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**A critical analysis of Walter Rauschenbusch and Gustavo
Gutierrez' respective uses of the Kingdom of God as a
normative symbol for theological ethics**

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Rice University, 1987

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**300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106**

RICE UNIVERSITY

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WALTER RAUSCHENBUSCH AND GUSTAVO
GUTIERREZ' RESPECTIVE USES OF THE KINGDOM OF
GOD AS A NORMATIVE SYMBOL FOR THEOLOGICAL ETHICS


by

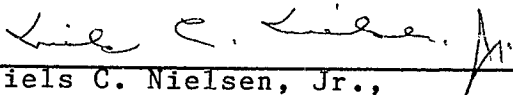
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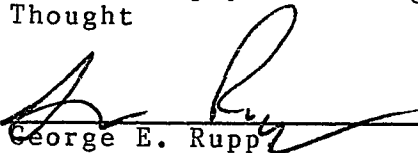
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ABSTRACT

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WALTER RAUSCHENBUSCH AND GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ' RESPECTIVE USES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A NORMATIVE SYMBOL FOR THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

PHILIP LEMASTERS

Walter Rauschenbusch, a leading theologian in the uniquely North American social gospel movement, and Gustavo Gutierrez, a founding figure in the development of liberation theology, are two of the most ethically, socially challenging Christian theologians of the past century. They both rely heavily on the theological symbol of the Kingdom of God for the formation of ethical reflection.

A comparison of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez reveals that they have insufficiently eschatological understandings of the Kingdom and overly optimistic views of anthropology, history, and politics. At times, they appropriate cultural ideology into theology in a fashion that obscures the moral import of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom's role as a guiding symbol for theological ethics is best understood as that of an eschatological reality that challenges persons and communities to live and act in a manner that is faithful to the always probing challenge of God's eschatological Reign.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the support and assistance of family, friends, and teachers in the writing of this thesis. I dedicate the thesis to Claude and Joy LeMasters and Paige Humes.

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Introduction and Statement of Thesis

This project provides an analysis of the respective uses of the Kingdom of God as a normative symbol for theological ethics in the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch and Gustavo Gutierrez. It describes, compares, and criticizes the thought of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez in an effort to understand more clearly the relevance of the Kingdom for Christian ethical discernment. The conclusion goes beyond such criticism to articulate the essentials of our own understanding of the Kingdom as a symbol for theological ethics.

This study's significance lies in the comparative nature of the undertaking. Despite the fact that much scholarship has focused on Rauschenbusch and a substantial, though smaller, amount has scrutinized Gutierrez, there has been very little work done in actually comparing the two thinkers. T. Howland Sanks' article in Theological Studies, Vol. XLI (December 1980), "Liberation Theology and the Social Gospel: Variations on a Theme," which is discussed in the conclusion, is the only developed attempt at such a comparison that has come to our attention. Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez stand as two of the most socially prophetic theologians of our century. The method of critical comparison employed here places their theologies of liberation and of the social gospel into creative dialogue. In so doing, the thesis brings to light important issues for theological ethics and demonstrates how the Kingdom may be

used as a point of contact for discussion between North and South American theologians.

This thesis criticizes Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez for an overly immanent, insufficiently eschatological view of the Kingdom. It contends that both theologians interpret the Kingdom of God's ethical significance in a fashion that compromises the normative significance of Jesus' initiation of it. The project also argues, against both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez, that emphases on nonviolence, a sort of sectarian ecclesiology, and an analogical understanding of the relationship between history and eschatology are vital for a sound formulation of the Kingdom's ethical relevance.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first is devoted to an introductory analysis of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' theological and social thought. The second provides a discussion and critique of their respective approaches to the Kingdom of God. The final chapter extends earlier critiques and comparisons of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez and develops our own understanding of the Kingdom's significance for theological ethics.

Chapter 1: The Theological and Social Thought of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez

This chapter provides a comparison and critique of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' respective presuppositions regarding theology and society. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first will consider the categories and themes employed by Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez for the explication of theology. The second is devoted to an analysis of their social agendas and thought. The third will provide a critical discussion of points of similarity and contrast that are identified in the earlier sections. But before embarking on this task, it is important to make brief biographical sketches of each figure, so as to place their thought in better perspective.

Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) was an American Baptist minister, church historian, and leading figure of the social gospel movement in North America. The son of German immigrants, Rauschenbusch received an excellent education in American and European schools. After pastoring a church in the "Hell's Kitchen" section of New York City for several years, he taught church history at Rochester Theological Seminary. He came quickly into prominence in 1907 with the publication of his Christianity and the Social Crisis. From then until his death, he produced numerous writings and made innumerable speeches concerning Christianity's relevance for social reform. It would be difficult to overestimate Rauschenbusch's importance in

setting the social agenda for American Christianity in the twentieth century. Along with Jonathan Edwards and Horace Bushnell, Rauschenbusch stands as a figure of major importance in American church history. (1)

Gustavo Gutierrez (b. 1928) is a Peruvian Roman Catholic priest and a seminal thinker in the liberation theology movement. His A Theology of Liberation is a foundational, classic text of liberation theology. Educated in South America and Europe, Gutierrez resides in one of Lima's slum areas. A leading spokesman for liberationist thought, he was the first professional theologian to systematize the implications of Latin America's popular political theology. Gutierrez, more than any other scholar, has played a crucial, formative role in the development of liberation theology. (2)

Theological Categories and Themes

A. Walter Rauschenbusch

The first task in analyzing Rauschenbusch's theology is to place his thought, at least in summary, within the larger context of the history of Christian theology. Donovan E. Smucker, in his doctoral dissertation, asserts that Rauschenbusch combined the theological influences of pietism, sectarianism, liberalism, and transformationalism in a unique fashion. Rauschenbusch developed early in life an evangelical piety which was enriched by his father's study of the radical sectarians of the Reformation.

Combined with these two traditions was his discovery of theological liberalism and the transformationist thought of Christian socialists in England and Switzerland. But, says Smucker, Rauschenbusch was not always a careful interpreter of these various traditions. "He lumped left-wing Protestantism together with social movements which were culturally but not theologically liberal." Despite his sound historical perspective on theology, Rauschenbusch "had a tendency to underestimate the validity of all earlier formulations of social concern and, hence, to fling himself too uncritically upon the resources operating" in his own time. Though the "form and power" of pietism and sectarianism continued to be vital for him throughout his life, he was prone "to pour in the content of current idealism." (3)

But, despite such problems, Smucker maintains that Rauschenbusch formulated a unique Christian social ethic, in that he combined a rejection of natural law, an emphasis on following the moral example of Jesus, and transformationist themes within the context of a liberal culture. From pietism, Rauschenbusch retained a suspicion of confessional dogmatism, a conviction that the Church should always be called to greater righteousness, and an awareness of the flawed nature of social custom and standards. He did, however, reject the individualism and otherworldliness often associated with pietism. From sectarianism, Rauschenbusch appropriated emphases on the

imitation of Christ, the primacy of love in social relations, a rejection of natural law, a belief in the Kingdom's presence in history, and an ecclesiology. He parted from sectarianism in his rejection of withdrawal from society and his stress on the Kingdom's immanence and progress in history. In Rauschenbusch's interpretation of sectarianism, "the liberal dimension is regulative."

Smucker notes several influences of Protestant liberalism on Rauschenbusch: rejection of the Hellenization of theology, opposition to irrationality in religion, an emphasis on experience, suspicion of confessional dogmatism, an anti-metaphysical orientation, belief in the possibility of finding the historical Jesus, the priority of the Kingdom over individual redemption, solidarity in sin and salvation, rejection of a forensic view of atonement, and gradualism combined with Pelagian optimism. His theological liberalism was combined with a transformationalist emphasis on employing socialism to establish a righteous social order. Though Rauschenbusch never seriously studied Hobbes, Darwin, Marx or other social philosophers, he was strongly influenced by popularizers of transformationalist social theory, such as Henry George. In theologizing about the social situation, Rauschenbusch's "realism was constantly fighting his idealistic progressivism."

Smucker's interpretation places Rauschenbusch within the larger perspective of Christian theology. He

participated critically in the traditions of evangelical pietism, the sectarianism of the radical Reformation, Protestant liberalism, and transformationalism. Rauschenbusch's thought is formulated in the dynamic interplay between these various traditions. It is also important to note that Rauschenbusch's view of the Kingdom of God is in no way Augustinian or Lutheran. He recognizes no distinction of realms in the social involvement of the Christian and refuses to identify the Kingdom with the Church. Neither is the Kingdom reserved for an otherworldly or eternal realm--it is directly relevant for human history. As well, his understanding of the Kingdom is somewhat Calvinistic. Christians are called to demonstrate God's sovereignty and righteousness in the social order. But they are to do so in a fashion that is informed by an Anabaptist view of following Jesus' moral example. It is precisely this interplay that Smucker has identified which makes the richness of Rauschenbusch's thought intelligible. (4)

It is also important to consider Rauschenbusch within the context of his historical setting: North America in the Victorian era. Janet Forsythe Fishburn, in her The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family: The Social Gospel in America, makes a study of Rauschenbusch in precisely these terms. She maintains that Rauschenbusch "used the terms Kingdom of God and manifest destiny interchangeably." The political ideals and cultural system

of the United States became in his thought prime manifestations of the Kingdom's loving way. Far from a socialist ideologue, Rauschenbusch, says Fishburn, identified the Victorian family and American democracy with the Kingdom. (5) The theology that undergirded this identification was "not a logically developed philosophical position." Rather, Rauschenbusch understood the truth of an ideal to be found in its ability to inspire ethical behavior based on an "intuitive grasp of unseen reality as the basis of the religious experience of the individual." In fact, Fishburn suggests that Rauschenbusch was "interested in the manipulation of the symbolic power of the God-concept for the purpose of facilitating social progress." (6)

Fishburn argues that Rauschenbusch's thought was so heavily influenced by the cultural ideology of Victorianism that he did not exert much effort to dialogue with the mainstream of the Christian theological tradition. This approach resulted in "a highly selective, and sometimes unorthodox, interpretation of doctrine and the Bible." He went further than Ritschl, Schleiermacher, or Hegel in seeing progress as bringing about "new knowledge and new truth [which] had superseded the wisdom of the Christian biblical and theological tradition." But "the philosophical distinctions of German theology eluded him." Fishburn thinks that Rauschenbusch misread Hegel, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Kant, resulting in undue

optimism about history and the identification of the Victorian family and manifest destiny with the Kingdom of God. Rauschenbusch, says Fishburn, recognized no qualitative difference between God and humanity. He failed to distinguish between natural and revealed truth, while affirming that reasonable persons could easily find "God's clear, cloudless, simple truth." Rauschenbusch stands, for Fishburn, as a theologian who was so captivated by his culture and historical period that his thought was, at best, muddled. (7) While Fishburn goes too far in her critique of Rauschenbusch, she is correct in placing him squarely within the cultural milieu of Victorian America.

