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Article

Cross Communion Paradigm: Reimagining Liberation Theology from the Perspective of the Catholic Church

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Abstract

Theology of Liberation is regarded as an essential elaboration and concrete theological reflection of the Second Vatican Council. As part of the development of mission in the modern world, theology aids the Church in responding beyond the option for the poor project and to discern and act on situations other than economic issues. However, theology is often associated with leaning toward ideologies deviating from the Church and shrouds the possibility of formulating a theology aligned with it. This paper intends to present a theology of liberation affiliated with Church teachings toward a proposed Cross Communion paradigm. The framework will utilize the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Cross model: the vertical aspect focuses on communion with God with the spiritual, magisterial, and transcendental dimensions, and the horizontal element focuses on communion with society and its sociological, temporal, and historical dimensions. Founded on the Scriptures and the teachings of liberation, elaboration of the concept of freedom, and the Social Teachings of the Church, the paradigm presents distinguishing elements responding to a form of split-level Christianity that reduces faith to verticalism or horizontalism and Marxist tendencies in theology. Also, analysis of general views of liberation from theological and non-theological perspectives, aligned or not aligned with the Church's teachings.

Keywords: *Cross communion, dualistic dilemma, horizontalism, Theology of liberation, verticalism*

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Introduction

The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) marked a transformative period for the Church in the modern world. Focusing primarily on evangelization and mission, the Church is geared towards a more relevant and dialogical institution, revitalizing its approach to ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, inculturation, liturgy, and options for the poor. Enshrined in its pastoral constitutions and declarations, Church authorities have the responsibility to interpret the "signs of the times" and align them with the values of the Church and her traditions.

One of the most controversial critical reflections brought about by Vatican II was deriving its mission through a theology of liberation. While there is an orthodox view of the theology of liberation being allied with the Church's social teachings and aligned with the directions of Vatican II, there were allegations against the theology of liberation concerning its utilization of Marxist elements that led to the Magisterium's rejection of the said theology. In addition, there were accusations of political governments against the clergy, religious, and laity of conniving with communist organizations camouflaged as the promotion of the theology of liberation.

Nevertheless, the influence of the theology of liberation in doing the Church's mission of preferential option for the poor is of paramount importance. Cardinal Müller stated that liberation theology is "one of the most significant currents of Catholic theology in the twentieth century."[1] Pope John Paul II clarified that "theology of liberation is not only timely but useful and necessary."[2] With these polarized presuppositions, we intend to delineate what forms of theological reflections can be aligned with the Church relative to the theology of liberation, albeit deviant form, but not necessarily Marxist.

Discussions

Church's Theology of Liberation

The Catholic form of theology of liberation is founded in the Scriptures. While other forms of theology would claim the same, there are still tendencies toward hermeneutical variations that may differ or be contrary to the Church's perspectives. Economic, geographic, ideological, and cultural factors may influence such interpretations. However, some forms utilize Biblical narratives merely to accommodate primarily ideologies. In this case, using Scriptures is dispensable, may not be necessary, or may be a criticism of theological expressions.

The following presentation will focus on the Church's theology of liberation inspired by God's work of salvation, founded in the Scriptures, and further elaboration of the Church that may not be explicitly Biblical but is theologically aligned.

[1] Gustavo Gutiérrez and Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, *On the Side of the Poor: The Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 2015), 11

[2] John Paul II, "Letter to the Brazilian Episcopal Conference (April 9, 1986)" in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*. ed. Alfred T. Hennelly (Maryknoll N.Y: Orbis Books, 1990), 503.

Biblical Context (Old and New Testament and the Church)

The Exodus experience is an example of a relevant reference to the liberating acts of God freeing His People from slavery. When the descendants of Jacob, together with Joseph and his brothers, grew in numbers and became more numerous, the Egyptians decided to put the Israelites into slavery. They were put into forced labor and were treated with cruelty. (Exodus 1:8-14) Once a former refuge of Jacob and his family, Egypt became a house of bondage for the Israelites.[3] Once redemption was brought to Egypt by Joseph averting hunger from famine, but the descendants of Israel were turned into enslaved people by a Pharaoh who had no memory of Joseph. Gomez notes that authentic liberation requires both religious and temporal liberation, as demonstrated by God commanding the Pharaoh to let the Israelites "go." This "let my people go" indicates freedom not only from forced labor but also in matters of social and political, and ultimately, freedom by following the Covenant with God on Sinai.[4] The Exodus experience, as a liberating activity for the Israelites, is not limited to the afterlife but also to the Promised Land here on Earth and culminates in the redemption of Christ.[5] Müller adds that salvation in the Old Testament must be understood as a form of liberation leading the Israelites to the land of freedom.[6]

"The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and a force for liberation."[7] Since the New Testament is the continuity of the Word of God, revealing and participating in the history of humankind, so is Jesus fulfilling His redemption in this history of salvation. One of the links between the Old Testament and New Testament is when Jesus utilized the words of the Prophet Isaiah: *The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor.* (Lk 4:18; cf. Is 61:1)

Pope Paul VI highlighted the life of Christ: His Incarnation, teachings & miracles, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension form part of an integral evangelical mission.[8] Jesus is the Promised Messiah foretold by the prophets for the redemption not only of the Chosen People of the Old Testament but also of all humanity. And since He is the author of salvation and must continue His evangelizing activity, He inaugurated the Church as His visible sacrament.[9] Hence, the foundation of the theology of liberation, according to Pope John Paul II, is based on "the truth about Jesus the Savior'; 'the truth about the Church'; and the truth about man and his dignity.'"[10] This framework would be the guide of the Church in discerning which are valid forms of liberation, and which are deviations or tendencies towards such deviations.

[3] Gomez, "Paths of Liberation Towards Freedom," 202
[4] Gomez, "Paths of Liberation Towards Freedom," 188
[5] Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, *Poor for the Poor*, 25
[6] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 20
[7] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation" or *Libertatis Nuntius*, Introduction
[8] *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 6
[9] *Lumen Gentium*, 9
[10] *Libertatis Nuntius*, XI: 5

Freedom

Freedom is the central focus of liberation. In a non-religious or non-theological sense, the cause for freedom for example calls for emancipation from colonialism (countries aspiring for independence from foreign rule or mentality that enslaves and eliminates local cultures), from economic poverty (root causes and effects of poverty such as corruption of both public and private institutions, lack of employment and education) and abuses against the basic rights of persons (lack of due process of law, authoritarian governments and non-commensuration of workers).

Freedom has become synonymous with liberation. Historically, liberationist movements had resorted to the use of armed struggle or violence in order to win freedom. Arendt supports this claim that to achieve liberation, revolution is necessary.[11] Since time immemorial, the struggle for freedom has often required armed resistance against occupations by other countries, racial discrimination, religious suppression, and labor abuses. War can be an inevitable recourse, and the use of violence is justifiable when no other means are available.[12] However, not all who fought for freedom would resort to violence, and not all would engage in swords and guns. In the modern period, dialogue is the initial and preferred means of averting armed conflicts. Civilized societies and governments are learning from history that disputes are addressed not in violent confrontations but sustained in dialogue and solidarity.

Freedom is one of the major themes in religions, liberating from inhuman conditions, for example, the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, Christian denominations from sins, and Asian religions from the cycle of rebirth. The Catholic Church, together with those who believe in salvation through Jesus Christ, situate the redeeming story originally from the sin of Adam and Eve. Müller stressed that sin resulted from the misuse of freedom that corrupted humanity, but found liberation from the redeeming acts of Jesus.[13] Adam of Genesis who brought sin to the world; Jesus, the new Adam, led the redemption for the salvation of all.

Freedom is a requirement for the achievement of salvation. Since faith is necessary for salvation,[14] faith demands assent to the truth of the redemption of Christ, which is the root and the rule of freedom.[15] This faith should be anchored in understanding salvation history, realizing liberation from evil is the foundation of authentic freedom.[16]

Libertatis documents

The core contention of liberation theology has always been the concept and application of freedom. For the Church, the heart of this freedom is from God, who

[11] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 142
[12] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 12
[13] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 70
[14] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 161
[15] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation" henceforth *Libertatis Conscientia*, 3
[16] *Libertatis Conscientia*, 97

reveals Himself and intervenes in human history for salvation. The Church, then, is tasked to continue to discern and actualize the continuing salvific work of God by way of liberating us from the sins of the world.[17] Vatican II and previous doctrinal pronouncements have formulated a framework to see and understand the oppressive situations and then set the evangelizing activity through the lens of the faith. But without the assent to this transmission of truths lies the tendency of deviations that may go against the Church's understanding of salvation.

