

**A CRITICAL STUDY OF CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF
MARXIST THOUGHT**

by

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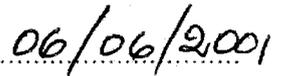
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"I declare that 'A critical study of Christian eschatology in the light of Marxist thought,' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."


.....
D. Iileka


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Dedicated to my father Simon Iileka
who taught me that God is reigning now and for ever more.

In memory of my brother Tauno Iileka
who shared with me the teaching of my father.

ABSTRACTS

This study explains the eschatology of the present in liberation terms. Chapter two looks at the Old Testament and New Testament eschatological elements. Chapter three explains that liberation theologians are using Marxism's social analysis for the pursuit of the New World. Chapter four explains that God's action in the course of history and Jesus Christ's deeds are means of liberating human being from economic, political and social oppression; therefore God the Creator and Jesus the Liberator are the content of liberation eschatology. The fifth chapter explains that there is an interface between practise and theory. By putting our faith into action through revolution, love and struggle we can create a New World.

In short, this study explains how liberation theologians close the gap between Christian eschatology and the Marxist hope of Utopia by using the biblical message of liberation and Marxist social analysis, and find an eschatology of the present in liberation terms.

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INTRODUCTION

The ongoing debate on eschatology in which theologians try to relate eschatology to our own situation has become a very interesting, but a difficult topic. Although there is a common agreement that the Bible has an eschatological outlook, the problem of the implications for our present situation is still unresolved.

The Christian view of the New World is different from the secular understanding, especially from the Marxist hope of Utopia. Both Christian faith and Marxism look forward to a new World. While Christian faith understands that the future is in the hands of God (it is God who will create a New World for us), Marxism argues that people in this world should create the New World through revolution.

Liberation theologians formulated a theology, which could satisfy both Christian faith and Marxism. They believe that salvation is not only a spiritual issue, but has also political, economic and social aspects. The kingdom of God, a New World, should also be seen in our daily life. Liberation theologians understand that our faith should be put into practical actions, as Marxism does, but they also believe in God's power.

In this research, my aim is not only to discuss the Christian view of a New World and Marxism hope of Utopia but also to investigate how liberation theology attempts to overcome the antagonistic aspects between Christian and Marxism by shifting a paradigm in Christian theology which considers

a circular dialectic between kerugma and our social political situation, or between the biblical view of a New World and the processes of human liberation.

In other words, the primary purpose of this research is to investigate how liberation theology can assist to close the possible gap between Christian eschatology and a Marxism view of a New World, by shifting a new paradigm which does not divorce theology from action.

The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter deals with the concept of eschatology. This will give us an understanding of eschatology. The focus will be not only on the definition but also on a description of the word, "eschatology". This will give us a clear understanding about the subject we are discussing.

The second Chapter explains the biblical view of eschatology. It begins with the biblical roots of eschatological ideas. This leads to the main themes of biblical eschatology in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The two Testaments will be dealt with separately because they do not have one specific idea. They have different thoughts, although they are related. Not all areas of eschatology can be covered by this study but I will summarize the ideas of eschatology that helps us to have a better understanding of biblical eschatology.

The third chapter attempts to explain the emergence of liberation eschatology and how it is influenced by the Marxism idea of the New World. In this way, this chapter explains how liberation theology uses the Marxism method of how to create a new and just world.

In the fourth chapter, I will discuss the content of liberation eschatology, as it is born from the influence of Marxism. This chapter shows us how God is active in our human history from the Old Testament through the New Testament, in order to create a meaningful life for his people. The Bible shows that the actions of God in history are related to our social, economic and political affairs, and that the work of Christ has liberated human beings from evil in this world.

The fifth Chapter tries to explain how liberation attempt to harmonize the two poles i.e. Christian eschatology and the Marxist idea of New World, in a practical and ethical way by putting Christian love and faith into action.

It is my own interest and commitment to discuss and analyse eschatological ideas of two trends (Christian and Marxism) and to make a careful study of how liberation theology can assist in filling the gap between the two. This discussion of the research is based on the text written by liberation theologians and other theologians on eschatology. Through this discussion I attempt not only to paraphrase but also to summarize and quote the ideas of liberation scholars and theologians.

CHAPTER 1

1. THE CONCEPT OF ESCHATOLOGY

The term eschatology is not found in the Bible. It was used in theology for the first time in the seventeenth century by a Lutheran theologian, Clovius in his book entitled "Sacred eschatology". The concept eschatology came into general use when Schleiermacher used it in his theology (Olivier 1991:3). The word eschatology comes from the Greek word "eschatos" which means the ultimate things ("last"), and from the word "logos" which means the study or word. This concept was formulated to describe the field of study concerning the treatise on human beings after death, and the whole world and its history. The emphasis is on death, judgement, heaven, hell, resurrection from the death and the second coming of Christ. Thus eschatology means the study of the last things of age to come. Since biblical faith talks about final consummation it could be understood that the biblical message has an eschatological outlook. The meaning of eschatology suggests the idea that history moves towards the redemptive purpose of God. This is a final end, a complete renewal of all reality and the entire universe.

However, to describe eschatology as the study of the "last things" has become a classical but then only one way of understanding eschatology. Within the field of eschatological reflection, there are other approaches as well. I understand, in distinction to the classical approach, eschatology as the dimension of liberation of human existence.

Since the Bible has a redemptive history of humankind and the whole reality, the liberating action of God made people in this history to be free now and also in future. Therefore, "the Bible presents eschatology as the driving force of salvific history radically oriented towards the future"(Gutierrez 1974:93). This study will look, with a critical eye, at the concept of eschatology in liberation terms.

Biblical eschatology is sometimes confused with the Greek word "Utopia" which means, "no where-land". Utopia is a vision for the future. It deals with the vision of how evil can be overcome here on earth, and creates a New World of happiness. However, the concept of Utopia sometimes implies a situation, which will not or cannot exist, because it is a dream emerged from a meaningless fantasy. Utopians claim that a human being can create a new world on his/her own, and escape from this world into "a dreamed world", while eschatologists look towards God for a new world but not on the basis of human resources.

From an overview of literature, we find the following interpretations of eschatology. According to Hoffman, scholars formulated different definitions of the term eschatology that do not give a clear understanding. Hoffman argues:

"In many studies the actual meaning of biblical eschatology is put roughly, something that is not really eschatology, but rather an idea related in one way or other to this unclear concept" (in Reventlow 1997:77).

Hoffman suggests three elementary conditions, which he regards as necessary for the definition of any

concept of eschatology: i.e. future perspective, universal overview and miraculous, supernatural element (in Reventlow 1997:77).

Guy has a different understanding. He claims that eschatology has two aspects i.e the fate of the individual after death and the certain cosmic events which have generally been considered to constitute the “last things” for the universe as a whole. And these two aspects cannot be divorced (Guy 1948:9). Guy, in my opinion, is right because in eschatological reflection the individual is related to cosmic events. Christian faith views life through the biblical evidence about the work of God in this world through Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christians await their own end and the end of the whole world by the power of God.

However, the term eschatology does not apply strictly to Christians only; it can also be applied to anyone who views time from a linear perspective. Von Rad explains:

“...even when our way of looking (at) the world and history became a secular one time itself was still in a certain sense thought of eschatologically - mankind, or a particular nation, was thought of as moving towards some ultimate fulfilment. Even the nihilist is to-day conscious of being a time-stream...” (Von Rad 1979:101).

Bultmann has a different understanding of eschatology. For him eschatology does not describe the doctrine of the last things, or in general the last things, which are still to come. Schmithals explains:

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“For Bultmann, ‘eschatological’ does not describe the final goal of the saving action of God which has still to take place in time; it describes any occasion which is itself bound up in this final action”(Schmithals 1968:301)

This is existential eschatology. According to Bultmann eschatology should be connected to history, to our contemporary situation. He concluded that the future of human being couldn't be separated from his being - in - the present. Thus, eschatology, according to Bultmann, must be focused on the person as he/she exists in his/her existential situation in which the meaning of history is located in the present moment of decision.

Bultmann's existential meaning is “not some future series of events, but rather the ever present possibility of an end to worldly, inauthentic existence and a beginning to the authentic life of faith” (Hebblethwaite 1984:139). Existential eschatology takes the Christian hope into present terms only; it fails to translate hope to the future and to the ultimate fulfilment of God's intension for human beings and for the whole world. It has “nothing to say about God's purpose in creation and providence” and fails “to do justice to Christian hope for the future realization of the kingdom of God whether on earth or in heaven” (Hebblethwaite 1984:140).

The most useful concept eschatology in this modern time is that of Moltmann. Moltmann sees eschatology as the centre of Christian doctrine and our faith. He rejects eschatology that is isolated from human life here and now. He explains:

“From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is hope. Forward looking and forward moving and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day” (Moltmann 1967:16).

Moltmann understands that eschatology is more than dreaming and longing for the New World, but it is the ground of hope in God’s liberating work in this world. He does not treat eschatology as a portion of Christian faith as other theologians do, but he takes the whole Bible and find the core or centre of Christian faith i.e. the eschatological message. Therefore, to him the whole proclamation of the church must be eschatological. He explains further:

“Hence eschatology cannot really be only part of Christian doctrine. Rather the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation of every Christian existence and of the whole Church. There is therefore only one real problem in Christian theology, which its own object forces upon it and which it in turn forces on mankind and on human thought: The problem of the future” (Moltmann 1967:16).

In this understanding, eschatology is not a part of Christian doctrine or theological reflection. It is a theology that directs our life here on earth and offers a new systematic approach to the whole problem of theology (spiritual and ethical). Moltmann rejected the theology that limits eschatology to

the end of the world and does not touch everyday life and historical events here and now. He formulates a theology that offers a historical eschatology that holds present and future together.

It is clear that eschatological assertions always have to be interpreted on the basis of the present also experience of salvation. To put it differently, eschatological assertions must also be formulated and interpreted against our present suffering, evil and death, and hope for salvation. It is important to offer hope as the foundation and the mainspring of the theological perspective, into our statement on divine revelation on the resurrection of Christ, on the mission of faith and on the history.

Let us look briefly at the concept of eschatology according to Nürnberger. He explains eschatology into practical senses:

(a) "It (eschatology) can offer a vision which fascinates the imagination, prompts active involvement and provides value and norms for that action. It indicates the evil, which is to be overcome, and pictures the good which is to be. It is an activating kind of hope which grants assurance, purpose and perseverance in the face of obstacles and frustrations..."

(b) "It (eschatology) acts as a consolation in situations which appear hopeless. It suggests that ultimately, beyond the present time and its possibilities, all will well, justice will prevail, there will be no more tears" (Nürnberger 1987:107).

The first practical effect of eschatology as described by Nürnberger is more Utopian and resembles Marxism. It challenges human beings to act and overcome the obstacles in the way to a New World. The second practical effect of eschatology as indicated by Nürnberger is found in Christian faith. It provides hope for a new future beyond our present condition. It gives hope to the hopeless and those who have limited resources to create a future in which justice prevails.

From this explanations of the concept of eschatology, one can understand that eschatology is a critical issue in understanding Christianity. It is not one element of Christian faith. To restrict the term eschatology to the end of time, the fulfilment of history is to eliminate the reality of the term.

Gutierrez explains:

“It is not sufficient, therefore, to acknowledge that eschatology is valid in the future as well as the present. Indeed, this can be asserted even on the level of “spiritual” realities, present and future.

We can say that eschatology does not lessen the value of the present life and yet expresses these words, which might be misleading. It by “present life”, one understands only “present spiritual life”, one does not have an accurate understanding of eschatology. Its presence is intra historical reality” (Gutierrez 1988:96).

Eschatology is a historical, earthly, material and social reality, but at the same time it “opens new perspectives by catapulting history forward, forward toward total reconciliation” (Gutierrez 1988:96).

Given the various interpretations of eschatology, it is now necessary to turn to the biblical elements on eschatology. Since through the Bible we find eschatological promises, it will help us to understand

eschatology in liberation terms.

CHAPTER 2

2 BIBLICAL VIEW OF ESCHATOLOGY.

“ The Bible is the book of the Promise. The Promise made by God to human beings... This Promise, which is at the same time revelation and Good News, is the heart of the Bible...The Promise is revealed, appeals to humankind, and is fulfilled throughout history. This Promise revelation is an eschatological perspective. Human history is in truth nothing but the history of the slow, uncertain, and surprising fulfilment of the Promise” (Gutierrez 1988:91).

2.1 Roots of Old Testament eschatological ideas: time and history.

The most important way in which we can understand biblical eschatology is to know first how Israel understood time and history. Today’s concept of time and history is different from the ancient world’s understanding. Our modern concept of time is linear (or actually eschatological) because we perceive time as history moving toward the ultimate fulfilment. This understanding was lacking in the early Israel.

The ancient world in general and early Israel particular, understood time as containing events, but they did not take events together to put them on one single line. Von Rad explains that Israel did not

view time with the idea of absolute and linear time:

“Israel was not capable of thinking of time in the abstract, time divorced from specific event. She found the idea of time without a particular events quite inconceivable, all that she knew was a time containing events” (Von Rad 1979: 100).

To make the point more clear, Von Rad explains that Hebrew does not have a word “for our modern concepts of time which means the distant past or future, but it has only a word ‘time’ which means ‘a point of time’ or a period of time” (Von Rad 1979: 100). Such kind of time is used in Ecclesiastics 3:1, 2 Sam 11:1, Mic 5:2. This characteristic of the concept of such time without an eschatological idea is also found in Gen. 8: 22.

Furthermore, although early Israel lacked any concept of linear or absolute time, the festivals had a great meaning to her concept of time. Festivals meant a return of an event, a great moment in the world was once again a present. In other words, the festivals were not only merely remembering but also participatory. For example, Israel’s celebration of the Passover is not only a remembering of Exodus but “she was entering into the saving event of the Exodus itself and participating in it in a quite “actual way” (Von Rad 1979: 104).

It is from this commemoration of events and festivals that Israel came to understand her history because this series of saving acts developed a span of historical time. She dropped the concept of the old understanding of time and developed a concept of linear history. In the words of Von Rad:

“... there must have been a time when each of the individual historical events was culturally celebrated in isolation and, indeed, at entirely different places later... however, these traditions were amalgamated from a sequence of events from which no single component could be omitted. At the same time each of them was to be understood only as a part of the whole which was itself very much more than simply the sum total of all its various parts... Israel has in this way broken through to the concept of linear historical span and she achieved this breakthrough not by means of philosophy or mythology but by gradual building up the time span through the summation of the various places” (Von Rad 1979: 106).