As Smucker indicated, Rauschenbusch's theology was shaped by Protestant liberalism, evangelical piety, a sectarian ecclesiology, and social concern. In light of his theological liberalism, he took seriously the findings of both historical, critical biblical studies and a historicist approach to theology. It was his "theology of history" approach that provided the theoretical basis for his social criticism. He considered history to be the "laboratory of theology" which produced a "renovating influence" on religious thought. He even claimed that historical study was the source of life for "all other departments of theology." (8) This liberal emphasis on history is obvious in Rauschenbusch's treatment of the Bible. He credited modern historical methods with revealing the true social message of the prophets, Jesus,

and the early Christians. "Modern study has shown that the prophets were the real makers of the unique religious life of Israel." Historical analysis also made clear the social ramifications of Jesus' preaching about the Kingdom of God. (9) In fact, Rauschenbusch was optimistic that historical biblical studies would be able to "put us in the position of the original readers of each biblical book." He was sure that this clearer perspective on the Bible would lead to an awareness of the social nature of pristine Christianity and, thereby, give impetus to the prophetic critique of society. (10)

Alongside Rauschenbusch's historical orientation is his faith in the insights provided by science. A social Christianity "needs science to interpret the universe which Christianity wants to transform." (11) Though never an advocate of a scientific reductionism, Rauschenbusch understood science to be a liberating force capable of freeing the human mind from the dangers of heteronomous dogma. Indeed, "the more scientific our religious life becomes, the closer, somehow, does it come to Jesus." (12) For him, Christianity's historical reliance upon the miraculous has been "directly hostile to any scientific comprehension of social facts." It has been plagued by an "inability to understand the facts and laws of social development." (13) In light of his liberal openness to culture, Rauschenbusch used such scientific concepts as evolution to articulate his theology. "Translate the

evolutionary theories into religious faith, and you have the doctrine of the Kingdom of God." (14) Should such evolutionary progress be retarded, "the revelation of the glory of God" is inhibited. (15) Ernest Fricke, in his doctoral dissertation on Rauschenbusch, comments that historical, critical biblical studies and the social sciences were the main "starting points" of Rauschenbusch's theology. These, he argues, were the two major factors in the development and articulation of Rauschenbusch's religious thought. (16)

Rauschenbusch's conception of God was also influenced by a reliance on an understanding of history of a type that was characteristic of Protestant liberalism. History was God's revelation. As Rauschenbusch commented, "in the rulings of history he [God] has manifested himself to man." (17) He understood the Bible to be the history of God's revelation to humanity. Yet, not only the events recorded in the Bible, but all history was part of God's revelation. "To a religious man the contemplation of the larger movements of history brings a profound sense of God's presence and overruling power." (18) Rauschenbusch claimed that all theological statements are the products of human encounters with, and reflections on, the God who is revealed in history. Such theological claims are also influenced by social factors. "The conception of God held by a social group is a social product...[and] takes on the qualities of that group." (19) Rauschenbusch reasoned,

consequently, that the failure of "the social movement" would result in the demise of theological statements that emphasize God's immanence, presence in history, and concern for the poor. Persons would cease to think of "a God who strives within our striving...[who is] their chief fellow-worker." (20) But it is the person of Jesus who reveals God most fully in history. Through his life and teaching, he "democratized the conception of God." He embodied God's love for humanity and preached the "Fatherhood of God." Rauschenbusch understood Jesus to be the person of greatest God-consciousness. He was the culmination of history in his uniquely clear revelation of God. (21)

Rauschenbusch had a view of Jesus that was typical of Protestant liberalism, but perhaps what is most interesting in Rauschenbusch's christology is his strong emphasis on Jesus' role as the initiator of the Kingdom of God. Rauschenbusch even speculates that, had Jesus lived "for thirty years longer," he would have founded "a new humanity which would change the relation of God to humanity." (22) Rauschenbusch was interested in the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth, not in refined christological doctrine. Jesus was fully human for Rauschenbusch. "His personality was an achievement, not an effortless inheritance." Sinlessness was a high moral and religious goal that Jesus struggled to attain by uniting his will with that of God. This perfect moral will entailed "uniting the service of

the common good with the affirmation of his selfhood." Once he realized this high level of religious life, Jesus was filled with the truth of God's perfect love. (23) Rauschenbusch quotes the idealist philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte to explicate his claim that what was truly significant about Jesus was that he "experienced God in a new way." Jesus shows the way for persons to devote themselves fully to the Kingdom and to achieve this superior God-consciousness. (24) Fricke criticizes Rauschenbusch for reducing the salvific work of Jesus to the task of being an example for persons to emulate. He argues that it is theologically irresponsible to place so little emphasis on the redeeming work of Christ. (25)

But Rauschenbusch approaches redemption on different terms. He emphasizes Christ's action in setting "in motion the historical forces of redemption which are to overthrow the Kingdom of Evil." Instead of stressing the importance of the incarnation, atonement, and resurrection, Rauschenbusch interprets the entire event of Christ "by the dominant purpose which he consistently followed, by the establishment of the Kingdom of God." (26) Indeed, the establishment of the Kingdom is Jesus' messianic task, that to which he devoted his entire life. Jesus carried out his work for the Kingdom by organizing a small group of persons around his cause. Through his group of followers and "by the authority of his personality, he made that ideal a living energy in the midst of our sordid earthly material."

(27) Fricke argues that when Rauschenbusch speaks of Jesus' continuing presence with the Church, he does not mean the presence of the Holy Spirit. To the contrary, he refers to the law of love or the goal of the Kingdom. Fricke characterizes this presence as "the memory of an ideal once given by the man Jesus." (28)

Rauschenbusch did not deny the significance of the death of Christ for theology. He asserts that "the cross was [for Jesus] the effective culmination of his work and the key which unlocks the meaning of his whole life." His death was also the fulfillment of prophetic suffering--suffering for a good cause. Through his suffering, Jesus "taught us to see the cross as a great social principle of the Kingdom of God." (29) But there is a non-unique aspect of the meaning of Jesus' death for Rauschenbusch. "What the death of Jesus now does for us, the death of the prophets did for him." To a certain extent, Rauschenbusch understood the death of Jesus to be "the clearest and most conspicuous case of prophetic suffering." (30) Yet, he also referred to Jesus' death as a genuine act of selfless love, the "conclusive and effective expression" of such love. (31) It is interesting to note Rauschenbusch's argument that Jesus' death was the result of his failure in the task of building the Kingdom. Hence, the fullness of the Kingdom was postponed until the future, when he would return and complete "what he had hoped to accomplish during his earthly life." (32) Fricke

comments that the crucifixion, for Rauschenbusch, was essentially an unfortunate interruption and the untimely end of Jesus's work of establishing the Kingdom of God. He saw it as a tragedy which had "an incomparable value in putting the cause of Christianity before the world." (33)

Rauschenbusch reacted strongly against what he believed to be a theological belittling of the significance of Jesus' life on earth. He complained that "the theological significance of the life of Christ has been comprised in the incarnation, the atonement, and the resurrection." (34) Rauschenbusch develops his understanding of Jesus' theological importance in his discussion of the atonement in A Theology for the Social Gospel. He begins here with the claim that Jesus' death has "no place apart from his life, his life purpose, and the development and expression of his personality." His death was the supreme act of defiance against sin and of obedience to God. Through the crucifixion, the evil power of sin was demonstrated; love, "the social instinct of the race," was revealed; and prophetic religion was "reinforced." The spectacle of the crucifixion inspires and calls others to take up the struggle for the Kingdom. (35)

But alongside his reliance on Protestant liberalism, Rauschenbusch always placed great emphasis upon the importance of personal religious faith. It is important to remember that he was a Baptist preacher in the tradition of

the revivalists; he never lost this orientation. (36) In a letter that he wrote two months before his death, Rauschenbusch indicated the importance to him of his personal religious faith. Through this faith, "God was consciously present in my life....This gave me reinforcement to my will, and turned my life in the direction of service." (37) In an address on "Conceptions of Missions" in 1892, Rauschenbusch emphasized the evangelical nature of his faith in his contention that educational and philanthropic work should never replace the missionary activity of the preaching and ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such a replacement would remove the "only solid and trustworthy basis" for legitimate missionary concerns other than evangelism. (38) In the essay "Social Motives in Evangelism," he maintained that the neglect of evangelistic work in favor of purely social concerns would be "a reaction from an old one-sidedness into a new one-sidedness." (39)

It was Rauschenbusch's evangelical faith, which was by no means individualistic or quietistic, that called him to involvement in ethical concerns. He asserted, in sharp contrast to the dominant religious piety of his day, that personal faith should necessarily lead one to involvement in the ethical issues of society. This understanding is, of course, linked with his view of the Kingdom of God. One who is committed to following Jesus ought to be committed to work for, and bear witness to, the Kingdom which Jesus

proclaimed. (40) It was from this perspective of faith that Rauschenbusch criticized those who called for an emphasis on social reform devoid of religious commitment. In an essay prepared for the New York State Conference on Religion in 1900, Rauschenbusch argued that it is only through religious faith that persons find the strength to be truly moral. "We have no scientific basis for our ethics," because ethics must be part of a faith commitment in order to avoid mere utilitarianism. This statement by Rauschenbusch should not, however, be understood as a rejection of the relevance of science for informing religious thought, particularly regarding, for example, biblical studies and evolution. Rather, he is here arguing against a scientific reductionism of ethics.

Scientific analysis was a tool employed by Rauschenbusch for the sake of clarifying religious thought, but it could never stand alone, especially when it came to ethics. (41) In an essay that he published in 1897, Rauschenbusch expressed his desire that the Church not be "turned into a reform club." Instead, he calls for the Church to emphasize dedication to the Kingdom of God. Then, the Church will be able to produce a "social Christianity which will be immeasurably more powerful and more valuable to the world than either an unsocial Christianity or an un-Christian socialism." (42) In Rauschenbusch's understanding, there is more to social reform than "the quantity or quality of meat and drink,"

for any social structure in which the spiritual aspects of humans are neglected is seriously flawed. (43)

"A great task demands a great faith." Rauschenbusch asserts that there is a need for spiritual support and guidance in dealing with ethical concerns. (44) In fact, without reliance upon God's support and guidance, the Church will be paralyzed, unable to carry out any meaningful efforts at reform. Thus, "we do not want less religion; we want more; but it must be a religion that gets its orientation from the Kingdom of God." (45) In the final analysis, religion is the only force powerful enough to reform the world and its corrupt societies. Politics and education can play their part, but they are by no means capable of transforming individuals and society as a whole. It is only religious faith, for Rauschenbusch, which has that great power. (46)

It is important to note that Rauschenbusch never saw himself as preaching a new gospel. To the contrary, he believed that the gospel which he preached was "the oldest gospel of all." (47) He understood himself to be translating the good news of Jesus Christ into the modern world, a world with horrid social problems. (48) He saw himself as calling the Church back to its true reason for existence, the Kingdom of God. Rauschenbusch was a professor of Church history, a Baptist preacher, an able theologian, a social reformer, and he saw himself as a prophet. Not only did he call the Church to an orientation

around the Kingdom; as well, he understood that perfection on earth would never be achieved by human striving--he was more "realistic" at this point than is often thought. (49)

Rauschenbusch was also, as noted earlier, influenced by the theology of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Harnack. (50) H. Richard Niebuhr points out that Rauschenbusch's theology was informed by Ritschl's "complete reconciliation of Christianity and culture." The Kingdom of God became, in effect, the kingdom of humanity. "Rauschenbusch's social gospel presents the same general interpretation of Christ and the gospel [as Ritschl's], though with greater moral force and less theological depth." Such liberal influence is obvious in his view of Jesus as the person of the greatest God-consciousness. His theology is articulated in largely historical categories. He had faith in the historical, critical study of the Bible and was optimistic about the future of society. As noted earlier, Rauschenbusch was also an American with certain Victorian views, particularly with reference to family relations and the roles of the sexes in society. (51) He valued hard work, honesty, and selflessness, though he rejected the individualism that was typical of the Victorian era.