As mentioned, liberation theology is one of the expressions of Vatican II.[18] Hence, if Vatican II has various projections and interpretations, liberation theology can be presented in different ways. These tendencies are subject to assessments of whether they are compatible with standard teachings or traditions of the Church. However, to examine those theological reflections that align with the Church, primary guidelines must be considered. One crucial consideration is Pope John Paul II's message to a group of Latin American bishops is that:

> *the theology of liberation is not only timely but valuable and necessary. It should constitute a new state— in close connection with former ones - of the theological reflection initiated with the apostolic tradition and continued by the great fathers and doctors, by the ordinary and extraordinary magisterium and, in more recent years, by the rich patrimony of the church's social doctrine, expressed in documents from Rerum Novarum to Laborem Exercens.*[19]

Hennelly underscores the Pope's affirmative stance on liberation theology, which is aligned and homogeneously based on tradition.[20] During his message to Brazilian bishops, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had already published two important instructions: *Libertatis Nuntius* (1984) and *Libertatis Conscientia* (1986). Though Pope John Paul II has the approval of these texts, Cardinal Ratzinger was the primary author of the two instructions.[21] The Instructions were intended to respond to repeated appeals by bishops, priests, and concerned communities regarding the theological climate when ideologies such as Marxism were integrated into some faith expressions. The said trend was an attempt by the Vatican to clarify, correct, and propose an authentic form of liberation theology.[22]

The first instruction was viewed generally as a criticism of liberation theology.[23] Although not all variants of the theology are against Church teachings, the admonishment comes from those who utilized Marxism uncritically, attacked the authority of the Church, and reduced the reading of the Scriptures.[24] The second

[17] *Lumen Gentium,* 4, 7

[18] Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor,* 124; Pasquale T. Giordano, *Awakening to Mission The Philippine Catholic Church 1965-1981* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1988), 1; Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 11-12; Raluto, *Poverty and Ecology*, 79

[19] John Paul II, Brazil 1986

[20] Hennelly, *Liberation Theology,* 498

[21] McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics:*17

[22] Torpigliani, "The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on Liberation Theologies," 167-168

[23] Hennelly, *Liberation Theology,* 393

[24] Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 270

instruction was more constructive on the theology of liberation.[25] Leading theologians, such as Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff, have positive reviews of it.[26] McGovern highlights the succeeding *Libertas,* which are focused on freedom and liberation. A personal quest for freedom is the key to achieving societal freedom. Since social sins are rooted in personal sin, social transformation demands inner conversion.[27]

Regarding armed struggle, Gomez stressed a provision from the Instruction endorsing passive resistance instead of violent means. The non-violent means for struggle are conformable to the Gospel and go against the Marxist tendencies wherein violence is justified for social transformation. He also claimed the success of the 1986 People Power in the Philippines was an inspiration for the Instruction on non-violent liberation.[28]

Cardinal Ratzinger's theological focus on Libertatis documents would be the connection of personal sin to structural sin and personal conversion to transformation of society.[29] Additionally, authentic liberation is understood as freedom from the slavery of sin attained in grace and communion with God.[30] Both documents would serve as the basis for promoting the expression of liberation theology and warnings on deviant forms and their tendencies. They should not be read independently nor with dissociation from one another. Instead, they must be studied in an organic relationship, taking into consideration each other.[31] Moreover, Vatican Instructions lead us away from the minimalistic and limited view of liberation theology, reducing it merely to Marxism. Libertatis documents set the framework for seeing the theology beyond perceptions, facilitating clearer awareness of true freedom.[32]

Freedom to and *Freedom from*

Since freedom and liberation are the focus of the theology of liberation, both can be understood synonymously or differently. The word liberation came from the Latin term "*liber*," which means "free," and hence is similar in meaning to freedom. First, liberty or freedom is choosing an act towards an objective. Freedom in morality refers to doing, not doing, acting or not acting, to doing good or evil.[33] Derived from reason and will, man can choose between acts that can result in good or sin. However, true freedom means determining an objectively reasonable act; otherwise, freedom is abused if an act is considered sinful.[34] The other perspective of freedom and liberation is attributed to a struggle against conditions that enslave, not proper to the dignity of man. Seeking justice and the promotion of rights are associated with this aspect.

[25] Hennelly, *Liberation Theology,* 461
[26] McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics*, 17
[27] McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics*, 54-55
[28] Fausto Gomez, "Some Notes on the Philippine Revolution, the Involvement of the Church, and Politics" Philippiniana Sacra 61 (Jan-Apr 1986): 111-112
[29] McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics:* 54
[30] Raluto, *Poverty and Ecology*, 83
[31] Gomez, "Paths of Liberation Towards Freedom," 174
[32] Gorospe, "The Vatican Instruction and Liberation Theology in the Philippines," 163
[33] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1731-1732
[34] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1733

Hence, discerning the concept of freedom aligned with the Church's theology of liberation can further lead to two elements: freedom from and freedom to.

First, "freedom to" presupposes the goal of freedom. Every object of free will is the freedom to choose what is good, at least on a personal level.[35] The intended good and how to achieve it, one is subject to morality and corresponds to reason. While freedom is fundamental to man's nature towards the good, this good must be accomplished truthfully in the context of love and justice.[36] Therefore, true freedom is the freedom to do the good manifested by the law of love.[37]

Human beings are capable of exercising their freedom. But this capacity to choose an act willed for the good is not absolute. "Freedom is not the liberty to do anything whatsoever."[38] A person willing to act for perceived good may be only for personal gain and probably at the expense of others. It may not be very good, but it is seen as subjectively reasonable or justifiable. It may also benefit the self or a few, but it may not help others. Freedom may be ruled by arbitrariness at times, moved by passions, consequently at the cost of others.[39] This happens mostly for leaders who are authoritarians, be it in the public and private sectors or small societies, who govern without regard to laws and ordinances. Though passions are neither good nor evil, inordinate ones can stifle doing the good. At the societal level, where injustices exist, passion to revolt can be an instrument for liberty if it follows an uncritical utilization of Marxism.[40] Because of tendencies to choose an apparent sound or false good, freedom requires a set of conditions or structures to determine an act as good.

The task of freedom necessitates the function of reason to determine what is true and good. St. Thomas Aquinas directed using this freedom for the actual good according to established laws and norms. For him, law is established by reason for the benefit of more than the personal and common good.[41] Pope John Paul II identifies the law of God, His commandments, as the starting point towards freedom.[42] In some societies that are turning more secular, morality is evolving to uncertainty, and popular voices are becoming a norm; the Pope prescribes going to Christ to seek answers about what is good to be done and what is evil to avoid.[43]

Moreover, "freedom to" (also freedom for) as an element in liberation theology involves the authentic use of freedom towards the good. Indeed, the quest for the good can be morally relative or ethically dependent, either for personal justification, based on existing policies, or conditioned by ideologies. Nevertheless, in the Catholic theology of liberation, the core of freedom and the pursuit of freedom is Christ. Other than the Sinai Covenant, Jesus' laws on love for God and love for neighbor are

[35] Jerry Reblora Manlangit, *Fundamental Concepts, Principles and Issues in Bioethics volume 1*, (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2010), 56
[36] Gomez, "Paths of Liberation Towards Freedom," 183
[37] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1985
[38] *Libertatis Conscientia*, 26
[39] *Centesimus Annus*, 4
[40] *Libertatis Nuntius, 12*
[41] St. Thomas Aquinas, STh I-I, 90, 1.
[42] *Veritatis Splendor*, 13
[43] *Veritatis Splendor*, 8

significant prerequisites in knowing the good. However, knowing and doing what is good must be rooted in truth. Jesus said, "*and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* (John 8:32). Certainly, the link to good is truth, but pursuing the good can be, at times, socially conditioned. For the Church established by Christ and given authority to preach the Good News in the pillar of truth,[44] the Church also discerns the good and the truth found among all peoples, religions, cultures, and philosophies. The Church recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit, who continuously sows the seeds of truth even outside the Church. These truths and everything that is good but against evil may still be part of or elements of the Church of Christ.[45] Moreover, the Church realizes that she lives in a pluralistic society, and members of the faith and those who have good will enter into dialogue with other outlooks, which is a matter of responsibility of the Church in a justly ordered society.[46]

Second, "freedom from" is basically freedom from sin.[47] Cardinal Ratzinger even stressed that liberation is primarily freedom from the *radical slavery of sin*.[48] At that time, the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith elaborated that liberation is not exclusively political, but freedom from any form of slavery from sin that affects man's cultural, economic, and social dimensions. Popularly known to be hostile to liberation theology, he veered the theology according to Catholic tradition rooted in faith. Gutierrez also broadens this freedom from self-centeredness, oppression, injustice, and deprivation.[49] Since sin also originated from being egocentric, in the same context of the sin of Adam and Eve's abuse of freedom, the self becomes an enslaved person to sin, which in turn enslaves others. The known Father of liberation theology classified this sin on a personal level that ruptures the communion with God. As the self breaks away from God, it results in social and structural sin, which further enslaves, oppresses, exploits, and abuses.[50] In other words, the bondage of sin starts from the self, influenced usually by social sins that have become structural slavery in need of freedom. In this sense, freedom is not only a social agenda but also a personal one.

Poverty is a significant theme of the "freedom from" of liberation theology. The Church in the modern world, responding to the signs of the times, acknowledges the poor as the Church's new self-understanding identity and mission. Dorr locates this liberating mission from *Gaudium et Spes,* providing a solid foundation addressing the problem of poverty through a Christian approach.[51] The Vatican II Pastoral Constitution identifies the Church with "those who are poor or in any way afflicted". It demands that the members of the faith be in communion with them. But this solidarity requires reflection from the perspective of the poor. Liberating the poor

[44] *Lumen Gentium*, 8
[45] *Ecclesia in Asia*, 15
[46] Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor,* 123
[47] Gomez, "Paths of Liberation Towards Freedom," 183
[48] *Libertatis Nuntius,* Introduction
[49] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 115-116
[50] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 17
[51] Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor,* 122

would be better if not from the dictates of the rich and powerful, nor the privileged class, but rather from the perspective of the oppressed.[52] Theologians should situate the assessment from the conditions and the origins of oppression, from the experiences of the poor. Gutierrez and Muller exhort those who work for liberation to first consider the poor's sufferings, exploitation, and oppression as the starting point of theological reflection.[53] Through dialogue, one learns the imperative for liberation motivated by the Divine objective of restoring the poor their dignity.

