire ... does not accept the economic determination that Marx espoused' (Elias, 43) exaggerates the point. 'What Freire did not accept ... is the overly optimistic readings of Marx by orthodox Marxists' (Peter Mayo, 'Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation' (Review Article), *Convergence*, 29 (1996), 64). Also see *The Politics of Education*, 178-9.

[132] Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, 67. Also, on the same topic, see *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 104-8.

[133] Freire, *The Politics of Education*, 122.

[134] Ibid., 122-3.

Freire parallels this sort of idealism with the moralistic position Reinhold Niebuhr condemned 'whether it be found in the religious or the secular domain.'[135] He, Freire, speaks out (here and elsewhere) equally strongly against the sort of church and churchmen who choose to condemn those who speak out for the oppressed. By refusing the church its prophetic role, these leaders deny it the hope of building a more just world. However, other Christians are seeking to work alongside the oppressed in 'A Theology of Liberation'. 'Their experience teaches them that being Christian doesn't necessarily imply being reactionary, just as being revolutionary doesn't always imply being demonic.'[136] This road, however, is not an easy one to travel, as the oppressors (both within and outside the church) will react violently. This violence will be directed at the liberated oppressed, but will sometimes include the 'committed intellectuals'.

> When this happens, many will retreat, keep quiet, or adjust to the situation; others will react by taking on new commitments. A basic difference between those who leave and those who stay is that the latter accept, as an integral part of existence, the dramatic tension between past and future, death and life ... between saying the word and mutilating silence, between hope and despair, being and nonbeing. It is an illusion to think that human beings can escape this dramatic tension.[137]

The amount of risk we are called on to take will depend on our situation, but Freire is clear that there is risk in life: '[a] reign of undisturbed peace is unthinkable in history.'[138] So any form of conservative church (whether it calls itself 'traditional' or 'modernising')[139] is condemned for having too much in the world that it has to sit still. It cannot challenge the *status quo*, as it is too much a part of that *status quo*.

Freire then turns to the prophetic church, one that 'accepts becoming, in order to *be*.'[140] Although it is a new reality in Latin America, Freire regards this

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[135] Referred to in ibid., 124.
[136] Ibid., 128. Freire points out elsewhere (ibid, 141, n. 11) that 'Dom Helder Câmara, the prophetic archbishop of Olinda and Recife (Brazil), is today [1985] considered one of these terrible demons.'
[137] Ibid., 128-9.
[138] Ibid., 129.
[139] This term, for Freire, refers to a church that adapts to a modern, industrial culture without affecting the *status quo*.
[140] Ibid., 137, emphasis original.

church as the original.[141] Against the individualism of the modernising church, this church challenges the social structures that keep the oppressed in their place. In a seeming paradox, we are told that '[t]he prophetic church is no home for the oppressed, alienating them further by empty denunciations.'[142] They must be encouraged to move on in their own 'Exodus' towards a new promised land, 'forever dying and forever being reborn.'[143]

This dying, this martyrdom, faced by people and clerics alike would be all the more painful when those carrying out the oppression claimed to be acting in defence of Christianity. The traditional church described by Freire in *The Politics of Education*, even in the guise of a 'modernizing church', will not welcome a prophetic, liberating church, as the prophetic church threatens the traditional church in its relationship and accommodation with those in power.[144]

What we see here is a very clear enunciation of what Liberation Theology is about (and something of the opposition that liberation theologians have faced). Freire, as I have noted, is unafraid to use Christian metaphors in his writing,[145] and it is clear (from his highly favourable critique of James Cone's *A Black Theology of Liberation* if nowhere else)[146] that Freire expects theology and politics to be closely intertwined.

5.5 Freire as Liberation Theologian

Paulo Freire makes no claim to be a theologian,[147] but Alfred Hennelly, in his book *Theology for a Liberating Church*, insists that '[w]e must ... confer on

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[141] Freire is consistent here, in an essay published in 1972, he states that the prophetic church is 'as old as Christianity without being traditionalist' (Paulo Freire, 'The Educational Role of the Churches in Latin America', *LADOC* (Washington D.C.), 3.14 (1972), 11).
[142] Ibid., 139.
[143] Ibid.
[144] For a discussion on persecution and internal conflict within the church, see Ronaldo Muñoz. 'Ecclesiology in Latin America' in Torres and Eagleson (eds.), *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, 155-6. Also see Jon Sobrino, 'The Witness of the Church in Latin America', in ibid., 170-80, where he discusses different types of persecution and martyrdom.
[145] For example, he points up Ché Guevara's emphasis on communion with the people – see *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 138-9.
[146] In Freire, *The Politics of Education*, 145-8.
[147] See Paulo Freire, 'Letter to a Theology Student', *Catholic Mind*, 70 (1972), 8.

Freire belated recognition as one of the outstanding *compañeros* in the worldwide fraternity of theologians of liberation.'[148] This is due to his influence on various liberation theologians. Hennelly tells us that examples could be cited of Freire's relationship with other liberation theologians, but Hennelly (and John Elias)[149] concentrate on the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo. Hennelly also looks at how Freire's methods of conscientization can be paralleled with the stages of liberation, and how Freire's culture circles (though, interestingly, Hennelly never uses the term) can be paralleled with Base Ecclesial Communities.[150]

Freire's influence can be traced in the documents which came out of the Medellín conference of Latin American Bishops in 1968. Conscientization, in the form of the 'educational activity of the [Roman Catholic] Church' is seen as 'absolutely essential' so that Christians can 'consider their participation in the political life of the nation as a matter of conscience ...'.[151] Further, the work of conscientization 'and social education ought to be integrated into Joint Pastoral Action at various levels.'[152] Freire's work and thought is evident in the Bishops' recognition of the need for conscientization 'and action flowing from it' that 'permeate[s] all sixteen Medellín documents from beginning to end.'[153]

The Christians' 'participation in the political life of the nation' is, from Freire's and Medellín's perspective, to be in the form of seeking liberation. Gustavo Gutiérrez acknowledges the debt to Freire when he defines conscientization, the liberating work of 'a true cultural revolution':

> From this point of view, one of the most creative and fruitful efforts implemented in Latin America is the experimental work of Paulo

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[148] Alfred Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church: The New Praxis of Freedom* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1989), 80.
[149] See Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation*, especially 145-8.
[150] I shall discuss the relationship between Freire's ideas and Base Ecclesial Communities below in 5.7.and 5.8.
[151] Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council: II Conclusions* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1973), 62 ("Peace," #18), quoted in Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 72.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 73.

> Freire, who has sought to establish a "pedagogy of the oppressed." By means of an unalienating and liberating "cultural action," which links theory with praxis, the oppressed perceive – and modify – their relationship with the world and with other persons. Thus they make the transfer from a "naïve awareness" – which does not deal with problems, gives too much value to the past, tends to accept mythical explanations, and tends toward debate – to a "critical awareness" – which delves into problems, is open to new ideas, replaces magical explanations with real causes, and tends to dialogue.[154]

Hennelly tells us that 'Gutiérrez also utilizes key concepts of Freire at pivotal points in his theology, for instance, in his description of the "new man," that is, "the kind of man who critically analyses the present, controls his destiny, and is orientated toward the future"'.[155] Also, Gutiérrez exploits the Freirean dialectic of denunciation-annunciation' in his 'conceptualization of utopia and its relationship to political action.'[156] This dialectic is further utilized when Gutiérrez wishes to critique (like Freire) a desire to claim 'neutrality': '[a]ny claim to non-involvement in politics ... is nothing but a subterfuge to keep things as they are.'[157]

5.5.1 Levels of Liberation

In the last chapter, I discussed Gutiérrez's three levels of liberation and how they related to one another. In the order Gutiérrez put them, we have first, 'economic, social, and political liberation; [second] liberation which leads to the creation of a new humanity in a new society of solidarity; and [third] liberation from sin and entrance into communion with God and with all persons.'[158] I will now show how closely this corresponds to Freire's ideas of conscientization. Gutiérrez's first level of liberation 'expresses the aspirations of oppressed peoples and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social, and political processes which puts them at odds with

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[154] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 57. For Freire's own description of the transfer from naïve to critical consciousness (and the dangers of what may happen if people do not make the transfer), see *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, 18-20.
[155] Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 73, quoting Gutiérrez *A Theology of Liberation* First Edition, 214.
[156] Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 73. See Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* Revised Edition, 135-9.
[157] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 151.
[158] Ibid., 137.

wealthy nations and oppressive classes.'[159] With its emphasis in favour of the oppressed, and the non-neutral nature of its approach, I can only agree with Hennelly when he says this is a very 'succinct recapitulation of the socio-political thought of Freire ...'.[160]

The next level of liberation occurs when humanity assumes 'conscious responsibility for its own destiny.' This destiny encompasses 'the desired social changes' with an expression of freedom that 'leads to the creation of a new humankind and a qualitatively different society.'[161] Freire, too, is interested in a new humanity, responsible for themselves and their new society. For example, in *Learning to Question*, Freire clearly agrees with Antonio Faundez when the latter states that it is a matter 'of changing society from the base so as to build a new society in which power and the struggle for power manifest themselves in a different way.'[162] This new way means that power, including political power, 'will belong to all'.[163] To us, this may seen somewhat idealistic, and place too much faith in the beneficial and all-encompassing involvement of 'democracy', but Faundez and Freire's sentiments clearly chime in with Gutiérrez.

This leaves us with the third level of liberation, the liberation from sin,

> which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression. Christ makes humankind truly free, that is to say, he enables us to live in communion with him; and this is the basis for all human fellowship.[164]

Here we must turn to Freire's remarks about theology, as most of his work (when he writes as a humanist, rather than specifically as a Catholic Christian) tends to omit the transcendent.

> The issue around liberation and its practice is not fighting against the religiousness of the popular classes ... but rather over-coming *with* it, the vision of God at the service of the strong for a God on the side of those with whom justice, truth, and love should be ...

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[159] Ibid., 24.
[160] Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 79.
[161] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 24-5.
[162] Faundez and Freire, *Learning to Question*, 64.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 25.

> This way, submission-faith toward a destiny that would reflect God's will makes way for a spurring faith of loving rebelliousness. In this process, there is an understanding of the body – for those who have evolved in their faith – as the dwelling of sin turns into an intelligence of the body as the temple of God.[165]

So, Freire clearly looks to a Christ who 'makes humankind truly free', but he gives no indication of how far individual sin in the oppressed (it is difficult to see how he could regard the oppressor as free from sin) could contribute to the disruption of friendship. Clearly the oppressed are more sinned against than sinning in this context (and I have discussed the criticisms of liberation theology with regard to individual and corporate sin in the previous chapter). I must note here, however, that Freire's only real indication of the stubborn nature of sin in marring human relations, and contributing to oppression in all its forms, is in his realisation that humanity is called always to be more human – we never, it seems, actually arrive.[166]

5.5.2 Juan Luis Segundo

Parallels between Freire and other liberation theologians exist apart from Gutiérrez, such as Juan Luis Segundo, who adapts Freire's theory of literacy training to evangelisation:

> To put it in other words: it is not possible to give the gospel as it really is, that is, as a liberative interpretation of history, without making man a subject of that history rather than an object of it. Without this [Freireian] process of consciousness-raising, the task of evangelising and catechising runs the risk of being a cultural invasion ...
>
> An evangelization committed to man's liberation is deeply tied up with the new form of literacy-training: i.e. one incorporated within a process of consciousness-raising.[167]

Segundo also makes the point that the way to avoid an "aseptic", unreal, spiritual, evangelization, is to keep the 'intimate and necessary connection between evangelization and political conscientization ...'.[168] He further emphasises the sacramental nature of Freire's work (I have noted above, that

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[165] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 103.
[166] On the 'unfinishedness' of human beings, see, for example, Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 52.
[167] Juan Luis Segundo, *Our Idea of God* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), 174-5 (cf. Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 73-4).
[168] Ibid., 174.

Freire believes that revolutionary leaders – after the manner of Guevara – should be *in communion* with the people). Segundo regards the sacraments 'as a "communitarian pedagogy of liberation"'. Just as the sacrament presents the Christian with their problematic situation as it is and invites their responses; 'it should also show divine revelation to be an element capable of helping them to face up to this challenge.' But the Christians' response, just like those undergoing a Freirean literacy program, is also in two parts: the intellectual and the practical.[169]

Thus again, we have a critique (along with Gutiérrez) of a politically 'neutral' church. A church that sets out to conscientize as its evangelises, cannot do anything other than educate its lay people for political involvement – with, it must be said, the whole-hearted support of Paulo Freire. This is, of course, a return to our third theme, but before I discuss that in more detail, I will now turn (briefly) to Freire's concepts of eschatology, and his ideas on the relation of the church to civil society (with particular reference to the Base Ecclesial Communities).

5.6 Freire's Eschatology

As Freire does not call himself a theologian, we cannot expect him to have a developed theology of the eschaton, but we can discern something of his ideas from his writings. He is keen to see a new humanity, but it is one that is very much achievable down here on earth.[170] This may be, at least in part, a reaction against the sort of preaching he heard as a child where suffering and oppression were God's will, only to be relieved in heaven.[171] However, it does mean, as Elias tells us, 'that Freire's radical person, who develops through the process of conscientization, will be able to act rationally and in a nonoppressive manner.'

> Undoubtedly this is a prerogative of utopian thinkers who proclaim the coming of the new man and woman. It is no doubt the rhetoric of the preacher who proclaims the coming of the Kingdom. But it is rather a narrow base, not only for criticism of society and its institutions, but

[169] See Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 74, and Elias, 146-7.
[170] See 5.4.1 above, and the discussion of Freire's utopianism.
[171] See Freire, 'Conscientizing as a Way of Liberating', in Hennelly (ed.), *A Documentary History*, 11.

> also for a program of social and political revolution. The dark side of humans will not be eliminated when the present oppressed are released.[172]

Freire is nothing if not passionate as he proclaims his 'utopian theology of hope':

> The utopian posture of the denouncing, announcing, historically committed Christians who are convinced that the historical vocation of humankind is not to adapt, not to bend to pressures, not to spend 90 percent of their time making concessions in order to salvage what we call the historical vocation of the church. We humans have an unbelievable historical vocation, and we cannot jeopardize it for any one fact, nor can we compromise it for any single, isolated problem, because the church has the whole world.[173]

In the same work, he makes clear that salvation is largely about what is to be done by us in this world.

> We work out our salvation in communion. Each one of us must set out in quest of his salvation, we must do it ourselves. I don't mean that God hasn't saved us by the divine presence in history: I'm talking now on the human level.[174]

For Freire, the human vocation is to become more human. This is to be achieved by a continuing conscientization. The early Freire may well have possessed 'the same faith in human perfectibility' which is 'clearly identical to the vision of transcendent society propounded by utopian socialists'.[175] But, later on, and certainly when he wrote *Pedagogy of the Heart* (published in the year of his death), he was less sure of perfectibility, talking of the permanent 'struggle for hope' in the face of 'daily bank robberies, witness killings, massacres ...'.[176] His struggle is for a society that 'is *less* evil and *more* humane.'[177] Freire's hope and struggle rest in his 'inconclusion', the lack of completeness of perfection:

> It is necessary to accept the *inconclusion* that one becomes aware of... Critical acceptance of my inconclusion necessarily immerses me in permanent search. What makes me hopeful is not so much the certainty

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[172] Elias, 56.
[173] Freire, 'Conscientizing as a Way of Liberating', in Hennelly (ed.), *A Documentary History*, 8.
[174] Ibid., 12.
[175] Elias, 57.
[176] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 105-6.
[177] Ibid., 104, emphasis added.

> of the *find*, but my movement in *search*. It is not possible to search without hope ...[178]

This is less dogmatic than the revolutionary character of Freire's early work, but none-the-less, he clearly expects progress in this life. In other words, the Kingdom *now* is emphasised over the heavenly 'not yet' aspects of the Kingdom.

5.7 The Relation of the Church to Civil Society

As it should be clear from the above, Freire has clear views on the relation of any individual to civil society. Although that individual was to work with others in a communitarian fashion, he or she was an individual:

> I cannot of course deny the singularity and uniqueness but that does not make my existence, in itself, isolated from other existences, a model of absolute meaning. On the contrary, it is in intersubjectivity, mediated by objectivity, that my existence makes sense. "I exist" does not come before "we exist," but is fulfilled in it. [179]

He spent his life trying to ensure that the oppressed broke out of the 'culture of silence' and took their place in society in order to change it. Freire was also alive to the idea that the overcoming of the culture of silence would involve struggle and conflict, but he accepted that as a part of life – indeed if Christians did not accept their part in the struggle, he regarded them as less than Christian.

> Those who don't make their Easter [conscientize themselves], in the sense of dying in order to be reborn, are not real Christians...
>
> Each of us has to give witness, and conscientization is a summons to do that: to be new each day.[180]

For those Christians who do 'make their Easter', who work with the oppressed and are, therefore, part of the prophetic church, the educational role of that church 'must be totally different from that of other churches ...'.

> Education must be an instrument of transforming action, a political praxis at the service of permanent human liberation. This ... does not happen only in the consciousness of people, but presupposes a radical

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[178] Ibid., 106, emphasis original.
[179] *The Politics of Education*, 129, and see Freire and Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, 109: 'I don't believe in self-liberation. Liberation is a social act.'
[180] 'Conscientization as a Way of Liberating', in Hennelly (ed.), *A Documentary History*, 13.

> change of structures, in which process consciousness will itself be transformed.[181]

Freire's recipe for Christian education is therefore much the same as his ideas for all education. He expects education to happen through communication, dialogue as both 'educator-educatee' and 'educatee-educator' search for truth together.[182] This concept of dialogue moves away from the idea of one knowledgeable teacher imparting wisdom to the ignorant masses, and, similarly, in the Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs), there are 'coordinators', or 'animators', but never 'leaders'.[183] There are, therefore, clear parallels between Freire's 'culture circles', and the way in which the BECs are set up.[184] Both aim to educate and to conscientize the people. Neither have leaders – or perhaps it is better to say that neither is supposed to have leaders in the traditional sense. I have already noted that Freire's biggest problem was to educate his educators away from their old systems of banking education, and Hennelly tells us that a key element of the coordinators' weekly meetings was 'the distribution and discussion of a typed or Xeroxed ... two-page summary ... of topics for the next meeting.'[185] While this may 'represent an impressive building of lay leadership at the grassroots level',[186] it also shows that the church has felt that the BECs need a considerable input from higher up the organizational chain of command[187] – the sort of direction that Freire (in his more theoretical moments) would wish to question.

Consistently, when he discusses BECs, Freire is positive about them – especially in their role in politicising the priests and the people in the wake of the military coup in Brazil that forced him into exile. Indeed, he credits the

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[181] *The Politics of Education*, 140.
[182] On this topic, see Paulo Freire, 'Extension or Communication', in *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, especially 147-8.
[183] See Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 86.
[184] On culture circles (and their use in Freire's literacy program), see *Education: the Practice of Freedom*, 42-58. On the organisation of BECs, see Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 82-6.
[185] Hennelly, *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 86.
[186] Ibid.
[187] This may also reflect the tension within Liberation Theology that encourages lay participation particularly in BECs, but also insists that BECs are part of, rather than separate from, the institutional (and hierarchical) church.

military dictatorship with creating the conditions for BECs to emerge from the silence imposed on the people. As people met together

> in the intimacy of the church ... [they] ended up by spreading and bringing into being the basic church communities. When popular groups assume the role of subjects in studying the Gospels, when they no longer simply read, then they inevitably study them from the standpoint of the oppressed and no longer from that of the oppressors.[188]

Freire goes on to comment on the importance of social groups, whether they are attached to the church or not, but he does credit the BECs with a political activism that was necessary at a time when most political activity had been closed down by the government.[189]

Although the political situation in Brazil may have been the catalyst for the BECs to emerge as forums for political opposition to the government, as I have noted above, the base communities were originally set up as clergy began to identify what was called a 'pastoral crisis', and so lay catechists were trained to disseminate the Church's teaching. This had led to the continued lay involvement with BECs, but, as Dominique Barbé points out, 'Church base communities nearly always have at their beginnings a priest or a sister.'[190] She comments on the task of lay leadership, but points out, in a clear echo of Freire that 'the poor have got into the habit of self-depreciation.'