Furthermore, Rauschenbusch had the experience of being a pastor in the Hell's Kitchen area of New York City during the late nineteenth century. He was confronted by the American "melting pot" experience. He saw the effects of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration. In fact,

his interest in social problems "came less from within the Church than from a confrontation with the conditions of working people and with the secular reform movement." (52) Fricke comments that Rauschenbusch's church was small and poor, yet it was able to provide him with a decent salary. "Rauschenbusch was not ministering to the lowest income group in society, but poverty was close by." (53) It was Rauschenbusch's encounter with "the agitation of Henry George in 1886" that opened his eyes to the relationship between Christianity and social problems. Through the debate that George instigated on the Single Tax--a proposal that would, in effect, make all land public property--and his encounter with the poverty of his community, Rauschenbusch became convinced of the necessity of a social gospel. (54)

Glenn C. Altschuler, a historian at Ithaca College, argues that Rauschenbusch used a good bit of theological innovation to articulate his understanding of the relationship between faith and social reform. Unlike many of his liberal colleagues who would ridicule any appeal to the literal truth of Scripture, Rauschenbusch argued "that Christ was a socialist whose program must be copied by all professing Christians." He relied on a historical approach to biblical studies and thought such an approach to be the best defense against religious and moral relativism. At this point, it is important to remember that Rauschenbusch was a historian of Christianity and a believer in the

necessity of historical inquiry for the establishment of truth. But, despite his occasional reliance upon the literal truth of Scripture, Rauschenbusch was willing to ignore biblical themes, such as eschatology, that were in conflict with his modernism and social activism. Altschuler contends that Rauschenbusch was much more concerned with the social gospel than with any particular school of theology or biblical interpretation. Orthodoxy offended his mostly liberal presuppositions, while "liberalism rendered the connection between Christianity and a socialist program tenuous." His commitment to the Kingdom and the success of the social gospel was the dominant factor in his thought. (55)

Altschuler maintains that Rauschenbusch's view of the Church was at odds with that of theological liberalism. Unlike the liberals, Rauschenbusch believed that the Church should be "the battering ram for social reform." Membership in the Church should be restricted to those who are committed to the "reform tenets of the Kingdom." This emphasis on moral criteria for membership was offensive to many liberals, who believed that the Church should be open to all who wished to join. "Against the tendency of liberalism, Rauschenbusch advocated the separation of sheep and goats." Nevertheless, he was opposed to any insistence on the acceptance of theological doctrines as the criterion for ecumenical cooperation. His primary concern was for the social gospel and the advancement of the Kingdom, not

for liberal inclusivism or narrow orthodoxy. "He first found the Kingdom of God--and tailored theology to spur men to bring heaven closer to earth." Altschuler's treatment of Rauschenbusch reflects a proper appreciation of the richness of his thought. He demonstrates how Rauschenbusch employed the Kingdom as the foundational metaphor of a theological system that incorporates themes of both orthodoxy and liberalism in a coherent fashion. (56)

But William McGuire King, a professor at Albright College, goes too far in arguing that the social gospel represents a colossal theological shift from Protestant liberalism. The major source for this theological novelty is, in his mind, its emphasis on "a participation/interaction model for explaining human knowledge and experience." Religious values, King asserts, were not knowable for the social gospel by mere theological speculation. Rather, participation in action, struggle, and decision-making was required for profitable theological discovery. This was a theology of history. As Rauschenbusch commented, "history is a revelation of God." King argues, then, that the problem of faith and history is a better starting point for considering the theology of the social gospel than is the Kingdom of God. Such a switch of categories would require, he suggests, an abandonment of the "commonplace categories of immanence, progress, and utopianism" for the analysis of the social gospel. King maintains that such terms fail to emphasize the "historical contingency that characterized the thought of the

social gospel." He asserts that most social gospel theologians rejected historical determinism, as such a view would undermine the urgency of reform. (57)

The usual claim that the social gospellers were heavily invested in evolutionary thought, and therefore had an inevitably positive view of history and the future, is challenged by King. He charges that the movement had "an increasingly self-critical tendency and a concern for historical realism." Any hopefulness which is possessed regarding the future "was not a philosophy of history but a religious conviction that seemed to them to be personally and socially compelling." King maintains that the German philosopher Rudolf Hermann Lotze is responsible for introducing into American theology this understanding of the contingency of historical events. Through Lotze's understanding that "the ultimate character of the world is personal," the social gospellers avoided despair and skepticism about history. They came to the conclusion, according to King, that it is only by being involved in the "flux of historical change" that God can be personal. He argues, moreover, that a doctrine of God's mutability is crucial for understanding the social gospel's theology. Even as history is changing and developing, God is creating; hence, God is changing. He quotes Rauschenbusch's speculation about the ongoing nature of creation on "an unlimited scale of ascent toward God," from A Theology for the Social Gospel, as proof that such a position is

representative of the larger social gospel. (58)

This understanding of creation, King insists, meant to the social gospelers that historical events could not disclose in themselves the meaning of history. Rather, the meaning of history could only be grasped "in the light of the divine participation in social struggle." The course of history belongs to God who will invite persons to participate in the process of creation. It is only by accepting that invitation that persons are able to interpret history rightly. "History only becomes purposive when it is viewed through faith in God's revelation of himself in Christ's history." The life, death, and resurrection of Christ were, as well, the high points of God's revelation to humanity about the meaning of history. Through these events, God became a participant in human history and suffering. God could no longer be understood as a spectator of the unfolding human drama. King maintains, then, that it was impossible for the social gospel to conceive of a "salvation history" that is somehow separated from the rest of human experience. History is necessarily related to God and the nature of reality. True theological knowledge is possible only for the individual who is committed to right social action and participation in the historical struggles of humanity. Hence, it was not possible for the social gospelers to speak of true religious faithfulness without speaking of history and human solidarity. Finally, he again quotes Rauschenbusch on the importance of social gospel

thought in the larger picture of Christian theology. "The social Christianity of to-day is not a dilution of personal religion, but a new form of experimental Christianity, and its religious testimony will have to be heard henceforth when 'the varieties of religious experience' are described."

And, King would add, it is a movement with an unusually serious view of the significance of history. (59)

But King's discussion of Rauschenbusch is problematic. He is wrong in arguing that the Kingdom should be replaced by the problem of faith and history as the central theme of Rauschenbusch's theology. It is clear that the Kingdom of God is the central strand in his thought--he approaches faith and history in light of the Kingdom. Also, King's downplaying of Rauschenbusch's optimistic view of history is not sound. While he was more realistic about history than many of his contemporaries, Rauschenbusch's theology remains a classic example of liberal optimism. Hence, King's treatment of Rauschenbusch as a monumental theological innovator is unwarranted.

In summarizing this brief, tentative critique of Rauschenbusch's approach to theology, it must be said that Rauschenbusch was more a preacher for the social gospel than a systematic theologian. In his great desire to serve the Kingdom of God, he neglected to sort out carefully the implications of his arguments. His thought combines in a less than precise fashion the influences of Protestant liberalism, evangelical piety, radical sectarianism, and

social concern. This combination explains both the profundity and the often perplexing nature of his thought. Smucker comments that Rauschenbusch's background in pietism and liberalism led him to emphasize the experiential and pragmatic aspects of religious involvement. He was suspicious of confessionalism and open to various, innovative theological positions. (60)

Rauschenbusch's optimistic approach to history, his high view of culture, his refusal to distinguish between nature and grace, his unsystematic and thoroughgoing stress on love as an ethical norm, and his strong emphasis on God's immanence, all make it difficult for theologians of the current generation to appreciate the brilliant and prophetic nature of his thought. But such problems should never be allowed to overshadow Rauschenbusch's role as a theologian in pursuit of a Christianized social order. Drawing on various interpretations of Christian theology, he provided a convincing theological basis for social activism and largely set the social agenda for North American Christianity in the first half of the twentieth century. Rauschenbusch is a notable figure in the history of Christian ethics who had a profound influence on the likes of Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Luther King, Jr. His thought is of continuing significance.

B. Gustavo Gutierrez

In beginning a discussion of Gutierrez, it is necessary to place him within his historical, cultural context.

Gutierrez wishes to explicate a uniquely Latin American theology that is shaped by the history and current reality of that region. This history has been one of colonialism. Christianity came to Central America as part of Spanish colonial policy. Native Americans were forcibly converted, their indigenous cultures and religions destroyed. The Spanish employed Christianity as a religious ideology to support a stratified, oppressive social order. The Latin American nations' struggles for independence of the nineteenth century did little to alter the severe social inequality: a significant middle class did not emerge. Developed nations, such as Great Britain and the United States, exploited the region's poverty and established patterns of trade which caused Latin America, in Gutierrez' view, to become economically dependent on the developed nations. This is the system of neo-colonialism which Gutierrez blames for much of the current poverty and oppression of the region.

Gutierrez is critical of programs for the development for Central America that are based on Western democratic, capitalist principles, such as John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, which have failed to produce a broad middle class in the region. The failure of such policy, along with the Brazilian military coup of 1964, the United States' military intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965, and the failure of Eduardo Frei's "Revolution in Liberty," gave rise to the sentiment in Latin America that Western

involvement in the region was at best ineffectual and more likely detrimental to the cause of democracy. It was in such a climate that the second general conference of Latin American bishops met at Medellin, Colombia in 1968 to address the fundamental problems of their region.

The Medellin documents condemn both "internal colonialism" and "external neocolonialism." They identify major social problems created by capitalistic greed and "institutionalized violence." Yet these writings do not offer specific solutions to the identified problems. They express no developed theme of liberation, instead emphasizing the necessity of the Church carrying out the imitation of Christ in solidarity with the poor. "The Medellin documents continue the basic strategy of modern papal social teaching in criticizing both liberal capitalism and totalitarian communism as threats to the dignity of the human person." Yet Dennis P. McCann points out that "theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez were quick to take Medellin as an endorsement of the various social movements with which they were involved." Gutierrez saw the documents of the conference as "a clear mandate for liberation theology." (61)

A vital aspect of the situation in which Gutierrez theologizes is the emergence of basic communities, social groupings that "represent a convergence of different trends in Catholic ecclesial development since Vatican Council II."