For Gutierrez, the preferential option for the poor is the best ecclesial movement from Vatican II to CELAM's Medellin and subsequent conferences.[54] Muller identifies this ecclesial movement as liberation theology, correlatively with his friend Gutierrez. Both recognize the missionary reflection and task of the Church as consistent with Jesus' evangelizing effort in redeeming the world. Unlike some speculative misunderstandings of the theology, liberation theology is a "continuity with the whole development of Catholic theology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries."[55] Muller also emphasized the role of the Church as an instrument of freedom, seen as part of the redemption of God to man,[56] liberating humanity from all conditions that contribute to poverty. Moreover, Pope Francis elaborated on the options for the poor economically, physically, spiritually, socially, and morally.[57] Of these, the financially poor have more leverage and can influence other dehumanizing situations. Hence, freedom from goes beyond the effort of liberating from factors affecting the poor, but also freedom for "spiritual as well as material development."[58]

Cross-Communion Paradigm (Split-level Christianity)

The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World recognizes a challenge in faith that tends to divorce itself from earthly responsibilities.[59] Certain views on religiosity are exclusively expressed on worship and anything that is divine or for the "next life." Since God is the "Father in heaven," he sent His Son to Earth, but He died, was resurrected, and ascended to heaven. Therefore, the goal of faith puts a premium on that which is not of this world. This uncritical reductionism in faith not only puts a demarcation line between what is spiritual and corporeal, but also finds no relevance or is insignificant in personal life and society. Muller calls this dualistic dilemma wherein there is a dichotomy "between what is this-worldly and what is other-worldly, between earthly well-being and heavenly salvation."[60] He ascertains the accusation of Marx and his associates against Christianity with this form of reductionism and polarization. Friedrich Engels, a close friend and co-author of Marx'

[52] Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, 122-123
[53] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 26, 58
[54] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 7
[55] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 11, 12, 14
[56] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 75
[57] Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, *Poor for the Poor*, vii
[58] *Libertatis Nuntius, 3*
[59] *Gaudium et Spes*, 43
[60] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 82

The Communist Manifesto, alleging that the Christian faith preaches only salvation after death, in eternal life. Though Rerum Novarum was just published at a time when there were abuses of workers during the Industrial Revolution, social transformation was seen by communist advocates as not an objective of the Christian faith.[61] On a positive note, Engels recognized the similarity of communism to the emancipation of oppressed people, liberating them from slavery. Still, this resemblance happened only in the early history of Christianity.[62] In other words, those who view faith goals merely as heavenly and devoid of social responsibilities are not only individualistic but also communistic in understanding salvation.

Another concept of split-type Christianity that is more well-known is from the explication of Fr. Bulatao. He opined a form of religious perception on one side, the person knows the moral truths, but is separated from their daily activities.[63] A student learns from the Commandments that it is wrong to steal, yet cheating in an exam is an example of this split-type Christianity. Bulatao alludes to this inclination. On one hand, regulations and beliefs are abstract and conceptual, and on the other, they are influenced by culture and society that tolerates wrongdoings. The split can also be caused by non-awareness of ethical divergences or invincible ignorance of acts, furthermore motivated by social or peer pressure.[64] He also suspects the split type of attitude with no disposition, or at least has feelings of guilt.[65] This propensity is common among Filipinos and not exclusive to Catholics. The behavior worldwide affects other Christian religions, caused by a shift to postmodern and individualistic attitudes.[66] Split types can also be associated with nonreligious expressions; for example, a government official is entrusted with financial responsibilities and is expected to safeguard and utilize them prudently, but does so otherwise.

Overall, the two categories of split-type Christianity pose a challenging task in a struggle towards freedom, which is both personal and social. First is the personal recognition and reception of the faith. How does one view transcendence in relation to self-understanding? Is the spiritual severing itself from what is corporeal? The second is on social intersubjectivity and implications. Does the belief in what is "not of this world" have meaning to what "in this world" refers to in various societies and groups? Would social responsibility limit its tasks to what is only divine, but not anything immanent? Further elaboration and parallel of this split will be on verticalism and horizontalism. After this, a proposed framework on liberation theology will be developed to respond to these faith challenges.

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[61] Frederick Engels, "On the History of Early Christianity", in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works. volume 27* (New York, International Publishers, 1990), 447-448

[62] Frederick Engels, "On the History of Early Christianity", 447-448.

[63] Bulatao, "Split-Level Christianity," 120

[64] Jayeel S. Cornelio, "Popular Religion and the Turn to Everyday Authenticity Reflections on the Contemporary Study of Philippine Catholicism," Philippine Studies 62, nos. 3-4 (2014): 475

[65] Jaime Bulatao, *Phenomena and their Interpretation: Landmark Essays 1957-1989*, (Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1992): 24

[66] Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw and Tite Tiénou, "Responding to Split-Level Christianity and Folk Religion," International Journal of Frontier Missions Vol. 16:4, (1999/2000): 173, 175.

Vertical and Horizontal Dimension

The Catholic Church's form of liberation hinges on the redeeming act of Christ established on the supreme commandment of love, namely, love of God and love of neighbor.[67] For Pope John Paul II, this love of God is not only inseparable from that of love of neighbor but also connected and mutually related.[68] Cardinal Bo integrates these greatest commandments into communion: the vertical dimension (communion between God and men) and the horizontal dimension (communion of men with their neighbor).[69] These dimensions form the foundation of the theology of liberation contained in the social doctrines of the Church, the interplay of the work of the Gospel in the Church's social mission in society.[70]

While there are distinctions between the vertical and horizontal dimensions, these aspects do not contradict or oppose each other. Recognizing each plane leads to a better understanding of the faith, and by integrating them, disposes and directs the faith towards mission and action.

The vertical dimension is the relationship between God and the individual person or God and a community of persons. In theological terms and closely connected to the identity of Cardinal Bo, this can be manifested by a personal, loving relationship with God through the contemplative and charismatic form of spirituality.[71] By contemplative, it is through prayer wherein we direct our minds toward God by adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and petition.[72] Charismatic spirituality is an attitude of worship by Christian renewal movements with special reception of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source of freedom and liberation, promoting justice and peace in societies.[73] Moreover, Muller defines the vertical aspect as a spiritual union with God, building a spiritual relationship, and becoming Jesus' disciples.[74] Similarly, his friend Gutierrez speaks of Christian commitment to recognizing God's reign in prayer and hope. Through this contemplative dimension, the goal is to identify the value of life and dignity from a liberative perspective.[75] For Ratzinger, transcendence only works in a vertical plane through the worship of Jesus.[76] He also pinpoints the Eucharist as the center of communion with Christ and the Church, for He is the new manna from the heavens in a sacramental form.[77]

Notable theologians of Vatican II have made perspectival contributions to the vertical aspect of the faith, from personal and ecclesiological perspectives. For

[67] *Libertatis Conscientia*, 72, 99
[68] *Veritatis Splendor*, 14, 76
[69] Charles Maung Cardinal Bo, "The Church in Communion: Theology and Expression," in *Church as a Communion: Perspectives and Expressions The Asian Context*, ed. Jannel N. Abogado (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2021), 6
[70] *Libertatis Conscientia*, 99
[71] Cardinal Bo, "The Church in Communion: Theology and Expression," 6-9
[72] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2098
[73] *Libertatis Conscientia*, 61
[74] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 27-28
[75] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxxi-xxxii
[76] Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 129
[77] Thomas G. Dalzell, "Eucharist, Communion, and Orthopraxis in the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger," Irish Theological Quarterly 78(2) (2013): 109

Schillebeeckx, he referred to the dimension as vertical transcendence, which constitutes our dependence on the transcendent God.[78] This understanding would respond to ideologies that tend to reduce God to a transcendent being, consequently locating salvation only on an immanent level. He also pertained vertically to an encounter with the Divine, first by His self-revelation to man, then an ascent of faith on a spiritual level from those who believe in Him.[79] This framework of revelation was presented first in the Old Testament through Creation, sending of His prophets to communicate His message, fulfilled in Christ, and continued by the Church. Likewise, Congar's view of the vertical plane is connected to the ecclesial communion and the role of the laity. Since everything comes from Christ, His incarnational reality transcends and cooperates in salvific activity through His visible sacrament - the Church. Ecclesiologically, the laity "has to live for God" while recognizing social and temporal responsibilities. Consequently, the work of the laity in the world is sourced out from God and for God.[80] Similarly, for de Lubac, the ecclesial communion is demonstrated through the invisible union with God in the body of Christ.[81] In Rahner's view, vertical understanding lies in relationship and movement toward the Absolute; hence, he termed it "transcendence in man or man as spirit.[82] Rahner would speak of transcendence not exclusively vertically but also on the horizontal level.[83] Overall, the great theologians of Vatican II highlight the primacy of the vertical plane without disregarding the temporal and horizontal one. The duality of dimensions is distinct yet complementary and coexisting with one another. Regarding liberation theology, the vertical aspect of ecclesial communion would have a specific framework to distinguish elements that are compatible or incongruent with the interpretation of the Church.[84]