Only this time span can be described as Israel's history. In other words, Israel's history existed only in so far as God accompanied her. She came to realize that it was God who established the continuity between the various separate events and who ordained their direction as they followed one another in time (Von Rad 1979: 106). It is from this realization Israel came to understand that history has meaning as it moves to the future.

To some extent, from this understanding of history, Israel formulated the idea of eschatology. As a nomadic people, slaves in Egypt, intruders during the initial phases of settlement, victims of Philistine and a nation struggling with drought and hardship, Israel came to realize that her life was surrounded by the problem of evil. However, through this great distress as God redeemed, protected, liberated, blessed and acted on her behalf in various events, she came to believe that he would restore her life and recreate the world in the future.

Although Israel came to understand history as a linear time span, she did not understand history in universality. It takes a long period to understand it. Only in apocalyptic writing (in Daniel), she took world history as a whole. This development of eschatology took a long period of centuries.

2.1 Old Testament eschatological elements.

Old Testament writings are a history of the beginning of the nation of Israel and her life on this earth, but they say nothing about human destiny after death except perhaps in the book of Daniel and apocalyptic literature. This means that Israel believed that death is the end of human existence. As a matter of fact, to them, death was not regarded as a transition to a better life.

The idea of life on earth was emphasized. They had some idea that a person continues to live after his death “in his son and through them in his community”. It was one of the most devastating fates to die without a male heir. When there was a death in old age, their sons assembled around them (Schwarz 1979: 39). They believed that to die in old age was God’s blessing, (Prov. 10:2) while the death of a youth was regarded as a punishment (Sam 2:32). Their understanding of salvation was an issue connected with life on this earth.

Furthermore, because the Israelites emphasized life on earth, they also understood God’s judgment as an act, which occurred during one’s lifetime. God judges all misdeeds on earth. God punishes a person while alive. It is why the prophets warned and reminded the nation of Israel to fulfil the law otherwise the whole nation would be in danger. Drought, exile and other catastrophes were regarded

as God's punishment.

Although this divine judgment or punishment was regarded as an event in history, Israel also believed that the Day of Judgment would be fulfilled in the future when God would send his son and destroy all Israel's enemies. Israel did not understand the future judgment as an issue, which would occur after death of someone in heaven since there was no "after death" or heaven in their understanding, but God's judgment would be in a historical event.

The future judgment would come on the day of the Lord. People thought "The day of the Lord" would be the day of light but Amos warned them that it was to be a day of judgment - darkness and not light" (Guy 1948: 13). Schwarz explains more:

"This day was thought to be a day of light and the great day of salvation. Popular expectation also went in the direction of historical political and cosmic changes. Sometimes the expectation of catastrophes in nature was part of this idea of the judgment of all nations and the salvation of Israel. But the prophets put these nationalistic eschatological expectations pronouncement of calamity and disaster" (Schwarz 1979: 41).

Here Schwarz, in my opinion, is correct. The prophets understood the judgment day (day of the Lord) as a day of fright and huge pestilence on society. On the day of the Lord, God will destroy the whole world. Events such as drought, fire, earthquakes and darkness will occur in nature (Mal 4: 1, Is 14: 5). Here too, the prophets did not believe that the day of the Lord would be the end of the

whole story, but they realize that a new creation and full salvation could only be reached through defeat and absolute destruction (Schwarz 1979: 41).

The prophets believed that it was God who would wage the war, that would destroy the whole cosmos including Israel's enemies. The prophets knew that through the history of Israel God intervenes in war. This concept of God coming to an act of war is born from Israel's own tradition that God acts in war on her behalf with miracles (for example, darkness Ex 14: 20; clouds with water Jud 5: 4; thunder 1 Sam 7: 10; stone falling from heaven Josh 10: 11) (Von Rad 1979:123). Von Rad explains further:

“The prophets however also believed that Yahweh's final uprising against his foes would take the same form as it had done in the day of old. It is beyond question that the day of vision of the concept of Yahweh's intervention in war became greatly terrified for the war was new creation and even Israel herself” (Von Rad 1979: 124).

After war (or after destruction) there would be salvation, a New World. Some prophets, such as Amos, confined salvation to Israel only, while others, like Isaiah, realized that a New World and full salvation would be granted to all nations and there would be everlasting peace. The end of the war would be the beginning of a New World. The kingdom of God, and people would have an enjoyable life and enough food (Isaiah 7: 7- 25, 11:6 - 9).

Further more, in Deutero - Isaiah, we find how Israel compares salvation to the creation of the world

in the beginning and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. When God creates a New World, everything in nature will be changed. All painful events will be forgotten. The land will yield plenty and good crops. There will be praise for the Lord (Isa 65: 27; 41: 18 and 43: 21).

The prophets also declared that the introduction of the New World would begin with the new everlasting government of the Lord of the Israel, which he promised to David. Israel, as a result, would proclaim this government to all nations (Isa 55: 3; 43: 6). But the important point the Old Testament writings mention is that the innocent suffering servant of God, the Messiah, will bring about the New World. In the words of Hoekemann:

“The concept servant of the Lord ...was thought of, at least in the times of the prophets, as one who would suffer for his people in order to redeem” (Hoekemann 1978: 6).

The Messiah is the expected king of the final time who will bring eschatological salvation, a New World. He was to be understood as coming from the dynasty of David. The kingdom of David obtained its religious strength by the prophets. The dynasty of David was promised eternal existence, and the son and the father relationship with all the blessing were promised to the king of the house of David (by God).

The Messiah would come from the line of David and for that reason he would be the son of God (2 Sam 7: 14, Ps 2:7). The son of God is the one that gives the law and justice to the land, and defeats all the enemies and rules over God's people. Therefore Israel never expected the spiritual king. In

this sense, he is understood to be an eschatological king, the Messiah, the ideal king. This Messiah, the anointed one, is understood as the son of God through his people. Therefore, he is called Emmanuel, which means, "God with us." His time of ruling is understood to be a time of peace and prosperity.

Israel expected a king who come to rebuild, purge and cleanse Jerusalem by destroying the godless and restore the dominion of Israel over all the nations. All people would come to Jerusalem and behold this kingdom. Hence, according to the orthodox Jews nobody knows but God alone.

There are so many ideas in the Old Testament concerning the implications of the New World, the eschatological advent of God. However the end of the old kingdom is the beginning of the New World. The New World is either conceived as a purification of the old or as a replacement of it, which will be brought about by the Messiah.

After the prophets ceased to prophesy the end of this world, Israel continued to look to the future in an entirely new form, which may speak about the end of the whole world. The book of Daniel is an example of apocalyptic literature. Von Rad explains the characteristic of apocalyptic literature.

"The characteristic of apocalyptic theology is its eschatological dynamism, the clear cut differentiation of two eons, the present one and the one to come. A further characteristic is its sheer transcendentalism - the saving blessings of coming eon are already pre-existent in the world above and come down from there to earth (Dan

7:3, Esra 13:36). The idea that the final events were determined far back in the past and pretold in detail to certain chosen men many centuries before they occur is also characteristic”(Von Rad 1979:302).

The point, which is important to our discussion here, is that apocalyptic theology looks forward to the end of the whole world, and to the inauguration of the New World. And this New World will not only appear to Israel but to all nations and through all God’s creation. Apocalyptic writers tried to calculate the duration of the world era but this did not greatly influence the Jews.

In short, the Old Testament has an eschatological outlook. It shows in different “strata of the literature the expectation of a coming Redeemer who will fulfil the official functions of the theocracy as a suffering servant, the coming of God’s kingdom with the inauguration of a new covenant, restoration for Israel, the outpouring of the Spirit, the day of the Lord, and a new heaven and earth” (Griffith 1987: 387).

Put differently, the Old Testament shows that a Jew believes that the world is moving to the establishment of the theocracy of God. God’s anointed one, the Messiah, would come to rule and establish a messianic kingdom. The heathens would be punished and the Jews would dwell in the favour of God. Those who are in exile, the remnant would return (shear yashub) and there would be peace, prosperity and blessedness for Israel.

2.2 New Testament eschatological elements.

The New Testament writings emphasize Christ's sufferings and glory as the core element of all eschatological hope. We find this idea especially in the Gospel of Matthew when the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary is regarded as the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophets. However, the New Testament believer, while conscious that he/she was living in the age predicted by the prophets, realized that this new age had been ushered in the coming of Jesus Christ (Hoekemann 1978: 18).

New Testament writers understood that the coming kingdom, the New World as had been proclaimed in the Old Testament, was already present, through Jesus Christ. In other words, Jesus' coming on earth is the fulfilment of the eschatological expectation of the Old Testament.

Jesus preached "the now" of the kingdom of God, the New World. His preaching included this message of the actual presence of the kingdom of God (Guy 1948: 174). His person and action show us also that the kingdom of God is already here, we are now in the New World. And it shows also that Jesus himself is the kingdom of God, indicating that there is no more bondage, death, hatred, suffering and pain. And there is hope for the poor and the sick, and there is love and freedom.

When Jesus refers to himself as the Messiah who is the saviour of the people, he uses the saying of the Old Testament. An example is found in Luke:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to

preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to captives and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4: 18 - 19).

Schwarz explains:

"With Jesus of Nazareth, the kingdom of God has already started, what had been projected into the future or into the present for so long has started now. The kingdom of God has come with his appearance... The today of Jesus is the goal of history" (Schwarz 1979: 55).

Jesus had first urged people to repent so that they would be able to receive the blessings of the new age (Guy 1948: 90). It is only the believers who may enter the new world, the kingdom of God (John 3: 3). It is based on a faithful relationship with Jesus.

We need to understand that Jesus himself, his person, his preaching, and his deeds are the sign that the kingdom of God is present. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask him whether he was the coming Messiah, Jesus' answer was directed to what was taking place around him. He said "The blind received their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the poor have a good news preached to them" (Matt 11: 2 - 6). These words are the sign that the kingdom of God is present. These events are known to have happened, and those who have experienced them must see in them the manifestation of the power of the kingdom of God at work.

Another issue, in which we recognise the presence of the kingdom of God, is the casting out of the demons. When he drove out the demons (Beelzebub), he says, "But if I by the finger of God casting out the demons it is the sign of the presence of the kingdom of God". The deeds (miracles) of Jesus are God himself acting and they proclaim the kingdom of God.

The most important event that shows us the presence of the kingdom of God is the resurrection of Jesus. "Since the resurrection has taken place we know that the decisive advent leading to the end had already happened" (Davies and Doube 1964: 410). The resurrection of Jesus is already party of the new age. As Hoekemann puts it:

"When we turn to the New Testament, we pass from the climate of prediction to that of fulfilment... the supreme sign of the eschaton is the resurrection of Jesus ... Resurrection of Jesus is not simply a sign which was granted in favour of this son, but the inauguration, the entrance into history of the time of the end" (Hoekemann 1978: 4).

Although we speak about the presence of the new age here and now, we are also aware that many of the predicted events had not yet realized (Hoekemann 1978: 140). Of course, even Jesus himself had also proclaimed the kingdom of God as an occurrence, which would take place in future. There are "other passages in the teaching of Jesus in which he plainly seems to consider the kingdom as something for the future" (Guy 1948: 48). The rule of God will come in the future to human beings with judgment (Matt 24: 4) but we should not misunderstand that God is not ruling now. According to the New Testament, the future and the present of the kingdom of God is inextricable intertwined.

Griffith writes:

“In him, the kingdom of God has decisively come, but its presence is not consummate, what had seemed to the prophets one complex of events unfolds in two stages, so that there exists a kind of tension for the believer and for the cosmos between present possession of salvation and its richest expression, still awaited. There is continuity, though, between present and future redemption, for the present is the breaching of the world to come not simply in promise, but in reality” (Griffith 1987: 388).

In other words, the New Testament “represents the redemptive kingdom established by Christ as coming to realization in both the present and future” (Griffin 1987: 387). However, there is a problem if this one event of the eschatology is seen as both present and future. How can it be “yet” but “not yet” at the same time? This can only be understood if we know very well that the idea of the coming kingdom of God starts in the Old Testament. Maddox explains:

“In the Jewish apocalyptic tradition the kingdom of God is entirely future. The difference with Jesus is that the ‘future’ which is a datum in Jewish apocalyptic theology is not future! It has astonishingly made itself felt in the present: that is, God’s miraculous power to renew and transform is more accessible, more actual than people thought” (Maddox 1977: 48).

God’s powerful saving action runs through the ages. As God acted and saved his people in the past,

he will also do so in future. And Jesus believed also a future consummation or rather “he asserted it” (Maddox 1977: 48). And “even with the fulfilment experienced by Jesus... God’s full salvation still beckons only in future” (Maddox 1977: 48). What had previously been future is now present and what is now future will be “present” as the future translates in the present.

To some extent, according to the New Testament, the kingdom of God is already here and not yet completed. We live now between two ages, between the old age, which ended by Jesus’ coming into this world, and the age that will come with his Second Coming. We are now in the “interim period.” We do not only find this idea in the Gospels but also in the letters of Paul. According to Schwarz:

“Paul also sees this life of the Christian as a life between the eons. The old eon has passed away and the Messiah has come. But the new one is not fully here, because the Messiah has not yet returned in power. This ‘not yet’ is no reason for bewilderment. The events of the final era will occur...” (Schwarz 1987: 67).

The understanding of the “not yet” emphasizes that Christ will come again. The return of Christ, the parousia which means “arrival”, is proclaimed by the New Testament to explain that Jesus Christ had already come but he will return or he will come for second time. This co-existence of realized and future eschatology has an idea that Christ would come twice. The first coming passed already and the Second Coming will come in future.

The Second Coming is associated with the Old Testament day of the Lord. The Second Coming is

understood as the “day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1: 8, Phil 1: 6, 10). And that on the day of his Second Coming there will be an earthquake (Matt 24: 29, 2 Peter 3: 10 - 12, Ch Isa 13: 9- 10 and Amos 8: 9). The New Testament indicated the main events related to the Second Coming of Christ. They are: the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment, the thousand-year reign of Christ and the signs of Christ’s coming.