Part of the Church's commitment to new forms of

evangelism, these communities, involved in everything from Bible study to support for guerilla warfare, are ideologically defined by a common commitment to liberation. Theologians of liberation, such as Gutierrez, "see themselves simply as spokesmen for these communities." In so doing, according to McCann, they go beyond the statements of Medellin to adopt an explicit political ideology with polarities of oppressor/oppressed and dependence/liberation. (62) It is only within the larger context of the history of Latin America, the Medellin conference, and the basic communities that it is possible to examine responsibly the particulars of Gutierrez' theology.

Gutierrez defines his essential understanding of theology in A Theology of Liberation, in which he argues that the theological task should be viewed as "critical reflection on praxis" done from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. Such Christian praxis is grounded in the biblical view of faith as "an act of trust...a commitment to God and neighbor." He stresses the anthropological focus of this approach to theology, particularly in light of the incarnation. God identifies with humanity in a unique and ultimate way in Jesus Christ. "The very life of the Church" is to play a crucial role in theology--for it is reflection on the activity of the Church. Underlying this emphasis on praxis is Gutierrez' philosophical claim that human action should be the point of departure for all reflection. He maintains that a major contribution of Marxist thought has

been its prodding of theologians "to reflect on the meaning of the transformation of this world and the action of man in history." The eschatological dimension of theology leads Gutierrez to emphasize the importance of human praxis. He asserts that inasmuch as Christian faith maintains that history is "above all else an opening to the future," it should be the goal of Christians to orient themselves toward the eschatological, "the full and definite encounter with the Lord and with other men." Vital to this approach is the significance of "orthopraxy," the sort of activity that leads to the "building up of that brotherhood and communion in history." This point of emphasis, Gutierrez claims, should be seen as a much needed corrective designed to balance "the primacy and almost exclusiveness which doctrine has enjoyed in Christian life." Hence, he calls for theology to be reflection grounded in faithful activity, not mere speculation that ignores the significance "of deeds, of action, of praxis in the Christian life." (63)

Gutierrez further develops his understanding of the theological pursuit by stressing his claim that theology must involve humanity's critical reflection on what it means to be human. But he warns against an entirely spiritualized orientation for such reflection, due to the importance of "economic and socio-cultural issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community." Indeed, it is only after the Church undertakes meaningful acts of love, which will necessarily be relevant to economic and social

concerns, that theology comes into play. "Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. Theology follows; it is the second step."

Gutierrez deliberately attempts to "do theology" in a way that is quite different from European and North American theologians. He discusses this different approach in his essay "Theology from the Underside of History." He begins here with the claim that "bourgeois" theology cannot be understood outside of the context of "the modern spirit." The phenomena of the industrial revolution and the rise of individual political liberty were part of "the complex of thought currents" of the Enlightenment. Reason, tolerance, and individual freedom were the highest values of this movement. The emphasis on the individual has shaped the "modern ideology and bourgeois society...the human being is an absolute beginning, an autonomous decision-making center." Hence, the individual becomes the "absolute principle" of economic and political activity. Private property, individual freedom of conscience, the social contract, and empiricism are all manifestations of this orientation. After the Enlightenment, the bourgeoisie dominated every aspect of Western culture; hence, they made a severe critique of traditional Christianity. Gutierrez maintains that the Enlightenment found religion to be superstitious, authoritarian, and anti-rational. It violated the bourgeois claims of autonomy and tolerance. Consequently, "religion in European bourgeois

society...[was]...relegated to the private domain." (64)

Gutierrez argues that there is, however, an "other side" to the phenomena associated with the Enlightenment. "What was a movement for liberty in some parts of the world...only meant new and more refined forms of exploitation of the very poorest--of the wretched of the earth." These bourgeois beliefs about liberty and economics were the ideology behind the colonialism that caused Latin America to be economically dependent. After centuries of Spanish domination, Latin America fell victim to a neo-colonialism that was based on "liberal utopianism." A white colonial elite dominated the peasants of the region, who "generally had no share at all in the advantages of the new arrangement." But the establishment of a bourgeois society never occurred in Latin America as it had in Europe and North America; rather, the new order "was at the service of the new international capitalism." This brought even worse oppression for the vast majority of Latin Americans than had existed previously. (65)

It is out of this oppressive situation that liberation theology was born. Gutierrez insists that it has its source in the poor who are "calling into question...[both] the economic, social, and political order that oppresses and marginalizes them" and the ideology that supports such an order. Hence, liberation theology calls for an awareness and a rejection of Latin America's economic dependence on North American and European nations, as it is this external

dependence which gives rise to internal domination. Only the members of the elite social classes benefit from the dependent situation; the rest are impoverished by it. Such a realization leads to "an encounter with the social sciences and Marxist analysis." Marxism is the critical economic and social theory that gives understanding and hope to Latin America's oppressed. Due to the horribly unjust situation in this region, Gutierrez takes up the struggle for a new and liberated society in which "new human persons" will be created who will achieve their liberation from any and all forms of oppression.

The critique of religion that emerges from such a situation is quite different from that of the Enlightenment. It is not concerned with how to speak of God in an adult and reasonable world. To the contrary, it is focused on "the human being who is not considered human by the present social order"--the non-person. The great division is no longer between believers and non-believers, but between the oppressors and the oppressed. (66) Gutierrez asserts that the division between bourgeois theology and liberation theology is "first of all a political breach." It is important to keep in mind that Gutierrez stresses the praxis, as well as the historical, cultural, and economic situation, out of which a theology develops. Thus, he claims that these theologies have different loci: the poor and exploited persons of Latin America, as opposed to the neo-colonialists, who are supported by bourgeois ideology.

Gutierrez is convinced that what is crucial in theology is praxis, particularly since the bourgeois theological tradition has served as an ideology for the horrid raping of a people and culture: "One of the best ways to refute a theology is to look at its practical consequences, not its intellectual arguments." Hence, he maintains that liberation theology must begin with "involvement in the liberation process;" reflection on such action comes later. Praxis and reflection are to "work from the viewpoint of the poor." Those who were once non-persons in every way are now the makers of their own history, the leaders in the struggle for liberation from every type of oppression. "Our own generation has only just begun to discover the presence of the Lord at the heart of the history of the Latin American people." (67)

In light of his emphasis on praxis and the perspective of the poor, Gutierrez calls for a re-reading of history from the point of view of the oppressed. This new perspective is needed because Christian theology and history have been "written with a white, Western, bourgeois hand." But it is impossible to reinterpret history or to articulate a liberating theology, says Gutierrez, without first being involved in the struggle for liberation. Without subversive action, subversive thought is not possible. (68) The theologian does not write and think "in some kind of ahistorical limbo." His or her explication of the Christian faith "starts out from material bases" and should always be

viewed in that context. The dominant theology of North America and Europe arises from the bourgeois class and its intellectual tradition. "The theology of liberation begins from the questions asked by the poor and plundered of the world." (69)

Crucial to understanding Gutierrez' thought is his rejection of the "distinction of planes model." He asserts that a rigid division between the Church and the world, or the spiritual and physical, leads to an otherworldly Christianity and an implicit approval by the Church of injustice in society. In this model, the Kingdom of God is made irrelevant for human history; it is reserved for the eschatological future. Gutierrez maintains that such a division results in understanding the temporal order to be autonomous from the religious sphere. Society becomes free from meaningful criticism from the Church. Hence, such a distinction results in "concealing the real political option of a large sector of the Church--that is, support of the established order." (70)

Gutierrez argues that the increasing autonomy of the secular realm has led to "a transformation of the self-understanding of man." The shift is from a cosmological to an anthropological perspective; persons come to realize that they are the agents of history, responsible for their own destiny. This approach affirms the goodness of creation, as well as its distinction from the Creator. Persons, argues Gutierrez, must first understand their

autonomy in order to enter into proper relationships with God, other persons, and nature. The Church and theology should be seen in terms of the world and the larger history of humanity. (71) Such an emphasis on the historical opens Christian theology to an orientation around social solidarity--thus rejecting a "narrow, individualistic viewpoint" of salvation. All persons, for Gutierrez, are called to participate in the single vocation to salvation, "be they conscious of it or not." Consequently, distinctions between the spiritual and the temporal "become more fluid." He argues, in contrast to Augustine's traditional formulation in The City of God, that the building of a just society on earth "has worth in terms of the Kingdom" and is "a salvific work." The rejection of a division of planes is at the heart of Gutierrez' approach to theology. (72)

Christine E. Gudorf, in her Catholic Social Teaching on Liberation Themes, insists that Gutierrez is in fundamental disagreement with traditional Roman Catholicism in his affirmation of theology as reflection on praxis. His approach maintains that the perspective of the poor who are struggling for liberation is the one most faithful to the gospel. The integrity of traditional authority is, she asserts, called into serious question by a theology that is rooted in reflection on liberating involvement in history. (73) McCann agrees that Gutierrez has gone beyond Vatican II in claiming that "the appropriate criteria" for sound

theology are to be derived from action and reflection based on solidarity with the oppressed. Gutierrez' thought is a theology of history in which God is understood to be interested primarily in bringing about liberation, as that concept is defined by a certain political ideology. Such an approach, he asserts, is clearly at odds with the theological method of traditional Catholicism.(74)

Robert Haight, S.J., in his An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology, suggests that Gutierrez' thought should be placed in the context of post-Vatican II Catholic theology. That is, Gutierrez is attempting to take the world and its questions seriously and on their own terms. In his effort to respond to the Latin American reality of oppression and suffering, he is struggling to formulate a relevant response. He has learned from Marx, says Haight, that oppression has economic roots. For Christian faith to be meaningful in such a world of oppression, it must be interpreted in light of theories that enable theologians to make sense of human experience, such as the massive suffering of the Third World. It is to this situation, which obviously calls for liberating praxis, that Gutierrez speaks. (75)

Rebecca S. Chopp, in her The Praxis of Suffering, interprets Gutierrez' theological method similarly. She asserts that, in his mind, "the irruption of the poor qualitatively changes history, Christianity, and theology." Theology is to be formulated from the perspective of the

poor as they work for their liberation in the course of human history. Such liberating praxis is the occasion for a *kairos*, a special time in which God is involved in a historical situation in new ways. "Theology is an ongoing process of reflection, dialoguing with contemporary categories, reformulating concepts in light of the situation and the Christian message, addressing new and changing situations." Truth is found for Gutierrez only in the struggle for liberation. In fact, liberation theology "helps create truth...truth judges and is judged through its own participation in history." Faith seeks understanding through its involvement in "the praxis of solidarity with the poor." This commitment to liberation is "Gutierrez' hermeneutical strategy." He theologizes in an attempt to respond to the contemporary spectacle of suffering and poverty in Latin America. (76)

Gudorf, McCann, Haight, and Chopp agree that Gutierrez explicates a theology grounded in praxis that is intended to be relevant to the Latin American situation. He differs from traditional Catholicism at precisely this point. He is not concerned with enhancing traditional structures of ecclesial authority or the preservation of the doctrinal statements of councils. Rather, Gutierrez rejects scholastic distinctions in an effort to be open to the fullness of the contemporary world. Rejecting any sort of dualism, he is concerned with the Kingdom's direct relevance for situations of suffering and oppression. For Gutierrez,

theology has integrity only to the extent that it grows out of and gives rise to redemptive social involvement. He is clearly a post-Vatican II thinker who has learned much from Marxism.