The horizontal dimension is about the communion of ourselves with one another.[85] Inaugurated from the commandment of love of neighbor preached by Jesus, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and from the "second tablet" of the Decalogue.[86] Aligan likewise identifies the horizontal approach as communion among men[87] and Timoner's communion with all the baptized, including communion with the saints.[88] The XVI Synod of Bishops for a synodal church terms it the unity of all humanity.[89]

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[78] Edward Schillebeeckx, *God and Man* (New York: Sheen and Ward, 1969), 163

[79] Edward Schillebeeckx, *God and Man,* 191, 196

[80] Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1957), 374-375

[81] Joseph S. Flipper, "Henri de Lubac and Political Theology," in *T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed. Jordan Hillebert (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 438

[82] Raymond Moloney, "The Intelligent Faith of Karl Rahner." Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review 71, no. 282 (1982): 122-123

[83] Nafula Fredrick Wanjala, George Ndemo and John Muhenda, "Karl Rahner on the Possibility of Metaphysics of Knowledge," International Journal of Latest Research in Humanities and Social Science vol. 4, issue 5 (2021): 5

[84] *Libertatis Nuntius* III.4; *Dei Verbum*, 10

[85] Cardinal Bo, "The Church in Communion: Theology and Expression," 11

[86] *Veritatis Splendor,* 13

[87] Aligan, "Amoris Laetitia: "Communion" and "Communion" in the Church," 73

[88] Timoner, To Be of One Heart and Mind, 24

[89] *Instrumentum Laboris* 2023, 46

Pope Benedict XVI calls it a communion with our brothers and sisters[90] and communion with others.[91] These others refer to the same shared humanity other than God and do not refer to irrational beings like animals.

The Second Greatest Commandment of Jesus is rooted in the divine anthropological perspective of every human being. Created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) is the foundation of full recognition that all persons possess dignity. With this dignity emanates man's basic rights and duties, and the basic principle of the liberating mission of the Social Doctrine of the Church.[92] To realize this, Congar asserts that an element of love of neighbor is doing the work of the world according to life's responsibilities and duties. It also participates in the temporal affairs of the history of the world through different societies and groups.[93]

Furthermore, this sensible and worldly activity must be linked to ecclesial objectives since the Church is the incarnation of Christ on Earth.[94] Along this line, Schillebeeckx's horizontal understanding, other than human activity in the world, is the proper exercise of freedom. As a free human being, a person must define himself in dialogue with the world and have the freedom to do the good of himself and for the good of society.[95] Doing this requires not only what is religious or through worship but also accomplishment in the context of one's secular vocation with its societal tasks and responsibilities.[96]

Verticalism and Horizontalism

Pope Benedict XVI views communion as inevitably inseparable in its vertical and horizontal dimensions.[97] If each were taken autonomously, detached, and irrelevant from the other, the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* may aptly call this the tendency of religion to be divorced or split from temporal and daily activities: verticalism or horizontalism.[98]

The Third CELAM or Puebla Conference described verticalism as reducing the faith into a "disembodied spiritual union with God."[99] The Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops warns of an inclination of faith aspiring to become too personalistic or with a preoccupation to become exclusivist without or less consideration for others. Another is the tendency among Latin Americans to confine worship to everyday life. However, the religious disposition observed by Puebla is not isolated in their locality. The Philippine form of worship likewise leans towards this same attitude.[100] The Practice of popular devotion is often limited to ritualism, which

[90] *Sacramentum Caritatis,* 76
[91] Dalzell, "Eucharist, Communion, and Orthopraxis," 109-110
[92] *Libertatis Nuntius*, 1; *Libertatis Conscientia*, 73
[93] Congar, *Lay People in the Church,* 374
[94] Congar, *Lay People in the Church,* 161-162
[95] Schillebeeckx, *God and Man,* 214
[96] Edward Schillebeeckx, *World and Church* (New York: Sheen and Ward, 1971), 11
[97] Sacramentum Caritatis (Benedict XVI, 2007), 76
[98] *Lumen Gentium*, 43
[99] *Puebla*, 329
[100] *Catechism for Filipino Catholics,* 192

usually translates to superstition and personalism. Moreover, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines observed Filipino Catholics' susceptibility to dichotomize worship from social, political, cultural, economic life, and social apostolate.[101] This kind of worship's personalistic orientation is a manifestation of the proverbial phrase: sacramentalized but not yet truly evangelized.

Ahern describes verticalism as reducing Christian missionary activity solely to spiritual exercises.[102] This one-sided faith dimension appeals merely to transcendence but lacks efforts toward social transformation. The view on mission and evangelization is only through spiritual proclamation, but it turns a blind eye to social justice and promoting the dignity of persons.[103] For Giordani, co-founder of the Focolare Movement perceives verticalism as a "practice of a Christianity strong in liturgy but weak in sociology," Giordani It is an evangelization merely situated itself within the confines of the Church but not beyond its walls, only on pews and aisles but not on the streets, entirely in prayers and hymns but not in words and deeds.

Cardinal Muller relates verticalism to a dualistic dilemma that divides what is for the heavens from what is for the world.[104] Verticalism is purely concerned with the otherworldly by way of worship and with an individualistic mindset. Its goal is to attain mystical experience with eyes set on the reward in the afterlife, but it disregards earthly life.[105] The concern is heavenly salvation and not the earthly forms of redemption; therefore, it may lead to ignoring oppression against persons or tolerating it for the reward of eternal life. He also posits that this kind of attitude toward faith is the very argument of Marxism against Christianity,[106] criticizing the Church not only for tolerating abuses against persons but also for being a party to such abuses.

Bulatao's split-level Christianity can be applied to verticalism. While one believes in the moral commandment of the Decalogue, acting otherwise is an example of this faith dissonance.[107] Even though a person remains to believe in Church doctrines and attends worship, they find no relevance to everyday living. Consequently, a person dominates two or more value systems that are incompatible or opposed.[108] Religious personalistic piety may be regarded as a primary consideration over earthly affairs, which may also be due to a lack of modeling from those who preach it and those from secular authorities. Bandura's social learning theory may help analyze this learning and values conditioning, where moral formation may depend on sociological factors and the degree of reception from various societies.[109]

The Second Greatest Commandment advertently compels Christians to love their neighbor as an integral response to faith. However, without the constitutive love

[101] *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (*PCP* II), 167, 186
[102] Kevin Ahern, *Structures of Grace: Catholic Organizations and the Global Common Good* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 31
[103] Kevin Ahern, *Structures of Grace: Catholic Organizations and the Global Common Good*, 122
[104] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 8
[105] Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, *Poor for the Poor*, 22, 24
[106] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 8
[107] Bulatao, "Split - Level Christianity," 120
[108] Bulatao, *Phenomena and their Interpretation,* 23
[109] Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1977), 43-47

for God, independence, and lack of consideration of the divine intervention in history, it is categorically referred to as horizontalism. Cardinal Müller associates it with efforts on salvation entirely in this world and not in the otherworldly.[110] Redemption is not transcendent, and he likened it to a two-floor structure wherein salvation takes place only on the ground floor, symbolizing the secular in this world. In contrast, the second floor is the heavens and the afterlife. He continues by locating an immanent form of faith recoursed to ideologies, particularly a Marxist formulation, thereby departing from the original intended Christian beliefs.[111] As such, faith practices and doctrines are mere means to achieve the objectives aimed by ideologies, but in some instances, spiritual activities are viewed as the opium of the ruling class and hence must be eliminated later. Quoting a warning from Pope Francis that some social works are inclined to turn into "charitable NGO" brought about by secularized notions devoid of spiritual dimensions,[112] consequently transforming into humanizing activity, departing from any form of worship and sacraments.

Pope John Paul II reminds the faithful of trends diminishing humanity merely on the horizontal plane without the need or rejection of God.[113] In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio,* the Pope would reassert the mission as the heart and nature of the Church, with a renewed calling and commitment to evangelizing the world.[114] However, proclaiming the Gospel is prone to a "gradual secularization of salvation," reducing it to purely human intellect, free from divine context. This effort of human development responds only to individuals' economic, social, political, and cultural needs, veering away from the core of authentic liberation, which consists of the transcendental aspect.[115] Ahern cites the Pope's objective on some social actions evolving to the relativistic form of evangelization, drifting away from Church tradition, and, in certain instances, forgoing the spiritual dimension.[116] Thus, the Pope urges not to lose the spiritual aspect of the faith, for the ecclesial mission is to give special attention to the poorest of society and promote justice and stewardship of God's creation.[117]

Horizontalism poses a challenge in the evangelizing task of the Church—Schillebeeckx notes secular transcendence as one of its kind within theistic formulation, yet deviates from the Christian faith.[118] But in a radical form, this horizontalism will engender atheism or agnosticism, redefining transcendence solely of human aspirations in a secular framework. For Bonoan, he calls this radical