> That is why each base community is founded through a gentle and gradual pedagogy, which teaches the humble ... to *give worth* to what they have to say as they express themselves to each other.[191]

Clearly what is being expressed here is an identification with the people on the part of (this) pastoral agent, which is Freire's first requirement on the part of any person seeking to assist in the conscientization of the poor. He also insists that the poor are conscientized in community, which is what the BECs provide. The similarity in approaches between Freire's politico-pedagogy and

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[188] Freire and Faundez, *Learning to Question*, 66.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Dominique Barbé, 'Church Base Communities', in Curt Cadorette et al. (eds.), *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 183. See also Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Base Communities: An Introduction* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), who points up the lay participation, and indeed leadership, in BECs, but also has to state that 'without the participation or approval of priests and sisters, and the pastoral strategy of favourable bishops, base communities would barely have got off the ground' (ibid., 117).
[191] Ibid., 185, emphasis original.

the work of the BECs, is so striking that, in spite of the fact that Freire did not acknowledge his influence on BECs, it is impossible to believe that the connection does not exist. [192]

For Freire it is clear that the church has to be educative. It has to work not just on behalf of, but also with the oppressed. Pious platitudes and acceptance of the *status quo* are not acceptable. Whatever the actual clerical involvement in the BECs, there is no suggestion that Freire would expect clerical leadership (indeed as noted above, he would not expect any leadership in the traditional sense). The laity therefore needs to be involved, to 'make their Easter' as all members of the church are conscientized. Within the BECs the task (again according to Barbé in an echo of Freire) is to restore a voice to the people, and then for the people to act. For Barbé, '[a] group does not become a community until the day it decides to *act together* ...'.[193] Again, like Freire, the parallel with Exodus is drawn: 'the exodus of action is always necessary.'[194] For Barbé, however, the BEC is primarily a religious community. Political action and involvement is but a consequence of the community's life together, 'however inevitable.'[195] Freire would, I suspect, accept the inevitability of political action, but deem it a result of conscientization, as a part of the whole pedagogical approach, and not to be separated off. However, he would not be worried that the conscientization was taking place in a religious context:

> From the prophetic point of view, it makes little difference in what specific area education happens; it will always be an effort to clarify the concrete context in which the teacher-students and student-teachers are educated and are united by their presence in action.[196]

5.8 Educating the Christian for Political Involvement

We now turn to the crux of the matter: how does Freire see the Christian being educated for political action? This section is going to be something of a recap of previous sections as it should be obvious that Freire's whole project was

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[192] See Elias, 147. The others Elias refers to who have made the connection include Hennelly: see *Theology for a Liberating Church*, 81-94. Also see Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Base Communities*, 178 for a list of the ideas that have 'come in [to BECs] ... via the influence of Freire's thought.'

[193] Dominique Barbé, 'Church Base Communities', 187.

[194] Ibid.

[195] Ibid., 190.

[196] *The Politics of Education*, 140.

about an education that he hoped would lead to political action. If the oppressed were not moved to act, then they were still trapped in the culture of silence imposed on them by the oppressor. For Freire, as much as Barbé might like to call the political act a consequence coming behind the religious nature of the group, political action is vital. 'Education will always be ... a mode of action meant to change things, a political program for the permanent liberation of man.'[197] He expects this action to change structures radically, a process that 'hopefully' will transform peoples' minds.

The church must therefore educate for that action. If the church becomes (or remains) fearful of the change that political action will bring, it 'badly loses its way.' As a consequence, '[i]t can no longer test itself, either through the denunciation of the unjust world, or the annunciation of a more just world to be built by the historical-social praxis of the oppressed.'[198]

In the utopian denunciation-annunciation cycle, the church itself stands as a witness in terms of how it educates its congregation and how it stands as an example on the side of the oppressed. These two aspects of witness are not necessarily distinct. Given that the BECs have (at least to begin with) clerical input,[199] then this becomes one example of how the church stands on the side of the oppressed. This stance will provoke a reaction, and therefore a test for the church: will its leaders, its 'committed intellectuals... retreat, keep quiet, or adjust to the situation', or will they 'react by taking on new commitments'?[200] Freire expects many to belong to the former camp, but praises those in the latter.[201]

How much change the conscientized members of the BECs can expect to be able to bring about is open to question. Barbé's example of BEC action is the

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[197] Paulo Freire, 'The Educational Role of the Churches in Latin America', 14. Freire does not expect a change of heart to lead to the changing of the world, but that a change in structures 'may (but may not, too!) lead to a change of hearts' (ibid., 1).
[198] *The Politics of Education*, 127.
[199] See above.
[200] *The Politics of Education*, 128.
[201] Ibid., 128-9.

building of a house for a widow against official persecution.[202] Barbé notes that

> At the end of five or six years, certain ones discover that creating a civilization of love is not at all easy. Structures must be thought about. The spontaneous mutual assistance of the *bairro* [*sic*] is no longer adequate.[203]

Full conscientization is, it seems, necessarily a long-term project. This is not the impression gained from reading Freire's works, especially the early books. Where Freire modifies his approach in his later works, it is to downplay his revolutionary expectations; but he remains convinced of 'the fundamental importance of my faith for overcoming an oppressive reality and for building a less ugly society, one that is less evil and more humane.'[204] There is no mention here of the 'new man or woman' free of oppression and able to live in non-oppressive love and peace with all.

While, realistically, those involved in setting up the BECs do not seem to expect to create a new man or woman, I have already noted that it is 'the progressive Christian groups ... who seem to have had most success in using the Freirean approach ...'.[205] The BECs 'can represent the starting point for a politics in which commitment and practice seek to serve the common good and social justice.'[206] Leonardo Boff, like Barbé, separates politics out into a field 'with its own relative autonomy.' However

> Faith is not set aside. Instead it acquires its true dimensions as a spiritual mystique, a source of inspiration, and a signpost pointing toward liberation. That liberation transcends history, but it can be seen and anticipated in history through a process of liberation that generates less inequitable forms of social coexistence within society.[207]

The transcendent element is brought back in with a clarity that is missing from Freire's own writings: the Kingdom is both now *and* not yet.[208] This view of the BEC allows, even insists, that political action is taken to create a more just,

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[202] Barbé, 187-8.
[203] Ibid., 189-90.
[204] *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 104.
[205] Blackburn, 'Understanding Paulo Freire', 8.
[206] Leonardo Boff, 'Theological Characteristics of a Grassroots Church', in Torres and Eagleson (eds.), *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, 138.
[207] Ibid.
[208] See ibid., 143.

more humane society; but equally it does not exercise any sort of naïve belief that this new society would be perfect. The BEC 'learns to discover God in its own life, struggles, and happenings',[209] and approaches life with 'a new kind of holiness' not confined to the ascetic. It is the holiness of the militant.

> Rather than concentrating on the fight against one's own passions, which remains a permanent struggle, one fights politically against the creation and use of exploitative mechanisms of accumulation; and one fights for the establishment of more well balanced, communitarian relationships. The new virtues find expression in class solidarity, participation in community decisions, mutual aid, criticism of abuses of power, endurance of slander and persecution for the sake of justice ...[210]

For Boff, the BECs point both to 'a greater fidelity to the liberating wellsprings of the gospel message, and also fidelity to the transcendent destiny of the earth with all its anxieties and yearnings.'[211] Freire might have worried about the transcendence of the earth's destiny, but the work of the BECs for greater justice for all, especially for the oppressed, can only have continued to meet with his approval.

5.9 Conclusion

I have shown that Freire's work has had considerable influence on Liberation Theology from Medellín onwards. His ideas and methods of conscientization have been appropriated by liberation theologians, especially Gutiérrez and Segundo, as a way of liberating the poor. Freire himself, while not wearing his religious heart on his sleeve, identified himself clearly with the liberating wing of the Catholic Church. He denied that he was a communist, though he felt able to borrow ideas from Marx and his followers and use those ideas in his own work – work whose contribution is not so much valuable for thinking entirely new thoughts, but which was able to synthesise others' thought in a new way: the way of *conscientização*. Freire, like the liberation theologians, is clearly on the side of the poor. His work is utopian, idealistic, and somewhat dualistic – and as such has been rightly criticised for ignoring the complexities of life. Freire's practice, certainly once he had left Latin America in the early

[209] Ibid., 138.
[210] Ibid., 142.
[211] Ibid., 143.

1970s for a post in Geneva with the World Council of Churches, was radical democratic rather than revolutionary, thus denying the tenor of his early work, especially *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Having said that, the radical nature of freeing the poor from their 'culture of silence' has generated both considerable praise and opposition. Freire foresaw that this opposition would occur, and expected Christians to face it alongside the poor. Love of neighbour, especially the poor and oppressed neighbour, can be said to be at the heart of Freirean pedagogy, and as such, this pedagogy exercises considerable hold over liberation theologians.

Freire's pedagogy was developed in the context of the Third World, but has been appropriated by various educators in the First World. Often these educators (such as Ira Shor, Michelle Fine, and Donaldo Macedo) are working in deprived areas of their countries.[212] Others (Peter Leonard and the Warwick School) faced considerable difficulty in translating Freire's methods into a genuinely First World University context. As I have noted above, Freire himself expected his ideas to be adapted to new contexts, not copied wholesale. This is also true of those who wish to use Freire's ideas in a Christian context. It is the liberation theologians who have had the best success in identifying with the oppressed in Latin America (and elsewhere), but there is also a realism creeping into their work[213] that is not seen in Freire's utopian dream. That is, for most people, the shades of grey in real life have to be taken into account, and incremental improvements – of the sort Freire looked for in his later work (and as Secretary of Education in São Paulo) – may be the order of the day. On the other hand, a utopian, prophetic denunciation-annunciation may be the best way forward in certain stark situations such as Brazil in the 1960s, or the Germany of the 1930s. It is to the Nazi Germany of Dietrich Bonhoeffer that we now turn.

[212] Freire himself defined 'Third World' so flexibly that it could include a lot of inner city (and other) areas in the First World.
[213] For example, see Dominique Barbé's article cited above.

Chapter 6

POLITICAL THOUGHT AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT CONSPIRACY: DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S RADICAL PATRIOTISM

6.1 Introduction

'Bonhoeffer's life is a necessary key to understanding his theology.'[1] His life was lived, and his theology formed in the cauldron of the collapse of the Weimar republic, the rise and implementation of Nazism, and the horrors of the Second World War. Against the idea that there are distinct, discontinuous phases in Bonhoeffer's thought, Clifford Green, Ernst Feil and James Burtness[2] argue for a continuity of thought in Bonhoeffer's theology. This is not to say that there is no development in his thought, but the idea that Bonhoeffer's theology suffered from the radical breaks and changes in direction – specifically that his 'prison theology' was radically different from what had occurred before – that were discerned by the 1960s 'death of God' movement and others is now discredited.[3]

Accepting the above, this chapter will concentrate on the Finkenwalde writings (*Discipleship* and *Life Together*) and also the later works, *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison.* This is because by this time (1935 on) the Hitler regime was in place, the Church Struggle had commenced and Bonhoeffer, by force of circumstances, was playing a prominent role in that struggle. He later joined the anti-Hitler conspiracy, which also caught up, and

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[1] F. Burton Nelson, 'The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer', in John W. de Gruchy (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22. For similar sentiments, see John W. de Gruchy, 'The Reception of Bonhoeffer's Theology', ibid., 97, and Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, revised edition 1999), 3: 'a deep, personal concern is at work along with the theological, philosophical, exegetical, ecclesiastical, and political factors which informed his thinking.'

[2] See Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*; Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985); and James Burtness, *Shaping the Future: The Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

[3] See the discussion in John W. de Gruchy, 'The Reception of Bonhoeffer's Theology', 93-109: de Gruchy argues for a middle way between continuity and discontinuity (see especially ibid., 100). Further the similarities, differences and dependence of Bonhoeffer's theology on Karl Barth is much discussed, though beyond the scope of this thesis. For a detailed discussion, see Andreas Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 2000).

in 1945 killed, his brother Klaus and brothers-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi and Rüdiger Schleicher.[4] Bonhoeffer's task, as he saw it, was to rescue his church from its struggle for its own survival, to, as it were, rescue Luther from the Lutherans, and to teach its people (by example as well as word) how to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, who, '[w]henever Christ calls us, his call leads us to death.'[5]

This chapter will first look at Bonhoeffer's life and work, placing it in its (anti-) Nazi context. I shall then look at the Lutheran doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and how Bonhoeffer re-worked that doctrine to overcome any idea of the separation of life into two spheres. I shall then, with specific reference to the use made of Bonhoeffer in South Africa, examine whether Bonhoeffer can be thought to have renounced privilege (and thereby have become more egalitarian in his outlook). Then, as with the previous chapters, I shall examine Bonhoeffer's eschatology (to examine how his thought affected his outlook on his 'present-day' reality); his ideas on the relation of the church to civil society; and his ideas on the education of the individual Christian for political involvement.

6.2 Bonhoeffer's Life and Work: an Overview

In one section, I am not going to attempt to look at the whole of Bonhoeffer's life, but I shall seek to set his life (and work) in its context of this thesis and its focus on the education of Christians for political involvement. This will mean a brief examination of Bonhoeffer's own home life, the visit to the United States of America in 1930-31, his leadership of the Finkenwalde seminary and the collective pastorates, and his involvement in the resistance against Hitler.

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[4] It has been argued that these family connections, rather than theology, influenced Bonhoeffer's decision to join the conspiracy – that there was discontinuity between his thought and his actions (see Kenneth Morris, 'Bonhoeffer's Critique of Totalitarianism', *Journal of Church and State* 26 (1984), 255-6). However, John A. Moses argues convincingly against this idea ('Dietrich Bonhoeffer as Conspirator Against the Hitler Regime: The Motivation of a German Protestant Revolutionary', *War and Society* 17 (1999), 25-40). For a discussion of the links between the Bonhoeffer family and his theology, see Renate Bethge 'Bonhoeffer's Family and Its Significance for His Theology' in Larry Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer – His Significance for North Americans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 14-30; for a more critical discussion of family influences on Bonhoeffer (including his fiancée's wish for him to be more open), see Frits de Lange, *Waiting for the Word* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 2000), 39-62.

[5] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 87.

6.2.1 Childhood Influences

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born, along with his twin sister, in 1906 to an upper middle class family.[6] It was, inevitably, a privileged upbringing, though much was expected of Dietrich and all his brothers and sisters.[7] Though not without its tragedy – Dietrich's older brother Walter, called up to fight in the First World War, died of his wounds on 28th April 1918 (27-28) – this privileged situation would trouble Dietrich in later years. He felt isolated from the less fortunate, and less able to understand them (19-20). This tension eventually led him to write about 'the view from below' in his 1943 paper 'After Ten Years',[8] but he was never able to deny the legacy of generations of privilege, nor his authoritarian conservatism.

6.2.2 America

Although he was aware of the political situation in Germany, Bonhoeffer 'gave no thought to becoming politically active' until he reached America (127). Yet, by 1932, 'Bonhoeffer was ashamed of his "disinterest," calling it "at this time essentially frivolous"' (128). Although he was appalled by the 'unbearably thin and disappointingly shallow' theology,[9] 'Bonhoeffer was impressed by ... the selflessness with which Union Theological Seminary students, among others, shared the life of the unemployed' (163). He also attended several lecture series, including on 'Church and Community' and 'Ethical Interpretations.' The latter required him to 'analyze articles in newspapers and periodicals, forming objective opinions on foreign or domestic political questions' (163).

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[6] Eberhard Bethge, in his definitive biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, devotes eleven pages to his ancestors showing Bonhoeffer's upper class and aristocratic connections. See Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* Revised Edition (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 3-13. For the remainder of this section, page numbers in brackets in the text refer to this book.

[7] 'Karl Bonhoeffer held high expectations for each child of the family, almost as if it were their inherent duty to fulfil the potential they had been given' (Nelson, 'The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer', 24).

[8] Reprinted in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM Press, enlarged edition 1971), 17. Hereinafter referred to as *LPP*.

[9] Nelson, 'The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer', 28.

Bonhoeffer also formed some lasting friendships whilst at Union Seminary. A pivotal one was with the French pacifist, Jean Lasserre.

> Lasserre confronted him with an acceptance of Jesus' peace commandment that he had never encountered before. Not that Bonhoeffer immediately became a convinced pacifist – in fact he never did so – but after meeting Lasserre the question of the concrete reply to the biblical injunction of peace and of the concrete steps to be taken against warlike impulses never left him again. (153)

This encounter led both men to insist that the one body of Christ meant that there could be no nationalism, nor could Christians be part of any discrimination on the grounds of race or class (see 154).

The element of race, and the need to combat racism, was present in another of Bonhoeffer's pivotal relationships from Union Seminary, that with Albert F. (Frank) Fisher. It was their joint work in Harlem that opened Bonhoeffer's eyes to the situation facing black Americans in their own country.[10] A third friendship was with Paul Lehmann who 'helped Bonhoeffer deepen his appreciation for the church to become involved in civil rights and the cause of economic justice.'[11]

6.2.3 The Church Struggle

With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to see the threat that Hitler and Nazism posed to civilisation and the church, but, as Joseph Harvard puts it:

> In 1934, Hitler appeared to some as a paragon of virtue and a political messiah. Hitler stood for honesty, industry, love of family and country. He restored law and order, ended unemployment, and stood against communism along with building the Volkswagen and Autobahn.[12]

However, Bonhoeffer was involved with the church's resistance to Nazism from the start. This resistance centred on the Aryan legislation of 7th April 1933 – which banned those of Jewish blood from holding any political, civil or church office – rather than any enabling acts that underpinned Hitler's dictatorship,[13] but Bonhoeffer saw that the question of church membership for

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[10] See Nelson, 'The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer', 29.
[11] Quoted in ibid.
[12] Joseph S. Harvard, 'The Continuing Cost of Discipleship', *Journal for Preachers*, 7:4 (1984), 3.
[13] Though it was under such acts that Bonhoeffer was executed in 1945.

Christians of Jewish descent was for the church, not the state, to decide. Bonhoeffer was always clear that the church should not accept the Aryan clauses for itself. 'By August 1933 Bonhoeffer had concluded beyond all doubt that there could be no question of belonging to a church that excluded the Jews' (273).