The New Testament clearly indicated that the time of the return of Christ is unknown (Matt 24: 36, Mark 13: 23). However the New Testament mentions also the sign of Jesus Christ’s return. Among the signs of the return of Christ are: the destruction of Jerusalem, false messiahs, war, famines, earthquakes, persecution and false prophets will arise (Matt 24: 3 - 14), the great apostasy or antichrist (2 Thes 2: 3, 1 John 2: 18, 22, 4: 3), and the conversion of Israel (Rom 11: 25 - 26). The early Christians of the apostolic times believed that these signs will occur soon because Christ will return very soon (Matt 10: 23, Mark 12: 30, 1 Thes 4: 15, Phil 4: 5) (Olivier 1991: 90 - 97).

However, as time went by, Christians came to realize that there is a long journey on this earth. The church has reviewed its teaching about the Second Coming of Christ, but the Church could not abolish the whole idea. In the second letter of Peter, there is an explanation why there is a delay of the parousia.

“But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you; not wishing that any should perish, but that all should

reach repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3: 8 - 10).

The New Testament testifies that the parousia is delayed with the purpose of all people to have a time of conversion (1 Timothy 2: 4). The purpose of God is to save all people. He gives a chance to those who are not yet believers to repent.

The delay of the parousia, the Second Coming of Christ, did not become a big problem in the New Testament because there was the idea of “already” in Christian thought. Christians began to emphasize the already aspect, however they did not abolish the idea of the Second Coming. Olivier explains:

“... the thoroughly biblical conviction that Christ in his risen life was already present in the midst of his people. Christians therefore did not have to pin all their hopes on a future coming of Christ. They could see that future as the consummation of a life they already had. The reason for hope lay within them: the presence of Christ through his Spirit” (Olivier 1991:111).

The delay of the parousia had changed the proclamation message of apostle Paul to reflect his preaching on the “already” aspects rather than on “not yet”. First Paul preached the “not yet” aspects of the coming of Christ (1 Thes 4: 13 - 18, 2 Thes 2: 1 - 17). But late Apostle Paul came to

emphasize the “already” aspects. He mentions that Christians have already passed from death to life (Col 2: 13, Col 3: 1, Eph 2: 5 - 6). And this life cannot be seen by our human eyes because it is hidden with Christ (Col 3: 3). Apostle Paul understands that “the real eschatological salvific events are not things that will happen in the future. Eschatology is the proclamation of the word here and now” (Olivier 1991: 178).

This understanding could also be seen in the Gospel of John and his letters. “According to John, the incarnation of Jesus is the eschatological event” (Olivier 1991: 179). And judgment is an event of now at present (John 3: 36, John 5: 34, John 6: 47). Apostle John does not wait for the Second Coming of Christ. He believes that Jesus does not go away nor is the Holy Spirit poured out after a period of waiting. But Jesus remains with the disciples and imparts the Holy Spirit himself (Olivier 1991: 181).

However, although the Church emphasized its attention on the “already” aspect of eschatology, its hope for the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment was not rejected. In other words, “the problem created by the delay of the parousia and the resultant emphasis on the ‘already’ did not mean a quick and painless end to apocalyptic expectations of an imminent cosmic end” (Olivier 1991: 112). Christians kept the ideas of the Second Coming until now, especially in the Christian creeds. Christians are still confessing in the creeds, the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the body and the judgment.

Jesus has already inaugurated God’s kingdom, but he will come again to usher in the in-semination of

his kingdom. In this Second Coming, God will disclose his kingdom and he will find ourselves in the New World and we shall see it clearly. This kingdom of God, the New World, will be fulfilled in the final judgment. The judgment is the last pronouncement of the final word about good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness, godliness and godlessness. This is also the final destination of humankind.

The kingdom of God, the New World which will be disclosed, is described with the term "heaven" while the term "hell" denotes those who are excluded from heaven. The dead will arise from the grave for eternal life and those who disobeyed him will rise for eternal condemnation. Those who obey God will enjoy the glory and righteousness of God. In the New World there will be no tears, no injustice, no suffering, and no death or other evils.

Having thus explained the eschatological elements from the Old Testament and New Testament, we now turn to the eschatological elements within Marxism and how it influences liberation theology.

CHAPTER 3

3. LIBERATION ESCHATOLOGY AND MARXISM.

Both Christian faith and Marxism have an eschatological outlook. They offer hope for the New World. In this chapter I will not discuss their differences or similarities, (see in this regard Nürnberger 1987: 105 - 109) but will try to show how Marxism has influenced liberation theology. I will first briefly discuss the rise of liberation eschatology. But since my aim in the first section is not to go into details on the origin of liberation eschatology either, I will just introduce the issue, which will help us to understand the influence of Marxism and Christian eschatology.

In the second section I will try to show how liberation eschatology uses Marxism in its formulation of the theology of eschatology. In this section, I will first explain how Marxism could be understood as “a method of analysis that emphasizes history over stasis, economics and class relations over the moral situation, and the importance of developing class consciousness in the effort to change society” (Spickard 1992: 327). Secondly, I will discuss liberation theology’s use of Marxism’s social analysis as a framework for Christian eschatology.

3.1 The rise of liberation eschatology.

3.1.1 The beginning

From the New Testament era to the period of the Reformation, Christian eschatology dealt only with things that will happen at the end of time. Issues such as the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the intermediate situation of the individual who dies before the return of Christ (e.g. purgatory, hell, heaven and limbo) were emphasized. Only things that are not relevant to our life here and now were designated to the doctrine of eschatology.

Christians during the New Testament period believed that Christ would come back during their lifetime on earth. Slowly, Christians lost their hope for the parousia, and the discussion of how things will be at the end of time became unimportant. In other words, the delay of the coming of Christ persuaded Christians to understand that history seems to continue for a long time ahead. New ideas on eschatology were formulated to fit the new situation. Christians began to reflect on the “already” aspects of eschatology rather than on the “not yet” (Olivier 1991: 110). During the first eight centuries after Christ some Christians came to understand the kingdom of God as “something here and now.” A person like Origen saw the kingdom as “wisdom and knowledge,” while Gregory the Great identified the kingdom of God with the Church.

In his book, “The city of God,” Augustine understood that the Church is the “sacrament” of the kingdom of God which will be fulfilled after the community of Satan is defeated by the community of

God. Some believers in the Middle ages identified the kingdom of God with the Christian State; e.g. the coronation of Charlemagne was regarded as the “first Holy Roman Emperor.”

During the Reformation period, Luther understood that the kingdom of God was divided into two aspects: God’s spiritual rule and his secular rule. These two aspects (rules) will unite in the future. To make his idea clear, Luther argued that a person is justified by God. Although still sinful, he/she lives in the kingdom of God but while still waiting for this kingdom to fully prevail. To Calvin “the Kingdom of God is wholly realized in Christ. Through his life, death and resurrection Christ has already renewed the world. What remains is the manifestation of the full glory of what already exists” (Olivier 1991: 147).

It was Albert Schweitzer (1875 - 1965) who first used the term consistent eschatology. He understood that the kingdom of God had not yet come. Even Jesus did not bring it about. God will establish his kingdom by himself, but not by human being’s power. Schweitzer and other consistent eschatology theologians, like Weiss and Buri, explained that Jesus’ proclamation “was an ethical message, summoning the people to bring about the moral consummation or perfection of the world. Thus Jesus was proclaiming moral ideals in the form of eschatological expectation” (Olivier 1991: 164).

They understood that Jesus’ ethical message has an eschatological meaning. By this they distinguished eschatology from ethics, so that the ethical message could be meaningful to our morality and leave eschatology in the hands of God alone.

Schweitzer's consistent eschatology was rejected by Dodd's (1884 - 1973) realized eschatology when he explained that with the appearance of Jesus on earth, the kingdom of God has already come. We do not need to expect Jesus' return in the future, since he (Dodd) regards the resurrection of Jesus as his return.

Realized eschatology is different from Bultmann's (1884 - 1976) existential eschatology. His method is called demythologization. According to Bultmann, the message of the Bible comes to us in the form of myths. The message needs to be demythologized in order to get its core of it. To Bultmann, "eschatology is the proclamation of the world here and now. The real eschatological event is the moment when the gospel presents the decision to understand oneself in a new way" (Olivier 1991: 178).

According to Bultmann, in his Gospel and letters, John had demythologized eschatology "by proclaiming that believers already have eternal life, that the final judgment has already taken place at the cross of Christ (John 12: 31) and that the resurrection has already taken place with our coming to believe in Christ (John 5: 24ff)" (Maimela 1990: 143).

Bultmann's existential eschatology was not accepted by many theologians of the late twentieth century because it did not respond to the problem of their time. Cullmann (born in 1902) formulated a theology of eschatology, which is called salvation - historical eschatology. He understands that the salvation acts of God are realized in history. We realize salvation in the concrete history of Jesus on which our salvation depends upon: his life, deeds, words, death and resurrection.

According to Cullmann, time has a beginning, middle and an end. Although in one sense the end has already been reached in the concrete history of Jesus, in another sense it has not yet occurred. In other words, with the coming of Christ we are already in the kingdom of God. However, this kingdom will only be fulfilled with the return of Christ. We are now between the already and not yet.

3.1.2 A paradigm shift

During the twentieth century a new development occurred in the theology of eschatology. The shift was concerned with the “reconstruction of the society in accordance with the ideal kingdom of God” (Maimela 1990: 73). This turn of theology toward the political or liberation could be noted clearly in the middle of 1960s. After the Vatican II in 1965, a new theology began to emerge. A conference of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on Church and society held in 1967 in Geneva signaled greater involvement of the church in social action. German theologians such as Metz and Moltmann formulated political theology. At a symposium in Chicago in 1966 Metz put forward the name, “political theology” while Moltmann published his book “Theology of Hope.” I will return to Moltmann’s theology later.

Political theology in general, and liberation theology in particular, dialogue with the so - called “masters of suspicion,” Freud and Marx. Liberation theologians such as Gutierrez, Sobrino, Boff, Alves, Miquel Bonino and others, formulated a theology that treats human beings not in general, but in their specific conditions of existence. The goal is to transform the world and put it in the light of the kingdom of God.

We can think of Moltmann who directed the theology of eschatology to another direction. Moltmann's theology tried to interpret the eschatological message of the Bible to our own present condition. He explained that eschatology is relevant to our contemporary situation. According to Moltmann, eschatology is concerned with the changing of the present because we need to anticipate the future God has given to us through Jesus Christ. Moltmann is "stressing the historical significance of eschatological expectation's a critical questioning and, in our theology, the eschatological value of present historical praxis of liberation" (Bonino 1979: 138). This liberation approach which is committed to revolutionary action influences the theology of liberation. Moltmann tries to relate the biblical view of the kingdom to our political, economic and sociological situation. As Bonino express his view:

"God builds his kingdom from and within human history in it's entirely: his action is a constant call and challenge to man. Man's response is realized in the concrete arena of history with its economic, political and ideological options. Faith is not different history but a dynamic, a motivation, and its eschatological horizon, a transforming invitation" (Bonino 1979: 138).

In Namibia, the Rev. Hamutumbangela is regarded as one of the most prominent liberation theologians of the 1960s. Although the term "liberation theology" has only been used recently, Rev. Hamutumbangela, in his activities as a pastor, expressed Christian faith in relation to the political situation of Namibia. (Unfortunately many of his saying are not written).

We can also mention here the theology of Bishop Colin Winter of the Anglican Church in Namibia. His theology could also be understood as a kind of liberation theology. In his "The breaking process," Winter says:

"...above all for us the gospel is the first and last all about liberation. If it (is) not, then it is nothing. Unless it can bring hope, speak of deliverance, depicts God as rescuer of the afflicted, then it is useless to our needs and will be cast of like the unclean rags of racism with which the oppressed Namibia people have been clothed for too long" (in Katjavivi, 1989: 118).

Liberation theology in Namibia emerged from a resistance to oppression, which tried to keep Namibians under the policy of racist power. Some Namibians theologians started to formulate a theology, which could be meaningful to their condition, the situation of the oppressed. They saw Jesus as the liberator who established the New World, a liberated community. As Kameeta argues:

"Jesus Christ is the liberator of the whole of humanity. In him there is no discrimination. It is blasphemous for South Africa to claim that it is a Christian country while it deprived the Black people of the God given freedom and dignity because of their colour. In the new liberated community one's neighbour cannot be economically exploited, politically oppressed and deprived of their social rights, but all these are shared, with them in love" (Kameeta, 1986: 14).

It is from this understanding that liberation theologians formulated their theology. They tried to relate

the biblical view of the kingdom of God to our own political, economic and sociological situation. They used the biblical understanding of the kingdom of God and connected it with the life of today. In this regard, liberation theology moved away from the predominant theology, which emphasized and concerned with human beings in general, to a theology, which specifically concerns with human beings in their concrete situation. Their theology address particular human beings in their specific conditions.

Thus liberation theology emerged to respond to the questions for which the dominant theology had no answer because the dominant theology was “linked with western culture” and paused on “spiritual” (matter) that needs to be reinforced” (Brown 1990: 91). Liberation theology was not linked to any culture but to “the marginalised race”. It focussed on a political world that needed to be replaced by a New World of justice and freedom (Brown 1990: 91). Therefore liberation theology arose to respond to the political, social and economic problems of the oppressed society.

Liberation theology criticizes the present through the expectation of the New World, which will be inaugurated by God. At the same time it anticipates the New World in this present. In short, unlike the predominately eschatologies of existentialism and personalism , liberation theology deals with the social problems of today.

To some extent, liberation theology, as any other theology, is an engaged phenomenon. It addresses a specific situation, the situation of political oppression, economic exploitation and social injustice of a specific group of people in a specific society. For this reason Maimela, in my opinion, is correct

when he says:

“ The historical events and experiences of people determine the questions about life, which their theology tries to answer. It is impossible for the word of God to be general theory unrelated to people’ experience of life. Theological reflection about God is inextricably linked to the goals and aspirations of a particular people” (Maimela 1990: 177).

Liberation theology is born and structured within an oppressed society. It is a theology that reflects on oppressed people, the situation, in which they live, and addresses their lives and their struggle for freedom and justice in their society. Mujoro explains:

“Liberation theology, more than any other kind of theological issue, unfolds because of human suffering anguish, death and humiliation... It seeks to justify God and his ways to perplexed rejected and horrid people that they might be inspired to do something about their God given lives” (in Katjavivi 1989: 93).