[110] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 59
[111] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 14
[112] Müller, *The Cardinal Müller Report*, 183-184; Ahern, *Structures of Grace,* 159
[113] *Redemptoris Missio*, 8, Ahern, *Structures of Grace*, 31
[114] James H. Kroeger, "The Mission-Vision of John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*," Landas vol. 33 no.1 (2019): 89-90
[115] *Redemptoris Missio*, 11, 17; Kevin Ahern, *Structures of Grace: Catholic Organizations and the Global Common Good* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 57
[116] Ahern, *Structures of Grace*, 120, 165
[117] Kroeger, "The Mission-Vision of John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*," 99
[118] Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, 96, 162

horizontalism whereby the priority is love for a neighbor over love for God.[119] Following the line of argument of Schillebeecks, this disposition can turn into a crisis of faith wherein God is reduced to an abstract notion without relevance to practical living. Recourse to the divine is discretionary if it only contributes to practical human development. Therefore, God is not the final object of faith but the good of man. God can be associated with technological advances, media, and human satisfaction and consumption.[120]

Giordani warns that aside from relegating religion only to moral discussions, the danger posed by horizontalism brings about the "ministry of death" by upholding justice with the possibility of justifying violence, even the use of atomic weapons in the pursuit of peace and liberation.[121] One prominent example is the problem of those who uncritically utilize Marxist philosophy integrated into the practice of faith. The Vatican cautions against this kind of horizontalism, reducing the Gospel entirely for economic and political purposes.[122] McGovern criticizes this form of radicalized horizontalism, which exists in particular forms of liberation theology associated with the ideology that warrants the need is for revolution or class struggle.[123] Here, the struggle for liberation necessitates even armed resistance grounded on a divergent biblical hermeneutic validating the violent struggle. Moreover, the Baptism and the Eucharist are re-read and celebrated in the context of the struggle of the oppressed in contrast to the Church's sacramental orientation.[124]

Cross Communion Paradigm

A primary concern regarding the reception of faith is a dualistic dilemma. Highlighted during the time of the 19th-century European Industrial Revolution, socialist movements accused the Church of being an opium dealer. Brady illustrates these communist allegations by claiming religion, together with the rich and top echelons of society, have turned a blind eye towards exploited workers, so much so against the poor.[125] Conversely, the poor would seek eternal reward in the afterlife by focusing on spiritual and pious things, practically tolerating earthly oppressions for heavenly possessions. For Müller, this tendency to dichotomize faith and salvation, of this world and the other world, between earthly well-being and heavenly redemption is one of the key determinations of liberation theology.[126] Radicalizing the vertical dimension of faith can engender religious spiritualism without regard to material or bodily welfare; moreover, the inclination to be self-serving and lacking concern for society. Attitude on prayer can turn exclusively to petition, appealing to God for

[119] Raul J. Bonoan, "The Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of Christian Life in Schillebeeckx," Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas; Volume 47, numbers 532 (December 1973): 733

[120] Haddon Willmer, "'Vertical' and 'Horizontal' in Paul's Theology of Reconciliation in the Letter to the Romans," Transformation 24/3 & 4 (July & October 2007): 153

[121] Igino Giordani, "Horizontalism," L'Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English 5 December 1968, page 10.

[122] *Libertatis Nuntius,* VI.4

[123] McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics:* 58-59

[124] *Libertatis Nuntius,* IX.1; X.16

[125] Brady, *Essential Catholic Social Thought*, 72

[126] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 82

personal good and blessing. On the other hand, horizontalism can turn to over-secularism, spiritual abandonment, and ecclesial separation. These manifestations were experienced by some clergy, religious, and the laity who have embraced a Marxist theology of liberation from countries such as the Philippines and Latin America, who struggled to recognize human rights in the 70s and 80s against dictatorial regimes.[127]

The Cross Communion Paradigm elaborates liberation theology derived from developing social teachings aligned with the Church. Following Müller's assertion that liberation theology is the "standard-bearer of the mission of the Church,"[128] theologizing sets its perspective from a dualistic mindset of reducing salvation from either vertical or horizontal, to a duality, and an integral form of redemption. The following elements will further demonstrate the paradigm.

Duality is not Dualism

Cross Communion Paradigm stresses duality but not dualism. One of the primary messages of the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 was re-emphasizing integral redemption as a pivotal missionary activity of the Church, simplified with the words, "duality is not dualism."[129] The said event was convened by bishops worldwide to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Vatican II, following the theme "The Church, in the Word of God, celebrates the mysteries of Christ for the salvation of the world." Salvation is not referred to by dualism, which refers to splitting the creative work of God's love to either "in this world" or "hereafter," corporeal or spiritual, horizontal, or vertical. Still, for the Synod, temporal liberation is integral to the work of salvation. Gomez highlights that the duality of redemption should not be as "either or" realities but constitutes both planes: spiritual and temporal, supernatural and natural, distinct but holistic.[130] Since Vatican II is recognized as the foundation of liberation theology,[131] Pope John Paul II further articulated the Church's liberative missionary objective by reinforcing the integrality of redemption in the spiritual and temporal spheres.

Cross

Christ carried out the redemption of humanity by His Cross and Resurrection. He is our Savior who delivered us from evil and freed us from sin and death. Hence, the foundation of all liberating actions of the Church is centered on these truths, contemplating the salvific mission in society.[132] For McGuckin, the Cross of Christ presents His suffering, death, and risen glory. He is crucified yet resurrected from the

[127] Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989), 247-250
[128] Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, *Poor for the Poor*, 23
[129] Catholic Church, *The Extraordinary Synod-1985 Message to the People of God* (Boston, MA: St. Paul Editions, 1986), 66
[130] Gomez, *Vatican II at Fifty*, 47-48
[131] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 14-15; Raluto, *Poverty and Ecology*, 79, 84
[132] *Libertatis Conscientia*, 3

dead.[133] Therefore, His death and resurrection must not be detached from the other but rather perceived as duality, distinct and not separate, for the death of our sins and salvation in heaven. The Cross implies the realization of Christian life rather than a theory, leading us to face our daily tasks and sacrifices for the objective good.[134] While we attempt to distance our lives from pain and suffering, there are necessary personal events requiring us to embrace these crosses, for they bring about redemptive value.

The Cross shifts from being a sign of shame to a sign of hope, from slavery to inevitable liberation.[135] The Christian life does not end with the death of Jesus on the Cross but is consequently directed toward a triumphant Resurrection. His agony on the Cross is a requirement for our salvation, but human suffering born out of the slavery of sin demands liberation. In attaining this freedom, conversion of heart and maturity in the faith are a prerequisite for the transformation of society. And to Aquinas, re-reading the Cross facilitates the formation of necessary virtues.[136] By contemplating the wisdom of the Cross, it breaches a stereotypical faith reception of passivity to the wisdom of divine charity.[137] Pope Benedict XVI expounds on this charity in the context of the Church's mission of facilitating spiritual nourishment and material needs.[138] Through her social doctrines, the Church proposes a just restructuring of society, offering a set of guidelines for developing societies and upholding human dignity.

Another sense of the Cross is in the context of the theology of liberation being proposed in this paper. The traditional portrayal of a cross-figure consists of vertical and horizontal lines. The vertical plane is the dimension of the faith and the spiritual aspect of liberation. As presented earlier, it is the relationship between God and man. The upward and downward directions are represented as a revelation-faith dialogical movement. Authentic liberation for the Church originates from God and is aimed at the salvation of humanity (downward direction). Man responds through faith expressions through prayer, worship, and sacraments, especially the "Holy Eucharist - the gift of liberation."[139] **"**Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God."[140] The upward movement responds to the divine vocation of communion with the One, the source of liberation. The prayer aids in contemplation and shares the fruit of discernment to exercise the freedom to do what is good and freedom from situations that enslave the dignity of persons.

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[133] Terence McGuckin, "The Eschatology of the Cross." New Blackfriars, vol. 75, no. 884 (1994): 375. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43249626. Accessed 15 Aug 25. 2024.

[134] Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience of November 5, 2008

[135] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 177-178

[136] Readings for the Memorial of St Thomas Aquinas (January 28) https://www.liturgies.net/saints/thomasaquinas/readings.htm

[137] Reinhard Hütter, "The Wisdom of the Cross Is the Wisdom of Charity: Thomas Aquinas's Soteriology—an Anticipatory Refutation of Neo-Pelagianism and Neo-Gnosticism." *Nova et Vetera,* vol. 19 no.1 (2021): 160. https://doi.org/10.1353/nov.2021.0007

[138] *Deus caritas est*, 19

[139] Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, "The Eucharist and Freedom," L'Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English 13 November 1996, https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/eucharist-and-freedom-2260

[140] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2559

The horizontal aspect of the cross is the relationship of self to society or among groups of people. The horizontal dimension of faith responds to the love of the neighbor commanded by Jesus. The credibility of witnessing faith in God is centrally situated by how we treat our neighbor. Furthermore, the neighbors are the human face of Jesus in our modern time.[141] For Müller, liberation theology will not cease to exist as long as there are those whose missionary activity is moved by God to be in solidarity with the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed.[142] Concurring with Gutierrez, theologians must not caricaturely adjudge the theology, leveling it exclusively to politics, sociology, and economics; instead, a valid form of liberation theology is rooted in God contemplating the human situations they deserve. Parallel to the view of the horizontal plane is the equality of all human persons since all have inherent dignity created in the image of God.[143]

The location of the Church in the framework is situated in both dimensions of the Cross, establishing her ministerial role both for God and neighbor. The Church received from Jesus and His apostles the teaching authority to continue to teach and participate in the growth in holiness of the people.[144] She becomes the sacrament of freedom, partaking in the history of salvation.[145] For Ruddy, the primary event of the Church as the body of Christ (vertical) and with the communion of people of God (horizontal) is realized in the celebration of the Eucharist.[146] As the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, the Eucharist references the divine role in the history of salvation.[147] Pope Benedict XVI underscores the liberative dimension of the Eucharist by promoting justice and peace, rejecting forms of violence and oppression that go against the dignity of the human person.[148] Conclusively, the redemption of Christ on the Cross is carried on by the Church (vertical) for the salvation of the world (horizontal).