6.2.4 Finkenwalde

Bonhoeffer was invited to direct one of the seminaries set up by the Confessing Church, and he took up this appointment in 1935. His experiment in communal living ('Bonhoeffer had reflected about communal life for four years; now he could put his ideas into practice' (419)) continued until the Gestapo forcibly closed the seminary down in 1937. Bonhoeffer's leadership was by example, in the work rate he set, his insistence on time away from that work, and in practical service.[14] There was only one rule: the ordinands were 'never to speak about another ordinand in that person's absence or to tell that person about it when such a thing did happen' (428). It seems that the students 'learned almost as much from the failure to observe this simple rule, and from renewed resolution to keep it, as they did from the sermons and exegeses' (428). It was not just the lifestyle that gave rise to rumours;[15] Bonhoeffer's concern for peace (raised by Lasserre and his work in the ecumenical movement) was still prominent:

> When in May 1935 his students heard the news that Hitler was reintroducing conscription, many of them rejoiced at this opportunity to prove that service in the Confessing Church did not signify any lack of patriotism. They were taken aback when he calmly suggested that the pacifist position should be considered seriously ...[16]

It was, however, the lectures on discipleship that were at 'the heart of everything' (441). I shall discuss the themes of discipleship below; here I will merely note that Bonhoeffer expected his students to live out the themes he expounded in his lectures. The practical experience of the 'House of Brethren'

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[14] Following a lack of response to the kitchen's request for help with the washing up, 'Bonhoeffer rose from the table, disappeared into the kitchen, and refused to let in the others who hurried to follow him' (429).

[15] It was thought that Bonhoeffer had introduced 'Catholic practices' (433). These included verbal confession to one another (465-6).

[16] Keith Clements, 'Ecumenical Witness for Peace', in de Gruchy (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 157.

that Bonhoeffer set up – and which lasted only two years before the Gestapo intervened – was recorded in *Life Together*. In this book, Bonhoeffer revealed that it was possible to have 'a living Protestant community' (469). 'Finkenwalde offered an alternative with its new forms of service, for Bonhoeffer always drew a sharp distinction between the office of the pastor as preacher – an office that could not be relinquished – and the office of the parish minister, which should not be preserved at all costs' (470).

As it transpired, not even the idea of training pastors in residential accommodation could be 'preserved at all costs' after 1937. Another way had to be found: and so the 'collective pastorates' were born. These lasted until March 1940, when 'strict military conscription brought all the ordinands of the Confessing church into the army' (589). In that time, Bonhoeffer managed, in spite of all the difficulties, to train five more groups of ordinands, each group split between two pastorates, for the Confessing Church.

6.2.5 Conspirator

Bonhoeffer's decision to return to Germany on 20th June 1939, especially after so many (including Reinhold Niebuhr) had worked so hard to find him employment in America, was multi-faceted, but Bethge's thesis is that ultimately, '[i]t was simply his readiness to recognize that he was and would have to remain a German, fully accepting of guilt and responsibility' (654). Part of the reason for his decision to go abroad, was his concern that 'he would be drawn more deeply into the conspiracy against Hitler' (636) if he stayed. This is, of course what happened after Bonhoeffer returned to Germany. Now '[c]onvinced that 'true patriotism' called for a concerted attempt to remove Hitler and his entourage from national leadership, Bonhoeffer became a civilian member of the *Abwehr* until his arrest on 9 April 1943.'[17]

As an agent of the *Abwehr*, Bonhoeffer was able to travel outside the Reich. Officially he was gathering information for the German war effort. In practice,

[17] Nelson, 'The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer', 40.

he was engaged in smuggling Jews, or those of Jewish descent, out of the Reich.[18] However, theology was not forgotten. He worked, when he could, on his *Ethics*.

> The themes of Christ and reality, concreteness, the natural, the penultimate and the ultimate, the four mandates, deputyship, responsibility, state and church and 'telling the truth' all profoundly reflect the endeavour by Bonhoeffer 'to address the great moral dilemmas posed by the war and the need to resist a blatantly evil government'.[19]

Bonhoeffer's life as a double agent came to an abrupt halt with his arrest in 1943, but even in prison he contrived to continue writing – much of what survives has now appeared in *Letters and Papers from Prison* – but any hopes of release were dashed with the failure of the plot on 20 July 1944 and his transfer to the Gestapo prison on Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse in October 1944. Although Bonhoeffer's only direct involvement with the conspiracy was a trip to Sweden in 1942, his fate was sealed. He was summarily tried and executed at Flossenbürg, one month before the end of the war.[20]

6.3 Bonhoeffer and the Two Kingdoms

On the face of it, Bonhoeffer has little to say about educating Christians (especially ordinary Christians) for political involvement. His privileged background, and his autocratic conservatism militate against the idea that he should advocate giving power to the congregation.[21] Even his 'theology from below' does not necessarily mean that everyone can be educated into free responsibility:[22] in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, he still regards the

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[18] It was this that led to Bonhoeffer's arrest. His connection with the plot to overthrow Hitler was not discovered until after the failure of the plot on 20 July 1944.

[19] Ibid, 40-1, quoting Kelly and Nelson, *A Testament to Freedom*.

[20] The description of Bonhoeffer's death as 'martydom' is open to interpretation, as he is seen by some as dying for a political, not a Christian, cause: see Bethge, *Biography*, 931, and John de Gruchy, *Bonhoeffer and South Africa* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1984), 16.

[21] See Bethge, *Biography*, 445-6.

[22] See discussion at 6.5 below. This is not to say that Bonhoeffer equates ordinary Christians with the peasantry, but that he clearly differentiates between those who carry responsibility and authority, and those who do not. John de Gruchy quotes Ruth Zerner describing Bonhoeffer as 'a theological de Tocqueville – perceptive, prophetic, aristocratic in temperament, *suspicious of the masses*, and sensitive to the realities of his time and place.' See John W. de Gruchy, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Transition to Democracy in the German Democratic Republic and South Africa', *Modern Theology* 12 (1996), 347, emphasis added. In spite of this, de Gruchy, in this article, wants Bonhoeffer to be more of a democrat than I believe he was: Bonhoeffer's experience of democracy in the Weimar Republic was not

peasant's 'sin of strength' as 'the breaking of the order of life'.[23] Also, Bonhoeffer's question, 'are we still any use?'[24] is directed, not at people in general, but at the elites. He clearly expects obedience to authority: part of his defence while being interrogated by the Nazis, was to point to his orthodox exegesis of Romans 13 in *Discipleship*.[25] He might expect change after the war,[26] but his concern appears to have more to do with finding the correct role for the elites, rather than abolishing them.

On the other hand, Bonhoeffer has written about 'doing theology from below'. This is a theology 'from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled – in short, from the perspective of those who suffer.'[27] He also wrote favourably in his *Ethics* about the Enlightenment's refusal to sanction privilege, and its support for 'the equal dignity of men before the ethical.'[28] However, Bonhoeffer then goes on to insist that 'the ethical calls for clear relationships in terms of superiority and inferiority',[29] there has to be a clear order, which for Christians is found in the commandments of God, which, in turn, 'embraces the whole of life.'[30] It appears therefore, that Bonhoeffer is nowhere near advocating equality in civil society.

6.3.1 Luther and the Two Kingdoms

Bonhoeffer's idea that God's commandments embrace life in its entirety challenges the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. Although the two kingdoms doctrine accepts that God is in control of both kingdoms, the church comes under his right hand, and the state his left. Therefore, what a person may be expected, or allowed, to do as an office holder in the secular realm

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conducive to its support from one with such an aristocratic background as Bonhoeffer – even if his elitism was one that 'recognised its responsibility for the establishment of a just order ...' (ibid., 362).

[23] *LPP*, 345. Also, cf. Green, *A Theology of Sociality*, 276.

[24] In his essay 'After Ten Years', *LPP*, 16-17.

[25] *LPP*, 60. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 240ff.

[26] See 'Thoughts on the Day of the Baptism of Dietrich Wilhelm Rüdiger Bethge', *LPP*, 295.

[27] *LPP*, 17.

[28] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Simon and Schuster/Touchstone, 1995), 269. Cf. Green, *A Theology of Sociality*, 323.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 272.

may not be the same as what that person may do in the spiritual realm. Martin Luther, according to W. Cargill Thompson, saw 'nothing incompatible' with one person having to live as a Christian privately, but to carry out duties as a public person 'which might appear to be contrary to the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount.'[31] This is because, for Luther, 'God has ordained the two governments, the spiritual [government] which fashions true Christians and just persons through the holy Spirit under Christ, and the secular [*weltlich*] government which holds the Unchristian and wicked in check and forces them to keep the peace outwardly and be still, like it or not.'[32]

As Luther expects there to be very few 'true Christians' in any society, there is all the more reason for a coercive secular government. For Luther, the secular government must be obeyed, even by the true Christian – 'because a true Christian ... lives for and serves his neighbour and not himself ...'.[33] Luther's doctrine of non-resistance, rather than total obedience,[34] is founded on Romans 13 (and 1 Peter 2:13).[35] Therefore, even if a prince overreaches himself and tries to compel belief, then Luther (like Augustine) commands passive resistance only. 'If he [the prince] then takes away your goods and punishes you for your disobedience, then blessed are you, and you should thank God for counting you worthy to suffer for the sake of his Word.'[36] Indeed, in the light of the Peasants' Revolt, Luther's line on obedience to secular authority stretched so far as to allow that 'a rebel might be slain by anyone, a tyrant by no one.'[37]

Luther's experience forced him to move away from his earlier, more idealistic positions, and accept more and more secular interference in Church affairs.[38]

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[31] W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), 61.
[32] 'On Secular Authority', in Harro Höpfl, *Luther and Calvin: On Secular Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10-11. '*Weltlich*', Höpfl notes, can also be translated as either 'worldly' or 'temporal', see ibid., xxxviii.
[33] Ibid., 13.
[34] See Cargill Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther*, 98.
[35] See, for example, 'On Secular Authority', 13 and 27.
[36] Ibid, 29.
[37] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 162.
[38] This was inevitable in the light of his opposition to papal or other ecclesial authority, thus leaving the secular authority the only one with any coercive power. See Quentin Skinner, *The*

This, Cargill Thompson argues, 'helped to prepare the way for the subsequent development of the Lutheran territorial church system in Germany'[39] – a system that Bonhoeffer inherited.

6.3.2 Bonhoeffer's Adaptation of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine

Whatever Luther may have intended by his idea of the two kingdoms, by the early part of the twentieth century, religion had been confined to the private sphere, separate from the world where 'one either saw radical flight from the world as one's way to God, or one lived in this world, radically open to it but independent of all relations to God.'[40] According to Ernst Feil, Bonhoeffer regarded overcoming religion 'as something which either separates or identifies faith and the world' as the 'chief task' for theologians of his generation. In other words, he wished to overcome the misappropriation of the two kingdoms doctrine that had allowed the conflict 'between a Christian and a bourgeois-secular vocation' to be resolved.[41] For Bonhoeffer the conflict must remain: this can be seen in his ideas of 'free responsibility',[42] and his awareness of the 'better righteousness' that Jesus expects of his disciples.[43] Bonhoeffer's writings have different emphases in terms of God's 'Yes' and his 'No' to the world. In terms of the Finkenwalde and Prison writings, we can see an emphasis on God's 'No' in *Discipleship* and, to a lesser extent, *Life Together*, and more of an emphasis on God's 'Yes' in *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Bonhoeffer's earlier works contain a more positive outlook on the world, [44] but the subtlety of thought, and the awareness of conflict can be seen in, for example, *Creation and Fall*, where Bonhoeffer writes of the curse *and* the promise associated with Genesis 3.

> That humankind must live in the fallen world ... that is the *curse*. That humankind *is allowed* to live in this world and that it will not be deprived of the word of God ... that is the *promise*.[45]

Foundations of Modern Political Thought, vol. 2: *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 12ff.

[39] Cargill Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther*, 174.

[40] Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 101.

[41] *Discipleship*, 50.

[42] See *Ethics*, 220-58.

[43] *Discipleship*, 116-17.

[44] For a discussion of this, see Feil, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 107-25.

[45] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 132, emphasis original.

For Bonhoeffer, the curse and promise associated with the world applies everywhere, including the monastery. Retreat from the world is not a valid option. Luther had to re-enter the world, 'not because the world itself was good and holy, but because even the monastery was nothing else but the world.'[46]

6.3.2.1 The Two Kingdoms and Finkenwalde

Therefore the church-community is not to be seen as some sort of shelter or escape from the world. Bonhoeffer was clear, even as he wrote about the Finkenwalde community, that

> The Christian cannot simply take for granted the privilege of living among other Christians. Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his enemies ... So Christians, too, belong not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the midst of enemies.[47]

If Christians are able to gather together, it is by God's grace, and 'merely a gracious anticipation of the end time.'[48] *Life Together* was written shortly after *Discipleship* and so still bears the hallmarks of Bonhoeffer's 'No' to the world – but even so, Bonhoeffer clearly expects Christ's followers to live, work and witness in the world. Bonhoeffer re-iterates the theme of curse and promise: 'God's people must live in distant lands among the unbelievers [the curse], but they will be the seed of the kingdom of God in all the world [the promise].'[49] Therefore the role of the Christian community is to fit the Christian for living outside that community:

> Every day brings the Christian many hours of being alone in an unchristian environment. These are times of *testing*. This is the proving ground of a genuine time of meditation and genuine Christian community. Has the community served to make individuals free, strong, and mature, or has it made them insecure and dependent? Has it taken them by the hand for a while so that they would learn again to walk by themselves, or has it made them anxious and unsure? This is one of the toughest and most serious questions that can be put to any form of everyday Christian life in community ...[50]

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[46] *Discipleship*, 48.
[47] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together / Prayerbook of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 27.
[48] Ibid., 28.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 91-2.

In the Christian community, service is service to and for others in listening, active helpfulness and bearing with one another[51] before there can be any 'service of the Word of God'.[52] This is because Bonhoeffer expects his seminarians to live the Word, before they can teach it. *Life Together* is clearly about how Bonhoeffer saw the Confessing Church community at Finkenwalde, but this does not mean that its concerns do not have application outside that Christian community. The German editors of *Life Together* put the point well when they ask '[h]ow could one overlook the fact that the basic concern of *Life Together* was found again in the words about "prayer and action for justice on behalf of the people" ...'.[53] What *Life Together* does show us is Bonhoeffer's concern that those who seek to be involved in 'prayer and action for justice on behalf of the people' are well grounded in the Christian faith that leads them to undertake such prayer and action. In *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer does not comment on the doctrine of the two kingdoms explicitly, but his implicit treatment clearly emphasises the rule of God over all, as opposed to the differences between the two kingdoms.

I have already noted Bonhoeffer's emphasis on God's 'No' to the world in *Discipleship*. Part of the reason given for writing the book is so that Bonhoeffer can work out his answer to the troubling questions:

> What could the call to follow Jesus mean today for the worker, the businessman, the farmer, or the soldier? Could it bring an intolerable dilemma into the existence of persons in the world who are Christian? ...[54]

Given this concern, Bonhoeffer's negative description of the world can be seen as surprising only if we expect those with secular vocations to be able to carry them out in the world without struggle. It is better to view Bonhoeffer's negativity about the world as a warning against the cheap grace that so aligns the secular world with God's kingdom of the left hand that, far from being intolerable, the dilemma ceases to exist. It is this misappropriation of the

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[51] See ibid., 98-100.
[52] Ibid., 103.
[53] Ibid., 125, editors' Afterword to the German Edition, quoting *LPP*.
[54] *Discipleship*, 39.

doctrine of the two kingdoms that Bonhoeffer repudiates.[55] If grace was not to become cheap grace, then discipleship was a constant, daily requirement. Without this emphasis on discipleship, '[t]he justification of the sinner in the world became the justification of sin and the world.'[56]

It was in America that Jean Lasserre challenged him about 'the biblical injunction of peace'. Also Lasserre confronted Bonhoeffer

> with the question of the relationship between God's word and those who uphold it as individuals and citizens of the contemporary world. This soon led Bonhoeffer to a new understanding of the Sermon on the Mount.[57]

In *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer's treatment of the Sermon on the Mount centres on 'Jesus' call and promise.'[58] This call can only lead to the cross; the faith-community can only be 'the community of the Crucified' (109).

> Things cannot go any other way than that the world unleashes its fury in word, violence, and defamation at those meek strangers ... In their poverty and suffering, this group of Jesus' followers gives too strong a witness to the injustice of the world. That is fatal. While Jesus calls, "blessed, blessed," the world shrieks, "Away with them!" Yes, away! But where will they go? Into the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven (109-10).

Bonhoeffer notes that these people while worthy of heaven, are (and here he uses Nazi terminology) 'obviously at the same time... unworthy of living ...'.[59] These same people are to be salt and light – they are to be a visible community that preserves the earth (110-14). Invisibility is not an option. However, Bonhoeffer defines the good works seen in the light of Christ as 'poverty, being strangers, meekness, peacemaking, and finally being

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[55] Green tells us that by giving the gospel and church a political role, Bonhoeffer transcends the 'traditional 'two realms' doctrine'. However, 'Church and secular existence' are not so autonomous under Luther's doctrine as Green seems to think. Conversely, Green is right to argue that Bonhoeffer goes beyond the limited right of resistance that Luther gave Christians in the sixteenth century (*A Theology of Sociality*, 290).

[56] Ibid., 50.

[57] Bethge, *Biography*, 154. Lasserre, therefore, 'provided the initial impulse for ... *Discipleship*' (Ibid., 153).

[58] *Discipleship*, 102, n. 2. In the same footnote, Bonhoeffer attacks any contrast between Matthew and Luke. 'Matthew is not interested in spiritualising the original Beatitude (Luke's form), nor is Luke interested in politicising any original Beatitudes (Matthew's form) referring only to "state of mind."' For the remainder of this section, page numbers in brackets refer to *Discipleship*.

[59] Ibid., 110 – and see editors' n. 51 on the same page.

persecuted and rejected, and in all of them the one work: bearing the cross of Jesus Christ' (114).

This work also included concern for the well-being of all in the church-community and beyond. In the context of when Bonhoeffer was writing – the Nazi mistreatment and murder of the Jews – the fact that Bonhoeffer tells us the disciples' concern and care for others is not confined to the church-community, is significant, even while no specific action is advocated.[60] On similar lines, Bonhoeffer's statement that '[f]or Christians, there is no such thing as absolute earthly allegiance',[61] and his clear statements warning against 'loyalty oaths', sounded a lot more 'political' than his words may appear now.[62] Equally, Bonhoeffer's insistence that Jesus 'demands undivided obedience' threatened Lutherans who referred to obedience to the State when in office, as opposed to in their private capacity, to justify their participation in Nazi-inspired evil acts.[63] In spite – or perhaps because – of all this, the Sermon on the Mount section of *Discipleship* still reads as a paper addressed to those who can and do expect persecution simply for being Christians, for focussing solely on Jesus, and becoming separated from the people around them.[64]

However, the disciples cannot judge the other person; that other person can only be viewed as one 'to whom Jesus comes' (170). Enemies must be prayed for. If the sin is to be condemned, the sinner is not. On the other hand, they cannot force the forgiving Word on an unwilling world (173). Like Luther, Bonhoeffer does not expect a large number of true Christians:

> The call [of Jesus] separates a small group, those who follow, from the great mass of the people. The disciples are few and will always be only a few. (175)

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[60] See ibid., 121-2, especially editors' n. 85. Also see the German editors' 'Afterword' in ibid., 304: 'During the Third Reich readers knew that a real engagement with the thoughts of *Discipleship* would necessarily entail practical consequences for their own lives.'
[61] Ibid., 130. The German Christians required pastors to swear a loyalty oath to Hitler from August 1934, ibid, n. 112.
[62] Kenneth Morris makes a similar point. 'Bonhoeffer's Critique of Totalitarianism', 267-8.
[63] See *Discipleship*, 135 and editors' n. 124.
[64] See, for example, ibid., 169.