In this light, liberation theology attempts to explain God’s love to the outcast i.e. the poor and the oppressed, that they are also created in the image of God, that they are people liberated by Jesus Christ, and that they have the right to reject every form of oppression and captivity, so that they can live, in a state of freedom within society. This new methodology in theology, which was introduced first by Moltmann and by the theologies of liberation of liberation theology, is a response to the challenge from (Marxism) by saying that human beings create their own history.

3.2 The use of Marxism in liberation eschatology

Liberation theology takes the possible and true teachings from Marxism thought that are in accordance with the kingdom of God, and combines them with Christian faith. It leaves other thoughts of Marxism alone. In the words of Spickard:

“...liberation theology resembles Marx’s immanent critique of social life. Here is the situation, it says. These things seem possible, these others do not. The role of the church is to bring the downtrodden a sense of worth and dignity, and give them tools with which to understand their situation. The dialectic of situation and consciousness, tools and dreams opens the door for those poor to take charge of their lives” (Spickard 1992: 337).

To say it differently, liberation theology “turns Marxist social analysis to Christian use in the pursuit of human freedom. All who oppose that freedom - Marxist and Christian alike - may quail” (Spickard 1992: 339). To understand the use of Marxism in liberation theology first one should understand Marxism’s hope of Utopia.

3.2.1 Marxism hope of Utopia

Although in this discussion I refer to Marxism rather than to Marx, I would like to present a brief biography of Karl Marx, the father of Marxism. This will help us to understand that the Marxist hope of Utopia is significantly influenced by religion, Christianity and Judaism, rather than Feuerbach and Hegel. Of course, Feuerbach and Hegel's philosophies also influenced Marx in developing the idea of the New World, but religion played a fundamental role in this development.

Karl Marx was born on 8 May 1818 in Trier, Rhenish Prussia, the oldest city in Germany. His father, Henrich Marx, was a German Jew and his mother, Henriette Presburg, was a Dutch Jew. Karl Marx was "a descendent of rabbis on both sides of his family. Since the 17th century, virtually all the rabbis of Trier were his paternal ancestors" (Padover 1980:1)

It is clear that Karl Marx was a Jew by birth and he may have known Jewish religion including the messianic hope. However, Karl Marx grew up in a Christian family after his father gave up the Jewish faith and was baptized as a Christian in the Evangelical Church. His baptism "was not a matter of conviction but of necessity" (Padover 1980: 9). Jews in Germany suffered from religious discrimination. They were not granted full civil rights to enjoy religious and economic freedom. They were regarded as "economic exploiters... enemies of true religion accursed by God because they had rejected Christ. It was commonly believed that the Jews' own religion taught nothing but corruption and the worship of one exclusive and jealous god - money" (Padover 1980: 8).

Therefore Karl Marx's father (Henrich Marx) became a Christian in order to enjoy full civil rights. It is only after his baptism that he succeeded to become a lawyer and a leading member of the local bar.

Karl Marx's mother, who was a Dutch Jew, did not "suffer from religious discrimination or persecution" because the Bavarian Republic granted Jews full civil rights in September 1796; they had enjoyed religions and economic freedom de facto" (Padover 1980: 5). She was not baptized because there was no law, which forced her to do so.

Like his father, Karl Marx became a Christian because of the law. In 13 September 1824 "the Prussia government decree confirmed a long standing practice that non Christians could not attend public school" (Padover 1980: 17). This forced Henrich (Karl Marx's father) to take his children to the church for baptism. At the age of six, Karl Marx and his sisters and brothers were baptized in Trier Evangelical Church. He was confirmed when he was sixteen, in the same church where he was baptized. At the time of his baptism his mother was still unbaptized. It is unclear whether she had baptized later or whether she died a Jew. On the 19th June 1843, Karl Marx married Jonny Von Westphalen in the Evangelical Church.

Since Karl Marx had known Christian and Jewish religion from his childhood, it is fair to assume that Marx was exposed to religious influences in his home. On the other hand Karl Marx did not receive religious education (Christian education) at home since his father was not an active member of the Evangelical Church. As it has been recorded: "In the light of Henrich's lack of admiration for Christianity, it is fair to assume that his participation on religions matters was minimal" (Padover 1980: 17).

However it was reported "that his knowledge of the Christian faith and morality was clear and well-founded and that he also knew a little of the history of the Christian church" (Padover 1980: 19). It is

from religious instruction that Karl Marx learned biblical thoughts about the suffering servant who could establish the kingdom of God, the return of Christ, the new heaven and earth, and other thoughts about “eschatology”.

Besides religious education and his serious study of Hegel, Karl Marx had also read Feuerbach’s positive penal law, which contributed to his idea of a New World. In 1841 Karl Marx completed his doctoral dissertation entitled “Difference between the democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature,” and was awarded the doctoral degree with Honour, at Jena University.

It was Christian theology in general and Hegel’s philosophy in particular, which became a turning point in the development of Marx’s ideas about the New World. Hegel regarded ideas and thoughts as the basic issue of the dialectical movement, which changes history. Every conflict between new ideas produces new ideas, which causes a change in society. “Hegel said that the whole process of development taking place in history was due to the absolute idea raising itself in history” (Cornforth 1977: 51). This is an idealistic conception of change and development.

Ludwig Feurbach’s “The essence of Christianity,” turned Marx’s own intellectual development from idealism to materialism” (Padover 1980: 63). Feuerbach, who humanized theology by developing a “true or anthropological essence of religion,” had influenced Marx’s thought on religion. Feuerbach believed that nothing exists outside of nature and of the human being. Therefore, he (Feuerbach) rejected Hegel’s idea that the existence of God is an absolute idea. According to Feuerbach, religion existed only in the human mind. Therefore, it is the human being who create God, but not God who

created human beings. Religion “is only the outward expression of man’s inner nature” (Padover 1980: 64). Hebblethwaite puts in this way:

“God, for Feuerbach, was an illusory projection of the ideal essence of man, and immortality a selfish belief, deflecting man from his proper concern with the here and now. The strength of his position lay in the fact that the Christian hope of heaven had indeed been advanced all too often at the expense of concern for his world. But whether such hope was bound to have that effect was not so clear” (Hebblethwaite 1984: 123).

Marx rejected Feuerbach’s conclusion “that nature could be interpreted by what it actually is without resorting to mystic notions” (Buzuev and Corodnov 1987: 35). For that reason Marx believed that Feuerbach’s conclusion rejected development and recognized only quantitative changes. And again he rejected Hegel’s dialectic because it was constructed in idealistic principle.

However Hegel’s philosophy became a very interesting topic to Marx. He looked at another direction at Hegel’s thought. As we read from Padover:

“Marx stressed another great element in Hegelianism, that of dialectics. Just as the “Absolute Idea” was static and retrospective, so the Hegelian concept of dialectic was evolutionary and forward - looking. For essence, and by definition, the dialectical process means moment and change, presumably for better” (Padover 1980: 35).

Marx's critique of Hegel was not so strong because he used his idealism of dialectics to enrich his historical materialism. In other words, although he criticized Hegel, he never abandoned the basic categories. He rejected Hegel's idea that the source of change lies in-between incompatible ideas. He, in turn, replaced the idealistic dialectics with a materialistic foundation. As Padover observed.:

“Unlike Marx's other critical writings, past and future, which were abrasively polemical, his analysis of Hegel was calm and objective even where he strongly disagree with him. A philosopher, after all, such as Marx considered himself to be, did not treat a man like Hegel lightly or sarcastically” (Padover 1980: 78).

Padover illuminates further by pointing out that “Marx was following the Hegelian pattern and using Hegelian language” (Padover 1980: 78). Marx criticised Hegel mainly because he used “ideas as if they were outside human effort” (Padover 1980: 78). However from Hegelian dialectics and Feuerbach's philosophy of Materialism, Marx developed a “material dialectics which transcended the limitation of metaphysical material and radically differed, from Hegelian dialectics based on idealism” (Buzuev and Gorodnov 1987: 37). In short, Hegel's idealism dialectics and Feuerbach's metaphysical materialism enrich Marx's philosophical materialism.

Marx's ideas of a New World are based on dialectic form. Dialectical movement is a struggle of two opposites, conflict or contradiction. For Marx conflict provides the dynamic principle, the source of change, which leads to the promotion of the New World. Haralambos put it this way:

“The struggle between incompatible forces grows in intensity until there is a final collision. The result is a sudden leap forward which creates a new set (of) forces of a higher level of development. The dialectical process then begins again. The contradiction between this new set forces interaction and propels change” (Haralambos 1980: 535).

Marx understands that the mayor contradiction which causes change in history is found in materialistic foundation but not in ideas of human beings. The ideas are mere reflections of the social relationship of economic production. In short, the contradiction, which causes social change, lies in the economic system.

Marx understood and explained development in a materialistic way. He “considers the universe, not as static, not as unchanging, but as in a continual process of development” (Cornforth 1977: 53). This is dialectical materialism. “It considers this development not a smooth, continuous and unbroken process, but as a process in which phases of gradual evolutionary are interrupted by breaks in continuity, by the sudden leap from one state to another” (Cornforth 1977: 53).

According to Marx, the introduction of the private ownership of the force of production is the fundamental contradiction of human society. He argues that at the beginning of history, when people began to control nature (involvement in production of food and shelter) there was no contradiction. People were living in a state of primitive communism where products of labour and forces of production were owned by all people. As a result, there were no conflicts because every one

produced not only for him/herself but also for the community.

But now, according to Marx, through the policy of ownership the majority suffers because the minority controls, commands and enjoys. Conflicts occur between the minority who gain at the expense of the majority, who produce the products. As a result, this causes changes in society.

Furthermore, Marx understood the human being as essentially a social being, but societies divided themselves into classes. Haralambos gives a clear clarification:

“Apart from the communities based on primitive communism at the dawn of history all societies are divided into social groups known as classes. The relationship between classes is one of antagonism and conflict. Throughout history opposing classes have stood in opposition to another, carried on uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fights that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large or in the common run of contending classes” (Haralambos 1980: 538).

The conflict of interest between the two groups (classes) occurs because the worker does not work in order to fulfil himself/herself as a person. His/her work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labour. And his/her work is merely a means to satisfy the needs of the others, not his/her own need. For this reason, Marx understood that “where contradiction is at work, there are the forces of development” (Cornforth 1977: 54).

Marx affirms that the abolishment of capitalism, the latest and highest manifestation of the class struggle, is needed and the creation of a society in which a person is related to his/her fellow human beings. He proposed the abolition of capitalism and the destruction of all forms of injustice and exploitation so that we could have a society, a New World, based on freedom and cooperation. In other words, Marx proposed a classless society, where the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" would prevail.

Political and industrial revolution was an important tool for Marx for intellectual development. He realized that revolution is the principle method of destroying the capitalist society. Therefore revolution, according to Marx, serves as the best means to create a New World. In the Communist Manifesto Marx reflected on the socialists whom he thought, "to be humanist and utopians" (Padover 1980: 129). As Padover observes:

"In the Manifesto, Marx stressed struggle, violence and class. He viewed men not as brothers, but as constant enemies who fight for power and not for human ideals. He also declared war on Europe's assorted forms of socialism. The concept of class conflict was designed to separate socialists who believed in humanitarianism and democracy, from communists who were now armed with a new historic revelation of their presumably inevitable victory through class war" (Padover 1980: 129).

Marx attacked those who rejected revolutionary action and who sought to create a New World by peaceful means because he thought that they would fail. In general he criticized the philosophical

socialists (or utopian socialists) and philosophies for analysing the society rather than actively trying to change it. In other words, theory should not be separated from action. Ideas should be put into practice in order to change a society. Thus, Marx's fundamental goal was to bring about a New World through revolution. This discovery "made philosophy into a revolutionary weapon, of the working people, an instrument, a method for understanding the world so as to change it" (Cornforth 1977: 54).

In addition, Marx criticized religion because it failed to accomplish social transformation in this world. Christians hope for salvation from oppression in heaven, in eternal life after death rather than in reality on earth. He says: "Religion is a sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of a sailor's condition. It is the opium of the people. Religion acts as an opiate to dull the pain produced by oppression. It does nothing to solve the problem, it is simply a misguided attempt to make it more bearable" (Haralambos 1980: 460).

From this understanding, Marx believed that religion acts as an opiate to dull the pain produced by oppression by promising the oppressed people salvation after death. It also promotes oppression by saying that those who bear the pain of poverty with humility will be rewarded for their virtue. Religion is an illusion of happiness and for this reason it needs to be abolished so that human beings can find true happiness. Marx also understood that human beings make religion but religion does not make human beings. As Van Niekerk explains:

"By this, Marx means that religion is self - awareness, the sense of self

of a person who has either not yet found himself or has lost himself. A person who has not found himself seeks a super being in heaven; all he finds is a reflection of himself in his reality” (Van Niekerk 1982: 270).

Marx’s point is that “religion is the product of man’s inverted awareness of the world - or an obverted word... Religion is both a projected reflection of man and flight of fantasy by human beings who have lost the reality of their true nature (Van Niekerk 1982: 270). It is from this explanation that one can understand that Marx demands a New World through our own deeds. He rejects religion because it discourages people’s struggle against oppression, and attempts to change their situation. By giving the illusion of hope in a hopeless situation, it blinds people to reality and prevents them from creating a New world by overthrowing evil system. Schwarz explains:

“As soon as religion as the general theory of this abolished - theory which provides the justification for the exploitation of the working class, and the consolation with a better future - we abandon the fantastic heavenly reality and face our reality on earth” (Schwarz 1979: 1460).

Marx introduced a theory which consoles the poor by which they “can take the leadership of the whole society” (Cornforth 1977: 10). It is a philosophy that influences “the Common people in their struggle to throw off all exploitation and to build a classless society” (Cornforth 1977: 15).

Liberation theology follows this Marxist social analysis by its attempt to understand this world in order to change it, create a New World in accordance with God’s kingdom.

3.2.2 Marxism in liberation eschatology

While Marx's theory of materialism clashes with the basic doctrine of Christian faith, some aspects of his system of analysis have been used by liberation theologians. In this regard, liberation theology dialogues with Marxism and analyses the weakness of personalized theology and idealistic philosophy.