Communion

The concept of communion is closely linked between God and His people. For Cardinal Bo, he traces the foundation of communion in the Bible, such as the Exodus event when God liberated the Israelites from Egyptian slavery through the prophets by reminding the Israelites of their relationship to God, ultimately in Jesus, for the world's salvation.[149] This bond is rooted in the communicative initiative of God with an aspect of communion that is both liberative and redemptive, established in the divine covenant. Consequently, the covenant sustains the communion, and salvation becomes the Biblical theme and final objective culminating in the Cross of Christ.

[141] Bishop Nereo Odchimar, ""Who is my neighbor?" A Pastoral Letter on AIDS," July 11, 2011
[142] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 26
[143] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), 144-148
[144] Dei Verbum 7-9
[145] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 75
[146] Ruddy Christopher, *The Local Church: Tillard and the Future of Catholic Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad Pub, 2006), 100
[147] *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 3, 64
[148] *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 89
[149] Cardinal Bo, "The Church in Communion: Theology and Expression," 3-4

Realizing integral liberation in Christ then necessitates indispensable communion with God and humanity.[150]

The liberative sense of the Cross predisposes communion relative to its two planes: vertical and horizontal. For Aligan, communion is two-dimensional: vertical communion with God and horizontal communion among men.[151] Likewise, in the Cross Communion framework, the term communion refers to the relationship between God and others: the vertical plane of the Cross corresponds to vertical communion and the horizontal plane to horizontal communion. The integrality of the two dimensions makes up the essentiality of the Cross by way of communion. Bacani also stresses communion as relational.[152] Though God is self-sustaining, He also comprises a Trinitarian communion of Persons. He shares this image with humans, forming a bond and responsibility to become relational to God and his neighbor. Salvation and liberation become the direction of communion inaugurated by Christ for humanity;[153] therefore, redemption is not exclusively a personal project but goes beyond vertical relationship, a communion model exemplified by the Cross, which fundamentally includes a horizontal level: a communitarian and social aspect of salvation.

Cross Communion Paradigm and Other Liberation Theologies

Liberation is a collective term referring to the aspiration to recognize human dignity and the struggle for freedom from situations that dehumanize humanity. In history, oftentimes, the struggle for liberation forms against a backdrop of colonization that dominates local resources for foreign control, particularly turning natives into human slaves. In the name of progress, cultural development, and a messianic complex, locals are often abused if they do not meet the demands of the colonizers. Movements arise to bring into consciousness an analysis of situations that usually result in resistance, and oftentimes through armed revolution. Arendt writes that the goal of revolution is freedom, and war becomes an inevitable move to justify the quest for liberation.[154] Ideologies or faith-based organizations often aid in the crusade against foreign rule, forming a groundwork and convictions for future struggle.

In the Church, salvation and liberation are closely connected.[155] Before, the dominating emphasis on evangelization was only spiritual redemption. The quest for holiness is through the struggle against sins and the formation of virtues. It was more of a personal journey towards God, and love for neighbor was expressed through Christian conversion for unbelievers and the exercise of almsgiving to those who are economically poor. As Christianity progressed beyond Europe, new challenges to the exercise of faith began to reflect on human situations such as slavery, notably in the

[150] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 5

[151] Aligan, "Amoris Laetitia: "Communion" and "Communion" in the Church," 24

[152] Teodoro C. Bacani, "The Priest as Minister of Communion," in *Church as a Communion: Perspectives and Expressions The Asian Context*, ed. Jannel N. Abogado (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2021), 64

[153] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 17

[154] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 12, 142

[155] *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 9; *Libertatis Nuntius,* XI.16

natives of the West Indies by the likes of Las Casas and Vitoria in the 16th century. The object of salvation considers not only the spiritual dimension of the human person but also the corporeal and societal aspects, forming an integral human liberation of evangelization. In the 19th century, social movements emerged due to economic developments brought by industrialization. Issues on labor and workers' conditions were the focus of the social question initiated by Bishop Ketteler, who later would have reverberations on Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*[156] and the development of liberation theology.

Theologies of liberation became a trend as one of the responses to the call of Vatican II. Though the approach of liberation theology may have been popularized in the early 70s in Latin America as an articulation brought about by the contemporary progress of the Church, the struggle for the poor was authoritatively initiated by Pope Leo XIII during the Industrial Revolution. During this period, laborers were unjustly treated by the abuses of capitalists.[157] Consequently, a theology of liberation from these struggles against human injustice was written and became a significant reference point for future social doctrines.

Theologies of liberation are associated with analyzing faith from forms of oppression or dehumanizing situations toward a struggle for freedom. The goal is not exclusively a Catholic perspective but a universal objective that varies from the lens of contextual understanding and means of achieving the purpose. Though some aspects may not be aligned with the Church's tradition nor contain any theological perspective but secular orientation, the Church believes that some elements of the Spirit can be found in various humanitarian efforts in religions and even in secular initiatives.[158] As far as the magisterium is concerned, there is not one but many forms of theologies of liberation.[159] These theologies may be generally categorized as either aligned or not aligned with the tradition of the Church. An example of a form of theology of liberation consistent with the lens of the faith is the Cross Communion Paradigm, which is the object of this paper. The following is a comparative analysis of the proposed framework vis-à-vis other liberation theologies articulated but limited through ecclesial statements, organizational objectives, ideologies, or by theologians.

Catholic aligned (The Bond of Love in Proclaiming The Good News) [160]

As stated earlier, a theology of liberation associated with the Church rests on "full conformity with the Gospel and with full standing in the Church."[161] The vertical dimension or the spiritual ascent of faith to God, the provenance of liberation, cascades

[156] Eissrich, "An Economist's View of the Work of Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler," 11, 16

[157] *Rerum Novarum,* 3

[158] *Redemptoris Missio*, 28

[159] Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible In The Church* (Sherbrooke, Quebec: Editions Paulines, 1994), 64-65; *Libertatis Nuntius* III.3; Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Biblical Commission's Document "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church": Text and* Commentary (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995), 93

[160] Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, "The Bond of Love in Proclaiming The Good News," Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas; Volume LI, numbers 566-567 (January-February, 1977): 31-34

[161] International Theological Commission, *The Interpretation of Dogma*, II.3

horizontally in communion with the Church and humanity. Some of the following examples are within the Philippines' efforts for liberation.

A pastoral statement of the Church during Martial Law amid division among members of the faithful and bishops challenging human rights abuses by the government. The document sets out the mission of the Church following Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on evangelization and liberation.

Applying the Cross Communion Paradigm, the statement was vertically centered on God, with the first sentence quoting Jesus from the Gospel of Luke, "*I must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God*" (Lk. 4:43), and ends in trusting in Him. This implies that all liberation efforts must be derived from God, with the horizontal aspect of duty, pastors of the Church, to guide their flock and all Filipinos in achieving justice and dignity.

Sanlakbay[162]

Sanlakbay is the Church's collaborative effort with the government's action against illegal drugs, focusing on the rehabilitation of drug dependents through programs providing spiritual and personal development (horizontal). The pastoral accompaniment dwells on God, who gives hope and serves as a model of all missionary efforts (vertical) to recognize human dignity.

University of Santo Tomas[163]

A leading Catholic learning institution in the Philippines, under the guidance of the Dominican objectives, sets the direction for the stakeholders: the communion of students, teachers, and all personnel to achieve the university's mission and vision. "In pursuit of truth guided by reason and illumined by faith" (vertical), the school is "committed to the integral formation of her stakeholders for social transformation" (horizontal). Additionally, the liberative aspect of the university draws on Dominican spirituality, putting God as an absolute priority (vertical) for the development of the people in society (horizontal). Conclusively, the fruits of contemplation in the light of the Gospel (vertical) are emphasized in the study (education), and sharing the fruits of contemplation for the betterment of society (horizontal) is vital in the Dominican way of evangelization.[164]

Non-Catholic theology, But Aligned

The Church in the contemporary era has made progress in the area of unity and communion with other religions. While the Church of Christ fully subsists in the Catholic Church, other elements of sanctification are also found outside the Church.[165]

[162] Sanlakbay, https://caritasmanila.org.ph/sanlakbay/

[163] University of Santo Tomas, https://www.ust.edu.ph/the-university/

[164] Phyllis Zagano and Thomas C. McGonigle, *The Dominican Tradition: Spirituality in History* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2006), ix, 106

[165] Lumen Gentium 8; Dominus Iesus 16-17

Such a principle would also entail the human and divine values in their beliefs.[166] Therefore, outside the Catholic Church, there are also aligned elements of liberation present, and the Church must reinforce collaboration with them.

José Miguez Bonino (1924-2012)

José Miguez Bonino is a Latin American liberation theology pioneer and a Methodist minister. His works follow a trend of liberation, along with those of Catholic figures such as Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff. For him, liberation is not exclusively a missionary objective of the Church but present in other religions, specifically those taking their impulses from Biblical sources. It is not confined to the religious realm but more so exists in economics, politics, and law.[167]

For the Church, the *Rerum Novarum* is an essential impetus to the development of social doctrines for the welfare of workers and freedom from abuses entailed by work. Though coming from a Protestant context, Bonino affirms the contribution and significance of the encyclical. But more than a response to social questions at that time, he claims Rerum Novarum is also a means towards ecumenical efforts.[168] Therefore, one source of inception of the ecumenical movement was rooted in the liberative context of workers with *Rerum Novarum* as a significant lens, to one of the aims of ecumenism, which is also liberative.