Even here there is separation: confession alone[65] does not save people. They must be doers of the word as well; inaction is not an option if disciples want to be part of the faith-community (179-82). The 'doing' is the call to serve even the weakest and despised 'brothers or sisters – be they Jew or Greek, slave or free ...' (257). This service, presumably, Bonhoeffer felt could be enacted in any walk of life (237-40).

The education of the Christian for political action seen here consists in taking the Sermon on the Mount seriously, and, vitally, seeking to serve any and every member of the community – and not just the church community.

6.3.2.2 The Two Kingdoms and *Ethics*

Bonhoeffer's approach to the doctrine of the two kingdoms, the idea that Christ is Lord over all, but in different ways, can be discerned in *Ethics* primarily in his treatment of the ultimate and the penultimate – or 'The Last Things and the Things Before the Last'.[66] *Ethics*, as Feil notes, moves away from the negative view of the world:[67] even though the present world is 'doomed to destruction', it 'must be taken seriously.'[68] Bonhoeffer rejects two approaches to the world: that of radicalism – which 'sees only the ultimate' and 'Christ is the destroyer and enemy of everything penultimate, and everything penultimate is enmity towards Christ'[69] – and compromise, where the penultimate 'is not threatened or imperilled by the ultimate' (127). For Bonhoeffer, 'the Christian life means neither a destruction nor a sanctioning of the penultimate' (132).

> What is this penultimate? It is everything that precedes the ultimate, everything that precedes the justification of the sinner by grace alone,

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[65] Even in a time when confession was an important means of differentiating between the Confessing and Reich Churches – see ibid., 178, n. 234.

[66] This is not the first time Bonhoeffer had looked at this topic. See Ján Liguš, 'Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Ultimate, Penultimate and Their Impact' in Guy Carter et al. (eds.), *Bonhoeffer's Ethics: Old Europe and New Frontiers* (Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1991), 59-60. Liguš also observes that 'the first chapter of *The Cost of Discipleship* also deals with the relation of the ultimate to the penultimate' (ibid., 59, and see *LPP*, 157 where Bonhoeffer says 'I just hinted at this, but did not follow it up ...'. Chapter 1 of *Discipleship* concerns cheap and costly grace, discussed above .)

[67] Feil, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 139ff., and see also Liguš, op. cit., 60. Bonhoeffer himself is now becoming more involved 'politically', i.e. in the conspiracy against Hitler.

[68] Feil, 139.

[69] *Ethics*, 126-7. For the rest of this section, page numbers in brackets refer to this work.

> everything which is to be regarded as leading up to the last thing when the last thing has been found. It is at the same time everything which follows the ultimate and yet again precedes it ... (133)

Therefore the relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate can be seen as complex, but Bonhoeffer is clear on two points: 'it is the ultimate which determines the penultimate', and it is '[f]or the sake of the ultimate the penultimate must be preserved' (133).

In *Ethics*, therefore, Bonhoeffer has nothing similar to the Lutheran idea of the separation of the two kingdoms;[70] here the interrelation (but not interdependence) of the two kingdoms is shown. The question for us is what action should we take in the world in preparation for the ultimate?

> The hungry man needs bread and the homeless man needs a roof; the undisciplined need order and the slave needs freedom. To allow the hungry man to remain hungry would be blasphemy against God and one's neighbour, for what is nearest God is precisely the need of one's neighbour ... If the hungry man does not attain to faith, then the guilt falls on those who refused him bread. To provide the hungry man with bread is to prepare the way for the coming of grace. (136)

Bonhoeffer is careful to say that these actions are not the same as the coming of grace, but for those who do these things 'for the sake of the ultimate'

> ... this penultimate does bear a relation to the ultimate. It is a pen*ultimate*. The coming of grace is the ultimate. (137, emphasis original)

The penultimate is spoken of and done to prepare the way, 'so that the word of God, the ultimate, grace, can come to them' (137). Even here, however, there is no clear link between action and the ultimate; it is not the case that 'values must be set in order' before people can become Christians. Bonhoeffer points to the paradox that 'precisely at times when the world has seemed to be relatively in order that the estrangement from the faith has been especially deep-seated and alarming.' He continues:

> The preparation of the way for Christ cannot, therefore, be simply a matter of the establishment of certain desirable and expedient conditions; it simply cannot be the realization of a programme of social reform. It is quite certain that the preparation of the way is a matter of

[70] This separation, as noted above, had lead to 'cheap grace', and was not what Luther intended.

> concrete interventions in the visible world ... yet everything depends on this activity being a spiritual reality, precisely because ultimately it is not indeed a question of the reform of earthly conditions, but it is a question of the coming of Christ. (137)

However, even though we are all still sinners, because of the 'approaching ultimate', the penultimate must still 'be respected and validated' (139). Christian life involves living in the world, however aware we might be of the fallen nature of that world. Bonhoeffer makes his position clear in his 'Outline for a Book':

> The church is the church only when it exists for others ... The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men of every calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others ... It must not underestimate the importance of human example ... it is not abstract argument, but example, that gives its word emphasis and power.[71]

It is clear from this that Bonhoeffer has not become blind to the world's failings, but just very aware of how Christians are to live in the world, even if they are not to be of it – this latter point being the emphasis of *Discipleship*.[72] Indeed, as Feil correctly argues, in *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Bonhoeffer 'postulates faithfulness to the earth for the sake of Jesus Christ directly in the knowledge of the destruction of the earth.'[73] Or, in Bonhoeffer's own words: 'It may be that the day of judgment will dawn tomorrow; in that case, we shall gladly stop working for a better future. But not before.'[74] In the *Ethics* we are told that:

> God loves man. God loves the world. It is not an ideal man that He loves, but man as he is; not an ideal world, but the real world.[75]

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[71] *LPP*, 382-3.

[72] And why he was able to 'stand by what I wrote', even if he could see the dangers of the book from the vantage point of his Tegel theology. See ibid, 369.

[73] Feil, 139. This eschatological perspective is also noted by L. Gregory Jones. See 'The Cost of Forgiveness: Grace, Christian Community and the Politics of Worldly Discipleship', in Wayne Whitson Floyd and Charles Marsh (eds.), *Theology and the Practice of Responsibility* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994), 159. Jones continues: 'In particular social and political circumstances, Christians must discern whether, and to what extent, it is possible to proclaim the ultimate word of forgiveness rather than live in the penultimate realm of preparing the way – perhaps in silence.' It seems to me that Bonhoeffer expects the penultimate to occur whether or not the ultimate can be proclaimed, but Jones is right to say that, in the penultimate realm, 'Christians are called to acts of repentance which, for example, "resist injustice"' (ibid.).

[74] *LPP*, 15-16.

[75] *Ethics*, 73 (cf. Feil, 141).

This attitude, while still aware that Christians should not be of the world – the pages following the above quotation from *Ethics* show that Bonhoeffer is very much aware of the evil of the world, and that Christians should have a different attitude[76] – he concludes that '[i]t is only through God's being made man that it is possible to know the real man and not to despise him.'[77]

6.3.3 Conclusion

Bonhoeffer clearly reacted against his Lutheran inheritance in terms of the separation of the two kingdoms and argued trenchantly against 'thinking in terms of two spheres'.[78] He insisted on Christ's lordship over all, including the fallen world.[79] Therefore, 'there is no real possibility of being a Christian outside the reality of the world and that there is no real worldly existence outside the reality of Jesus Christ.'[80] Bonhoeffer argued for costly, rather than cheap, grace, and for the respect of the penultimate for the sake of the ultimate. Christians must therefore be involved in society as Christians, as disciples. There will be a cost to this (emphasised in *Discipleship*), but the church is only the church *not* when it concentrates solely on God's kingdom of the right hand, but when it 'exists for others.' This means that the church must recognise its political responsibility. As with much else, Bonhoeffer's thought developed over time. In the next section, I shall look at how his thought developed from 1933 (the Jewish question) through to his ideas on free responsibility and how disciples can operate under an 'ethic of resistance' when the church itself is in danger of acting inauthentically.

6.4 The Church's Political Responsibility

6.4.1 Responsibility for the Jews

From the moment Hitler came to power, Bonhoeffer was involved with the church's resistance to Nazism. As noted above, this resistance centred on the Aryan legislation of 7th April 1933, but in his essay 'The Church and the Jewish Question', unlike his later work, Bonhoeffer still followed the

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[76] See *Ethics*, 73-6.
[77] Ibid., 76.
[78] Ibid., 198.
[79] As such, it has been argued that he had a 'weak' eschatology, see 6.6 below.
[80] Ibid.

traditional Lutheran line and carefully differentiated between what the church could, and what it could not, tell the state to do.

> Without doubt, the Church of the Reformation has no right to address the state directly in its specifically political actions ... Without doubt the Jewish question is one of the historical problems which our state must deal with, and without doubt the state is justified in adopting new methods here.[81]

But, Bonhoeffer continues with what he feels the church can, and should be able to, do:

> there are three possible ways in which the church can act towards the state: in the first place ... it can ask the state whether its actions are legitimate ... Secondly, it can aid the victims of state action ... even if they do not belong to the Christian community ... The third possibility is not just to bandage the victims under the wheel, but to put a spoke in the wheel itself ...[82]

Whether or not the objections are theological, and whether or not Bonhoeffer advocates the 'third possibility' at this time, he is crystal clear on whether the church should accept the Aryan clauses for itself:

> It is ... the task of Christian preaching to say: here is the church, where Jew and German stand together under the Word of God ... No one who feels unable to tolerate church fellowship with Christians of Jewish race can be prevented from separating himself from this church fellowship. But it must then be made clear to him with the utmost seriousness that he is thus loosing himself from the place on which the church of Christ stands ...[83]

As he wrote this, Bonhoeffer was prepared to leave open the question of whether this separation would be a 'tolerable schism', but '[b]y August 1933 Bonhoeffer had concluded beyond all doubt that there could be no question of belonging to a church that excluded the Jews.'[84] The church's political responsibility was limited here to questioning the state about the legitimacy of its action, and, as far as Jewish members of the church went: 'aiding the victims of state action'. Green tells us that 'Bonhoeffer is referring to, but not

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[81] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords* (London: Collins, 1965), 222-3.
[82] Ibid., 225.
[83] Ibid., 229.
[84] Bethge, *Biography*, 273. For the background on the Bonhoeffer family's approach to the Jews, and to Hitler's 'inevitable' approach to the Jewish question, see Edwin H. Robertson, 'A Study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Jews', in *Bonhoeffer's Ethics: Old Europe and New Frontiers*, 121-30.

yet advocating, the possibility that the church may have to demand the dissolution of a government which has forfeited its legitimacy.'[85]

Bonhoeffer's attitude to the Jews has faced criticism. For Kenneth Barnes, Bonhoeffer's time in Britain from October 1933 to April 1935 suggests 'an uncertainty and ambivalence ... about the church and the Jewish question',[86] – ignoring the fact that Bonhoeffer (as noted above) had settled his position by August 1933. A more balanced approach comes from Ruth Zerner who notes Bonhoeffer's Lutheran heritage, and his willingness to repeat attitudes of 'condescension, if not contempt, towards Jews',[87] but also his focus on 'restraining popular attitudes ... towards the Jews.'[88] She also points to Bonhoeffer's later statements including: 'Only he who cries out for the Jews may sing Gregorian chant'; and 'An expulsion of the Jews from the West must necessarily bring with it the expulsion of Christ. For Jesus Christ was a Jew'.[89]

We may conclude that, for all his initial failings, there was progression in Bonhoeffer's thought. So, to read all of Bonhoeffer's life (and future work) in the light of the 1933 essay on 'The Church and the Jewish Question', with all the apparent ambiguities that Barnes finds in that document, is as dangerous as reading Bonhoeffer's entire life and work backwards from his martyrdom.[90] Bonhoeffer's attitude to the Jews, it must be remembered, was considerably more liberal than a lot of people in Germany (including Martin Niemöller)[91] at the time. He had to fight an often lonely battle, even as his own thought progressed and he worked through the three options of church action and involvement laid out in his 1933 essay. Bonhoeffer had to think through (and react against) an unquestioning obedience to the state that was engendered by

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[85] Green, *A Theology of Sociality*, 232.
[86] Kenneth C. Barnes, 'Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hitler's Persecution of the Jews', in Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel (eds.), *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 120.
[87] Ruth Zerner, 'Church, State and the "Jewish Question"', in de Gruchy (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 195. Also see Robertson 'A Study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Jews', 129 for a discussion on Bonhoeffer's 'indefensible' repetition of the 'medieval teaching of the 'curse' upon the Jews ...'.
[88] Zerner, 'Church, State and the "Jewish Question"', 195.
[89] Quoted in ibid., 197.
[90] A danger noted by de Gruchy in 'The Reception of Bonhoeffer's Theology', 97.
[91] Ibid., 195.

his upbringing, his culture and his Lutheran religion. The fact that Bonhoeffer went so far in his thinking should be commended; it is wrong to expect (as Barnes does) a fully articulated opposition to the state as early as 1933. The calls for political action on the part of the church were generally ignored, but had they been heeded, and had other church leaders joined Bonhoeffer 'while there was time to prevent genocide', then there may have been a chance for effective resistance to Hitler before tyrannicide became the only option.[92]

6.4.2 Responsibility for Peace

It was Hitler's antipathy towards the Jews that renewed Bonhoeffer's demands for political action on the part of the church, but his concerns were wider than that. His ecumenical work, which officially began at the 1931 conference in Cambridge, brought him into contact with many (including the English Bishop George Bell) who were fighting for peace. This concern about the international situation, and primarily with regard to peace, was all the more surprising from a Lutheran – who was expected to 'see that Christianity involved giving Caesar his due and that bearing arms for the Fatherland when required was a natural and Christian duty'[93] – and a German where there was, even among protestant circles, 'widespread opposition to anything savouring of 'internationalism''.[94] However, Bonhoeffer was not a typical German Lutheran, and he was still challenged by Lasserre's demand to receive Jesus' teachings on the Sermon on the Mount not 'as ideals for an ideal world', but as a concrete command to non-violence.[95] In 1932, at the ecumenical conference at Gland, Switzerland, Bonhoeffer challenged the churches to re-examine 'a world whose idol has become the word 'security' – a world without sacrifice, full of mistrust and suspicion, because past fears are still with it ...'[96] and to stand for a peace in which 'righteousness and truth are preserved.'[97] His concern remained much the same at the conference in Fanö, where his call was

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[92] See Michael Westmorland-White et. al., 'Disciples of the Incarnation', *Sojourners* 23, 1994, 30.
[93] Keith Clements, 'Ecumenical Witness for Peace', in de Gruchy (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 155.
[94] Ibid, 157.
[95] Ibid, 155.
[96] *No Rusty Swords*, 186-7.
[97] Ibid., 188.

for a peace that 'must be dared.'[98] As Geffrey Kelly notes, '[t]he churches were, however, timid and lacking in the will to commit themselves to such a risky cause.'[99] This led to Bonhoeffer's complaint that the churches spent too much time looking after their own perceived interests and survival under Nazism to engage in resistance – and action on the part of those whom the regime victimised.[100]

6.4.3 Responsibility before Christ

So, how were Christians to behave, especially as the church (even the Confessing Church) failed to live up to the promises of the Barmen declaration?[101] From 1935 to 1940 (when the Gestapo closed down the collective pastorates), as I have noted, Bonhoeffer was engaged in training candidates for ministry in the Confessing Church. Discipleship is Bonhoeffer's key to Christian behaviour at this time. This discipleship, this radical living for 'Christ in community', can be seen as forming an 'ethic of resistance'.[102] I have noted above that *Discipleship* was seen as more political when it was written than it might be seen today. This is due to the context and culture of its time: the editors' of *Discipleship* make the point with clarity:

> Bonhoeffer's Confessing Church [was] in open hostility to the regnant Nazi ideology ... Beatings, arrests, police terror, and rampant injustice were commonplace in the years in which the Nazi government reinforced its grip on every aspect of life in Germany. It was not lost on Bonhoeffer that these developments and the sluggish reaction of many church leaders were in sharp contrast to those daring, even shocking sayings of Jesus, the Beatitudes.[103]

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[98] Ibid., 291.

[99] Geffrey Kelly, 'Bonhoeffer and Romero: Prophets of Justice for the Oppressed', in *Theology and the Practice of Responsibility*, 96.

[100] See *LPP*, 300 ('Our church ... is incapable of taking the word of reconciliation and redemption to mankind and the world'), and 381 ('No taking risks for others'), and cf. Kelly, op. cit., 96.

[101] In its day, the Barmen declaration was politically radical 'because in *that* situation it created a freedom zone "in the midst of a system of terror"' (de Gruchy, *Bonhoeffer and South Africa*, (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1984), 33). For a copy of the full text of the Barmen declaration (in English), see ibid., 145-50. Bonhoeffer was not at the synod that drew up the declaration, drafted by Karl Barth, but he 'was relieved by this justification of his views' (Bethge, *Biography*, 371).

[102] Green, *A Theology of Sociality*, 307. Green notes that Bonhoeffer criticises ethical postures that may have served previous generations well, because they are insufficient for the present task, and therefore it is responsible action that 'is in fact at the center of Bonhoeffer's ethic of resistance' (ibid., 305-7).

[103] Editors' 'Introduction' to the English Edition of *Discipleship*, 2-3.

In turn it is Bonhoeffer's treatment of those Beatitudes, especially his ideas on not resisting evil, forgiveness, or loving one's enemies, that has caused some to see *Discipleship* 'as too otherworldly and impractical in how Christians had to deal with an enemy such as Nazism ...'.[104] Bonhoeffer's editors would have none of this. For them, Bonhoeffer's 'countercultural perspective' in *Discipleship* 'was not a flight *from* the world, but a struggle to establish a critical church presence *in* the world.'[105]

This 'countercultural perspective' can be seen in *Discipleship* when the Christian is to 'expect nothing from the world but everything from Christ and his coming realm.'[106] In this light any revolution against current social order is forbidden.[107] However, Ernst Feil tells us not to regard Bonhoeffer's different overall approach in *Discipleship* – compared with *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison* and with his earlier, more positive view of the world – as discontinuity, but to see the call of discipleship as a call that 'leads out of the world and only thereby truly into the world.'[108] This is to over-simplify. Bonhoeffer's goal in writing *Discipleship* was to bring those who 'have to admit sadly that we have made it too difficult for them to get to know Jesus'[109] into true discipleship. The idea is that these people, too, can be blessed along with those 'who already stand at the end of the path on which we wish to embark' and who 'in the knowledge of such [costly] grace, can live in the world without losing themselves in it.'[110] *Discipleship* was written to counter 'cheap grace' where

> the world is in principle justified by [cheap] grace. I can thus remain as before in my bourgeois-secular existence ... The conflict between a Christian and a bourgeois-secular vocation is resolved. Christian life consists of my living in the world and like the world, my not being any different from it ...[111]

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[104] Ibid., 14.
[105] Ibid., 16.
[106] *Discipleship*, 239. This sentiment strikes an Augustinian note (the sojourner idea is especially clear in ibid., 250-2).
[107] Ibid., 238-9.
[108] Feil, 138.
[109] *Discipleship*, 37.
[110] Ibid., 55 (cf. Feil, 138).
[111] Ibid., 50-1.