People who have studied Marxist theory come to understand their situation in the way Marx understood his situation. They found Marx's social analysis helpful in interpreting their situation. They found that Marx understood that the Capitalist system heavily oppressed the poor and powerless and that religion kept people passive under the injustice of the system.

Liberation theologians believe that the church has been on the side of the oppressors and its teaching "stands in the way of social analysis and prevents people taking action to defend themselves" (Spickard 1992: 330). Spickard gives an example of Latin America:

"Liberation theology fosters this creativity even in the religious sphere. Its adherents recognized that Latin America Catholicism has been both an instruments of oppression and source for popular creativity. In emphasizing the latter, it tries to build on what it sees as the positive side of church's own tendency toward authoritarianism... Admittedly such antielitist theory may be violated in practice, but since most Latin America Marxism is both theoretically and practically elitist, the difference must be noted" (Spickard 1992: 331).

Liberation theology follows Marxism's social analysis "to have a better understanding of what action must be taken if oppressive social structures are to be transformed and a free and just society is to be established" (Maimela 1990: 176). It is from this tradition that liberation theology tries to save the gospel itself from the bondage of ideology which distorts the gospel by turning into a justification for oppression (Maimela 1990: 175).

Here we have to understand that liberation theology is not Marxism, but it "uses Marxism purely as an instrument. It does not venerate it as it venerates the gospel. And it feels no obligation to account to social scientists for any use it makes, correct or otherwise, of Marxist terminology and ideas, through it does feel obliged to account to the poor, to their faith and hope to ecclesial community for such use" (Boff and Boff 1987: 28).

Liberation theologians use Marxism's social analysis in such a way to clarify their point in connection with Christian faith. In other words, liberation theologians understand that "Marx can be a companion on the way. But he can never be the guide" (Boff and Boff 1987: 28).

Marxism is not used by liberation theologians as a dogma or a doctrine of Christian theology but a method borrowed to be used in the interpretation of Christian faith to our situation. As Bonino clarifies:

"The Marxist scheme cannot be taken as dogma but rather as method which has to be applied to our own reality in terms of this reality, and this in turn reverts to a reconsideration of the method itself. Just as the socialist system which will finally emerge in Latin America

countries will not be a copy of existing ones, but a creation related to our reality, so the analysis has to be adequate to this reality and develop its own categories and method" (Bonino 1979: 35).

Many theologians reject the dogmatism of Marxism even liberation theologians, because its content clashes with basic Christian doctrine. For this reason, liberation theologians developed new categories and new methods, so that it could be related to their own situation.

Some social analysts argue that although "Marx's own social analysis predicted a worker's revolution, overthrowing capitalism and ushering in a socialistic and human society" (Spickard 1992: 326), its practical methods, as used by Marxists, have failed. Only those who borrow some methods from Marx and put these into a new historical perspectives have good results. Spickard explains:

"So - called communist revolutions have neither enthroned the working class nor have they brought a human social order. While Leninist political parties continue to worship Marx's eschatological vision, Hegelian Marxism calls for using Marx's method to reanalyze today's society. In a new situation, new concepts and new historical vision would surely result" (Spickard 1992: 327).

Here we can understand that Marxism "offered a framework of study open to the dynamism of history and to a projective view of human activity. It is conflictive understanding of reality which was true to our situation" (Bonino 1979: 36).

The important point here is to understand that Marxism provides a new way for theology to analyse the present situation and the methods of how to overcome the undesired status quo.

Marx's optimism concerning a classless society has been criticized for some failures, however some Christians use his elements, as Hebblethwaite explains:

“This optimistic secular eschatology has been widely criticized on a number of grounds - its false analysis of capitalism, its unfulfilled prediction of the course of history, its failure to reckon with human nature, its neglect of the ever - present possibility of power, its willingness to sacrifice innumerable lives for the sake of an uncertain future, its inability to cope with man's mortality; but, for all these criticisms, it remains the most powerful secular alternative to Christian eschatology, and many Christians in the twentieth century have adopted elements of Marxism theory into their own understanding of Christian hope for the future of man” (Hebblethwaite 1984: 123).

Liberation theology “turns Marxist social analysis to Christian use in the pursuit of human freedom. All who oppose that freedom - Marxist and Christian alike - may quail” (Spickard 1992: 339). Liberation theology believes that Marxism helps to create a New World on this earth while we are awaiting the fulfilment of the New World in the future. These theologians agree with Marx that present conflict in society occurs because the poor are forced to maintain an unfair status quo. Therefore their starting point with the poor.

This means that they begin with the experience of the poor, powerless and oppressed in history. As Maimela rightly puts it: "Liberation theology looks at the harsh reality of an unjust from the point of view of the poor" (Maimela 1990: 180).

Therefore liberation theology emphasizes that the church must side with the poor and rescue them from danger and harm - and make them important people in the eyes of God as well as in the presence of all human kind (Iileka 1991: 18).

This is the same idea we find in Moltmann's theology of hope. When Moltmann viewed the New World, as Bauckham explains, his "claim is that Christian eschatology, properly understood with the reference not to another world but to the eschatological new creation of this world, must have precisely this effect. Christian hope is not the Apocalyptic lethargy' which leaves this world its fate and waits for another. Rather, by revealing the world to be 'not yet' what it will be, but as open transformation in the direction of the promise" (Bauckham 1995: 103).

Here Moltmann provides a political theology that rejects the evil of the status quo in order to liberate Christian faith from the support and glorification of it (status quo). He answers positively Marxist's criticism of religion that it provides a merely illusory compensation for human misery by promising another world, and thereby it helps to perpetuate the condition, which is caused by the status quo. Moltmann's theology directs Christian faith into the transformation of the material conditions in this world as Marxists desire.

However, liberation theology does not only emphasize the material and the struggle for economic empowerment. It also concerned with the hope of the people and turning their situation. Spickard explains:

“And liberation theology ... teaches that the material situation is important but so are the people’s hopes and dreams. The role of theology in the liberation model is to combine those hopes with concrete analysis to help the poor learn to change the unjust structures that surround them” (Spickard 1992: 337).

Furthermore, Marx himself was not interested so much in religion but he regarded religion as a social institution, which influences the society. Therefore, he criticized religion for its “practise” which influenced “German life and thought” (Kee 1980: 61). In short, “Marx exposed and condemned the ideological legitimations performed by the church on behalf of the ruling class” (Kee 1980:62).

Kee notes clearly that those who persecuted the church under Marx’s theory did not understand Marx clearly. Marx believe that the church has an important place in the society and should change its way so that its practice could contribute to the changing of this world. Liberation theologians accept Marx’s criticism and try to charge theology in the direction of Marxism.

In other words, liberation theology, by showing the meaning of the transformation of the present situation and how human beings can act in this human history for a better society, employs Marxism. Therefore liberation theology looks forward to a New World and the transformation of this world into

a world of peace and justice.

A holistic approach is seen in liberation eschatology of Southern Africa. Liberation theologians such as Allan Boesak, Zephania Kameeta, Desmond Tutu and others, affirm that Christian faith is related to all dimensions of human life. They rejected the dualistic theology, which confines itself to the hemisphere of spiritual life. They reject dualistic theology because they believe that it is incomplete since it does not take seriously all aspects of human life. Therefore they formulate a theology which relates Christian faith to all dimensions of human life. In the words of Boesak:

“The confession of the Lord Christ over all of life must be heard again in our preaching, as a protest against the departmentalization of life, and as a plea for faith in the God of the Bible, who cannot be divided, and whose power can be neither deferred nor denied” (Boesak 1978: 12).

Here Boesak rejects the theology that divides religion from secular life. Zephania Kameeta, a liberation theologian in Namibia, does not separate the church from politics. He rejects the dualistic theology which separates the religious sphere from the political sphere. He maintains that people, who have tasted the liberation in Christ, go into the world and sacrifice themselves for the liberation of their neighbours (Iileka 1991: 16). He adds:

“I see the struggle in Southern Africa, especially here in Namibia, not merely as a political struggle in which only politicians may participate, but as a struggle in which all Christians are called to participate” (in Serfontein 1976: 214).

Here we see how Kameeta applied Christian faith in the political dimension. De Vries who formulates his theology focussing on the responsibility of the Church in the oppressed community affirms a similar point. He rejects theology preached by the missionaries because it does not touch the needs of the people and by so doing, it supported the unjust system of colonialism (Iileka 1991: 17). De Vries argues:

“The gospel of Jesus Christ sees man in his totality. The Church is not simply responsible for the person who comes to the church on Sunday, but for man in his daily needs. This total demand of the gospel thus drives the Church out into the secular world in which people live ... The Church in Namibia must be made aware of its social political responsibility” (in Robbins 1989: 9).

The point here is that De Vries understands that our political, social and economic interests can not be separated from spiritual life, nor can salvation be reduced to the soul only, because our material lives are influenced by our spiritual life and vice versa (Iileka 1991: 22).

In other words, by accepting Jesus the Messiah as our Redeemer and liberator, we can understand that liberation is a commitment of revolutionary action against evil power i.e. injustice, oppression, poverty, racism and violence. Therefore, liberation is appropriated because we cannot single out liberation in only one aspect or take liberation only as a freedom from the bondage of spiritual evil. Salvation is not merely a spiritual idea or thought, but it is also a concrete proclamation of liberation

action. In short, liberation cannot take place in a vacuum, but in a reality. And the spiritual person cannot be separated from his social, economic and political situation. Therefore liberation is inseparable from salvation.

Furthermore, the theology of liberation eschatology is focussed on the concrete political, economic and social situation of today. In short, salvation is also understood in light of the present situation of humankind. Liberation theologians interpret the Bible in the situation of the oppressed people. This means that salvation is no longer understood only as something which will occur after life as the "old" (Western) theology emphasizes, but should be a concrete freedom beginning in this world and finding its fulfilment in the world to come.

Liberation theologians take liberation events and count them as salvific events. They believe that total salvation can be seen in both the social order and the spiritual sphere, which will be fulfilled in the future.

Faith in God is regarded as an act related to all dimensions of human life. Religion, politics and economics cannot be separated into distinct sphere. Because liberation theologians interpret faith in God in social and political terms, they believe that liberation for social justice is not something other than what God has done and is doing for the people (Iileka 1991: 28).

As Frank Chikane rightly have it:

"There is no longer a dichotomy between humanity and divinity in our

lives. Henceforth, we do not differentiate between the sacred (spiritual) and the secular (material). Henceforth, there is no distinction between the horizontal and vertical. The only differentiation possible is between good and evil, righteousness, and unrighteousness; justice and injustice, have love and hates and between shalom (peace) and war or conflict” (in Katjavivi 1989: 69).

Here we can understand that liberation theology does not reduce theology to the sphere of politics but “relates all dimensions of human life to the faith in God and the question of his justice” (Katjavivi 1989: 66).

If liberation theology then does not reduce theology to the sphere of politics, the question that arises is namely: what is the contents of liberation eschatology?

CHAPTER 4

THE CONTENT OF LIBERATION ESCHATOLOGY

History indicates that people were created and liberated by the power of God. Therefore “it was possible to think in the present from the perspective of the possibilities of humanization which that past experience had created. The past became the clue for the understanding of the possibilities of liberation in the content of present events” (Alves 1972: 91). In this understanding Alves explains further that: “The gospel is thus the annunciation of the historical reality of the ongoing politics of God, which expressed itself not as philosophical or mystical experience but as a power that invades history” (Alves 1972: 92).

The content of liberation eschatology explains the action of God in the course of history. In this chapter I will explain that through history God’s action is related to political, economic and social dimensions. This action of God does not end in the Old Testament but it is seen also in the New Testament. Therefore it is right to say that God the creator and Jesus the liberator are the content of liberation eschatology.

4.1 God in human history.

God’s saving act as understood by liberation theologians is the very starting point in Christian eschatology. Liberation theologians consider God and his actions as the source of life and the whole

reality because, every word about God is also at the same time a word about the world and humanity.

The whole reality exists because of God's action. He is the source of the whole world. Therefore liberation theologians believe that the God of the Bible involves himself in human history and his action cannot be separated from the social political dimension. He is God in all human activities. As Cone puts it:

“Yahweh is known and worshipped as the Lord who brought Israel out of Egypt and who raised Jesus from the dead. He is the political God, the protector of the poor and the established of the right for those who are oppressed. To know him is to experience his act in the concrete affairs and relationship of people, liberating the weak and healing from pain and humiliation” (Cone 1975: 63).

Liberation theologians begin with the exodus story to show the action of God in history in relation to social and political affairs. God took Israel from Egypt where she was a slave without hope, and put her in the Promised Land. Therefore, liberation theologians see the liberation message as the central theme of the Old Testament. It is a history of the liberation of Israel with God's action. It is God who rescued Israel “from meaninglessness and alienation... from uncertainty and misery, from pain and humiliation service of the living” (Boeksak 1978: 20). It is God who takes initiative action and shows that he is Yahweh - the one who is active and says: “I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their suffering and I have come down to deliver them out of the land of the Egyptians” (Ex 3: 7 - 8).

Liberation theologians emphasize the action of God in the present. It is the action of God, which changes oppressed conditions into meaningful life. God does not only reflect on their condition and leave them in their painful condition, but he sees and acts. And again, he does not act in the future but in the present, introduce himself to Israel as the God who acts and frees her from bondage. This divine action in human history is summarized in Israel's liturgical confession.

“A wondering Aramean was my father, and (he) went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number and there he become a nation great, mighty and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us and laid upon us Lord Bondage. Then we cried to the Lord the God of our Father, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and words; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey”
(Deut 26: 5 - 9).

It is clear that liberation theologians understand that God's “action of liberation forms the content of life and faith, the history and confession of Israel” (Boesak 1978: 20). Liberation theologians wish to emphasize that God's action does not end with exodus but he continues to act through human history.

In doing theology, liberation theologians believe that “the covenant means that Yahweh's liberating presence continues to sustain the people through the wilderness to the Promised Land” (Cone 1975: 65) and through the human history. This shows us that theology of liberation “is the expression of a certain historical experience. It is not a language based on a dogmatic idea execrated ... From the

sphere of philosophical speculation ... It is simply descriptive of historical experience of human liberation” (Alves 1972: 88). Alves explains:

“The biblical communities, however, had hope for the future because God was present, and in his present, through the exercise of power, which was historical through and through, he negated historically and presently the power of what was thereby making man and history open for a new tomorrow. God was thus experienced as present determined toward the future, and God’s acts, consequently, created a present in which the future was being formed” (Alves 1972: 94).