In the Cross Communion Paradigm, the theology of Bonino and the Church is similar in the vertical aspect. Both assert that God is the point of reference for liberation, and they do so with inspiration from Biblical narratives.[169] Like the Church, he criticizes some Marxist-inspired hermeneutical views that highlight the denial of God and man's materialistic anthropological origin. Likewise, his liberative design is horizontally aligned with the affirmation *Rerum Novarum* on recognition of the dignity of workers, and also an ecumenical tool for Christian unity.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)

Bonhoeffer lived during the political upheavals of Nazi Germany and was challenged by various forms of oppression committed against religions and Jews. A Protestant pastor and theologian, he devoted himself to pursuing freedom and liberation as a praxis of faith amid social injustices.[170] For him, the centrality of faith is Christ, and those who follow him must listen to His words and, simultaneously, to the cry of the oppressed.[171] A faithful follower of Christ must involve himself in the struggle for freedom since Christ was sent to *proclaim freedom to captives...and the oppressed go free*. (Luke 4:18) However, this goal of liberation would not be exclusive to

[166] Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (New Jersey, Paulist Press, 1992), 166

[167] José Míguez Bonino, "Theology and Liberation," International Review of Mission volume 61, issue 241 (1972), 67

[168] Bonino, "Social Doctrine as a Locus for Ecumenical Encounter," 393-395

[169] José Míguez Bonino, "Theology and Liberation," International Review of Mission volume 61, issue 241 (1972), 70-71

[170] Altmann Walter, "Bonhoeffer in Latin American Perceptions: An Inspiration to Overcome Structures of Injustice? Stellenbosch Theological Journal (2016): 26

[171] Altmann Walter, "Bonhoeffer in Latin American Perceptions: An Inspiration to Overcome Structures of Injustice?, 26.

Christians but inclusive of all human beings regardless of race, color, or religion. This prophetic call cost him imprisonment and later his execution. His road to martyrdom is epitomized in a letter to his friend Niebuhr: "*I shall have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people*."[172]

Bonhoeffer's aspiration for liberation aligns with Latin American liberation theologians. De Santa Ana's claim that Bonhoeffer may have influenced the Catholic liberation theologians, particularly Gustavo Gutierrez.[173] Undeniably, the Protestant struggle for freedom in Latin America has antedated the Catholic counterparts, even with the developments of Vatican II and CELAM's Medellin. Though it is not an issue of who came first, Catholic and Protestant liberation share the same perspective on the centrality of faith in Jesus. This vertical aspect of liberation unites two faiths on the need and source of liberation despite varying doctrinal orientations. Horizontally, Bonhoeffer requires recognizing the neighbor as an imperative demand of Christian discipleship. To speak of Christ is to realize the struggles and suffering, to reflect through the lens of faith, and to act for freedom and liberation.[174] Lastly, the Cross Communion Paradigm can be related to Bonhoeffer, that is, to remedy the tendency of faith dualism, such as dichotomizing the church and world, spiritual and societal. Like the paradigm, Bonhoeffer highlights the importance of secular activities in a temporal world (horizontal) born from becoming a disciple of Christ (vertical).[175]

Non-theological but Catholic aligned

All individuals and groups are called for the transformation of society. For the Church, the enterprise of human progress is not exclusively spiritual but also societal. Hence, the Church collaborates and participates in integral development. Both private and public institutions should jointly promote the common good to remedy problems of social evils rooted in selfishness and greed.[176]

1986 EDSA People Power

The 1986 EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue) People Power peaceful revolution led to the overthrow of the dictatorial government of former President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Together with other cities in the Philippines, the protests were a show of discontent and a call for regime change against a leader who deprived Filipinos of basic civil liberties and abused his power against people's democratic rights.[177] Various sectors of society, not only religious, took part in the concerted effort to air out their indignation for national freedom. In a show of solidarity, different types of people from all walks of life joined together with a common cause.

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[172] Bonhoeffer Dietrich, *The Cost of Discipleship First Touchstone* ed. (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 17-18.

[173] Julio de Santa Ana, "The Influence of Bonhoeffer on the Theology of Liberation," The Ecumenical Review, vol. 28, issue 2 (1976): 188-189

[174] Melano, "The Influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 76; Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 26

[175] de Santa Ana, "The Influence of Bonhoeffer on the Theology of Liberation," 188-189

[176] *Mater et Magistra*, 37-40

[177] A History of the Philippine Political Protest, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/edsa/the-ph-protest/

The important turn of history in the Philippines is considered a political revolution involving the masses of varying backgrounds. It was a unique way of showing the world that a revolution for a regime change can be made possible through non-violent means. The liberative aspect may lack the vertical dimension from the perspectives of non-Catholics and non-believers. But in the eyes of faith in particular from Jaime Cardinal Sin and Auxiliary Bishops of Manila, the peaceful revolution was an answered prayer from God.[178] Modeled after Christ's exemplary determination before Herod, the crowd, and the Cross; the hope for liberation is for the goal of the nation and its individuals to attain freedom from oppression and achieve human development (horizontal).[179]

Bureau of Corrections

The 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates the State to fully recognize the dignity of every human person and ensure their corresponding rights (Article II, Section 11). One of the government agencies that is tasked to guarantee the directive is the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor). Following the policy of the State, the Bureau has the responsibility to safeguard and promote the fundamental rights of every inmate. Central to the undertakings of the Bureau is the safekeeping of inmates by providing basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. Another is to administer reformation programs, namely: moral, spiritual, educational, livelihood, and recreation.[180]

Pope Francis reminds us that there is humanity in prisons. In fact, it is a place of great humanity where challenges, pains, sufferings, opportunities, and redemption exist, similar to those experiences outside of the prison peripheries.[181] Pope John Paul II adds that salvation is for everyone, even those who are excluded from society.[182] With these principles on prison apostolate, the Church contributes to the rehabilitation of law offenders with the State since the work of evangelization is, at times, a collaboration of spiritual life with that of secular affairs and activities (vertical and horizontal).[183] In the Philippines, an example of work in prison ministry is the Commission on Prison Pastoral Care (ECPPC). One of their key objectives is to advance public awareness of correctional societies and encourage the participation of priests, religious, and the laity in the prison apostolate. They also create connections and work with non-governmental organizations for the holistic formation of inmates.

Since liberation is centered on Christ (vertical), the ministry is not only focused on reforming prisoners but also on communion with other stakeholders of the society (horizontal). Additionally, persons deprived of liberty (PDL, a term referred to

[178] Fausto Gomez, et. al., The *Philippine Revolution and the Involvement of the Church* (Manila: Social Research Center, University of Santo Tomas, 1986), 91-92

[179] *PCP II*, LXXXVI

[180] Philippine Government, "Republic Act No. 10575: An Act Strengthening the Bureau of Corrections (Bucor)," https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/2/57088

[181] Pope Francis, "Meeting with the Police Prison Officers, Detainees and Volunteers," May 18, 2024 https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240518-verona-casa-circondariale.html

[182] Pope John Paul II, Letter to the Prisoners in the Frei Caneca Penitentiary," October 1997 https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/pont_messages/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19970930_carceri-rio.html

[183] *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 4

inmates) may have in a sense, restrictions on the exercise of their freedom and would have an opportunity to reflect their offense against society (freedom from) towards the process of learning to correct those actions and form right consciousness according to the standards of the society (freedom for).

Non-Catholic Aligned

Liberation theology can be expressed in different forms. For the Church, an elaboration of the theology has foundations on Biblical and magisterial sources integrated into social doctrines contained in encyclicals, Vatican II documents, and bishops' conferences. Those expressions that are opposed or contradictory to it may fall into the category of non-Catholic aligned. The two Instructions (*Libertatis Nuntius* and *Libertatis Conscientia*) by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) provide definitive elucidation and distinction of what is aligned and not aligned theology of liberation. And for both documents, the specific form that is not congruent with the Church is those theologies with Marxist tendencies.[184] Dorr enumerates salient points considered non-aligned to the Church based on the Libertatis documents: compatibility with Marxist social analysis, rejection of social teachings, and refusal of ecclesial authority.[185] Though the papers did not specifically name theologians or articles that fall under that type, they warn those who tend to fall into those categories.[186] Instead, what the then-Cardinal Ratzinger-led CDF emphasized was to utilize the lens of teachings of the Church in analyzing, judging, and responding to social problems instead of leaning toward deviance.

The following categories are not aligned with the Church's liberation theology following the *Libertatis* documents *vis-à-vis* the Cross Communion Paradigm.