Given the difference between 'cheap' and 'costly' grace, it is unsurprising that this book contains mostly Bonhoeffer's 'No' to the world. However, this 'No' to the world also contains the radical 'Yes' to Christ that Bonhoeffer wished to emphasise against the prevailing culture of accommodation to Nazism. This radical 'Yes' to Christ does not diminish in Bonhoeffer's theology. As he becomes more deeply involved in the conspiracy, he still defines the Christian life as 'prayer and righteous action'.[112] How he conceived 'righteous action' and what it consisted of may have changed over the period from *Discipleship* to *Letters and Papers from Prison*, but the two sides of faith and action (or obedience) in the world are still extant. As a good Lutheran, Bonhoeffer insists on the ontological priority of faith, but he is equally clear that this does not follow chronologically.[113] Bonhoeffer regards the first step as one of obedience that leads to faith. It is a step that is taken in the '*iustitia civilis*', that is in the sphere of civil rather than faith or spiritual justice, 'within which people are free' to obey Christ's call or not.[114]

This gives both people and churches responsibilities in the civil realm. Bonhoeffer discusses these explicitly in his *Ethics*.[115] Even though he knew that the Confessing Church had failed to hold the Nazi government to account, he clearly felt that the church still had responsibilities towards the state.[116] These responsibilities were laid on the church in order to answer 'the claim of government on the church'.[117] These responsibilities consisted mainly of 'call[ing] sin by its name and... warn[ing] men against sin...'.[118] The question remains as to who was to express the concerns and criticisms that the church had of the state. Does Bonhoeffer expect the people who should have seen 'the need for free and responsible action' to be ordinary people, or the elites, the church leaders, only? It is to this question that I now turn.

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[112] *LPP*, 300.
[113] *Discipleship*, 63-4.
[114] *Discipleship*, 64, and see editors' footnote 19 on the same page.
[115] *Ethics*, 344-6.
[116] These compare with the responsibilities Luther held that the church had toward the state (see 6.3.1 above).
[117] *Ethics*, 345. The government's claim on the church consists in keeping and, if called upon, to restore, 'the rightful order within which the spiritual office can be rightfully discharged and both government and Church can perform their own several tasks' (ibid., 344).
[118] Ibid., 345.

6.5 A Privileged Liberator?

F. Burton Nelson tells us that 'Bonhoeffer's own biography depicts a journey from privilege to deprivation, from affluence to subsistence, from comfort to suffering, from upper class elitism to the lower dregs of society behind bars.'[119] Whether Bonhoeffer would ever have identified himself as part of the 'lower dregs of society' is moot,[120] but Bonhoeffer's empathy with the disadvantaged, including the Harlem blacks he met while at Union Seminary, the disadvantaged children he organised Youth clubs for when he was a pastor in Berlin, the Jews in anti-Semitic Germany, and finally his fellow inmates at Tegel prison (and the other places he was incarcerated) is well documented.[121] Nelson's pertinent question is whether it is at all possible 'for middle and upper class, affluent, comfortable Christians ... to hear the Bible from below'?[122] This question seems particularly valid in the light of the Confessing Church's failure to stand with the oppressed of Nazi Germany. All Bonhoeffer could do was hope that, one day, 'men will once more be called so to utter the word of God that the world will be changed and renewed by it.'[123]

At Finkenwalde, Bonhoeffer was involved with those who were training to be pastors, and therefore leaders in the Confessing Church. What we cannot discern in *Life Together* and *Discipleship* is the sort of political action (outside and apart from prayer) Bonhoeffer would expect from the ordinary member of the congregation. Bonhoeffer has been seen as a sympathetic character by liberation theologians,[124] but he also has an elitist side. In *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer

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[119] F. Burton Nelson, 'Christian Faith and Public Policy: The View from Below', *Covenant Quarterly* 40 (1982), 31.

[120] '[Bonhoeffer demonstrates] an ability to concentrate on intellectual projects of [his] choosing and even continue much of [his] pre-prison life-style, including the cultivation of [his] sensitive esthetic [*sic*] tastes.' Larry Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 45.

[121] As one example, even at Schönberg, Bonhoeffer 'did a great deal to keep some of the weaker brethren from depression and anxiety.' Letter from H. Falconer to S. Leibholz (1.10.1945), quoted in Bethge, 924.

[122] Nelson, 'Christian Faith and Public Policy', 32.

[123] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 'Thoughts on the Day of the Baptism of Dietrich Wilhelm Rudiger Bethge', in *LPP*, 300.

[124] G. Clark Chapman Jr. charts several parallels with, and criticisms of, Bonhoeffer by liberation theologians, including the parallel between praxis, 'the continuing reciprocity of action and reflection' and Bonhoeffer's portrayal of discipleship ('Bonhoeffer: Resource for Liberation Theology', *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 36 (1981), 231). Chapman also criticises Bonhoeffer for his lack of awareness of the class conflict, but this, just like the

discusses the French Revolution and its inheritance, he is clear that there are (or ought to be) 'strong and mentally superior personalities' over and above the masses, and is concerned that 'the increasing acceptance of mass standards will ... level down mental achievements to such an extent that technology itself will cease to develop and will therefore cease to exist.'[125] Later on in the same book, Bonhoeffer asserts that 'it is granted to only very few men ... to experience the hazard of responsible action.'[126] However, Bonhoeffer is not content to leave it there. He is critical of a society that crushes those, outside of the great and the good, who 'venture to act on their free responsibility', with 'the machinery of the social order'.[127] He also, in the light of this 'machinery', seeks to redefine free responsibility:

> every life can experience this situation [of free responsibility] in its most characteristic form, that is to say, in the encounter with other people. Even when free responsibility is more or less excluded from a man's vocational and public life, he nevertheless always stands in a responsible relation to other men; these relations extend from his family to his workmates. The fulfilment of genuine responsibility at this point affords the only sound possibility of extending the sphere of responsibility once more into vocational and public life.[128]

In this and the following paragraph, one can detect signs of the conservative aristocrat[129] ('The apprentice has a duty of obedience towards his master, but at the same time he has also a free responsibility for his work, for his achievement and, therefore, also for his master'),[130] but Bonhoeffer has clearly opened the door towards ordinary people becoming more involved with action for others. As with his theology from below, these moves are only tentative, and have not been fully worked through – there is tension here between the author of *Discipleship* who did not wish to see any upset of the social order,

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criticisms of his sexism (see H. Russel Botman, 'Is Bonhoeffer Still of Any Use in South Africa?', in John W. de Gruchy (ed.) *Bonhoeffer for a New Day* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1997), 367-8.) is criticism out of time. There was enough conflict in the 1930s and 1940s, for anyone to cope with, without demanding that Bonhoeffer be aware – before the world around him – of other conflicts.

[125] *Ethics*, 102.

[126] Ibid., 246-7.

[127] Ibid., 247.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Kenneth Morris calls it 'rank elitism' ('Bonhoeffer's Critique of Totalitarianism', 266).

[130] *Ethics*, 248.

and the desire to see all humanity capable of exercising a free responsibility that accepts the 'tension between obedience and freedom.'[131]

In his discussion of the place of responsibility, Bonhoeffer reacts against 'two disastrous misunderstandings'[132] of the call of the grace of Christ on a person's life. The first is the secular Protestant one that confuses the call to earthly duties and institutions for the whole of Christ's call on a person's life.[133] The second is the monastic one that attempts 'to find a place which is not the world and at which this call [of Christ] can, therefore, be answered more fitly.'[134] God's "no", as well as his "yes", 'is addressed to the whole world, including the monastery ...'.[135] For Bonhoeffer, although he talks about recognising a "limited field of accomplishments" that may be a person's lot, he insists that its boundary is broken both by Christ 'from above', 'but also in an outward direction.'[136] In theory this can apply to everyone, and Bonhoeffer argues that 'there can be no petty and pedantic restricting of one's interests to one's professional duties in the narrowest sense.' However Bonhoeffer's example is of a physician (like his father?) who may be called to take 'public action against some measure which constitutes a threat to medical science ...'. It would have been interesting to see how Bonhoeffer saw boundary breaking responsibility working for the apprentice (or the schoolboy, student, or industrial employee) whom he regarded as in a relationship of free responsibility, even while they held a duty of obedience to their respective masters.[137] Professionals, such as church pastors, are encouraged to go beyond the "Lutheran" idea of the limitation of responsibility and care for the neighbour who is farthest away from them,[138] even to the extent of breaking God's own law 'solely in order that the authority of life, truth and property

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[131] Ibid, 249. Though, interestingly, in *Discipleship* Bonhoeffer also writes: 'The rights of a man with a university education and the privileges of social standing are no longer valid for anyone who has become a messenger of Jesus ... Let it become clear that with all the riches you have, you covet nothing for yourselves ...' (*Discipleship*, 189).
[132] *Ethics*, 251.
[133] Ibid., 251-2. This objection is reminiscent of Bonhoeffer's attack on 'cheap grace' in *Discipleship*.
[134] *Ethics*, 252.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid., 253.
[137] See ibid., 247-8.
[138] Ibid., 255-7.

may be restored.'[139] This means that acceptance of guilt is also a part of free responsibility, but, yet again, it is the professional classes who seem called to exercise this sort of free responsibility.

How far Bonhoeffer, had he survived the Second World War, would have moved towards a liberationist position is a matter for conjecture, but he was clearly beginning, but only beginning, to think beyond the bounds of his upbringing but he still regards positively the 'urban middle-class culture' that both he and his godson had been born into. [140] This is in spite of the concerns expressed to his sister about his privileged situation,[141] though we cannot tell whether he would have agreed with John de Gruchy that privilege is 'too much at the cost of others', and 'has become a form of self-imposed bondage from which we need to be liberated for our own sakes as well as those of others.'[142] Writing from a South African perspective – in which whiteness was a birthright to privilege – de Gruchy points to a Bonhoeffer

> whose theology and life experience enabled him to so transcend the limitations of his ecclesiastical and social heritage that he himself became free for others and is therefore able to help us discover that freedom in Christ for ourselves. He does so as one who in his time and place forsook the privileges of his birth, education, and class for the sake of Christ and the "least of his brethren" – the Jews of Nazi Germany.[143]

Bonhoeffer certainly called for, and was active on behalf of the Jews of Nazi Germany, but whether he *forsook* the privileges that were his birthright, is open to debate.[144] Certainly he was prepared to go his own way in following Christ when even the Confessing Church wanted to compromise with Nazism,

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[139] Ibid., 257.
[140] *LPP*, 294. For an excellent description on how Bonhoeffer was 'personally torn' on the issue of a social ethic going beyond the constraints of his privileged upbringing, see Chapman, 'Bonhoeffer: Resource for Liberation Theology', 227.
[141] Bethge, *Biography*, 19-20. See 6.2.1 above.
[142] de Gruchy, *Bonhoeffer and South Africa*, 68.
[143] Ibid., 75.
[144] As Keith Clements points out, the 'we' Bonhoeffer refers to, who learned to see things 'from the perspective of ... those who suffer', are still 'the consciously privileged, the strong.' Keith Clements, 'Community in the Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer' *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 10 (1997), 30. However, we must also note that Bonhoeffer's life of costly discipleship 'was lived on a sharp learning curve, as he sought to see things from the perspective of others ...' (John de Gruchy, 'Bonhoeffer, Apartheid, and Beyond: The Reception of Bonhoeffer in South Africa', in de Gruchy (ed.) *Bonhoeffer for a New Day*, 360).

but he never denied that the good things in life were also gifts of God.[145] On the other hand, Clifford Green's observation that Bonhoeffer "remained fairly conservative in his social attitudes and largely limited by the perspectives of his own class ..."[146] goes too far in the opposite direction. Bonhoeffer certainly sees the goodness of his middle class situation even in prison:

> The urban middle-class culture embodied in the home of your mother's parents has led to pride in public service, intellectual achievement and leadership, and a deep-rooted sense of duty towards a great heritage and cultural tradition. This will give you, even before you are aware of it, a way of thinking and acting which you can never lose without being untrue to yourself.[147]

Bonhoeffer was never interested in being untrue to himself, and would have seen no reason to deny his upbringing, even in prison. On the other hand that upbringing meant 'pride in public service', which in itself means consideration of others, even 'the least of the brethren.'[148] Bonhoeffer's own 'liberation' in 1932 had more to do with his unease about using his theological gifts for his own ends: his awareness of 'the clear contradiction between his vocational profession to be a servant of Christ, and his actual, conscious use of his vocation to serve his own ambition.'[149] The Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount, had a big part to play in this liberation – as had his American experiences, including his friendship and work with Albert Fisher and Jean Lasserre. Certainly, this 'conversion'[150] put him on the road that, through discipleship and as a (very critical) servant of the church, led to his involvement with the conspiracy against Hitler. He was not the only member of his family to be involved in that conspiracy, and it can be argued that family

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[145] See Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 124; cf. *LPP*, 341-2 (the letter is from 30 June 1944, not 27 June, as Rasmussen claims).
[146] Quoted in Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 124.
[147] Bonhoeffer, 'Thoughts on the Day of the Baptism of Dietrich Wilhelm Rüdiger Bethge', in *LPP*, 294-5.
[148] This does not mean that he is (or was) a liberal democrat. Therefore I cannot agree with H. Russel Botman's attempt to locate Bonhoeffer as a theologian of the democratic Weimar republic (H. Russel Botman, 'Who is "Jesus Christ as Community" for Us Today?', *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 97 (1997), 30-38). Botman wants Bonhoeffer to be a democrat, and not the authoritarian conservative he was. (Indeed, it was his authoritarianism that he used to oppose totalitarianism – see Kenneth Morris, 'Bonhoeffer Critique of Totalitarianism', 255-72.)
[149] Green, *A Theology of Sociality*, 147.
[150] Though we must be clear that Bonhoeffer never described it as such. Bethge, *Biography*, 174.

influence meant he was more involved than he might otherwise have been, but his family certainly supported him in his actions.[151]

Therefore when de Gruchy tells us, correctly, that a step of obedience is required for personal liberation – and that this "outward liberation" precedes the "inner liberation" – and '[l]ike Peter or the rich young ruler in the gospels, or like Bonhoeffer himself, white South Africans [amongst others] need to be set free from that which prevents them from hearing the good news – they need to be externally liberated from clinging to those things that are contrary to the gospel',[152] this does not have to mean the 'class suicide' that Paulo Freire (for example) talks about.

As we have just seen, however, Bonhoeffer's 'stumbling block' was his own ambition. That this ambition came (at least in large part) from his family's expectations and upbringing, as Green recounts,[153] is undoubted, but Bonhoeffer did not abandon his upbringing entirely when he sought to abandon his worldly ambition – as his thoughts on the day of the baptism of his great nephew show.[154] It was not privilege *per se* that Bonhoeffer felt he had to repudiate,[155] nor was it his theology which he had written because of that ambition, but the ambition itself that needed to be repudiated – indeed much of his early theology is now seen as containing the themes that would be explored in greater depth later in Bonhoeffer's life.[156]

However, de Gruchy is following Bonhoeffer when he reports the critique of both a distorted communalism – 'when ethnicity becomes ideological and nationalist it ends up denying the freedom and liberty of others and then, in

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[151] Bonhoeffer's father wrote after the war about the loss of 'two sons and two sons-in-law through the Gestapo'. 'But since we *all* agreed about the necessity of action... we are sad, but also proud of their straight and narrow attitude.' Quoted in Bethge, *Biography*, 933, emphasis added. (See also discussion at 6.1 above.)
[152] de Gruchy, *Bonhoeffer and South Africa*, 77.
[153] Green, *A Theology of Sociality*, 143-6.
[154] Quoted above. We must note, however, that Bonhoeffer is prepared to criticise his class, often for its unwillingness to exercise its responsibility. See, for example, *Ethics*, 75; 254, and *LPP*, 5.
[155] He continued to make use of his parents' homes in Berlin and in the country, though, in the latter case especially, it was not just for his own use.
[156] See 6.1 above.

The state, however, has 'a right to educate for goodness, *i.e.*, for outward justice or righteousness.'[203] The justice considered here follows from 'the second table [of the Ten Commandments]' and 'cannot be in conflict with Jesus Christ.' While Bonhoeffer insists that he does not require Christian action as such, he does insist on 'action which does not exclude Christ.' This in turn can only come about through the preaching of the Church.[204]

This leaves us to consider the role of the Christian in political society. Following a discussion of the political responsibility of the church (which, *in extremis*, is reduced to 'establishing and maintaining, at least among her own members, the order of outward justice which is no longer to be found in the *polis*, for by so doing she serves government in her own way.'),[205] Bonhoeffer turns to the individual Christian:

> Is there a political responsibility on the part of individual Christians? Certainly the individual Christian cannot be made responsible for the action of the government, and he must not make himself responsible for it; but because of his faith and his charity he is responsible for his own calling and for the sphere of his personal life, however large or however small it may be. If this responsibility is fulfilled in faith, it is effectual for the whole of the *polis*. According to Holy Scripture, there is no right to revolution; but there is a responsibility of every individual for preserving the purity of his office and mission in the *polis*. In this way, in the true sense, every individual serves government with his responsibility. No one, not even government itself, can deprive him of this responsibility or forbid him to discharge it, for it is an integral part of his life in sanctification, and it arises from obedience to the Lord of both Church and government.[206]

How should this responsible life be lived? Bonhoeffer's path, according to Larry Rasmussen, is to

> rule out extremes as the normal and normative patterns and procedures for the use of power. But they are not ruled out as exceptional instances of Christian action brought on by hard necessity...[207]

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[203] *Ethics*, 335.
[204] See *Ethics*, 336. Pagan governments have to rely on the 'providential congruity between the contents of the second table and the inherent law of historical life itself' (ibid.).
[205] *Ethics*, 345.
[206] *Ethics*, 345-6.
[207] Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 140, quoting from *Ethics*, 'The Structure of the Responsible Life', 220ff.

Bonhoeffer's time is so abnormal that he can 'write of the guilt of his church, his nation and his class.' It follows from this complicity that 'not to plot Hitler's overthrow but instead attempt to save some measure of moral innocence amidst such guilt by not supporting tyrannicide only compounds the guilt.'[208]

There is another tension here. Bonhoeffer experienced the 'the failure of the Confessing Church and the ecumenical church forcefully and successfully to oppose Nazism, in the one instance; and the location of the most responsible anti-Nazi action among the people of the military/political resistance, in the other.'[209] This meant that Bonhoeffer had to develop his theology to account for the resisters' nonreligious "participation in the sufferings of God in the life of the world",[210] while most people appeared willingly to become complicit in the evils of Nazism. This folly, 'a bewitching complicity with evil and its party slogans',[211] is produced 'in a large part of mankind' as a result of 'any violent display of power'.[212] Bonhoeffer is convinced that this folly cannot be overcome by instruction, 'but only by an act of liberation'[213] – this again points away from an idea of a Christian political education, but towards an authoritarian idea of leadership responsibility. This is not to say that he allows anyone (member of the elite or not) to feel contempt for any member of humanity,[214] but the question is whether those in power 'expect more from people's folly than from their wisdom and independence of mind.'[215]

In spite of such realism, or even pessimism, Robin Lovin states Bonhoeffer's 'advice is for us, too, when ordinary rules of morality fail us'.