J. Andrew Kirk, in his Liberation Theology: An Evangelical View from the Third World, makes a persuasive critique of some of Gutierrez' most important presuppositions about theology. He begins his argument with the charge that liberation theology tends to distort the significance of the Exodus for Christian faith. This is the case, he asserts, in that it tends to emphasize a humanistic, horizontal interpretation: God did not intervene in this archetypical revolution of the people. Kirk argues that this exegetical distortion is the result of the influence of Marxism on liberation theologians. He astutely suggests that most liberation theologians, including Gutierrez, have not given much attention to how the biblical message of liberation should modify Marxist categories. Yet Kirk thinks that an even greater dilemma is created by "the use of Marxism as a pre-understanding for the hermeneutical task." This dilemma has to do with whether Marxism should be viewed as a scientific, objective tool with wide relevance, or as a limited paradigm with restricted relevance for the interpretation of texts, events, and history. Kirk maintains that Marxism should be viewed as an "objective socio-political tool of analysis" within a very limited field of competence. As a tool for

understanding biblical revelation, Marxism is ambiguous. This is the case, Kirk argues, in that the claim that "praxis can...precede all theoretical reflection, is an illusion." Rather, it is theory that gives rise to praxis. He maintains, consequently, that biblical categories should inform and criticize liberation praxis. (77) Kirk does not, however, articulate clearly his argument that praxis is dependent on theory, though he is correct in insisting that theory is at least implicitly involved in praxis. The theory/praxis debate is a complicated one which will be treated more fully later in this chapter.

Kirk asserts that liberation theologians must deal more seriously with the biblical notion of sin, in order to clarify the meaning of liberation. It is a mistake for them to assert that "the origin and nature of oppression as the Bible portrays it can be determined by a particular modern interpretation of historical man." Kirk argues that the Bible teaches that persons are "structurally unfree" to manipulate a social system to the point where there is true freedom and liberation for all. Social alienation is the inevitable result of human sinfulness; "no amount of hermeneutical jiggling" can override this clear biblical theme. (78) This is precisely why "the text [must be] allowed to question modern man, without being suppressed." Marxism "is not subversive enough...for a continuous prophetic task." Kirk maintains that it is only the biblical text itself, with its unique appreciation of the

inevitability of human sin, that is capable of pointing persons toward full liberation in Jesus Christ. Reliance upon Marxism risks a socio-economic reductionism and an identification of the Kingdom of God with that of humanity. Hence, it is to be rejected. We will develop a critique of Gutierrez that is similar to Kirk's in the course of this thesis.(79)

The Argentinian liberation theologian Enrique D. Dussel is more sympathetic towards Gutierrez' approach to theology as he makes his case for an analogical relationship between orthodox Christianity and particular theological orientations. Dussel asserts that each theological movement, such as liberation theology, arises in a particular situation and is "a reduplicative pondering of the divine happening of Christ and the church from the standpoint of a given person, culture, and point in time." Hence, though there is one Christian faith, there are, and must be, a plethora of Christian theologies. These theologies take part in an "analogical degree of participation in the history of one theology." Dussel maintains that those who emphasize a "univocal" or "universal" Christian theology are, in fact, advocating the dominant theology, the one that elitist classes find helpful for excusing their exploitation of the masses. (80) Dussel reasons that much of the dominant theology is the idolatry or fetishism of "Christians who spend all their time trying to make money." Often, the entire political and economic

system is "baptized," treated as though it were part of Christian orthodoxy, for the sake of preserving the advantages of the elite. Dussel calls, however, for a theology that is atheistic with respect to the false gods of the capitalist fetishists. Instead, theology should emphasize openness to the other, to "the poor and those oppressed by colonialism." Faithful persons should seek to participate fully in their pedagogical relationship to God who is the Parent. This relationship should challenge the "authoritarian paternal domination and the oppression of the child" that is brought about by neo-colonialism.

In conclusion, Dussel stresses the necessity of salvation's relevance for "the whole human being." A true theology of liberation will not be able to ignore or excuse the historical, social, and physical suffering of impoverished masses. Yet, he, like Gutierrez, does not want to locate the Kingdom of God entirely within history. Such an identification of the Kingdom would serve to bring about "total oppression and unlimited tyranny." Instead, salvation must be "historical in its witness and preparatory stages, but eschatological in its ultimate fulfillment." The historical struggle, for Dussel, is the sign of the eschatological Kingdom which is never to be identified fully with any sort of political system. "Christians absolutize only the Kingdom of heaven." Hence, all Christian theology must be viewed in an analogous way. (81)

Juan Louis Segundo, a liberation theologian from

Uruguay, argues for a theology of liberation more provocatively than either Gutierrez or Dussel. He asserts that liberation theology "claims to view theology from the standpoint which the Christian fonts point up as the only authentic and privileged standpoint for arriving at a full and complete understanding of God's revelation in Jesus Christ." Theology, for Segundo, should be directly relevant for specific political issues; otherwise, it will have "an absolute value, a non-functional value. In other words, its value is nil." This is the critique that Segundo makes of European political theology: politics is viewed as relative, while "the future that comes down from God himself to humanity" is given absolute importance. Segundo cites Jeremiah and Jesus' prophetic pronouncements as biblical instances of the direct relevance of theology for specific historical problems. Indeed, Jesus referred to his concrete acts of healing as the coming of salvation to persons. (82)

Eschatology, for Segundo, links the present to the absolute. "Absolutization is necessary for all effective human mobilization." True Christian faith will ascribe ultimate importance to history. Hence, theology must be directly involved in the "here and now." It cannot afford to speculate about the eschatological future to the extent that the present is belittled. As well, Segundo argues for a "causal relationship" between liberative historical events and the Kingdom. There is not merely "an anticipation, outline, or analogy of the kingdom" involved in the struggle

for liberation. Instead, "in however fragmentary a way," the eschatological Kingdom is involved in the events of history. (83) Segundo's almost exclusive claims for liberation theology lead him to make statements that are even stronger than Gutierrez' about the realization in history of the Kingdom and the relevance of faith for political action.

Robert McAfee Brown, the North American student of liberation theology, points out that theologies of liberation should be evaluated in terms of the presupposition that theology is an "open-ended process." Theological reflection involves a process that incorporates earlier dogmatic statements, contemporary modes of thought, and present situations. Liberation theologians, of course, attempt to work from the perspective of the oppressed. Such an orientation, Brown insists, will necessarily lead to challenging statements about the theological enterprise. Theology is a corporate process that develops through conversation and argument with various facets of society and the Church. It grows out of the experience of a people with a peculiar history and develops through dialogue in which presuppositions and conclusions are continuously challenged. Of great importance for Gutierrez and the other theologians of liberation is the claim that theology is an "engaged process." It is reflection which is inspired by, and done in the context of, a historical task. Hence, Brown finds liberation theology to be a responsible theological movement

which the bourgeois classes of the world must take seriously.

Brown also points out that the modern European theological tradition has points of contact with liberation theology's concern for the oppressed in the examples of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Tillich, and Karl Barth. He urges North American and European theologians to listen to the liberation theologians, to attempt to appreciate the "otherness" of their situation, so that bourgeois presuppositions will be challenged. It is only through dialogue with theologians such as Gutierrez, Brown insists, that bourgeois theologians will have something relevant to say to a world of oppression and want. (84)

In making a tentative evaluation of Gutierrez' larger approach to theology, it is important to note that Gutierrez is an admirably contextual theologian. He self-consciously attempts to reflect theologically in light of the history, experience, and current climate of Latin America. He understands the problems posed for theology by the hermeneutical debate and is masterful in his use of philosophy to explicate his liberationist orientation.

But it is necessary to give more attention to Gutierrez' claim that praxis precedes reflection and is foundational for theology. Gutierrez relies on Marx's understanding of the need to transform the world, to liberate the oppressed, instead of merely reflecting upon theories of social change. As Marx wrote, "the philosophers

have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." Persons come to know truth through their active solidarity with the oppressed in the struggle for liberation. Knowledge has material, historical roots--action is foundational for reflection. For Marx, "human knowing is an expression of historical human praxis."

Persons come "to know the world by a critical reflective activity that transforms the world." (85) This is the epistemology that informs Gutierrez' theological systematization.

French theologian Rene Coste, in his Marxist Analysis and Christian Faith, rejects a Marxist claim for "metaphysical materialism and atheism" while affirming the importance of praxis for Christianity. "The Christian faith is authentic only when it becomes a dialectic of truth and practice, of thought and action." He thinks that it is possible to recognize "the primacy of praxis, but only on [the] condition that we see clearly that practice must be consistent with the word of God." (86) Hans Kung, in his Does God Exist?, approaches the question similarly. He reasons that Christianity must learn from Marxism that "the truth of belief in God must be proved, tested, verified in practice." Marxism, then, is a challenge to Christians to flesh out the social, political impact of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God. (87)

Rebecca S. Chopp, in her The Praxis of Suffering, goes a step further than either Coste or Kung to suggest that

liberation theology stresses the primacy of praxis out of a recognition that "the practical conditions of life...are the conditions for all theory and reflection." Theological formulation "is not something we do and then apply" but something "embodied, involved, and participative" in particular situations of human and communal existence. Far from reducing theology to social analysis or activism, she recognizes that sound theological formulation must grow out of redemptive involvement that is relevant to the needs of persons in the contemporary world. (88) Jose Miguez Bonino, who agrees with Chopp that theological reflection is rooted in redemptive involvement, deals more explicitly than she with the theory/praxis question. In his Toward a Christian Political Ethics, Bonino argues that theory and praxis are "two poles that challenge each other...Action overflows and challenges the theory that has informed it; and thought...pushes action to new ventures." Theory is human reflection "abstracted from past and present praxis" that critiques such involvement and calls for new, more responsible action. "Praxis incorporates a theory and challenges it by changing the reality from which it has been abstracted." Christian theology, in his mind, ought to spring from and be critiqued by a liberating praxis of solidarity with the oppressed. It is the task of theology, however, to reflect on such praxis and to clarify new directions for action. Bonino finds the dialectical tension between theory and praxis to be both necessary and fruitful

for the social involvement of Christianity. (89)

David Tracy, in The Analogical Imagination, sheds further light on the issue with his claim that "praxis is theory's own originating and self-correcting foundation...praxis sublates theory, not vice-versa." Tracy insists that Christianity historically has been based in a conversionist, transformative understanding of truth: one must "do truth" to know truth fully. But he refrains from making a total separation between theory and praxis; rather, he suggests a distinction for the sake of clear thought. "Cognitive claims are distinct from, though never separate from, their grounding in particular historical situations and social structures. More concretely, there is never an authentic disclosure of truth that is not also transformative."

With reference to liberation theology, Tracy notes that this movement, due to the nature of the Latin American situation, stresses praxis in order to focus theological attention on the situation itself "rather than upon the crisis of the modern Christian intellectual analyzing the cognitive claims of the Christian tradition." (90) Of course, every theological formulation must be explicated in a fashion that speaks to the situation of which it is a part. But praxis has a stronger claim to priority than simply that offered by the peculiarities of the current Latin American reality. It does not suffice to posit reflection as some sort of ahistorical, ultimate norm or

process. Persons, who are necessary involved in the flux of history, are the agents of reflection. Thought, when isolated from committed action, can all too easily become ideological in the sense of providing rationalizations for existing social structures. Hence, theory must be held accountable to the test of praxis: to what sort of involvement does a particular theory give rise?