Liberation theology focuses on historical social structure i.e. the concrete situation of the poor. It emphasizes history and the transformation of history through human action (Spickard 1992: 337).

Through the struggle God is always in front of the way and is a winner. Spickard explains:

“It (liberation theology) believes in God’s work in history, in tribulation and triumph. It takes seriously the promise of redemption, and the inevitability of judgment, If the church and the poor are working for God’s Kingdom, now and to come, they will inevitably triumph” (Spickard 1992: 337).

In liberation theology God’s action is understood as the revolution of human history which changes our history and the whole world at large. While Marxism claims that it is the human being that changes the world, liberation theologians believe that it is God who acts and changes life and human history. However, they also maintain that our action with the help of God does effect some change in

the world in which we live. Because God is active in history, liberation theology does not leave him out of the struggle. It teaches that God directs the way in all action, while people are only his instruments. In short, "liberation theologians believe that God is active in history, indeed, God is directing the action, of which people are mere instruments" (Spickard 1992: 331). Bonino states:

"God's action take place in history and as history. It inextricably involves human action and conversely, there is no human action reported outside the relation with God's purpose and word ... Thus Yahweh's sovereignty does not appear in history as a abstract act or an interpretation but as announcement and commandment, as announcement which convokes and invites a response. History is precisely, this conflict between God and his people in the minds and relation to people" (Bonino 1979: 134).

Here Bonino explains that there are not two histories or two worlds. Eschatological expectation and historical action are precisely one issue. One can differentiate between the expectation of the kingdom of God and the movement of history in the Bible because political form and religious issues in the biblical view are completely one. Therefore "this positive relation between God's kingdom and man's historical understanding justifies us in understanding the former as a call to engage ourselves actively in the latter" (Bonino 1979: 150). Christian faith pushes the believer "to make a concrete historical option and assures them eschatological pre - eminence insofar as they represent the quality of human existence which corresponds to the kingdom" (Bonino 1979: 150).

Liberation theology speaks of God historically. It speaks of God from the point of historical events,

and with remembrance of the historical events and experience. And this historical experience gives hope for the future. This remembrance of the historical events gives expectation from the God of the past toward a future in which human beings will be liberated from misery.

The history of Israel gives a clear example of God's action in history. God chose Israel and led her through history. Liberation theology emphasizes that God did not choose Israel because she fulfilled the law, but because she was a poor, weak and defenceless nation. In his election God shows that he is "the God of history who is identical with the liberation of the oppressed from social and political bondage" (Cone 1975:65). He guided the people of Israel through the wilderness and defended them from their enemies in order to make their life a happy one.

Cone believes that the covenant at Sinai gave Israel a responsibility to have a relationship with God of the Exodus and also to treat the weak as God treated her. He states: "The covenant not only places upon Israel the responsibility of accepting the absolute sovereignty of God as defined in the first commandment: It also requires Israel to treat the weak in her midst as Yahweh treated her" (Cone 1975: 64).

Cone believes that theology must be involved in politics, which takes its stand with the poor, and against the rich (Cone 1975: 65). It is clear that God Himself, through history, protects the weak against the strong and he asks human beings to do likewise. We find this idea in apodictic law of the covenant code:

“You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them and they cry out to me I will surely hear their cry” (Ex 22: 21 - 23).

Liberation theology believes that the poor in this history are God’s own special possession because they are called into being for freedom. Cone states that in almost every scene of the Old Testament drama of salvation the poor are defended against the rich, the weak against the strong (Cone 1975: 90). For this reason Cone argued that “if theology does not side with the poor then it cannot speak for Yahweh who is of the poor” (Cone 1975: 71).

Here we, in my opinion, can agree with liberation theology because in the theme of justice God’s special concern for the poor, the weak and the widow is dominant through the history of the Old Testament. Prophets such as Jeremiah, Micah, Isaiah, just to mention a few, as well as the Psalms, emphasize justice upon the poor. Jeremiah, for example, champions the weak against the strong. Thus he says:

“For wicked men are found among my people, they lurk fowls lying in wait. They set traps, they catch men. Like a basket full of birds their houses are full of treachery therefore they have become great and rich, they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bound in deeds of wickedness; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy” (Jeremiah 5: 26 - 28).

Because of God's commitment to justice for the poor and the weak, the king in Israel is enthroned to rescue the weak from the strong and poor from the oppression and to help the widow who have no one to protect them. As it has been indicated in the Psalms:

“For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and he who has to help. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight” (Ps 72: 12 - 14).

Thus liberation theology speaks of history eschatologically, because it emerges from history and has a future. It is theology between memory and hope because it anticipates the new history and new freedom through remembrance of what God has done in history. It is not a theology, which describes God in metaphysical terms, but it places God in historical terms, in order to explain his faithfulness and action in this world by liberating human beings in this earthly misery. By doing this, liberation theology shows that God was present, God is present and God will be present in the future human history.

4.2 The logos of praxis.

God's action does not end with the exodus, but he acts through Jesus Christ. The New Testament does not put the work of God in the Old Testament to an end. It is rather a new expression of the historical language of the Old Testament because the same God of the New Testament who is present in Jesus is the one who brought Israel from Egypt. Liberation theologians believe that the work of

Christ is a liberating deed like the action of God in the Old Testament. As Alves explains that Jesus “was the one through whom God’s politics of liberation was carried out. His obedience was thus the expression of his total identification with God’s messianic activity, and therefore he could be confessed as the Messiah” (Alves 1972: 92).

Jesus Christ was a reality in this world, a true human being among us. The Apostle Paul explains his being:

“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion. He was manifested in the flesh, indicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed in this world, taken up in glory” (1 Tim 3: 16).

The authentic person in flesh and blood, Jesus Christ is God. Thus, liberation theology affirms that Jesus Christ who lives in our midst is, at the same time, God. We know Jesus in relation to his father who reveals himself in this world. Therefore, there cannot be the logos of praxis without acknowledging the work of God the father in relation to this history because Jesus has been granted authority by his father to redeem, give life and hope to hopeless people. God’s liberating act is revealed in Jesus Christ. Thus he is the authentic and true God.

Liberation theologians, by describing Christology, depart from the historical Jesus to the divinity of Jesus - the so-called anthropocentric Christology. By doing so, they take seriously the humanity and historical aspects of Jesus as a means for our salvation. This approach emphasizes that Jesus reveals

his father to us. He teaches us to know God. It is not God who teaches us to know Jesus. We know God from the humanity of Jesus (i.e. from the bottom upward).

However some liberation theologians take the functional model of Jesus. Their concern is not Christ's person - his divinity and humanity - but they emphasize his action (deeds). In this approach, the central theme is his work but not his nature. They do not engage in philosophical arguments of the incarnation of Christ, but focus on his birth, his healing miracles, his preaching, his death and resurrection. In other words, some liberation theologians do not emphasize the nature of Jesus Christ, rather they value his deeds. They understand Jesus' "person and work as the inauguration of a new age which is identical with freedom for the oppressed and health for the sick" (Cone 1975: 770).

Liberation theology in general, and Cone's theology in particular, affirms that theology is about the liberation of the poor, the weak, the oppressed and the humiliated. It judges the strong and oppressors. Cone maintains that any theology that fails to make this point clear is not Christian theology but a theology of the Anti - Christ (Cone 1975: 83). Thus he concludes:

"The hermeneutical principle for and exegesis of the Scripture is the revelation of God in Christ as liberator of the oppressed from social oppression to political struggle, wherein the poor recognize that their fight against poverty and injustice is not only consistent with the gospel, but is the gospel of Christ" (Cone 1975: 81).

Therefore, from the liberation perspective, the point of departure for interpreting Christian

eschatology is to begin with the poor. Thus liberation theologians regard God in Jesus Christ as the helper of the weak and the poor, and as the liberator of the oppressed. For this reason, they make salvation as liberation a first act in the scripture, which gives freedom for a New World, a new way of life to the weak, the poor, and the oppressed.

The commitment to the poor and the weak against the rich and the strong does not end in the Old Testament. Liberation theologians, by doing the theology of the New Testament, affirm that the message of the Old Testament continues in the New Testament. On other hand they believe also that the Old Testament salvation message is fulfilled in the New Testament. But what is important is that liberation theology holds a special affinity for the poor and the weak in the Old and the New Testaments.

From the beginning the message of the New Testament is addressed to the poor. Jesus himself is understood as the one who favours the poor, the oppressed and the needy and considers them important people (Iileka 1991: 20). Therefore, the eschatological message in the New Testament is also good news to the poor and the needy. In the words of Winter:

“He (Jesus) storms through the pages of history as the enemy of tyrants, the condemner of the exploiter, the one who bears an implacable hostility to the perpetrator of violence against the poor, the weak, the helpless. He is renowned as the one who takes up the cause of the widow, the orphan and the stranger. He does not overlook the mighty against the powerless” (in Katjavivi 1989: 122).

The message for the liberation of the poor in the New Testament is summarized in the story of Jesus' reading from Isaiah 61: 1 - 2 during his visit to the synagogue of Nazareth, which demonstrates the good news to them and their well being:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release for the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set a liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4: 18 - 19).

Thus liberation theologians understand God as the one who brought liberation to the poor through the work of Christ. In other words, they affirm that the gospel means liberation and liberation comes to the poor and to give them the strength and the courage to break the condition suffering.

Liberation theologians see the connection between Jesus' person and work, and the presence of the kingdom of God. He comes in the form of the poor, a servant who suffers on behalf of other people and who is “redeeming them from oppression and for freedom” (Cone 1975: 73). It is from this understanding that liberation theologians come to the conclusion “that Jesus rejected such role as worker or political king, because they would separate him from the suffering of the poor, the very people whom had come to liberate” (Cone 1975: 75). As Cone vividly puts it:

“The gospel means liberation, that this liberation comes to the poor,

and it gives them the strength and the courage to break the condition of servitude. This is what the incarnation means. God in Christ comes to the weak and the helpless and becomes one with them, taking their condition of oppression as his own and thus transforming their slave existence into a liberated existence” (Cone 1975: 77).

It is from this point of view we can understand that Jesus was not a poor and oppressed person like others. Rather, he took the form of them and acted in order to liberate those who suffered and were oppressed. Therefore, liberation theologians affirm that the actions of the historical Jesus have their origins in God’s eternal being (Cone 1975: 81). Jesus, by entering human history, provides “a new insertion of freedom into history which opens new horizons for human liberation” (Alves 1972: 93).

Cone describes the actions of Jesus in this way:

“They (actions) represent a new vision of divine freedom climaxing with the cross and the resurrection, wherein God breaks into history for liberation of slaves from societal oppression. Jesus’ action represents God’s will not to let his creation be destroyed by power” (Cone 1975: 81).

The New Testament understands the historical events of Jesus as “events that made free..., events which indicates that God was actively engaged in a struggle against the power that kept man and woman captive” (Alves 1972: 93). This is why liberation theologians proclaim the gospel as the announcement of salvation that brings a new way of human life.

The historical Jesus has a special meaning to those who have the experience of the poor because “he lives in this world as the oppressed people” (Boesak 1978: 38). This can be justified because we read from the Bible that he healed the blind, the lame, the crippled, the dumb and many who suffered physically. As Cone puts it:

“Jesus life was a historical demonstration that the God of Israel wills salvation for the weak and the helpless. God hates injustice and will not tolerate the humiliation of the outcast” (Cone 1975: 80).

From this point of view we can understand that to know Jesus is to believe the story of his life, his death and resurrection, because his ministry is the answer to the human story of oppression and suffering (Cone 1975: 109). People come to meet him in the historical struggle of freedom. Therefore, eschatology has to begin with the affirmation that Jesus was a human being in history. Consequently eschatology has to take the historical Jesus seriously. The historical information about Jesus not only concerns his ministry but also his suffering and humiliation.

In other words, liberation theologians understand Jesus Christ as a central point of liberation eschatology. They understand that the historical Jesus, as Risen Christ who was humiliated, is the one who has been resurrected. He is the God - man, who suffered and by whose resurrection human beings have been liberated from suffering to exclamation. Liberation theologians believe this because they affirm that the liberating actions of Jesus are actions, which touch the real lives of human beings. Therefore, they believe that the struggle for justice is a part of the formation of the New World. Even the prophets announced that the coming kingdom, the New World, would be established on this

earth. This means that for liberation theologians Jesus Christ is the ground of eschatology. Cone is therefore correct in saying that “to speak of history eschatologically is to speak of the promise of God’s world of liberation, disclosed in his future, and breaking into our present and overthrowing the power of evil that holds people in captivity” (Cone 1975: 140). It is God in Jesus Christ who takes the poor and the helpless “into a newly existence” and “opens a new future” for them “different from the past and present miseries” (Cone 1975: 139). Surely this new life for the weak is nothing less than a New World, a new age to them, and the present eschatology.

The point here is that Jesus himself was poor from his birth. He had the experience of poverty from home and lived among the downtrodden and oppressed. He openly showed that he had come especially for this kind of people so that they could have a new life, the eschatology in the current human history. Therefore, liberation theologians affirm that the struggle for justice is part of the establishment of the kingdom of God on this earth. The establishment of the kingdom of God on this earth brings us to faith in action, that is, praxis.

CHAPTER 5

5. TOWARDS AN ESCHATOLOGICAL ETHIC OF LIBERATION

“Liberation is not a history that breaks in from a future totally unconnected with the present. It is a project which springs from the protest: a protest to which God grants in a future in which man enters through his action” (Bonino 1979: 76).

5.1 Praxis: Faith in action.

The word praxis is very important in understanding the eschatology of liberation. Praxis is a Greek word, which is often translated as “practice.” It is understood in contrast to the word, “theory.” But this translation is incomplete because it does not cover the whole meaning of the word. In liberation theology as well as in Marxism there is an interface between practice and theory. As Brown explains:

“Thus a praxis situation is one in which theory and practice are not separable. Each continually influences, and is influenced by, the other, as the mutual interchange goes on, they are not only constantly transforming one another, but are transforming the overall situation as well” (Brown 1990: 65).