> On these occasions, the Christian acts, not out of self-interest, but to protect those who otherwise would suffer ... What characterises responsible action is "deputyship," standing in on behalf of those who are powerless to act for themselves and using what power we have for their protection. Responsibility can have dramatic consequences in the

[208] Ibid., 141.
[209] Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 118.
[210] Ibid., 119, quoting *Ethics*.
[211] Chapman, *Bonhoeffer: Resource for Liberation Theology*, 233.
[212] *LPP*, 8.
[213] Ibid., 9.
[214] Ibid., 9-10.
[215] Ibid., 9.

> central events of history, but it is rare enough in any circumstances, and when it is exercised on the smaller scale of city politics, business decisions, family choices, and congregational meetings, it upsets the predictable patterns of self-interested behavior and creates unexpected opportunities to introduce new forms of cooperation. In these ways, too, those who "live by responding to the word of God which is addressed to us in Jesus Christ" take history into their hands.[216]

This still, however, leaves the question of how Bonhoeffer would educate ordinary Christians for such responsible action, especially if their family background had not prepared them to place that action higher than 'personal integrity or the sanctity of an oath'.[217] De Lange points to Bonhoeffer's high expectations of all Christians and church-communities, and asks whether these expectations are attainable for 'ordinary people as they are?'[218] Geoffrey Kelly, on the other hand, wonders whether the church, and its 'bourgeois parishioners' could cope with 'Bonhoeffer's dream of a renewed, Christ-orientated church',[219] and asks, pertinently, how churches today could 'relate Christian faith with concrete action to achieve peace and justice ...?' and, very appropriately for those following Bonhoeffer's life and work, 'how can Christians condition themselves to endure persecution for the cause of justice (Matthew 5:10)?'[220]

What is clear therefore, is that Bonhoeffer believes that educating Christians to be Christians wherever they are, will, or at least should, lead to responsible action in the sphere of his or her own life 'however large or however small it may be.' He also believes that the responsible action, undertaken to achieve peace and justice, could involve opposition, persecution and humiliation.[221]

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[216] Robin W. Lovin, *Christian Faith and Public Choices: The Social Ethics of Barth, Brunner, and Bonhoeffer* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 147.
[217] Ibid., 148.
[218] De Lange, *Waiting for the Word*, 143.
[219] Geffrey B. Kelly, 'Prayer and Action for Justice: Bonhoeffer's Spirituality' in de Gruchy, *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 250. Christian Gremmels notes how easy it is for a church to talk of being for others without being with them. 'There is a very subtle possibility in the concept of the "church *for* others," as it is often used nowadays, that actually it is used to keep others away' ('Bonhoeffer, The Churches, and Jewish-Christian Relations', in *Theology and the Practice of Responsibility*, 299).
[220] Ibid., 252.
[221] See, for example, *LPP*, 7; and *Discipleship*, 108-10.

6.9 Conclusion

Bonhoeffer's life and work involves a considerable amount of education: his own. He moves from the unbelieving, ambitious theologian (who nevertheless talks of Christ existing in community), to an ecumenical, believing pastor and seminary leader who calls for a peace that 'must be dared' and 'is the opposite of security',[222] but who believes in the authority of the state,[223] to the conspirator and martyr for whom 'being Christian today will be limited to two things: prayer and righteous action among men.'[224] This, as I have noted, involves both a development in his thinking, and tension between his privileged upbringing and his wish to 'do theology from below'. There is enough in Bonhoeffer's writings for liberation theologians to point to his empathy with the oppressed, but Bonhoeffer is no social democrat, and those with privilege and power are expected to use it responsibly, rather than hand it over to the masses: *noblesse oblige*, rather than 'power to the people.'

[222] *No Rusty Swords*, 291.
[223] *Discipleship*, 240ff.
[224] *LPP*, 300.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I have tried to discern how the church should educate ordinary Christians for political involvement. My underlying concern has been practical: that is, I wish to think through what kind of education for political involvement would be appropriate for Christians in today's world. In order to do this, I have needed to step back to look at foundational theological theory in this area. In turn, this necessitated that I examine the thought of different theologians who had influenced thinking on Christian involvement in politics.

The first theologian, Augustine of Hippo, was chosen for his significance for the entire Western tradition of thinking about Christianity and politics. The second, Gustavo Gutiérrez, was chosen because of the apparently profound differences between him and Augustinian political thought. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was chosen as the third theologian because he can be seen as a mediating figure between the other two, as it can be seen that Bonhoeffer both has an Augustinian inheritance (mediated through his Lutheranism) and has influenced Liberation Theology; as well as having many other significant contributions in his own right.

However, from these three theologians, it cannot be shown that there is, or has been, a political, or even prepolitical education for the Christian congregation. For Augustine and Bonhoeffer, I have shown there is no explicit political education, but all my conversation partners have expected some form of action to follow Christian commitment,[1] as all of them have expected love for the neighbour to express itself in practical ways (even if the action was not explicitly political).[2] However, what I have discerned, and shall elucidate below, draws on Nicholas Lash's work to produce a form of 'summary

[1] Gutierrez (chapter 4 above) clearly advocates a process that leads to action on the part of ordinary people. Both Bonhoeffer and Augustine's expectation tends toward action by those in authority and/or power.

[2] This includes Augustine; see *Confessiones*, XIII, xvii (21) and chapter 3 above.

grammar'[3] that all churches, and therefore all congregations, should consider in terms of their relationship, both political and social, with civil society. Before I do this, I shall for the sake of clarity, bring out the emphases from the previous chapters that help us towards these conclusions.

7.2 Christian Political Involvement: Three Approaches

7.2.1 Augustine

In this thesis, as noted above, I first looked at the Augustinian approach. I use the word 'the' with caution, as so many people have used Augustine to back up their own views or to reflect the situation they are in,[4] that defining one Augustinian approach is practically impossible. For example, as discussed in chapter 2 above, his works were used as ammunition in both sides of the medieval dispute between the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor.[5] In the twentieth century, Neville Figgis wrote of Augustine's 'nostalgia for the infinite', which reflected the post First World War nostalgia for a better place; during the cold war in the 1960s, Herbert Deane wrote of Augustine as a bulwark against anarchy advocating obedience to the authorities in all circumstances; in the 1970s Robert Markus promoted the idea that Augustine would favour a more 'secular' approach to the political realm, only to find that this approach was rejected by John Milbank in the 1990s as post-modern thinking grew up as a reaction against cold, non-spiritual rationality. It remains to be seen what new directions Augustine will take in the twenty-first century.[6]

However, as I showed in chapter 2, the current dominant view of Augustine's political thought, exemplified by Herbert Deane, is that Augustine was a political quietist. He therefore expected his congregation to follow and obey their political masters, even if those masters were tyrants or pagans or both. Nevertheless, while Augustine certainly advocated obedience, it does not

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[3] See Nicholas Lash, 'Considering the Trinity', *Modern Theology* 2 (1986), 183-96, and discussion below.

[4] 'Interpretations swing with the reigning theories, always ensuring that he [Augustine] is not left in opposition.' O'Donovan, '*Augustine and Politics* ... by John von Heyking', 135.

[5] See 2.4.2 above.

[6] As discussed in chapter 2, von Heyking's work, which was published in 2001, is an unsatisfactory following of Markus, and advocates an unsustainable 'politics as nature' line.

follow that he is politically quietist. He and his fellow bishops were active in appealing to the Imperial court to try to alleviate injustice. Augustine also played a full part in seeking to help the poor and needy of Hippo. Along with his conviction of the fallenness of humanity, his eschatology was too otherworldly, however, to expect too much of this world in terms of a better life. This in turn raises questions over what advice, if any, he would have for his congregation about political involvement.

My principal conversation partner in looking at Augustine's ideas on educating people for political involvement was Peter Bathory. Specifically, I examined Bathory's theory that Augustine had a prepolitical *paideia* for his congregation, which allowed them, if not active involvement, then at least the ability to recognise a good leader when they saw one, and to follow him. As I showed in chapter 3, I cannot agree with Bathory's thesis as it stands. That is not to say his ideas are not (as Duncan Forrester puts it) 'a corrective' to Deane's thesis of passive compliance, but if Augustine did have a pre*political paideia*, then it was merely incidental to his *Christian paideia*. Of course, if you come from the right class, and are commanded into office, you are to serve 'the peace of Babylon'.

This peace, of course, is nowhere near as good as the peace of the city of God, but it is the best we can hope for in this life. Lower orders, like everyone else, are to regard themselves as pilgrim members of the city of God; but, unlike their leaders in the church or in civil society, they are unlikely to affect the world around them. However, Eugene TeSelle is correct to point out that the 'distancing from the world and its values' is 'Augustinian only as a *first step*, a clarification of one's primary values and commitments.'[7] For all that Augustine advocated obedience to the authorities, he did note the difference between 'better and worse in the temporal sphere'[8] and sought to do all he could to improve the lot of the poor and disadvantaged in his church.[9]

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[7] TsSelle, *Living in Two Cities*, 61. And see 2.5.2.2 above.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Van der Meer (*Augustine the Bishop*, 138) quotes *Sermo* 61, where Augustine asks his congregation for money so that he could pass it on to some poor men 'who have not received overmuch from you.'

In short, action by – as opposed to on behalf of – ordinary people is not advocated. On the other hand, leaders are, of course, expected to do what little they can to mitigate the effects of injustice, though even they must recognise that there will always be injustice this side of the second coming. So, political involvement is for the political classes only, even if it will not achieve much; the rest of us are to obey our betters unless and until they order us 'to do what is impious and wicked'[10] whereupon we are to accept lawful punishment up to and including death for failing to carry out those orders. For Augustine, it is the martyrs who are to be the example for his congregation in terms of how they are to live in their civil society.

7.2.2 Liberation Theology: Gutiérrez and Freire

In Latin America, martyrdom is still very much a part of Christian witness. Therefore, in conversation with Gustavo Gutiérrez and Paulo Freire, my next theological approach is that of Latin American liberation theology. As far as liberationists are concerned, all theology is political, the only question is whether you act and speak in favour of the oppressive *status quo* or not. It is axiomatic to say that liberationists are not in favour of the *status quo*. They seek to serve the oppressed, to conscientize them, and to promote the Kingdom of God here on earth. For liberation theologians there is a strong structural element to sin, and structures (as well as people) need reforming. One cannot preach the kingdom of God 'exclusively as a future life'[11] and proclaim that people, the poor especially, must merely put up with the blatant injustices of life in this transitory, unreal, world because such is part of God's plan. Therefore, the structures that need challenging often include ecclesiastical ones. It is unsurprising that liberation theology has faced challenges from both ecclesiastical and secular power sources that prefer 'peace' to a revolutionary justice.

Gustavo Gutiérrez writes about three stages of liberation: first 'economic, social, and political liberation; [second] liberation which leads to the creation

[10] *DCD*, V.17.
[11] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 39.

of a new humanity in a new society of solidarity; and [third] liberation from sin and entrance into communion with God and all persons.'[12] This has a certain utopian and socialist flavour to it. The Marxist and dialectical flavour to Liberation Theology has of course been one of the bones of contention between Liberationists and the Vatican. As I discussed in chapters four and five, the Marxism is somewhat muted and need not detain us, but the dialectical approach to life, seen especially in the division of humanity into 'oppressor' and oppressed' is a more pertinent criticism of both Freire's conscientization process and of Liberation Theology generally as it oversimplifies the complexity of life and the social situations in which people find themselves. This criticism should not blind us to the positive aspects of conscientization, and Liberation Theology's correct emphasis on the preferential option for the poor. It should also not blind us to the considerable opposition and persecution that liberation theologians (and Freire himself) faced in promoting their ideas and working those ideas out with the poor and oppressed, especially as they sought to challenge society as to the causes of poverty.[13]

Conscientization of the poor takes place in the Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs), which generally follow the pedagogical approach pioneered by Paulo Freire. The poor are encouraged to ask questions of their situation, to critique that situation, and then to work out how they can change that situation. What is sought is community, and for that to occur, what is required is that people act together.[14] While a BEC is seen primarily as a religious community (and indeed often has a priest or religious sister at its head), political action and involvement is but an inevitable consequence of the community's life together.[15]

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[12] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 137. As I noted in 4.2.2.3 above, these stages are not to be viewed as distinct, and the progression through them is viewed as ontological rather than chronological.

[13] 'Once causes are determined, then there is talk of "social injustice," and the privileged begin to resist.' Ibid., xxiv.

[14] Dominique Barbé, 'Church Base Communites', 187.

[15] Ibid., 190. This was seen especially in Brazil during the military dictatorship that sought to stifle all political opposition: the BECs stood as the only group who could give expression to popular feeling.

Another difficulty comes from the idea that liberation, while not being seen as the same as salvation, is seen as 'a salvific work'[16] and therefore raises questions about what is to be said about God if the attempts to overcome oppression fail. Although Gutiérrez does address this question in his book *On Job*, the impression is still one that liberation theology expects improvements in justice and peace for the poor in this life.[17] Another question that remains unaddressed, is how the oppressed are to be changed in their human nature so that they do not in their turn become oppressors once they have successfully liberated themselves.

There are also difficulties, given liberation theology's avowed anti-elitist approach, over the allied notions of leadership and authority. Gutiérrez talks of a coming alongside the poor, Freire calls for a 'class suicide' on the part of the bourgeoisie. This is, to put it mildly, difficult as class suicide involves the rejection of so many factors, like one's:

> values, norms, taste for culture ... relationship to language and culture ... one's educational background, the nature of one's everyday work ...[18]

This gap between bourgeois educator and oppressed 'educatee' can therefore be extremely difficult to close. In fact, Gutiérrez spends considerable time working with those identified as 'organic intellectuals' – there are, as Curt Cadorette notes, good reasons for this,[19] but it is interesting that, even in liberation theology (a theology that seeks liberation for all) there is a hierarchy of education for liberation: the pedagogue, the organic intellectual, the rest of the poor.[20] This internal conflict between the expressed anti-elitism and the practical realities of organisation can also be discerned in Freire's struggles in describing the distinction between authoritarianism and authority: just because a teacher is not interested in 'banking' education, this does not mean that they

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[16] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 104.
[17] In *On Job*, 90-2, Gutiérrez makes it clear that, while God is just, his justice cannot be trapped within human ideas on the nature and the timing of justice.
[18] Peter Mayo, 'A Few 'Blind Spots'', 90.
[19] See discussion in 4.6.3 above.
[20] As I showed in 4.6.3 above, this hierarchy is a practical outworking of Freire's and Gutiérrez's practice, rather than a 'status' hierarchy – but it exists, none the less.

have no authority and cannot promote their ideas. Conscientization therefore is a subtler, and possibly a more 'top-down', process than it first appears.[21]

I have also noted that the rhetoric of liberationism has been toned down over time. The *revolutionary* Freire, the one who calls for 'class suicide', of the 1960s and 70s, becomes the *radical democratic* Secretary of Education of São Paulo in the 1990s – where he hopes to help build 'a less ugly society, one that is less evil and more humane.'[22] Gutiérrez similarly tones down his rhetoric. In the first edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, he insists that class struggle, as 'combating the oppressive class' in a struggle for justice and human dignity, is totally in accord with Christian love; but in the second edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez merely states that:

> The universality of Christian love is ... not incompatible with a preferential option for the poorest and most oppressed ... [23]

Therefore Gutiérrez does not, especially latterly, see liberation as the rise of the proletariat and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Nor does he see a simple linear progression from one stage of liberation to the next. He expects, and has experience of, the struggle, and indeed failure, involved in liberation (as noted above). In his discussion of 'Liberation and Salvation' in *A Theology of Liberation*, he tells us that '[a] gradual pedagogy of successes and failures would be necessary for the Jewish people to become aware of the roots of their oppression, to struggle against it, and to perceive the profound sense of the liberation to which they were called.'[24] In this context, the Exodus, along with the rest of Biblical history, is seen as a political act requiring political action on the part of his people.[25] How far conscientization has got in educating the poor for that political action is still a matter open to debate. However, the fact that liberation theology has spawned the BECs with all the political and social

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[21] Even if the idea of conscientization is to give the poor a voice, this idea has to be passed onto the poor from the pedagogue, and often against the poor's initial wishes – see 5.2.2 above.

[22] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 104. In contrast, his early seminal work, *A Pedagogy of Liberation*, published in 1971, is distinctly revolutionary in tone and speaks highly of revolutionaries such as Ché Guevara.

[23] *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 160, and see 4.2.2.3 above.

[24] Ibid., 88.

[25] Ibid., 89-91. As I noted above in 4.2.2.2, Biblical history is not seen *solely* as political, but this is part of what God's work is about.

implications, means that there is, as far as this theology is concerned, a role for educating ordinary Christians for political and social involvement.[26]

7.2.3 Bonhoeffer

My third conversation partner was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer's theological background emphasised obedience to the civil authority, but he took part in a conspiracy against that authority; he was born into wealth and privilege but sought towards the end of his life to do theology 'from below'; and he has a foot, as it were, in the Augustinian camp (traced through his Lutheranism), but he has influenced liberation theology. With his privileged, and somewhat elitist background,[27] and as one who had witnessed the failure of the Weimar Republic, Bonhoeffer cannot be described as a democrat. His development of the idea of free responsibility and especially his theology from below has appealed to liberation theologians, but Bonhoeffer regarded free responsible action as something 'granted to only very few men'.[28] While Bonhoeffer may have empathised with the people from the lower classes with whom he came into contact over his lifetime, there is no evidence that he sought to educate the ordinary parishioner for the sort of political action and involvement he was prepared to hazard for himself.

Therefore, for all his involvement against the Hitler regime, and his influence on liberation theology, it is difficult to see any form of 'conscientization' of the poor in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's writings. As the director of Finkenwalde seminary, he clearly had ideas about educating *pastors* for their role in the church and society: *Discipleship* and *Life Together* are the two books that arose directly out of that experience – and appear at first glance to say very little about a pastor's (much less one of his congregants)[29] political role.

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[26] However broadly this may be construed – Gutierrez states in the introduction to the revised edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, xxx, that '[t]he struggles of those who reject racism and machismo ... as well as of those who oppose the marginalization of the elderly, children, and other "unimportant" persons in our society, have made me see, for example, the importance of gestures and ways of "being with" that some may regard as having little political effectiveness.'

[27] See 6.2.1 above.

[28] *Ethics*, 246.

[29] Although *Life Together* arose out of the Finkenwalde experience, its message has been applied to Christian communities more generally (see Zerner, 'Bonhoeffer on Discipleship and

Discipleship in particular says more about living by the Sermon on the Mount than in the 'real world.' However, for Bonhoeffer, as we have seen,[30] living by the Sermon on the Mount is precisely what Christian living in the real world is all about.

In *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer tells us that Christians can 'expect nothing from the world but everything from Christ and his coming realm.'[31] This firm 'No' to the world, this 'No' therefore to accommodation to Nazism, also contains the radical 'Yes' to Christ. This gives both people and churches responsibilities in the civil realm.[32] Bonhoeffer discusses these explicitly in his *Ethics*.[33] In spite of the Confessing Church's failure to hold the Nazi government to account, Bonhoeffer clearly felt that the church had responsibilities towards the state – responsibilities that consisted mainly of 'call[ing] sin by its name and ... warn[ing] men against sin ...'.[34]

There is a clear tension in Bonhoeffer between the conservative son of a privileged family, and the man who, at the end of his life, sought to 'do theology from below ... from the perspective of those who suffer.'[35] However, he remains convinced that the good things in life are gifts of God, to be used and enjoyed; and was part of a conspiracy that sought to restore a proper *authoritarian* government to the German people (as opposed to Hitler's totalitarian regime)[36] – not a democratic government. For the ordinary person, action is constrained, and there is still

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Community', 36). Although '[t]he experiment in community undertaken at Finkenwalde was "a mission entrusted to the church" ...' (Editor's Introduction to *Life Together*, 23, quoting Bonhoeffer's preface: see ibid., 25.), Bonhoeffer himself points out that 'Christian[s] cannot simply take for granted the privilege of living among other Christians.' (Ibid., 27.), and his book is clearly mainly addressed to, and based on the experience of, the student pastors who attended Finkenwalde.