But we cannot stop here, since it is equally dubious to speak of praxis as the cause of theory as though praxis could exist by itself. This would be impossible, for there must be some type of reflection to inform praxis, to provide the content or goal of the historical project. Instead, it is helpful to see theory and praxis in a dialectical relationship. They are to be distinguished from one another, yet there is a "back and forth" interchange between them. They are interdependent aspects of truth. But it is necessary to stress that theology's incorporation of praxis does not require its surrender to metaphysical materialism. The argument is not that praxis is primary due to the assumption that reflection may be reduced to economic or social bases. Rather, our claim is that reflection is done by persons who are part of and shaped by historical realities. Hence, theological systematization should be judged initially by the praxis out of which it arises and to which it contributes. As Nicholas Lash argues in his A Matter of Hope: A Theologian's Reflections on the Thought of Karl Marx, Christian claims cannot be established "merely

in theory--in theological reflection." Rather, the challenge is to work a "transformation, not only of theological description but also of structures, activities and relationships. It is not true that the Church is the sacrament, or symbol, of unity for the whole human race if, in fact, it is not." (91)

Thomas H. Groome argues correctly that a thoroughgoing acceptance of Marx's understanding of praxis must be rejected, for "it would rob us of all transcendence, and indeed of the God who is the source of that transcendence." The "human emancipation" for which Marx hoped is antithetical to the Christian belief that salvation comes by the grace of God--not through human achievement. A theologically sound treatment of the theory/praxis issue will emphasize not only the importance of action, but also the necessity of a "lived relationship with God as this is encountered and reflected upon in a Christian community." (92) Notions of praxis must be placed within the context of a theology of grace. Given this understanding of theory and praxis, we may agree with Gutierrez that theology should be informed by and held accountable to a standard of praxis or redemptive social involvement. The more interesting question, reserved until the next chapter, has to do with precisely which theological notions should inform and guide Christian praxis.

One area of difficulty in Gutierrez' thought related to praxis is his anthropology. Despite the fact that the

social and political conditions of humanity are a vital part of any anthropology, it does not suffice to articulate a theological anthropology without a solid discussion of other traditional aspects of the person, such as human nature or finitude. But Gutierrez stresses the urgency of the political situation to the extent that abstract consideration of anthropological categories is given a low priority. For the purpose of articulating a coherent theological ethic, more precise reflection must be provided. It does not suffice merely to speak of creating a new person who will bring about liberation and a just society. Persons are, of course, social creatures; but for the sake of clear thought, an anthropology must at least attempt to go behind or beyond the social. By failing to discuss human nature in itself, Gutierrez falls into the trap of thinking that a just social order will eradicate sin and produce a new humanity. Such a claim reflects an optimistic anthropology of the sort that would require a strenuous defense, which he does not provide.

Gutierrez' rejection of a division of realms of being is also problematic in light of his essentially social anthropology. A brief comparison with Wolfhart Pannenberg demonstrates Gutierrez' weakness. Pannenberg, like Gutierrez, wants to abandon dualistic notions about realms of being. In so doing, he avoids an overly optimistic, horizontal view of the Kingdom's relationship to history by means of a probing theological anthropology. For

Pannenberg, the primary focus of liberation must be "the human heart itself...[which] is considered the impediment" to true human freedom. "Man is alienated from himself." So long as this is the case, as long as persons are sinful, there is no possibility of ushering in the fullness of the Kingdom. (93)

Gutierrez, through his theologically weak anthropology and rejection of realms of being, fails to provide the theoretical constructs necessary to sustain the Kingdom's eschatological nature. Without either of these checks on the possibility of human moral progress, his thought tends to horizontalism. Due, as Pannenberg reasons, to the inevitability of human sinfulness, it is impossible to affirm optimistic notions of humanity evolving morally right up to "the day of the Lord." But perhaps this is a theological way of expressing the outcome of Gutierrez' dialectical view of history: the victory of the oppressed and the establishment of the classless, liberated society. Nevertheless, Gutierrez' thought lacks the sobering realism of Reinhold Niebuhr or Paul Tillich. Against such optimism, it must be argued that the paradox of sin and grace will never be overcome in the course of human history. No dialectical process of liberation, or scheme of human moral progress, will ever bring about the actualization of the "impossible possibility."

Similarly, Gutierrez is susceptible to McCann's charge that it is problematic to affirm both a dialectical view of

history, which calls for the creation of a new humanity that will bring about its own salvation, and a view of history that sees God as the liberating Actor in history who works the liberation of the oppressed. McCann is correct in maintaining that there is great tension between a Marxist "dialectical vision" of history, in which the incarnation would be considered a myth, and the "epiphanic vision" of God's real historical involvement in history, especially in the incarnation. Who or what is controlling history? Who is the primary acting subject, God or humanity? It is not an insurmountable contradiction to affirm both God's action and humanity's freedom in historical events. The problem is that Gutierrez does not attempt to explicate his understanding of how this takes place. He does nothing more to answer the question than to affirm both in an imprecise fashion. This ambiguity in Gutierrez' view of history also causes problems for his Christology. It is not clear how Gutierrez' claim that the Son of God was truly incarnate in Jesus is logically consistent with a dialectical view of history. As McCann argues, "No dialectical tour de force can integrate the epiphany of the Absolute in time with the vision of history as an ongoing struggle of the oppressed to realize the untested feasibility of liberation." The claim that history is one, which Gutierrez makes, seems to deny the possibility of the incarnation, when understood in a traditional sense. Jesus may be either "the definitive epiphany of God who decisively catapults history forward

towards salvation" or a symbol of hope for liberation in a dialectical view of history--but, as McCann maintains, it is difficult to see how he may be both. McCann insightfully asserts that such unresolved tension demonstrates a lack of precise correlation between the content and form of liberation theology. (94)

Social Thought

A. Walter Rauschenbusch

For a clear understanding of Rauschenbusch's social thought, it is necessary to consider his analysis of the social problems of his time and the solutions which he proposed for them. An initial object of Rauschenbusch's concern was the alienation and exploitation of the worker. Such a situation came about because "in capitalistic production there is a cooperation between two distinct groups: a small group which owns all the material factors of land and machinery; a large group which owns nothing but the personal factor of human labor power." (95) Rauschenbusch was enraged by the situation of "a subject working class" that had no rights and no influence in managerial decisions. Workers were forced to accept long hours and low wages. They were "being compelled to labor too fast, too long, and under conditions harmful to their physical and mental health." (96) What with industrial accidents and the use of inexpensive labor performed by women and children, all society fell victim to the greedy

desires of the capitalists. Moreover, Rauschenbusch was concerned with the alienation that resulted from the monotony of industrial labor. Workers had no sense of pride, joy, or meaning in their work on the assembly line; rather, the work de-humanized the worker. (97)

Rauschenbusch also protested against the living conditions of the industrial city. "The machine was the creator of the modern city. It piled the poor together in crowded tenements at night and in unsanitary factories during the day, and intensified all the diseases that came through crowding." (98) Wages were low, prices were artificially high, and disease was rampant. The capitalist system created "a rich class and a poor class whose manner of life is wedged farther apart, and whose boundary lines are becoming ever more distinct." (99) Rauschenbusch charged that such social inequality threatened the institution of the family. Men could not make enough money to support their dependents. Women were forced into prostitution to make ends meet. (100) Another factor in creating such a horrid social situation, Rauschenbusch argued, was the status of land as private property. Given the class divisions brought about by capitalism, "we shall have three layers of population...the great proprietor, the tenant farmer, and the agricultural laborer." (101) Rauschenbusch put much of the blame for the worker's inability to obtain or use land on the practice of speculation. He claimed that not even many Christians

believed that it is wrong "to hold land idle for speculation in cities where men's lungs are rotting away, overgrown with tuberculosis bacilli for lack of air." (102) Rauschenbusch argued that natural resources are the property of God. Hence, private ownership of them by humans is just only when the owner pays "the full rental value for the opportunity granted to him by the community." (103)

Rauschenbusch was also concerned about corruption in government, which he blamed on "the power of capitalism." (104) Such corruption was difficult to fight, for "the standard of honor in public life has fallen so low" that dishonesty had become a matter of course. (105) Rauschenbusch was pleased with governmental reforms in the early years of the twentieth century. "The history of American politics in recent years has been a history of the reconquest of political liberty." (106) Fricke comments that Rauschenbusch's Christian Socialist Society made the call for fair and equitable taxation one of its basic principles, as Rauschenbusch understood unfair taxation to be a major loss of political equality. Another aspect of equality that Rauschenbusch believed to be compromised by capitalism was the right to legal representation, since a rich person could afford the lengthy employment of an attorney while a poor person could not. In fact, part of this legal problem found its source in lawyers and judges themselves, in that "the study and practice of law create an ingrained respect for things as they have been and...the

social sympathies of judges are altogether likely to be with the educated and possessing classes." (107) So long as great social inequality exists, Rauschenbusch maintained, political inequality would exist. The rich will always seek as much power as possible to protect their interests. Herein are the roots of governmental corruption. "If we want approximate political equality, we must have approximate economic equality." (108)

Rauschenbusch was convinced, as well, that unfortunate economic crises were inherent in capitalism. Aside from the material ramifications of such economic disruptions, he was concerned with the damage that they caused to morality. During the crises of the 1890's, "one could hear human virtue cracking and crumbling all around." Rauschenbusch was particularly disturbed by strikes and lockouts, chief signs of "social impotence and moral bankruptcy," that lead only to violence and an intensification of class struggle. (109) This inevitable polarization was largely the fault of employers who had sufficient political and economic power to "treat the organization of workingmen as a conspiracy" that should be destroyed for the sake of profits. (110) Such a situation caused Rauschenbusch not to rule out force, the use of which "against oppression can[not] always be condemned as wrong." (111) Indeed, he understood the union movement to be an "institutionalized expression of dissatisfaction" and oppression. Rauschenbusch was puzzled that the workers did not resort more often to violence,

given the existence of great injustice. (112) He found this to be the case especially in that a "political conspiracy" of employers was at work "to cripple and suppress the organizations of labor." (113)

Rauschenbusch argued that workers must "stand collectively on a footing of equality with the capitalists."

Herein lies the value of socialism: it gives control of the means of production to the workers and guarantees a fair distribution of wealth. "There would then be no capitalistic class opposed to the working class; there would be a single class which would unite the qualities of both."