The basic and starting point in this understanding is Marx's famous eleventh theses against Feuerbach, in which he says, "the philosophers should not only interpret the world but transform it." Marx believed that theory that is cut off from the task of transforming the world is incomplete. In Marx's opinion the theology of his time "does nothing but give a symbolic solution for real problems" (Boff 1987: 13). He argues that theology that operates abstractly from the world and from reality withdraws itself from reality (Boff 1987: 12). A real problem must be solved by real solutions.

To express this idea in theological terms, liberation theologians argued that being a Christian means following Christ. This means that to follow Christ demands faith that is put into practice (in the light of reflection on our faith). Liberation theology considers praxis as the fundamental locus of theology a powerful tool to change the world and solve the problem. It dissolves concrete problems with concrete solutions, not with abstract or speculative solutions. Liberation theology understands that the process of liberation requires the active participation of the oppressed. All Christians have a responsibility to change the world towards a better life. Here liberation theologians "theologize the slavish value of this practice, not in abstract, but in concrete" (Boff 1987: 103). This also means that the church should attempt to change the evil situation here on earth and not preach salvation as "Pie in the sky." It has responsibility in this world to demonstrate the Christian message to the world and promote the kingdom or the reign of God amongst human beings.

Liberation theologians are at one in believing that through action, putting our faith into practice, we can transform this world into a better condition. For this reason Boff and Boff explain:

“Christianity can no longer be dismissed as the opium of the people... : it has now become active commitment to liberation. Faith challenges human reason and the historical progress of the powerful, but in the third world it tackles the problem of poverty now seen as the result of oppression. Only from this starting point can the flag of liberation be raised” (Boff 1987: 7).

The poor and the oppressed can only be liberated from oppression by actions combined with theory, but not by theory alone. Theory (strategy) has to be put into practice in order to change social conditions. The poor and oppressed must organize themselves, understand their situation and present condition in the direction of a new way of life. Therefore, liberation emerged as strategy of the oppressed and the poor who are struggling for changing the society. Here we can speak of liberative action. To put it in theological terms, one can say: that liberation theologians speak of faith reflecting on action, to liberate those who are in physical and spiritual captivity.

The point here is that “action is always understood in the light of reflection” (Brown 1990: 67). Thus, human activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis, it is transformation of the world. Moreover, praxis requires theory to illuminate it. Human activity is theory and practice, it is reflection and action. It cannot... be reduced to either verbalism or activism (Brown 1990: 68).

The exodus, the battle of Jericho and the Ministry of Jesus by feeding the hungry, healing the sick and his resurrection ensure us that liberation is not merely a thought, but a revolution against evil power, which put the human being in captivity. The scriptures tell us that God is the one who liberated the

oppressed from bondage through Jesus Christ. Here the point is that God did not only see the oppression of the people and stop. On the contrary he saw and acted because action is born from reflection to create a new society.

From this point of view we draw the conclusion that faith in Jesus Christ is not only a matter of confession, but a generator that influences us in our action of struggle with love and trust in God against poverty and racism, and brings about joy in the community. Therefore, liberation theologians believe that human beings can create a New World by means of our labour and struggle for a better life.

5.2 The kingdom of God and Utopia.

This emphasis of eschatological value on the kingdom of God is the central message of the Bible. The resurrection of Christ is not only understood as the initiation of our resurrection but also an initiation of the kingdom of God because the proclamation of its coming finishes the possibility and initiates the demand that one lives in history in radical openness, and that this ultimate kingdom will be realized.

The deeds of Jesus shed light on what the kingdom of God is. Liberation theology explains that the action of Jesus i.e. healing the sick, expulsion of demons and the feeding of the people are the sign of the kingdom of God. When Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, he addressed it to the poor. The oppressed and the poor, whose life is politically, economically and socially oppressed, are the target

group to be promised the kingdom of God.

Liberation theologians do not expect the coming of the kingdom of God or the new world in spiritual terms only. They expect also the rule of God to be manifested in social, historical, political and material realities. From the perspective of liberation theology the church must take the present social and political condition and put them in the light of the kingdom of God.

If the church sees, for example, that the government is not in obedience to the demands of righteousness and love, as revealed in God's word, Christian should direct it, because everything that is opposed to the will of God is opposed to the kingdom of God. Liberation eschatology therefore emphasizes that the church is necessary for the sake of God's kingdom. We agree with Pannenberg when he rightly says: "The church is necessary so long as the social political life of man does not provide the ultimate human fulfilment that the kingdom of God is to bring in human history" (Pannenberg 1957: 83).

It is clear that liberation theologians believe that Christians have a great responsibility to reform the social condition and maintain the well being of human beings because the oppressive structures of the society which entrench class, race and cultural dominations are the destructive consequences which must be struggled against and overcome in order to build up a just society.

The Bible speaks of the kingdom of God as the kingdom of peace, justice, freedom and reconciliation.

To quote from Gutierrez:

“Peace, justice, love and freedom are not private realities, they are not only internal attitudes. They are social realities, implying a historical liberation. A poorly understood spiritualization has often made us forget the human consequences of the eschatological promises and the power to transform unjust social structure, which they imply. The elimination of misery and exploitation is a sign of the coming of the kingdom... the struggle for just world in which there is no oppression, servitude... The kingdom and social injustice are incompatible.” (Gutierrez 1988: 97).

From this understanding, liberation theologians point out that the kingdom of God is not an event which will take place in the future (although it will be completed in future), but it is a revolution of God in all interrelations in our world, spiritual, social, political and economic. As Maston says:

“His (God’s) rule or reign cannot be restricted to one phase of life which might be labelled spiritual. It is concerned with what goes on in the laboratory, in the classroom, in industrial plants, in the legislative hall, in the councils of nations, in the home, everywhere” (Maston 1957: 334).

At one level liberation understands that the kingdom of God is for a particular group, the group of the poor, because it comes to change the situation of the poor. It understands that God showed partiality through history. His power liberates the poor from their meaningless situation. The kingdom of God terminates the misfortunes and slaveries of the poor and provide them the opportunity to live with

dignity. In other words, the kingdom of God is the condition that makes the life of the poor happy. At another level however, we can also understand that the kingdom of God is not only addressed to the poor alone but to the other as well: the rich and the oppressors. However liberation theology does not claim that the kingdom of God will be completed in this moment. It is real anticipation. It knows that the future is the destiny of present life. This is the "already, but not yet" of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God will only become reality at the end of this present age, although it is already in reality in the person and deeds of Jesus. Liberation theology upholds the biblical teaching that Jesus is the mediator.

The proclamation of the kingdom of God by Jesus is very important to liberation theology because it speaks to human beings in their concrete situation. The kingdom of God is understood as an aspect of change in this world, by bringing freedom to all human beings who are alienated from peace, justice and freedom. It is regarded as a total restructuring of human relations.

In this approach, Gutierrez provides a clear distinction between the term liberation of human beings and the growing of the kingdom. He explains that "both are directed towards complete communion of men (people) with God and men (people) among themselves. But they do not follow parallel roads." He states further:

"The growing of the kingdom is a process which occurs historically in liberation in so far as liberation is a precondition of the new society. But this is not all it is... without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the kingdom. But the processes of liberation

will not have conquered the very roots of oppression and the exploitation of man by men without the coming of the kingdom which is above all, a gift.” (Gutierrez 1988: 177).

Here, Gutierrez on the one hand understands the liberation of human beings as an event, which contributes to the growing of the kingdom. On the other hand, he acknowledges that liberation actions could not overcome the very roots of the oppression and the exploitation of human being by another without of the coming of the kingdom (Gutierrez 1988: 177).

In addition, Gutierrez explains also the kingdom of God in relation to Utopia. Before we consider the relationship between utopia and the kingdom of God, let us now consider the meaning of utopia according to Gutierrez. Gutierrez embraces and interprets utopia positively in his theology to indicate the vision for social radical change. In his own words:

“Utopia means a denunciation of the existing order. Its deficiencies are to a large extent the reason for the emergence of utopia. The repudiation of dehumanized situation is an unavoidable aspect of utopia. It is a matter of a complete rejection which attempts to strike at the root of the evil” (Gutierrez 1988: 233).

He explains further:

“But Utopia also is an annunciation of what is not yet will be: it is the forecasting of a different order of a new society. It is the field of

creative imagination, which process the alternative value to those rejected... Utopia moves forward; it is a projection into the future of dynamic and mobilizing factor in history” (Gutierrez 1988: 233).

Theologically, Gutierrez believes that utopia is a factor which drives to engage in human history to change the present order and put it in the light of God’s redemptive purpose and the promised future of the kingdom of God.

For this reason, Gutierrez understands that utopia is not imagination, nor should be confused with fantasy or illusion. It is rather a historical praxis, which supplies a new goal for the existing order and political action. Here Gutierrez’s “utopia” can be compared to Alves’ “hope.” Alves sees hope as a language of the possible. He argues that “hope”... cannot be confused with fantasy or illusion, because it is derived from history and envisions, from the experience of the past, what is possible in history” (Alves 1972: 101). Alves explain further:

“Hope... express what is possible to history and therefore what can be made historical through the activity of freedom, only to the extent to which it is derived from, and is an extrapolation of, the objective movement of the politics of human liberation, as experienced in history. In other words, it is not enough to say that freedom opens its way towards the future in history. Hope emerges when we are able to see how freedom moves on its way... Only thus is it a realistic way of perceiving” (Alves 1972: 101).

In this understanding one can say that utopia and hope are the same. Both “express what is possible

to history and therefore what can be made historical throughout the activity of freedom” (Alves 1972: 102). In other words, the expression of the words “utopia and hope” is the same in liberation theology. Both are the factors “of historical dynamism and radical transformation” (Gutierrez 1988: 235).

However, the word “utopia,” as used by Gutierrez does not give a clear light to the theological concept of eschatology because it is a form of illusion which cannot inform history because of its “unrelatedness to the way of operation of freedom in the world” (Alves 19972: 102). The word, “hope,” as used by Alves is more meaningful in Christian theology, especially in the theology of eschatology. It is a biblical word, which is connected to Christian faith.

Gutierrez, according to Bonino, calls Christian “action of faith as the utopian function of Christian eschatology” (Bonino 1979: 151). Bonino rejects this idea that action of faith is kindling imagination (utopia). He argues:

“The name (utopia function) is not correct to the extent that the Kingdom of God is not utopia: It has a place both in history and in God’s eschatological time. Moreover the mobilizing visions of the future are also not utopia in the sense that they are divine productiveness, the possibility for which we work in the present” (Bonino 1979: 151).

Bonino, in my opinion, is correct, because utopia contradicts biblical eschatology i.e. the biblical view

of history. The biblical view of human nature provides that human beings are redeemed from sin by the liberating work of Christ, but the life of human beings is still a life of injustice and oppression. Christian hope for the future which God promised and created in history, and this future is not simply evolution but the events based on the experience of what God has done in the past. Therefore Bonino explains:

“Utopia moralism gives insufficient consideration to the moral ambiguity that characterizes all form of social existence. Every government or social system is imperfect and will continue to be so. Achievements or justice and freedom do not flow smoothly from the good will of an individual but from a precarious balance of power in a given social context” (Bonino 1979: xiii).

Liberation theology “knows that the biblical message of God’s liberation has a historical as well as an eschatological dimension” (Boesak 1978: 114).

This eschatological dimension, but not utopia, opens the way for a real future. It calls a Christian to engage in struggle for a better and just society in the light of the kingdom of God.

5.3 Revolution and violence

Liberation theology believes that the New World on earth, the better life, can only be brought by revolution. However liberation theology differs from Marxism in that it does not revolutionize the

society for the sake of conflict. Its aim is different from Marxism although both envision the creation of a New World. Spickard puts it in this way:

“Its (liberation theology’s) commitment is not to revolution per se, but to build the “reign of God” on the earth. Its aim is not class conflict, but the full development of the human family. This development is not just physical, but emotional and spiritual. It seeks the right ordering of people’s relationship with each other, with the planet and with God” (Spickard 1992: 331).

Revolution and violence are human actions. These actions are the struggle against all the forces of oppression in human society. The aim is to create a new society of freedom in the direction of the kingdom of God. Freedom does not come on its own but by fighting against the oppressor. There exists a contradiction between the power of the oppressed and the oppressor, and this contradiction, according to Marxism, is called revolution. Alves explains:

“Freedom creates the new in history through dialectical process. The new is not mediated directly. The reason for this is that the old in history, resists and opposes the new” (Alves 1972: 104).

The oppressors are selfish. They want to retain their rights and freedom without considering the rights and freedom of other people. The oppressor do this because they are afraid of the future “the fear of the future gives birth to violence” (Alves 1972: 104).

And violence is whatever denies human beings a future or kept him/her in a prison “of the futureless structures” (Alves 1972: 112). Alves explains:

“Violence is the power that denies the man the possibility of exercising his freedom for himself, by making it a function of the project of the master. He wants to build an new future, but since his master dominates him, everything he does, instead of bringing about the future he hopes for, makes the presence of his master more tyrannical” (Alves 1972: 112).

During the Namibian liberation struggle, liberation theologians and the church itself were supporting the armed struggle. For this reason they were accused of advocating violence. But liberation theology claims that violence can be understood as a “means that may be used in situations where there is not other way to combat oppression” (Katjavivi 1989: 84).

Toivo ya Toivo, in his statement to the supreme court that accused Swapo for using armed struggle, explains this point:

“The South African government is not truly interested in whether the opposition is violence or nonviolence. It does not wish to hear any opposition to apartheid. Since 1963 SWAPO meetings have been banned... We have found ourselves voiceless in our own country and deprived of the right to meet and state our own political opinions... Is it surprising that in such times my people have taken up arms? Violence is truly fearsome, but who would defend their property and

themselves against a robber? And we believe that South Africa has robbed us of our country ... I have spent my life working in Swapo, which is an ordinary political party like any other. Suddenly we in SWAPO found that a war situation had arisen and that of battle" (in Katjavivi 1989: 84).

Toivo ya Toivo, as a Christian, understands that violence or armed struggle was the only choice at that moment, because SWAPO was forced "by the intransigence of the South African government"(Katjavivi 1989: 84). There is a popular Christian understanding that violence should not be used for attack but only for the purpose of defence. Therefore Per Prossion understands the Namibian armed struggle in this way:

"The first act of violence was not the start of the liberation war but the colonial conquest, economic exploitation and racist oppression as in Namibia. The armed struggle for liberation is seen here as a means of self - defence to the end the primal violence of an oppressive" (in Katjavivi 1989: 85).