[30] See 6.3.2.1 above.

[31] *Discipleship*, 239.

[32] As I have shown in 6.4.3 above..

[33] *Ethics*, 344-6.

[34] Ibid., 345.

[35] *LPP*, 17.

[36] For definitions of, and the distinction between, 'authoritarian' and 'totalitarian' see Kenneth Morris, 'Bonhoeffer's Critique of Totalitarianism', 255-72.

> According to Holy Scripture ... no right to revolution; but there is a responsibility of every individual for preserving the purity of his office and mission in the *polis*.[37]

However much his own class and his church failed to act in time against Hitler, Bonhoeffer still looks to these interests for the restoration of ordinary life.

As I have discussed above, we are not told how Bonhoeffer would educate the individual Christian so that they could recognise their free responsibility and act on it. [38] In spite of this, Mark Thiessen Nation asserts that Bonhoeffer's preoccupation 'was how to shape a Christian people that would embody discipleship seriously enough that an Adolf Hitler could not have his way with them.'[39] This may well be a legitimate development from Bonhoeffer's concerns, but, for me, Bonhoeffer's authoritarian conservatism is too much in evidence even in his later works to allow this idea of a Christian *people* – rather than a Christian leadership – embodying the sort of discipleship and righteous action that Bonhoeffer required.[40] Bonhoeffer may have dreamt of such a church, but this still leaves the concerns I noted in chapter six above that Bonhoeffer's high expectations may be unattainable for 'ordinary people as they are',[41] or whether the church's 'bourgeois parishioners' could cope with 'Bonhoeffer's dream of a renewed, Christ-orientated church'.[42] In other words, even if Bonhoeffer had overcome his conservatism to wish to 'shape a Christian people' in the mould of the costly discipleship he advocated, we are still left with the question of how he would educate his parishioners for the righteous action, or the political involvement, such discipleship would require.

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[37] *Ethics*, 345-6.
[38] There is only one paragraph in *Ethics*, 345-6.
[39] Mark Thiessen Nation, 'Discipleship in a World Full of Nazis: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Polyphonic Pacifism as Social Ethics', in Stanley Hauerwas et al. (eds.), *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honour of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 275.
[40] This is not to say that, had he survived the war, he would not have moved to such a position, but I do not see such a move in Bonhoeffer based on the writings we have.
[41] De Lange, *Waiting for the Word*, 143.
[42] Geoffrey B. Kelly, 'Prayer and Action for Justice: Bonhoeffer's Spirituality', 250.

7.3 A Christian Political Education?

Clearly, we have not produced a formula for educating Christians for political involvement. What we cannot do is adopt Augustine, or Gutiérrez or Bonhoeffer's approach wholesale. However, what we can do, I suggest, is discern a 'summary grammar' encompassing three distinct, though related, tensions that, if ignored, move the church and its congregations towards error. The first tension is eschatological: that is how far we should emphasise the 'now' or the 'not yet' nature of God's kingdom. The second tension is worldly: the church is in the world, but not of it. The standards and practices of the church should be radically different from the world's, but yet hoping to influence the world for its good. The third tension is the social action tension: that is the tension that lies between prophetic denunciation and annunciation and the practical (and often pragmatic) approach to the incremental steps required to move towards a better kind of justice. If the church is solely prophetic in its proclamation – in the sense of being too insistent on how things ought to be – then its own members (much less those who are not Christian) will become apathetic as they will fail to see how they appropriately serve the cause of justice, or witness to God's kingdom positively. On the other hand, if the church becomes too pragmatic – devoting all its time to the incremental, but achievable steps in improving justice in some part of the world, then the prophetic vision will wither, and the difference between the church and voluntary social service organisations will be difficult to see.

Nicholas Lash develops the idea of a 'summary grammar' as a limit against which to test our thought and action and to correct 'our propensities towards idolatry'.[43] He proposes that 'the doctrine of the Trinity may be considered as the "summary grammar" of the way of Christian discipleship construed in terms of ... "the intrinsic dialectics of experienced life"'.[44] This is because if we stop with the idea of God as Spirit, 'we would be pantheists' – which is idolatrous as we would then have identified the nature of God with the quest for the good.[45] However, life is not all good, so we may absolutise our limited

[43] Nicholas Lash, 'Considering the Trinity', 194.
[44] Ibid., 192.
[45] Ibid., 193.

action or understanding and find ourselves approaching God as incomprehensible, utterly transcendent, and worship him in silence. This too, according to Lash, is idolatry if we stop here as 'we would (at best) be agnostics', because we would have totally identified a nature of God 'which proscribes all mention of him.'[46] So we continue with an interrupted silence and the 'memory of a Word once spoken'. 'But, if we stopped there, we would be in danger of ascribing absolute significance to the past *as* past ...'.[47] For Lash, the pattern needs to be broken again with the knowledge that it is 'in new possibilities, not ancient meanings, that acquaintance with God is to be found.'[48] This leads us back full circle, to the doctrine of the Spirit.

For Lash therefore, each doctrine (of Father, Son or Holy Spirit) *by itself* leads to idolatry, but taken together, the doctrine of the Trinity 'is a doctrine of *God*, because its purpose and function, as 'summary grammar' of the pedagogy of salvation, is to enable us appropriately not only to work and think ... but also to worship.'[49]

In my view there is a connection in kind between Lash's summary grammar for the 'pedagogy of salvation' and my summary grammar of tensions for educating Christians for political involvement. Just as I have not deduced a specific programme for educating Christians for political involvement, Lash points to a doctrine of the Trinity that points to 'God the unknown'.[50] Also, just as each of Lash's grammatical elements leads to another if we are to avoid idolatry, each of my tensions leads to the next: how the 'now' and 'not yet' nature of God's kingdom is to be expressed will lead to a consideration of how Christians are to live their lives *in* but not *of* the world. This tension in turn provokes thoughts of how the balance is to be struck in the prophetic or practical nature of Christian pronouncement and action. The prophetic and

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., emphasis original.
[48] Ibid., 193-4.
[49] Ibid., 194, emphasis original. My basic difference from Lash is that the 'propensity for idolatry' for Lash, occurs when one part of his summary grammar is emphasised to the exclusion of the other two, for me, the error occurs when one side of a tension is emphasised to the exclusion of the other.
[50] Lash, 'Considering the Trinity', 194.

practical tension returns us to consideration of the now and not yet nature of God's kingdom. In order to expound these tensions, I shall first elucidate them in summary form, and then look at each tension, and the errors that could follow from them, in turn.

7.4 The Tensions of Church and Politics

The three tensions identified above, along with the idolatries follow from emphasising one side of the tension over the other, are as follows:

1) God's kingdom is both 'now' and 'not yet'. If the latter is over-emphasised, the church is dangerously close to ignoring the belief that God's kingdom of justice and love has arrived, and is active on earth. Totally ignoring the 'now' aspect of God's kingdom easily leads to the claim that nothing can be done to save the world, therefore salvation has nothing to do with the present condition of the world and political involvement is irrelevant. The suffering the world inflicts must be borne with patience and placidity. If the other side of this dialectic – the 'not yet' nature of God's kingdom here on earth – is ignored, then the church runs the danger of equating liberation with salvation, and assuming that humanity can indeed save itself.
2) The church is in the world but not of it. Over-emphasise the former, and the church will face the expectation of baptising the status quo, to be part of the world and its established order, structures and organisation. (This may be a particular danger for established churches that owe their position, to a greater or lesser extent, to the good will of the state and its legislative process). If the idea that the churches are not of the world is over-emphasised, then the temptation will be to retreat into a ghetto mentality and live as a church against the world with nothing to say to it.
3) The church is prophetic and embodied. Over-emphasis on the former will lead to paralysis as the prophetic tends to mere denunciation of the world as it is, which will deter people from attempting to make a difference, and they will therefore tend to sit back and wait for the parousia. Over-emphasise the latter, and the prophetic vision is lost as differences between the church and the world will be eroded – all

persons of good will can see that the world is not as just or as peaceful a place as it might be, and can be persuaded to take action if they can see that the scope and target of that action is achievable.

This is not to say that one side of a tension can never be emphasised over the other. The danger of idolatry comes when over-emphasis means that the other side of the tension is eroded or lost. It may be true that 'where there is no vision, the people perish',[51] but they are equally likely to perish if no practical steps are taken to realise the vision laid before them. Any political *paideia*, whether it is for churches, church leaders, or 'ordinary' Christians must show that these tensions not only exist, but that Christians (above all people) must live with these tensions as they exercise their free responsibility in seeking to work out 'how the coming generation is to live.'[52] I shall now expand on the above summary, and show in more detail how each tension follows from the work of the three theologians discussed above.

7.4.1 The Kingdom: Now and Not Yet

This tension clearly follows from my consideration of the eschatology of my conversation partners. If we look at Augustine's views, we can see that he clearly emphasises the 'not yet' side of the eschatological argument: 'the peace of Babylon' is all we can expect in this life, and he does not expect much in the way of improvement in earthly justice – indeed he finds 'progress' 'inherently ambiguous'.[53] Augustine's view is that there has never, after the Fall, been a truly just state here on earth,[54] nor does he regard a Christian state as 'feasible or necessary'.[55] If we stopped here, however, we would be ignoring Augustine's relative judgements about different societies, and fall into the heresy of saying that salvation has absolutely nothing to do with, and gives us no responsibility for, the present, political situation.

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[51] Proverbs 29.18 (Authorized Version).
[52] Bonhoeffer, *LPP*, 7.
[53] O'Donovan, 'Western Political Thought', 146; and see 2.3.4 above.
[54] See *DCD*, XIX.21.
[55] Deane, 137.

In other words, the eschatological division of people into the two cities is Augustinian as 'a first step' only.[56] In chapter 2 above, I have pointed to Augustine's own involvement, with others, in civil society and his attempts through the African church councils to improve the justice of society,[57] and arguments for leniency in the application of the law[58] – laws that he nonetheless supports in their attempts to secure the peace of Babylon. For Augustine, the facts that members of the city of God are pilgrims while on earth[59] and that they 'are never *bona fide* members of the earthly city'[60] does not remove the requirement to care for our neighbour.[61] However, it does mean that it is extremely difficult to imagine where Augustine would or could advocate any form of civil disobedience, short of martyrdom, in order to promote greater justice in society.[62]

For Gutiérrez, while he never advocates violence, he regards civil disobedience – including the 'counter-violence' of the oppressed[63] – as understandable, and he certainly looks to the church, and its Base Ecclesial Communities, to be involved politically in conscientizing the poor. His eschatology, as discussed in chapter 4 above, emphasises the 'now' side of the kingdom of God, one that regards 'making the world a better place' as part of the 'hermeneutics of the kingdom of God'.[64] In *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez makes his position clear: 'The absolute value of salvation – far from devaluing the world – gives it its authentic meaning and its own autonomy, because salvation is already latently here.'[65] He is clearly against any idea that eternal life can be 'seen exclusively as a future life'.[66] On the contrary, for Gutiérrez, Christian actions in the temporal world and the desire to see temporal progress are connected with the growth of the kingdom of God here

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[56] TeSelle, *Living in Two Cities*, 61.
[57] See 2.3.7 above, and Dodaro, 'Augustine's Political Activism', 11.
[58] See especially *Epp.* 152-5 to and from Macedonius.
[59] See *DCD*, XV, 1.
[60] O'Donovan, 'Western Political Thought', 141.
[61] See *Confessions*, XIII, xvii (20).
[62] See 2.3.6 above and Dodaro, 'Between the Two Cities', 3.
[63] See 4.3.2 above and Hieber, 'Peace Profile: Gustavo Gutiérrez', 298.
[64] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Revised Edition, 10-11 (quoting Edward Schillebeeckx); and see 4.4 above.
[65] Ibid., 85.
[66] Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 39.

on earth. This leads to an eschatological hope defined as accepting the future 'as a gift ... accepted in the negation of injustice ...'.[67] This leads to the very positive statement that 'the claim that "the victory which has conquered death is our faith" will be lived, inescapably, at the very heart of history to its fulfillment in the definitive encounter with God.'[68]

The danger with this progressivist eschatology is that the idea of secular history functioning 'as *part* of the coming of the kingdom of God',[69] is subverted to becoming the idea that secular history *is* the coming of the kingdom of God. This is one of the accusations made against Gutiérrez by the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in March 1983.

> As an excuse for eliminating every "dualism", the author [Gutiérrez] proposes a dialectical relationship between liberation-salvation and liberation-politics ... Although he does not admit it, he falls into a temporal messianism and reduces the growth of the kingdom to the increase of justice (what kind of justice?) in society.[70]

This is an incorrect reading of Gutiérrez[71] – he looks to a future 'definitive encounter with God', and is insistent that the increase of justice is a part, but not the whole of liberation[72] – but it is the potential idolatry of a liberationist approach to eschatology: a reduction of salvation to liberation in this world. This idolatry is, however, rendered implausible by the stubborn sinfulness of human nature and all the other limits of life in this world.[73] Therefore it needs to be balanced by the 'not yet' nature of eschatology. But recognising this tension opens the question of how Christians are to live in this world.

Even as Christ's disciples seek to mitigate the world's injustices, they must be aware that the world will always have injustices that need mitigating: and that there will always be those who will oppose what the disciples of Christ seek to

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[67] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 125.
[68] Ibid, 140.
[69] See Doyle, *Eschatology and the Shape of Christian Belief*, 274, emphasis added.
[70] Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez', in Hennelly, *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, 349.
[71] See Hennelly's introduction to ibid., 348.
[72] I have discussed the shortcomings of Liberation Theology in 4.3 above. Gutiérrez, particularly in his later works, is careful to note the 'spiritual' aspects of liberation as well as its temporal aspects.
[73] Cf. Lash, 'Considering the Trinity', 193.

do. So we can see that, in so far as it represents the kingdom of God and not the earthly kingdom, the church's stance should be oppositional; but in so far as it is called to love its worldly neighbour – the kingdom is also 'now' – the church must be involved with that neighbour, and any attempt to improve the justice in and of the world, must be commended. This has brought us to the consideration of the second tension, how the church is to be in the world, but not of it.

7.4.2 In the World But Not Of It

Following from the previous tension, therefore, but yet distinct from it, the tension of being in the world, but not of it, follows not just from the now and not yet nature of God's kingdom, but also from the knowledge that the world is both loved by God and under his judgment.

Augustine tells us very clearly that, as far as the world is not the kingdom of God, it comes under God's judgment; but if we look, for example to Bonhoeffer's later works (especially *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison*), we can see that the world is also loved by God. Indeed, Bonhoeffer goes so far as to reverse his original position and states that, instead of God keeping the world in being for the sake of the church, the church continues to exist for the sake of the world.[74] Withdrawal from the world is not an option. This can clearly be seen from my study of all three theological approaches, and I have already noted in this conclusion that Augustine, who is most clear about the world's final 'end', never advocated a hermetically sealed church separated from the world. However, I have also noted how Augustine's 'other worldly' eschatology severely limited any expectation of improving the justice and peace in this world. The world, it seemed to Augustine was irredeemable in itself, and only the Catholic Church pointed the way for humanity to find its true 'end' in God. As Neville Figgis points out, if Augustine did not say that '*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*', he certainly believes in the principle.[75]

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[74] See 6.4 above, and Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 138.
[75] Figgis, *Political Aspects*, 72.

Therefore, if we are to follow Augustine's lead, we must more closely define this tension as one that advocates involvement in the world, but which does not expect overmuch from that involvement, as the world will never correspond to the kingdom of God. Put this way, it sounds somewhat pessimistic, and one can easily see how people could refuse to get involved on the grounds that not much will change anyway – thereby being *not in and not of* the world. Some readings of *Discipleship* and *Life Together* have assumed that Bonhoeffer takes this separatist line as he expects Christians to face persecution simply for being Christians and being separate from the world around them.[76] As I have noted in chapter 6 above,[77] these readings ignore the context in which Bonhoeffer was writing. To take one example, Bonhoeffer was reminding Christians that Jesus 'demands undivided obedience' in the context of Hitler's demand for a loyalty oath to him as Führer.[78] So, although Bonhoeffer's Finkenwalde writings might appear to be separatist tomes, they cannot be considered as such when the Nazi German context is taken into account. Indeed, Bonhoeffer deplored the attempts to retreat from the world, and pointed out that these attempts lead to a situation where one is not in the world, but *still of it*. It was for this reason that Luther had to leave the monastery: 'Luther had to leave the monastery and reenter the world, not because the world was good and holy, but because even the monastery was nothing else but the world.'[79]

In *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer's 'No' to the world was a radical 'Yes' to Christ. This 'Yes' to Christ is also a 'Yes' to involvement with and for the other for whom Christ also died. Bonhoeffer points to the Sermon on the Mount and tells us that we are (only) blessed if we seek God's kingdom of peace and justice here on earth as well as in heaven.[80] However, he also points to the beatitude that tells us we are blessed when, not if, we are persecuted for righteousness sake.[81] This is the most difficult lesson of all. It is all too easy,

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[76] For example, see *Discipleship*, 169; and see the discussions in 6.3.2.1 and 6.4.3 above.
[77] See 6.3.2.1.
[78] See *Discipleship*, 135, and editors' note 112 in ibid., 130.
[79] *Discipleship*, 48, and see chapter 6 above, 6.3.2
[80] 'It is important that Jesus calls his disciples blessed ... when they suffer for a just cause.' Ibid., 109.
[81] Ibid., 109-10.

as Bonhoeffer found, for the church – in its concern to be 'in' the world – to bless the bourgeois mentality and proceed with cheap grace and a distortion of what Luther (and Augustine) said about obedience to secular authority – in other words, to succumb to what Bonhoeffer called the 'secular Protestant' misunderstanding[82] of the call of God's grace on a person's life and reduce the tension between the church and the world to nothing, and being, as I have noted, both in and of the world.

If the over-emphasis on being 'in' the world leads to the 'secular Protestant' misunderstanding of what the call of God's grace is about; then an overemphasis on being 'not of' the world leads to a misunderstanding in another direction. This is what Bonhoeffer calls the 'monastic' misunderstanding of the call of God's grace on a person's life: this is where a person fails to appreciate that Jesus' call involves struggle against the world, while in it, but 'attempts to find a place which is not the world and at which this [misunderstood] call can, therefore, be answered more fitly.'[83] Bonhoeffer insists that this attempt to be neither of nor in the world fails to take either God's "yes" or his "no" to the world seriously.[84]

Thus, as far as the church is a representative of the kingdom of God, it must be aware of God's "no", and not be *of* the world. However, because it is also aware of God's "yes", it must be *in* the world, and obedient to its structures as far as possible – given that the church's ultimate loyalty is to God and to the proclamation of His kingdom. This prophetic proclamation is the subject of the third tension.