(114) Rauschenbusch points out that such a goal would require much sacrifice and commitment. There must be solidarity among all workers, so that they might speak and act in a unified and effective fashion. Hence, he praised the "sympathetic strike" of workers for the sake of striking workers in another industry. "Where in the transactions of the business class, and where in church life do we find such heroic self-sacrifice of great bodies of men and women for a common cause?" (115)

A further aspect of Rauschenbusch's critique of American society was his rejection of competition which "represses good will and calls out for selfishness and jealousy." (116) A competitive economic system breeds "covetousness, cunning, hardness" and a generally dehumanizing social order. It violates the law of love. (117) Rauschenbusch asserted, as well, that competition

encourages monopoly, which entails the exploitation of the "two primary factors of production," land and labor. (118) Those who own land or businesses charge an artificially high price solely "by reason of their power to compel the rest to pay it." (119) This, Rauschenbusch claimed, is the standard procedure of monopolies. "The collection of monopoly profit is immoral, and that's all there is about it. To charge another man more than a thing is worth is unfair." (120) The only reason for the existence of such business structures is the profit. Hence, both the consumer and the worker fall victim to the greed of the capitalist.

In light of these unhappy conditions, Rauschenbusch called for a new religious vision of how society should be ordered. "For the first time in religious history we have the possibility of so directing religious energy by scientific knowledge that a comprehensive and continuous reconstruction of social life in the name of God is within the bounds of humanity." (121) Such a reconstruction, however, was not limited to a socialist political agenda. It called for "a new mind and heart...a revolution both inside and outside...a moral renovation of public opinion and a revival of religion." (122) This new society would be based on the convictions that each person has inherent worth and that all persons are brothers or sisters to one another. In fact, Rauschenbusch maintained, in one of his earlier articles, that socialism is compatible with Christianity due to their mutual recognition of inherent human worth. (123)

Rauschenbusch envisioned a social order in which the value of each individual would be respected, "the brotherhood of man" would be a guiding principle for economics, and "the spiritual good of humanity will be set high above the private profit interests of all materialistic groups." (124)

Rauschenbusch understood these convictions to be "fundamental utterances of the mind of Christ...the supreme law of Christendom." They were to be translated "into terms large enough to make them fully applicable to modern social life." Through the application of such ideals, society would become "Christian...organized to give to all the maximum opportunity of a strong and normal life." (125) Fricke comments that Rauschenbusch had no detailed plan for how society ought to be organized. Instead, he asserts, Rauschenbusch provided general goals or directions for society and the economic order. (126) His main societal goal was economic democracy, as it referred to the relationship between the worker and the employer within a company. Rauschenbusch maintained that the workers should be the ruling power within a company and should elect the managers, who would be responsible to the workers. The capital, in such a scheme, is to be owned collectively by all concerned. With the power acquired by workers in this system, the worth of the common person would be recognized and enhanced. Rauschenbusch envisioned a social order in which all people would work together for the common good.

This understanding finds its source in Paul's view of the

body of Christ, "the highest possible philosophy of human society." (127) The application of this ideal to the social order, says Rauschenbusch, would require "millions of people of low intelligence and education" to work diligently and "subordinate their passions to a higher reason and the common good." (128)

In light of Rauschenbusch's diagnosis of society's ills and his proposed cure, there is some confusion about his appropriation of socialism. Vernon Bodein maintains that Rauschenbusch, though never a member of the Socialist party nor a doctrinaire Marxist, was a socialist. "By socialism he meant the converting of society into a free and equal co-operative commonwealth where every person should have an equal chance to make a living and enjoy the comforts of life." Bodein asserts that Rauschenbusch admired the Socialist party, but he saw it as being only one aspect of the larger movement of "collectivism." As well, Bodein insists, he was suspicious of plans to create a perfect society solely through economic reform. Indeed, Rauschenbusch emphasized the ethical significance of the Kingdom of God to an extent that was unacceptable to doctrinaire socialists. Nevertheless, the socialist orientation of his thought is obvious at many points. (129)

Fricke agrees with Bodein that Rauschenbusch was no doctrinaire socialist or Marxist; rather, he says, "communism for Rauschenbusch was synonymous with public

welfare." (130) He understood communism to refer to that which persons possess in common, such as the home, church, and school. The state, by its very nature, was communistic for Rauschenbusch. "It is the organization by which the people administer their common property and attend to their common interests." (131) Rauschenbusch was suspicious of doctrinaire socialism, largely due to his fear that it would make the state the sole employer, threaten the sanctity of marriage, decrease patriotism, and support violent revolution and atheistic materialism. (132) As well, the anti-religious bias of many European socialists carried over to America and frightened the ecclesiastical community. (133) Rauschenbusch was further disturbed by the dogmatism of many socialists who refused to work for the reform of society, in light of their expectation of the collapse of the capitalist order. "We should not," Rauschenbusch insisted, "abstain from practical reform work in the expectation of a speedy collapse of the present economic order, meanwhile only dogmatizing and theorizing." He even rejected the Marxist claim that the middle class would disappear as a result of greater social inequality. Rauschenbusch was convinced that Marx, though essentially correct in his economic analysis, had placed too much stress on "a single cause" of economic injustice, "the ability of capital to appropriate the surplus value of social production." (134) Nevertheless, Rauschenbusch did not provide a detailed discussion of Marx. He stated his

agreement with the socialist analysis of economics and then proceeded to call for the realization of specific societal goals. (135)

Rauschenbusch's vision of a just society would necessarily entail a much greater role for government regulation of the economy. But he recognized the dangers of authoritarianism inherent in such a scheme. A truly revolutionary movement for social change could very well allow "its maintenance [to become] an end in itself and therewith the organization becomes a drag on social progress." (136) Despite this cautionary note, Rauschenbusch advocated nationalization of "the natural monopolies--railways, surface lines, elevated roads, subways, water ways, telegraph and telephone systems, gas and electric light and power systems--these are the irreducible minimum which must come under public ownership."

He also insisted that all natural resources should become socialized property, "made to serve the common good." Forests, virtually all supplies of water, and mines are essential to the harmony of an industrialized nation and should be free from capitalistic exploitation. (137)

Rauschenbusch was convinced, moreover, that society should provide insurance for the elderly, the ill, and victims of accidents. "The system of insurance and pension will have to be developed to go with the modern system of social production as its corollary." (138) As well, he called for the guarantee of employment for workers. "The

right to employment is the next great human right that demands recognition in public opinion and law." Such a guarantee of employment would "dispel the curse of fear that is now on" workers and do away with their alienation from their work. (139) The goal of full employment, according to Rauschenbusch, could be achieved through the union movement, "the more conservative movement for industrial democracy," as opposed to the Socialist party. (140) Rauschenbusch reasoned that the experience of oppression, which workers endure, would inspire the unions to press for "the collective ownership of the means of production and the abolition of the present two-class arrangement of industrial society." (141)

Short of implementing a socialist system, Rauschenbusch called for government to smooth the roughest edges of the capitalistic order. "The State had to step in with its superior Christian ethics and put certain limits to the immoralities of Capitalism." This is the reasoning behind Rauschenbusch's admiration of the conservationist movement. (142) Crucial to the control of capitalism was political and governmental reform. "Direct nominations, home rule for cities, uniform accounting, commission government," as well as other improvements, would help to ensure the election and appointment of officials with "human qualities of a higher order than capitalistic business." (143) In light of this strong commitment to reform, Rauschenbusch gave his support to the Populist Party, which "is allied with Christianity

while the Democratic and Republican Parties are allied with the money power, oppression, and evil." (144) After the failure of that party in 1896, Rauschenbusch realized that reform of the management of government and civil service would be a most difficult goal to achieve. (145)

Rauschenbusch's social thought was informed by Western democracy, a mild socialism, certain Victorian notions, and liberal optimism. These values converged, as will be argued in the following chapters, in an inordinate faith in the direct relevance of love for social reform. Despite his support of labor movements and political action, Rauschenbusch's political thought lacked a theoretical basis sufficient to sustain serious political and social involvement. His failure to distinguish systematically between love and justice led to political impotence, as Reinhold Niebuhr maintained. This critique will be extended in the following chapters.

B. Gustavo Gutierrez

Gutierrez approaches issues of politics and society in terms of his larger theological commitment to liberation. Liberation has "three reciprocally interpenetrating levels of meaning" for Gutierrez. First, it has to do with the struggle for justice in oppressive societies. In such struggles, the liberationist perspective emphasizes the conflictual nature of oppressive social systems and stands in contradiction to the false harmony implicit in the bourgeois ideology of development. Moreover, liberation

refers to humanity's role in history as the agent for creating "a new man and a qualitatively better society." Third, liberation is the message of the Bible: freedom from sin, the root of oppression. (146)

Gutierrez approaches the various meanings of liberation in light of the "signs of the times." He is convinced that "the social praxis of contemporary man has begun to reach maturity." Humanity is becoming more and more aware of social injustice and oppression, as well as more political in its interpretation of the world. The political sphere is now "the collective arena for human fulfillment." There is nothing in life that is truly outside of the political arena. Gutierrez argues that there is also "an increasing radicalization of social praxis." Many persons are beginning to see through the thin bourgeois ideology that is responsible for oppression around the globe. They now realize that a qualitatively better society must be built that is "based on new relationships of production." Hence, liberating social praxis has come to play a crucial role in defining "the very meaning of Christianity." Gutierrez insists that to be a Christian in the contemporary world means to follow God in the praxis of liberation. (147)

Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization influences Gutierrez in his approach to the sort of liberation that the Latin American situation demands. Freire argues that the oppressed tend to have "a precritical consciousness...the consciousness of a man who has not taken hold of the reins

of his own destiny." The praxis of revolution is, however, serving to alter the worldview of many victims of injustice. The oppressed are becoming conscientized for liberation. They are coming to recognize their ability to build a qualitatively better society. Gutierrez links this notion of conscientization with his understanding of eschatology, "the driving force of a future-oriented history." Persons who are struggling for their liberation in light of their new revolutionary consciousness must expect and hope for a truly just society in the normal course of history, which is "an open-ended process." This hope must challenge the present and shape the future; it should never be reserved for a purely otherworldly fulfillment. (148)

Dennis P. McCann, in his Christian Realism and Liberation Theology, criticizes Gutierrez for using conscientization to explain eschatology. He argues that such a theory presupposes a dialectical view of history in which there are no "limit-situations," without which "theological reflection eventually becomes meaningless." Freire, McCann asserts, is strongly influenced by Marx's critique of religion and rejects religious mythicization precisely because of the limitations that it places on human consciousness and possibilities. Marx's claim is that, instead of encouraging socially transforming praxis, religion urges the oppressed to accept their plight as a given. It is the opium of the people. All religious statements about the nature of reality, says McCann, would

be called into question by Friere's philosophical presuppositions--that there is no acting subject in history save humanity struggling for its own liberation. Hence, McCann claims that there is ambiguity and unresolved tension in Gutierrez' combination of traditional theism with conscientization. He asks, "By what criteria--if any--is this vision of a liberating God exempted from conscientization's dynamic opposition to mythicization?" McCann is correct in arguing that Gutierrez' position is in need of clarification at this point. (149)

Another vital aspect of Gutierrez' thought that has political implications is his treatment of biblical material in his discussion of creation, salvation, and liberation. He maintains that there is an exceedingly close relationship between creation and salvation in the Bible. "Biblical faith is, above all, faith in a God who reveals himself through biblical events, a God who saves in history." Creation, for Gutierrez, is the first salvific act; creation initiates "the salvific adventure of Yahweh." In later Hebrew texts, the act of creation is identified with God's liberating activity in the Exodus. Gutierrez points out that the liberation of Israel from Egyptian oppression was a political action. It was a deed that achieved the liberation of the Jews from slavery, repression, alienated labor, and great humiliation. Yet, the religious aspects of the Exodus are not treated separately by the biblical authors; rather, the religious "is its deepest meaning."