This armed struggle (violence) in liberation theology's position is a means to overcome oppressive power, exploitation, and to create freedom and peace. In other words, violence is a means of building a "reign of God" in Namibia, which has been proclaimed by Jesus and his followers.

From this understanding one can find that history is not an open process because "the way is blocked by a politics of violence that makes the historization of human liberation impossible" (Alves 1979:

114). Alves explains the difference between violence and counter-violence. "Violence is the power that oppresses and makes man (people) unfree. Counter-violence is the power that breaks the old, which enslaves, in order to make man (people) free. Violence is the power aimed at paralysis. Counter-violence is the power aimed at making man (people) free for experimentation" (Alves 1972: 125).

The term "Counter-violence" as used by Alves, clearly differentiates between "violence" and "defence." Counter-violence is a destruction of evil power for the sake of building liberation for the future. It is the power against those who make liberation impossible. In order to make the oppressed free, the power of the oppressor must first be destroyed. Jesus confronted first the power of the devil, sin and death and overcame them. There will be no freedom and justice without confrontation first. According to Alves:

"God does not wait for the warriors to come to the conclusion that peace would be desirable. He burns their weapons. He does not wait for the master to decide freely to liberate the slave. He knows that the master will never do that. So he breaks the yoke, and the erstwhile master can no longer dominate. The power of God destroy what make the world unfree. This use of power looks like violence because it destroys the equilibrium and peace of the system of domination. But ... this peace is really the triumph of the violence of oppression. Thus what looks like the violence of the lion is really the power of counter-violence, that is, power used against those who generate, support, and defend the violence of a world of masters and slaves" (Alves 1972: 125).

This is the idea we find in the Bible. It shows us that the struggle for justice is not for the sake of confrontation but for the liberation of the oppressed. Freedom comes after the destruction of evil. When liberation theology used the word revolution or counter - violence it does not mean war. The word revolution (or counter-violence as used by Alves) implies radical change in the society. Liberation theologians believe that problems are not solved automatically. Therefore “the concept of revolution refers to the radical nature of the change that must come and not to the method which might be used to bring it about” (Maimela 1990: 159). In Christian faith, revolutionary actions are regarded as a way of bringing freedom and justice in the direction of God’s kingdom. Bonino explains: “The Christian faith today both a stimulus and a challenge for revolutionary action when it encourages us to look and work for historical realization in the direction of the kingdom of God in terms of justice” (Bonino 1979: 152).

Revolution can be understood as an action for radical change because the oppressor denies the oppressed their freedom and rights. It is a radical change in the society so that the oppressed and poor can be free in the society.

5.4 Love and struggle.

Many theologians of liberation theology use the word “revolution violence” as a process through which the oppressed can obtain their freedom. Alves uses the word, “counter - violence.” Bonino replaces the words “violence and revolution” with the term, “Class struggle.” This is different from

the idea of Alves who uses the word, “counter - violence,” but both describes the “process through which the oppressed discover their identity” (Bonino 1979:107).

According to Bonino, there is a relationship between class struggle and Christian love. Class struggle is a struggle for the poor to reshape the society. It is not an instrument of revenge but a means for attaining a new and just situation (Bonino 1979: 119). Like class struggle, Christian love “did not mean ... a morally emotional feeling but a conscious and intelligent effort to change the basic economic and social structures which produced the dire conditions in which people lived. Faith works out in love” (Bonino 1979: 44).

Christians have a responsibility to liberate those who are under oppression. To love them does not just mean solidarity with them or just a mere feeling, but one must do something practical. We see this example in the love of God. His love is expressed in his concrete saving actions toward human beings. We can understand God’s love in the event of the exodus, the liberation struggle of Israel from Egypt. Through his love, God liberated Israel from the power of oppression although in many cases Israel was unfaithful to him. Kameeta explains:

“He (God) created and blessed them when they turned their backs against his love and truth, he chased them out of the garden. He then gathered them after the flood and opened the doors of his blessing, when they were oppressed, he led them out of slavery with this mighty hand of liberation. He brought them in the shadow of his blessing, but again when they turned back against his liberating love and truth, he

destroyed the temple, which had become the symbol of the evil status quo, overthrew their government and sent them into exile. But when they turned back to him, he did not hesitate to prepare a road in the wilderness of despair and to lead them through the door of blessing” (Kameeta 1986: 5).

Kameeta illustrates both the love of God and his punishment. He punishes those who do not respond adequately to his loving care. He punished Egyptians because he loves them so that they could stop evil actions against Israel. And again, God liberated Israel from bondage because he loved them. He hates oppression, but again he punished them when they did not fulfil God’s law. God’s punishment is just because he punishes for a good purpose.

Our Christian message concerning the love of God compels us to love God and our fellow human beings. In other words, our response to the love of God is shown to be effective in our love of and service to our fellow human beings. Because God loves this world, he conquered it by sending his only Son who confronted the evil power - the cross and death. We should follow in his footsteps so that we can be faith full to our Christian faith. Bonino writes:

“... the commandment of love must evidently be read in the context of Jesus ‘ proclamation of the kingdom of God. It cannot therefore, be reduced a purely interpersonal or inter subjective dimension, but must be set in relation to the eschatological and cosmic scope of the kingdom. This means that love is inextricably interwoven with hope and justice” (Bonino 1979: 113).

Bonino's argument is, in my opinion, correct because love implies an absolute demand for justice. Love is the fulfilment of justice because only through love for fellow human beings can justice prevail. For only the person of love can serve others with justice. For this reason love must be understood, as the motivation which guarantees justice. With love in the people, love will prevail in society.

From this understanding one may conclude that love implies an eschatological dimension because it is a category of the kingdom of God. Love is equal to justice. Therefore, the Christian message of love must show its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the society so that human beings can live in accordance with the kingdom of God.

Alves explains that love is the power against the oppressors because it helps destroy the structure intended to oppress the poor, the slave and the rejected. He argues that:

“Love is what God does in order to make man free ... The use of power come to be seen not as the expression of love, but rather as a concession that love makes to the contingencies and imperfection of historical life. From the perspective of dialectics, however, since the man who is afraid of the future is unable himself, love takes shape as an activity that aims at the destruction of the objective and subjective condition of slavery” (Alves 1972: 126).

Action against evil powers - oppression and injustice - remains the work of love because it destroys the power of the devil, and makes human beings free. Alves explains further:

“Love for the oppressed is wrath against the oppressors. The process of liberation is thus the judgment on the master. In order to make the slave free, the objective power and instrument must be destroyed” (Alves 1972: 124).

Love of fellow human beings, according to the Gospel is not acceptance of evil but a means to reshape society. Love must be understood as a condemnation, resistance or rejection of evil. It must also be interpreted as the way to criticize the power of oppression in order to create a new form of economic and social organization. It is Christian love that compels Christian to fight for justice, freedom and peace. So acts of love liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor.

Here we see that there is not difference between struggle and love. Because of love, evil has to be resisted. And to resist evil one has to struggle against it. There must be confrontation against evil forces. This will help us not to reconcile with injustice and oppression but to create a community of justice and peace. Bonino states:

“... the struggle can be characterized as an instrument of liberation - the oppressed realize that it is only as they assert the conflict and carry it to its radical resolution that they will be able to wrest power from the hands of the oppressor and therefore to free themselves. The outcome of the struggle - and its intended aim - is not, nevertheless, a new oppression simple inversion of the relations of the power but the suppression of oppression, and therefore the elimination of the struggle” (Bonino 1979: 107).

In social political terms the New World can only prevail after oppressive structures of economic and political injustice have been confronted. Justice, peace and freedom have to be sought, even if it takes time and creates conflicts. This conflicts is the struggle between oppressed and oppressors, justice and injustice. A conflict between God and the devil, which aims to tear down hatred, injustice and political injustice.

In this understanding, in order to fulfil what Jesus tells us to feed the hungry, care for the sick and imprisoned, and clothe the naked, “we need to change the structures of society which create and multiply every day those conditions” (Bonino 1979: 44).

CONCLUSION

Christian theologians differ in their understanding of the coming of the New World. There are some who believe that the kingdom of God, has already started with the coming of Jesus Christ, while others are still seeking or waiting for a New World with a better life after death. For those who are just waiting for the kingdom of God after death and abandoning their life on earth, Marx's claim that religion is the sigh of the oppressed people could be correct. But his conclusion that religion is the opium of the people is incorrect. Of course, religion was used, and is still used, to comfort the people in painful oppression, but this is not its basic purpose. Christian faith looks forward to a New World and the transformation of this world to a New World of peace and justice. It looks forward to the New World, just like the Marxist, who is waiting for Utopia.

Christian faith shares with Marxism some understandings of history and although there are difference between their understanding concerning the coming of the New World, both have a common understanding that history has meaning and that it moves in a certain pattern towards a known goal. In Christian understanding, history derives meaning from human beings or from the contradiction found in human society. Marxism holds that the historical process is dominated by the struggle between social classes. The goal of history is the New World, the classless society leading to full human freedom.

In other words, as in Christianity, Marxism too sees history as perpetuated between two forces. In

both Christianity and Marxism, the struggle is predetermined. In Christian faith, God triumphs when human beings finally turn towards him and abandon false ideals. He will establish his kingdom based on justice and freedom. According to Marxism the outcome is the abolition of capitalism, and the destruction of all forms of injustice and exploitation, and we find a New World based on freedom, equality and fraternal co-operation.

Liberation theology has built a bridge between Marxism and Christianity. Faith is not simply understanding the meaning of life and history as our own work in the totality of our history, like Marxists do. But they believe that creation is related to the power of God who created this world at the beginning. Christian faith looks forward to a New World born from the reality of the past, and believes that this present world is created by the power of God. The future creation must start from the condition inherited from the past.

In other words, liberation theologians believe that although the future is in the hands of God, human beings are asked to work towards the New World. The idea is that Christianity has already tasted the ruling of God through salvation (through the death and resurrection of Christ). There is relationship between divine salvation through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and political, economic and social freedom through the liberation struggle. The point here is the question of how we can liberate or transform society from social injustice, and this cannot be separated from the question of how God liberates human beings from the evil. Because we encounter God's kingdom through Jesus Christ, liberation theologians see the need to preserve that peace and justice while we are waiting for a complete change. We need to point and direct the world to the ultimate destiny.

Therefore, liberation theologians produced a theology which satisfied both Marxism and Christian eschatology. Of course, Christians have an essential place in society because they are concerned with the ultimate destiny of human beings and society. Christians carry out their critical and constructive function of pointing society towards the fulfilment in the New World. Christians, by witnessing the future fulfilment of humans in the kingdom of God, help inspire the vision of social change and also to stir the imagination for social action. Only through this social change do we human beings see the vision of the coming kingdom of God, the New World. According to Jesus Christ, the proclamation of the kingdom of God points towards the future of the world.

Christian's understanding of the kingdom of God is neither myth nor a mere vision as Marxism thinks. It is reality of faith, to which we Christians look forward. The basis of Christian faith for the New World is the new way of life, which has already begun in Jesus Christ. We should also bear in mind that the early Christians understood the church as an eschatological community. In other words, they believed the church to be a community of high expectation and hope because reality being under the rule of God who will pour out the Spirit in the last day. They believed also that the Spirit is now present. In this regard, Christians think of themselves as a new people of God in expectation, and in the present.

Although I welcome and praise eschatology of liberation, it may difficult to be accepted by some Christians for some reasons. As it has been recorded:

“Liberation theology has been welcomed with sympathy and hope by many and has contributed to vitality of numerous understanding in the service of Christian witness. As the same time it has stimulated interest in reflection on the Christian faith... The year has also brought serious and relevant critiques that have helped this theological thinking to reach maturity.

On the other hand, the theology of liberation has also stirred facile enthusiasms that interpreted it in a simplistic or erroneous way by ignoring their integral demands of the Christian faith as lived in the communion of the church. Finally there has been the foreseeable resistance of same” (Brown 1990: 131).

Liberation theology accepts the Marxist interpretation of history and how the problem in this world could be solved by revolution and class struggle. Class struggle is regarded, by liberation theologians, as the driving force of history. By this understanding, they replace God’s power with human action. If one has a conviction that human beings can make history, it shows the heresy that human beings are gods.

This understanding allows also liberation theologians to advocate revolution as the only means to be used against oppression rather than a peaceful means. Class struggle also promotes hatred in the society or between classes. The kingdom of God is no more understood as the gift of God by grace, but as a result of human struggle.

Liberation theology neglects a “spiritual” side of the people and emphasizes the political side of the

people. Like for example, for Gutierrez sin is reduced to social and political sphere, where he expresses that there is no sin except social sin. They interpret the Bible by selecting the texts so that they can give them a political meaning. Bible stories such as the exodus story are used by liberation theologians for political meaning.

By so doing they just quote the biblical texts without showing the real meaning of them. Some times they manipulate the text so that it can fit one's idea without a deep knowledge of how to employ the text in the social and political context.

Liberation theology advocates that God is on the side of the poor and the neglected. This explanation can give a misunderstanding that the rich and the powerful are excluded from the kingdom of God and they have no place in the eternal life.

Much criticism can be raised against liberation theology, but this does not end the problem. Those who criticize liberation theology without putting the situation of the people into consideration may end up doing theology that has no meaning to that particular group of the people. Brown explains:

“Criticism is a two-edged sword. Those who wield it should be aware that their own presupposition are also under scrutiny, and that they may conflict more damage on themselves than on those they seek to discredit... Many of the attacks on liberation theology are more damaging to the viewpoints of their adherents than to their intended targets” (Brown 1990: 132).

We are asked, by our faith, to prepare the present for the future kingdom of God. The future kingdom of God has significance beyond our existential now. Therefore we make our present condition more effective to the promised future kingdom of God. We also find this idea in Moltmann's theology.

“He (Moltmann) is ... much more interested in showing the practical consequences of Biblical eschatological perspective as they inform church and the burning political issues such as social justice, world peace and personal freedom... He no longer wants to confine eschatology to discourse about the so-called last things, which will happen in the end, but to consider the whole cause, which drives, towards this end” (Schwarz 1979: 98).

The kingdom of God, or the New World, implies liberation in this world. It requires economic and political liberation as well as human solidarity and struggle for justice. Human beings have to act in order to form a society in God's will. This means that the involvement to create a just society and the resistance to injustice and evil is the responsibility of all Christians.

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