7.4.3 The Prophetic and the Embodied Church

Given that the world is both loved and yet to be judged, the church must work out how it is going to live alongside the world without being a part of it: how it is to 'make use of the peace of Babylon' without making such imperfect peace its own goal. Following on from Peter Bathory, this temptation is one

[82] See 6.5 above, and *Ethics*, 251.
[83] See 6.5 above, and *Ethics*, 252.
[84] Ibid. See also 6.5 above.

that occurs most often when things are going well: this brings the prophetic task to the fore, which seeks 'to re-establish contact between ongoing social and political affairs and the founding principles that had given social substance to those affairs.'[85] Bonhoeffer also points out that it is dangerous to assume that success and prosperity (setting the values of the world in order) will produce more people of faith. 'This is refuted by the evidence of the New Testament and of Church history; indeed it has perhaps been precisely at times when the world has seemed to be relatively in order that the estrangement from the faith has been especially deep-seated and alarming.'[86] Even the Puebla documents note that Base Ecclesial Communities should do more to be *ecclesial* communities.

> But not enough attention has been paid to the training of leaders in faith education and Christian directors of intermediate organisms in neighbourhoods, the world of work, and the rural areas. Perhaps that is why not a few members of certain communities, and even entire communities, have been drawn to purely lay institutions or have been turned into ideological radicals, and are now in the process of losing any authentic feel for the church.[87]

Perhaps this lack of training is the reason why people have transferred their allegiance to lay institutions. However, there is another possibility. Perhaps some people had just got fed up with a church that still seemed too comfortable with the rich and powerful in the land. Given that most people in Latin America are at least nominally Roman Catholic, the church could still be tempted by that 'success' and become comfortable with the world around it, and be further tempted towards the easy life of cheap grace.

Therefore the church must continually point to God's kingdom – to how things ought to be – and how they will be come the eschaton;[88] but it must also work for that impossibility. The first part of this, I shall refer to as the prophetic call of the church, the second as its embodied role. The 'impossible' vision is none

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[85] Bathory, 151; and see 3.6.4 above.
[86] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 137.
[87] 'Puebla Final Document, "Base-Level Ecclesial Communities (CEBs), the Parish, and the Local Church"', quoted in Hennelly, *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, 249.
[88] I have discussed Bonhoeffer lack of a radical critique and apocalyptic eschatology in 6.4 above, but he certainly believed in the church's 'watchman's brief'. The radical critique in more in evidence in Gutiérrez and Freire; and we have also seen this critique in Augustine, but his emphasis that things will *never* be truly just in this life militated against the hope of radical improvements in society.

the less real, and can be worked for in practical steps (however small and incremental). It is, to follow Gutiérrez, much better to do something to improve the justice in the world, than to do nothing, as this denotes acceptance of the *status quo*. It is axiomatic to state that the *status quo* is never perfectly just, so there is always something that can be done to improve the justice in the world. However, Bonhoeffer, as I have noted above,[89] would point to the unpopularity of such a fight on the part of the weak. This resistance on the part of the powerful is also a continuing feature in Liberation theology. Augustine, while never seeking to oppose civil authority, was none the less a part of a violent society, and continually pointed to the martyrs as his example of passive resistance to any idolatrous demands that civil society might seek to impose on Christians.[90]

These two roles – the prophetic and the embodied – must be kept in tension: to over-emphasise the prophetic call to achieve the kingdom of God will either lead to apathy on recognition that this is humanly impossible, or enthusiastic calls for revolution which tend to lead to more destruction and hardly witness to the kingdom of God. Bonhoeffer, perhaps surprisingly, makes this latter point in *Discipleship*.

> Would a revolution which simply overturned the existing order of society not obscure the awareness of God's new ordering of all things through Jesus Christ, and the establishment of his church-community? Moreover, would every such attempt not actually hinder and delay the abolition of the entire world order and the dawning of God's realm?[91]

If revolution is excluded, then an over-emphasis on the prophetic call, an emphasis on how the world does not come up to God's standards, will tend to reduce prophecy to mere denunciation, and obscure the denunciation-annunciation dialectic that Gutierrez and Freire point to.[92] Mere denunciation will lead to a church separated from the rest of society, with nothing positive to say – and therefore it runs the huge risk of its message being totally ignored.

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[89] See 6.3.2.1.
[90] Augustine did not accept that anything less than idolatrous demands should be resisted.
[91] *Discipleship*, 238-9.
[92] See Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 136: 'The denunciation [of the existing order] is to a large extent made with regard to the annunciation.' Also: 'According to Freire, between the denunciation and annunciation is the time for building, the historical *praxis*' (ibid.). See 5.5 above.

On the other hand, to over-emphasise the incremental approach to improving justice would tend to eliminate any differences between church and civil society – you do not need to be a Christian to see that there are injustices in society. Nor do you need to be Christian in order to witness against injustice. Without the Christian prophetic denunciation-annunciation dialectic, the embodied aspect of the church's work can degenerate into the merely pragmatic where power, allies or action will be sought for its own sake – where 'the peace of Babylon' starts to be seen as an end in itself rather than something to be used by the pilgrim members of the city of God.

In its living with the tension between the prophetic and the embodied, the church must be both patient and impatient in the same way that Freire expected his educator to experience the tension between patience and impatience in conscientization. Freire noted that,

> Patience alone may bring the educator to a position of resignation, of permissiveness that denies the educator's democratic dream ... Conversely, impatience alone may lead the educator to blind activism, to action for its own sake ... Patience alone consumes itself in mere prattle; impatience alone consumes itself in irresponsible activism.[93]

If the church is too patient, it will become resigned and apathetic, and will never aspire to bring the world closer to the kingdom of God. If it is too impatient, it runs the risk of constant and unconsidered action against 'the existing order of society',[94] with all the attendant ills that could bring – a lack of foresight that cannot be said to witness to the kingdom of God. Both being too patient and impatient show a church that is forgetting the 'now' side of the presence of the kingdom of God. The tension between the prophetic and the practical may never be solved, and in this tension, we see the need also to look to the now and the not yet nature of the kingdom of God.

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[93] Freire, *Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*, 44. See 5.2.3 above.

[94] They may be occasions when 'the existing order' has to be overturned – such as in Central Europe when the Iron Curtain came down in 1989. However, I suggest that the Christians involved in this overturning of society had a clear idea of what the new order should look like (even if they have since been disappointed). On the other hand, Bonhoeffer's warning is clearly pertinent for the situation that came about in former Yugoslavia.

7.4.4 Conclusion

What I have discussed above is three inter-related tensions arising from my study of three theologians of differing times and places. Although inter-related, the tensions are distinct. The first, as I noted above, arises from eschatological considerations of the nature of the kingdom of God. The second tension arises from asking what the correct attitude of the church should be to the world; and the third tension comes from asking what response the church should make to that world. However, each tension relates to the others in building a more complete picture of how Christians should live and act in this world.

7.5 The Role of the 'Ordinary Christian'

All the above has concentrated on the church, not on Christian individuals. None of my conversation partners have shown any individualist tendencies. While they have accepted that Christians are individuals, and are called as individuals, they have all been equally insistent that these Christian individuals are called to live and work in community. Bonhoeffer is especially clear in this point,[95] but also Augustine insists that life is social,[96] even if it is not naturally political. Liberation theology is also insistent on the idea of Base Ecclesial *Communities*: people are not conscientized in isolation. As far as the individual is concerned, we may assume from this that each person has a role in community. Although, as I have made clear, Augustine and Bonhoeffer do little to examine that role, I think it is legitimate to assume that a role exists. This is not just because 'to do nothing for fear that one person can do so little is the greater sin', but also because there is the underlying expectation that Christians will love their neighbours and seek to do their best for their neighbour.[97] Also doing nothing, as noted above in my discussion of Gutiérrez, shows support for an unjust *status quo*.

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[95] See *Life Together*, 82; and *Discipleship*, 99; and 6.5 above.
[96] *DCD*, XIX, 5
[97] '[A] man should harm no one, and, second, that he should do good to all, so far as he can.' *DCD*, XIX, 14.

However, we must also be aware of the potential cost of standing up for justice and peace: Augustine survived an assassination attempt.[98] Gutiérrez lives and Freire lived in a world where politico-religious assassination was and is not uncommon,[99] and Bonhoeffer died as one of Hitler's last victims in April 1945. What all these people have shown is leadership by example. Standing up for the poor, seeking mercy for the criminal, defending the Jews, all cost my conversation partners in some form or another. Martyrdom, or simple witness, may not change things (in the short term at least, it may even make things worse), but it shows the poor and oppressed on which side God is standing. The Biblical 'preferential option for the poor' is referred to so often that it has become commonplace, but it is still as valid as when liberation theologians introduced the concept to the world.[100]

This is the unenviable responsibility laid on those who would lead the church. They are to lead by example. In the end, as for Bonhoeffer, Christianity is often reduced to 'prayer *and righteous action*'.[101] No education for Christian political involvement will work unless the disciples see Christians politically involved as Christians. This will not always be easy or uncontroversial: Bonhoeffer's motivation within the conspiracy has been deeply questioned in Germany at least, where many people saw him as a political conspirator, not as martyr, especially in the years immediately after the second World War. Also Paulo Freire often made so little of his Christian commitment that obituary articles could completely miss his Christian faith and motivation,[102] but the point is that Christian disciples should be able to see the Christian motivation of these people.

This emphasis on the persecution that Christians can face in their demands for justice on behalf of the poor has led to a change in terminology. Instead of

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[98] Even if it was in what we might now term a religious quarrel, there were 'nationalist' ideas behind Donatism.
[99] Archbishop Oscar Romero is simply the most famous of many.
[100] This is, however, without denying God's love for everyone. See 4.5.2 above.
[101] *LPP*, 300, emphasis added.
[102] This is in spite of his Catholicism and his work for the Office of Education of the World Council of Churches in Geneva – see *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 11. For further discussion on this point, see 5.4.1 above.

referring to 'ordinary' Christians, I have now referred to 'disciples'. Although Gutiérrez may live in a society that is nominally, at least, Roman Catholic, both Augustine and Bonhoeffer expect that there will only ever be a few disciples,[103] and that these may not necessarily be found in church (conversely those in church may not necessarily be disciples).[104] However, while they may be few in number, these are the people who are prepared to count the cost and walk the narrow path. These are the people whom the church should be seeking to educate: it may be that these people are more likely to be the 'organic intellectuals' of any community.[105]

It may be fine to say that all disciples should be educated to know about, and to do 'prayer and righteous action', for them to have examples to follow in terms of Christian leadership, and to be aware of the possible cost involved; but what that righteous action should be in their situation cannot be prescribed, except that it should seek to serve the cause of justice in the world.[106] The tension between the embodied and the prophetic will not disappear: the Biblical emphasis on the prophetic clearly points towards both the failure of the Israelite community to live up to the demands of the covenant and the hostile environment in which those who followed God had to live – but there is very little Biblical prescription of how to 'do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God'.[107] Just as the Old Testament community did, we have to seek our own ways of 'doing justice', in our situation, guided by those who have gone before, but aware that their situation may not be the same as ours.

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[103] See *DCD*, XVI, 21; XXI, 12 and *Discipleship*, 175.

[104] See 2.3.4 above and the discussion of van Oort's observations on whether the reprobate exist within the church but not the city of God.

[105] While I have no evidence for this assertion of equating organic intellectuals with disciples as defined here; it seems to me that it may be likely, as these people need to be concerned, in the Christian context of the BECs, for their brothers and sisters – thus fulfilling the demands of 'love your neighbour'. Also, as leaders in their communities, organic intellectuals will be more likely to face persecution, should it be visited on their communities.

[106] The question to Gutiérrez, 'what kind of justice?' (see 7.4.1 above) is pertinent. Some questions of justice have no easy answer: where should the line be drawn between civil liberties and state control? Where is the justice, or lack thereof, in the use of genetic engineering to boost crop yield? The difficulty of these questions, and others, does not however, excuse Christians from serving the cause of justice. They merely show that life rarely furnishes easy answers, and points to the need for education and leadership.

[107] Micah 6.8.

7.6 A Contemporary Application

While the church may object that it does not only concentrate on private moral issues (abortion, euthanasia and the like), but also examines more 'public' areas of debate; the general assumption clearly favours a privatised religion.[108] It also appears that what Bonhoeffer called 'secular Protestantism' is alive and well in the twenty-first century.[109] When church leaders do speak out on areas of public policy, all too often these views are merely noted at best within their churches. To take one recent example: the potential war with Iraq may have exercised the minds of Anglican bishops, but it does not seem to have exercised the mind of many congregations. If ordinary church members are concerned about the potential war with Iraq, they are more likely to get their information from the media, rather than their churches. Given the twin strands of Christian pacifism, and the Christian just war tradition, this is a lamentable state of affairs.

To put it provocatively: what is wrong with seeking to remove a dictator who has killed his own people, violated every international agreement he has been prevailed upon to sign, rules by terror, and (as far as we know) has weapons of mass destruction he is quite prepared to use? If the choice is between a guilty dictator and the lives of countless innocent civilians, surely the less evil option in a fallen world is to go to war against that dictator? This does seem, after all, to be a not over-exaggerated summary of the arguments from a Prime Minister who is a self-confessed Christian. However, the bishops do not seem convinced. Neither, it must be said, are many other people.[110] In their October 2002 submission to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, the bishops define their job, on the part of the national church, as raising

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[108] 'The Church of England's established position guards, in practice, against wholesale privatisation but negative reactions to its official political interventions point to a popular assumption [within and outside the Church] that it has, at best, a limited political role.' (Medhurst and Moyser, *Church and Politics*, 356.)

[109] Given the number of people in Great Britain and Europe who do not go to church, but still feel 'a latent sense of belonging' (Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002), 6-8), there must be little sense for these people that following Christ means taking up a position *against* the world whilst still in it (see *Ethics*, 252 and 6.5 above).

[110] Though in October 2002, *The Telegraph* reported that fifty-seven per cent of Church of England clergy would support a war against Iraq, against the bishops' line. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2002/10/06/nbish06.xml (16/01/03).

'those moral and ethical questions, which the government needs to address before there is any recourse to war.'[111] The submission clearly relies on just war thinking, and makes the excellent point that a just peace needs to be sought as the result of any war – the removal of Saddam Hussein is not to be seen as an end in itself.[112] However, the submission also says that '[i]t is the privilege of individual Christians to campaign one way or another for or against military action ...'.[113] The bishops are giving individual Christians the responsibility to think through the issues involved with war, without giving them the means so to do. I, for one, have not heard a single sermon about the rights and wrongs of going to war with Iraq or any other state: nor have I heard of any discussion group where the issue can be debated in a Christian context. The education, the prepolitical education is clearly lacking.

It seems obvious to me that if the bishops' concerns are to be taken seriously by congregations, then those congregations should already be aware of the criteria on which the bishops are basing their objections to war with Iraq. This means that they should have already been taught about such notions as 'just war', and what the outcomes of such a war should be. Even if the bishops, and their clergy are split on the specific issue on whether war with Iraq is justifiable in current circumstances, the criteria upon which the debate rests should surely be available to and within congregations.

The bishops claim to have 'drawn on the resources of scripture, tradition and reason'[114] in voicing their objections to war with Iraq. So, if sermons are not deemed to be the appropriate place for imparting the information for such debate – and, as they are generally one way affairs, feedback is limited – then the small groups which meet during the week ought, at the very least, to be able to examine Scripture in the light of the events of the day, and not just in

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[111] 'Evaluating the Threat of Military Action Against Iraq: A submission by the House of Bishops to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee's ongoing inquiry into the War on Terrorism' http://www.cofe.anglican.org/papers/Bishopssubmission.doc (16/01/03), paragraph 70.
[112] Ibid., 63. The bishops do not view the United States as having a good record in helping to build alternative regimes in those countries where it has recently intervened militarily (ibid.).
[113] Ibid., 70.
[114] Ibid.

the light of a privatised faith. This approach obviously has similarities with the BECs discussed in chapters 4 and 5 above. In turn, the small group leaders would require training similar to that given to the 'organic intellectuals' in Latin America. The emphasis is still on Bible study, but its purpose is expanded: I have no wish to stop the church 'being church', and it is axiomatic that Christians should learn to be Christians within the body of the church, but what I contend is that they should also learn how to be Christians, to think 'Christianly', *outside* the body of the church, outside what is seen as the traditional, privatised box within which religion is 'supposed' to operate.

This expansion of thinking will not necessarily be popular. Of course it is possible that the small group leaders, if not the rest of their groups, may notice injustices in society, and, in the light of Scripture, start to object. However, this challenge to the world is a necessary part of the gospel. If we rule out political questions, we will continue to 'cut short the proclamation of God's saving power ...'.[115] Leaving out the political questions will make life more comfortable, but it will remain a life of cheap grace. If Christians challenge the world, the world will object. This means that Christian discipleship would become a more confrontational, risky and dynamic business, but it would cover the whole of life. In turn, this means that prepolitical education must also involve counting the cost, which is in itself a necessary part of Christian discipleship.[116] Costly discipleship, to which challenging the world will inevitably lead, involves rejection, suffering for a just cause, but brings the blessing of Jesus.[117]

Perhaps this is why the bishops speak in a vacuum: greater involvement brings greater cost. However, if the bishops do not wish to talk in a vacuum, if they hope to make politicians and the public think that they need to take account of a Christian approach to the issues of the day, they must begin, I would suggest, by educating their congregations prepolitically to relate their faith to

[115] Oliver O'Donovan, 'Political Theology, Tradition and Modernity', 241.
[116] Luke 14.25-33.
[117] See *Discipleship*, 108-10.

those same issues, so that more ordinary Christians are prepared to challenge worldly thinking – and to count the cost of so doing.

7.7 A 'Summary Grammar' for Political Education

What I have discerned is a 'grammar' – or a 'set of protocols against idolatry'[118] – against which we can measure the church's approach to political involvement; and therefore how Christians should be educated for political involvement. However, I do not have a curriculum, or anything like it.

What I have noted is that, for Augustine and Bonhoeffer, Christian leaders have a responsibility to act in the interests of their churches and people in general to try to create situations of greater justice. But it seems that their congregations are expected to follow (mutely?) behind. For Gutiérrez, the leadership responsibility is to conscientize the poor so that they can take action on their own behalf.

One of the key questions to note is how Christians are, as Kelly puts it, to be educated to 'condition themselves to endure persecution for the cause of justice ...?'[119] Not that we should look for martyrdom,[120] but that all Christians need to be aware that the responsibility to love our neighbour inevitably involves social and political involvement on behalf of our neighbour.[121] This involvement on behalf of our neighbour, the poor, the oppressed must be (here I follow Augustine) correctly motivated and always seeking to serve the cause of justice in civil society. Christians are, in all circumstances, called to be disciples first and foremost. In all else, therefore, there should be broad obedience, but occasionally, respectful disobedience – not looking for trouble, but aware that, in Jesus' words: 'blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'[122]

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[118] Lash, 187.
[119] Kelly, 'Prayer and Action for Justice', 252.
[120] As Gutiérrez notes, such masochism is sinful (*We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 117 and n.8, 167).
[121] This must be motivated by 'a real, concrete approach to human persons' and not through 'fleshless charity' that is 'foreign to human love' (Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 114).
[122] Matthew 5.10 (cf. Kelly, 'Prayer and Action for Justice', 252).

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