Utilization of Marxist Social Analysis

Social analysis aims to grasp the comprehensive social realities based on historical, structural, economic, political, cultural, and social structures that affect societies and human relations.[187] Holland and Henriot locate the analysis based on realities or experiences and conceptualize it according to principles or frameworks. It tries to unravel the context, which eventually paves the way to action, resolving societal problems. However, for Arrupe, realizing that varied methodological perspectives exist in analyzing societies, Marxist social analysis has been a concern for the Church. First, all structures, particularly religion, are determined by economic aspects, also known as "historical or dialectical materialism."[188] For Marx, all is determined by economic or material factors affecting historical developments, including class struggles between the two dominant classes of society. This mindset

[184] Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, *Poor for the Poor*, 27
[185] Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, 261-262
[186] Torpigliani, "The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on Liberation Theologies," 172
[187] Joe Holland and Peter J. Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 14
[188] Hennelly, *Liberation Theology*, 309

leads to criticism of religion and reducing it to a mere economic category, hence, atheistic. The struggle would then lead to revolution as a key drive for social change.

In a bid to effect the transformation of society, Marx's social analysis has been a convenient tool for the oppressed. It starts with the hope for God to liberate humanity from oppressed situations, then introduces Marxist ideology integrated with faith and theology. Unfortunately, this attempt can turn to "horizontalism" and "immanentizing" of the Christian faith, wherein the vertical and transcendental element of salvation is narrowed to mere earthly activity.[189] Borrowing the Marxist term, the poor are now interpreted as the proletariat, limiting it only to the working classes, abandoning the Biblical inclusivity of the poor.[190]

Liberation theology that utilizes Marxist analysis tends to lack a vertical dimension and, thus, is not congruent with the Cross Communion Paradigm. The faith may be called "materializing" without spiritual consideration or priority. Split-level Christianity happens in this framework wherein there is a dichotomy of salvation between here and the afterlife. In the dialectical process of the analysis, polarity exists between what one believes theoretically and what one can consider practical.[191] The latter prioritizes the former, praxis, over theory. The Cross Communion Paradigm attempts to remedy this division by stressing the need for a vertical communal relationship with God in order to establish horizontal communal relationship with a neighbor.

Rejection of Ecclesial Authority

A deviant liberation theology for the Church evidently does not recognize or is critical of magisterial authority. Still in line with the uncritical use of Marxist thought, truth and praxis are based on the class struggle in which armed revolution or violence is necessary.[192] The appropriation of the concept of the proletariat is needed for recognition against the power class. This replaces the Biblical notion of the poor. Unlike in the proletariat, the anthropological center is found in the vertical dimension (man in communion with God) and defines man in a way other than mere economic views. Salgado identifies this recognition of the poor within Marxist ideology, also known as the dictatorship of the proletariat.[193] The power that originally resides in the bourgeois, the owners of the capital, must be wrested by the proletariat. Equivalently, the authority of the magisterial Church, seen as the power class, must be relocated to the ordinary people (proletariat). As a result, the magisterial hierarchy is viewed as the ruling class to be replaced by the members of the masses as ministers to the people's struggle for revolution.[194] The "Church of the Poor" is the outcome of this struggle, revolutionizing even the established liturgies. More so, the institutional Church is

[189] Gutiérrez and Müller, *On the Side of the Poor*, 14

[190] Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report;* 180

[191] Pedro Arrupe, S.J., ""Marxist Analysis by Christians" (December 8, 1980)" in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. Alfred Hennelly (Maryknoll N.Y: Orbis Books, 1990): 308

[192] *Libertatis Nuntius*, VIII

[193] Ojoy, "The Social and Political Philosophy of Pedro Salgado," 421

[194] *Libertatis Nuntius*, IX.13

considered Marx's bourgeois functioning, like a capitalist "giant multinational corporation."[195] A true Church must become a popular church from below, as one of the characteristics of a class society. But Ratzinger accused this form of theology of liberation of being indicative of "radical aggression against the institutional model of the Catholic Church."[196]

Cross Communion Paradigm liberation theology asserts the ecclesiological significance established in the Church. It recognizes the Pope, Vicar of Christ, and the successor of Peter, who was entrusted with the authority in the unity of both the bishops and the faithful.[197] The vertical aspect of ecclesial communion is a necessary condition in determining a Church-aligned liberation theology. Moreover, Pope John Paul II asserts the role of the magisterium as a prerequisite in determining the theological locus found on the horizontal dimension.[198] Compared to Marxist-inspired theology, whose focal point is radical horizontalism that leads to atheistic tendencies or regards God only for materialistic and personalistic gain. In the Cross Communion framework, the source of liberation is God (vertical), hermeneutically situated from salvation history with the Church as a continuous link for the salvation of humanity and not exclusively the proletariat (horizontal).

Refusal of the Church's Social Doctrines

Denial of ecclesial authority inevitably leads to a repudiation of the Church's teachings, in this case, the social doctrines. Though reception to the magisterial teachings may vary, liturgical expressions may also differ, like the celebration of the Holy Mass transforming into the liturgy of the people's struggle.[199] This revolutionary mission replaces the Church's social teachings with Marxist elements or at least similar to it since the Church is viewed as imperialistic and authoritative. With the authority shifted to empowering the masses, the social doctrine-based ideologies became more attractive.

Some liberation theologians who shifted to socialist ideas rejected the social doctrines of the Church.[200] They argue that a radical view and drastic action must occur if liberation truly engages in social transformation. Concrete steps are needed if fundamental change is the objective. They also claimed that social doctrines offer an inductive approach to social injustices, while elements of Marxism provide a deductive framework. Consequently, the "of this world" solutions render results while "from the heavens" options are too abstract that they distance away from realities. Unfortunately, these accusations against the Church's teachings yielded an immediate reaction to

[195] Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power*, 53

[196] C. G. Arevalo, review of *Church: Charism and Power. Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, by Leonardo Boff, International Bulletin of Missionary Research, volume 9, issue 4 (October 1985): 192

[197] *Lumen Gentium*, 18, 22-23

[198] John Paul II, *Letter to the Brazilian Episcopal Conference*, 503

[199] *Libertatis Nuntius*, IX.1

[200] *Libertatis Nuntius*, X.4; McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics:* 50, 226; Gomez, "Paths of Liberation Towards Freedom," 179; Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 98

problems yet engendered more injustices, for it may resolve existing issues, but did not dispel the root causes of the problems. This happened not only in the Latin American experience, where attempts to remove dictators by armed struggle bred new forms of violence. The new victors became the new masters of slavery, perpetuating the vicious cycle in societies.[201]

The Cross Communion Paradigm liberation theology framework centers on the Church's social doctrine. These teachings are aligned with the Christian practice of liberation,[202] which the popes have emphasized since Rerum Novarum and from the prophetic role of Jesus and the Old Testament prophets. Müller also avers a "Catholic" liberation theology closely following the Church's social doctrine.[203] To be genuinely free, all the anthropological dimensions of man must be geared towards realization and development, not only the political, social, and economic aspects, but also the spiritual. This means that the liberation of man must be free from (freedom from) anything that enslaves and causes injustices to his nature. Together with this aspiration is the freedom to do (freedom for) good according to the laws set by God, discerned by the Church, and its compatibility with secular laws. Müller also adds that social doctrines direct man's development and relationship with his society (horizontal dimension) and relationship with God (vertical dimension).[204] Compared to the uncritical utilization of Marxist or Marxist-like elements, horizontalism or the lack of a vertical aspect of liberation may enkindle more injustices instead of remedying them. By recognizing the role of God, the development and dignity of human persons may be actualized since, from God, we may discern man's ultimate origin and purpose. Thus, the social teachings follow the Two Greatest Commandments: Love of God and love of neighbor.[205]

Conclusions

One important theological trend and fruit of the Second Vatican Council of the Church is a theology of liberation. Rooted in the divine activity based on scriptural narratives, the theology tries to unpack what has been the redemptive mission of God, continuously discerned by the Church in the context of the dynamics of the modern world. Since Biblical times, the aspirations and hopes of freedom have become the objective of faith, treading beyond the realm of spiritual yearning to temporal and material endeavors proper to the dignity of human persons. In other words, salvific action is becoming synonymous not only with liberation but also with freedom.

Liberation or the struggle for freedom is not an exclusive project of any religion, nor a monopolizing enterprise of the Church. Since human beings are coming from various cultures, traditions, and contexts, the aspiration for liberation is ever more

[201] Gomez, "Paths of Liberation Towards Freedom," 198; Evangelii Gaudium 60; Evangelii Nuntiandi 37
[202] *Libertatis Conscientia*, chapter 5
[203] Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, *Poor for the Poor*, 27
[204] Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, *Poor for the Poor*, 6
[205] Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, *Poor for the Poor*, 7-8

complex, if not challenging. Therefore, the Church cannot demand a spiritual assertion against temporal authorities but can proclaim the faith and journey with the world, seek in them the seeds of the Gospel, and capitalize on the fruits it will bear. In the end, the prophetic mission of the Church can thrive in the midst of secular orientations, in a horizontal and vertical dimension of faith.

It is clarified that there are indeed coherent or aligned forms of liberation theology in the Catholic Church. Founded on the Scriptures and from the development of Church teachings promulgated by the popes, the social doctrines become the tool in discerning social realities, affirming man's anthropological dimensions about integral human development. The Cross Communion Paradigm is an example of this elaboration, and the framework would be an attempt to better comprehend the missionary role of the Church in society. Though some ideologies can be challenging, such as Marxism, the paradigm undertakes direction assessing not only such ideologies but also economic, cultural, and political schemes. While there are crosscurrents to and Church standards; divergence should not be a hindrance but an opportunity for collaboration. Communion, in this sense, is still incorporated in the horizontal dimension yet anchored in a vertical relationship with God.

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