The Hebrews are re-created through God's liberating activity as a nation with a history and a holy purpose. Gutierrez views the redemptive action of Christ in similar terms. "The work of Christ forms a part of this movement and brings it to complete fulfillment." This ultimate redemption is viewed by the biblical authors, like the Exodus, as an act of re-creation. All things, including things political, are created and saved in Christ.

This biblical view of the relationship between creation and salvation causes Gutierrez to place great religious and anthropological value on the struggle for justice. "By working, transforming the world, breaking out of servitude, building a just society, and assuming his destiny in history, man forges himself." Indeed, the liberating experience of the Exodus is paradigmatic for biblical faith. Faithful Christians become "one in the very heart of history" when they struggle against the false, oppressive divisions of an unjust society. But the true agents of liberation are those who are currently oppressed and are fighting for their own liberation. By participating in such struggles for justice, persons place themselves "within an all-embracing salvific process." To invest oneself in the battle against "misery and exploitation" and to help build a just society is "to be part of the saving action, which is moving towards its complete fulfillment." (150)

Such human actions are to be carried out in obedience to the God who is revealed in history. Faithful persons are

to remember the salvific, liberating acts of the past and to anticipate future deeds for the establishment of justice. Gutierrez insists that the fidelity to which God calls persons is "at once justice and holiness." To be faithful means to carry out the praxis of liberation. Particularly, such faithfulness will entail "taking sides with the poor," the ones for whose liberation God acts. (151) Liberation participates in and points toward the consummation of the Kingdom, which is reserved for the eschatological future. It is clear, as well, that Gutierrez considers these questions from the perspective of a theology of history. As he argues, "human history, then, is the location of our encounter with him, in Christ." This divine involvement in history is evident throughout the history of the Hebrews' faith; for Christians, it reaches its high point in the incarnation. In light of Jesus' identification with humanity, Gutierrez claims that every person, regardless of religious persuasion, is "a temple of God." God's presence is "universalized" through Christ, as it is no longer limited to a particular people.

As well, God's presence is internalized, in that "it is a presence which embraces the whole man." Gutierrez warns against a spiritualization of the incarnation; every human and all human history participate in God's redeeming plan. The profane, as a realm distinguished from the sacred, no longer exists. Consequently, persons are to serve God through their liberating involvement in history on behalf of

the poor and oppressed. "The God of Biblical revelation is known through interhuman justice." Of importance here to Gutierrez is the Gospel of Matthew's eschatological discourse. This passage, with its emphasis on service to "the least of these," is important for its stress on humanity's destiny for perfect communion with God and with other persons. This goal is the opposite of sin, which is "to refuse to love...to reject even now the very meaning of human existence." But such Christian love "exists only in concrete actions." This is the only meaningful way of expressing and actualizing one's love for God. Persons must be dealt with "in the fabric of social relationships...economic, social, cultural, and racial coordinates." Entire social systems must be taken into account for meaningful social action to occur. Otherwise, such efforts will be ineffectual at best.

Gutierrez' social thought is also informed by his rejection of developmentalism. Attempts at development of the Latin American economy through North American and European investments have failed, in his estimation, to attack the causes of oppression. They have been timid, ineffectual efforts which have served to increase the power of the ruling classes in Latin America and the profits and political power of the neo-colonialists. Despite the seemingly good intentions of the rich nations, the lot of the oppressed is not improved--instead, it is worsened through such efforts. Gutierrez argues, however, that

liberation entails a different approach to the problems of Latin America. It fights against any and all forces or structures which preclude persons from acquiring and exercising their political, social, and economic freedom. Liberation is dedicated to providing the oppressed with the possibility of enjoying a human existence. It strives for freedom from any sort of oppression. Consequently, Gutierrez calls for an end to Latin American dependence on neo-colonial powers. He understands the poor to be the agents of their own liberation from all oppression. They do not need the support of Latin American capitalists; rather, it is a struggle in which the poor are the primary agents as they strive for the "complete fulfillment of the individual in solidarity with all mankind." (152) Gutierrez briefly explicates his understanding of sin within the context of this discussion of liberation. Sin is "a breach of friendship with God and others"--the "ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, and the oppression in which men live." It is from such sin, which is defined in social terms by Gutierrez, that Christ died to set persons free.

Gutierrez' view of the Church is also of great importance for understanding his political thought. He begins his discussion with the assertion that the Church's mission must be interpreted in light of "the universal will of salvation" and "the historical becoming of mankind." God is sovereign over, and active in and throughout, history; hence, the Church should understand itself to be playing but

one of several roles in realizing salvation. "We must avoid reducing the salvific work to the action of the Church." Consequently, Gutierrez urges the Church to consider itself no longer as the "exclusive place of salvation." Instead, the Church must devote itself to the service of humanity--an orientation that has been lost ever since Christianity became the official religion of the Roman state. He maintains that this orientation of service is in keeping with Vatican II's identification of the Church as a sacrament. To describe the Church as a sacrament "is to define it in relation to the plan of salvation, whose fulfillment in history the Church reveals and signifies to men." The Church does not exist for its own sake, but for the sake of others--for "the work of Christ and his Spirit."

Indeed, the Church-world relationship should be seen in dynamic terms: the Church as a sign of salvation to the world; the world, "in which Christ and his Spirit are present and active," as a source of challenge and inspiration for the Church.

Gutierrez insists that the Church "should signify in its own internal structure the salvation whose fulfillment it announces." That is, the Church should be an example of liberation in its organization and normal conduct of affairs. Since the Church does not exist for its own sake, it must devote itself to witnessing to the liberating truth of the Kingdom--the reason for its existence. Particularly within the context of Latin America, the Church, Gutierrez

insists, "must live and celebrate its eschatological hope...[in] the world of social revolution; the Church's task must be defined in relation to this." At this point, Gutierrez emphasizes the Eucharist, which commemorates the "liberation from sin [that is] the very root of political liberation." In fact, the celebration of the Eucharist points to the Kingdom's goal of "a real human brotherhood." Hence, without a serious commitment for liberation and against oppression, "the Eucharistic celebration is an empty action." Gutierrez maintains that to commemorate faithfully the redeeming death of Christ entails taking up the praxis of liberation and sacrificial service for the sake of others.

The first step that the Church in Latin America must take, then, is to recognize that it is part of the oppressive establishment. Any claim for political neutrality on the part of the Church "is nothing but a subterfuge to keep things as they are." Gutierrez argues that it is impossible to define the task of the Church "in the abstract." Instead, the historical situation should be the determining factor in shaping the activity and thought of the Church. In Latin America, the situation calls for a real commitment to liberation. Gutierrez defends liberation theology from the charge that it will produce an equally oppressive ecclesiastical dictatorship with the optimistic argument that the Church's commitment to the oppressed and exploited will preclude it from being in good standing with

politically powerful groups. For him, the question is not whether the Church will take a side in the revolutionary process of Latin America. Rather, the question is with which side the Church will stand. By taking no explicitly political stance, the Church in effect supports the status quo. It is only by self-consciously taking up the struggle for liberation that the Church will be on the side of the poor and oppressed of Latin America. (153)

Gutierrez realizes, however, that there is a danger of reducing Christianity to a revolutionary political ideology. He maintains that this is a possibility only because the Church has tried to hide the political implications of biblical faith. An extreme politicization is likely the natural reaction to an extreme otherworldliness. In fact, it is only by investing themselves in the actual struggle for liberation that persons will be able to reflect upon the significance of their spiritual and political activity. The specifics of such religiously inspired political action must be "discerned little by little." Persons involved in the struggle for liberation must resist the temptation to produce guidelines that are "valid for all eternity." Yet, Gutierrez suggests that the Church must be fully invested in such struggles, despite the "incertitude and apprenticeship" that are necessarily involved. These imperfect strides toward liberation are annunciations of the future of the Kingdom. They serve to radicalize Christian faith and to call the Church to relevant, needed service of oppressed

persons. "To know...[God] is to work for justice. There is no other path to reach him."

Gutierrez recognizes that the conflictual nature of history, particularly in the Latin American experience, stands in contradiction to the ideal of "brotherhood" for which the Church is called to witness and strive. The division of persons into classes of oppressors and the oppressed "brings with it confrontations, struggles, violence." Gutierrez asserts that such struggle poses a problem for "the universality of Christian love and the unity of the Church." He approaches this problem with the assumptions that class struggle is a fact and that neutrality is impossible. Gutierrez points out that, while the bourgeois countries maintain that no such struggle exists, those who are oppressed as a result of the economic policies of the neo-colonialists know better. He is quick to assert, however, that he is not advocating class struggle. Rather, he is recognizing its existence and calling for a better order in which such divisions between persons will be overcome. For the Church to claim a position of neutrality in such a struggle is to side with the dominant classes. Since class struggle is a fact for Gutierrez, he insists that failing to identify with the oppressed is really to identify with the oppressor. "To accept class struggle means to decide for some people and against others." (154)

Gutierrez argues that universal love does not entail

avoiding confrontation; "it does not mean preserving a fictitious harmony." Universal love demands the liberation of the oppressed and of the oppressor. There must be a "real and effective combat" against the oppressor--but not hate. The challenge is to love one's enemies; but "to love one's enemies presupposes recognizing and accepting that one has class enemies and that it is necessary to combat them." Christian love becomes "concrete and effective" only through the praxis of liberation. Authentic Christian love must call for a classless society in which such struggle is overcome. "Reconciliation is the overcoming of conflict." Gutierrez maintains that this conflict must be overcome initially in the Church itself. To ignore such struggle and simply to proclaim harmony is to side with the oppressing classes. Unity in the Church, Gutierrez asserts, is something to be achieved, not something already given. It is only through the liberation of the oppressed, he argues, that true harmony will result. "The unity of the Church is not truly achieved without the unity of the world." The wholeness of Church and world are dependent on the establishment of justice for the poor. (155)

In providing a tentative evaluation of Gutierrez' political thought, it is important to note that McCann argues persuasively against Gutierrez' use of the concept of conscientization. He is correct that it is unclear how Gutierrez may combine traditional theism with conscientization's philosophical presuppositions. Such an

approach denies "limit situations," any religiously grounded statements about reality that serve to limit the possibilities open to persons in history. Freire, who is strongly influenced by Marx's critique of religion, rejects religious mythicization because of the limitations which it places on human consciousness and capabilities. Religious notions, in his mind, are evidence of alienation and serve only to perpetuate oppression through the belittling of history's opportunities for liberation. This approach, at least as it is employed by Gutierrez, does not appear to be profitable for theological ethics, in that it rules out meaningful discussion of anything that smacks of religious influence. But Gutierrez does not even attempt to explain or ameliorate this difficulty. His thought is in need of further clarification at this point.

Moreover, Gutierrez' interpretation of Latin America's economic and social situation has by no means gone unchallenged. John C. Cort, a pioneer member of the Catholic Worker movement and a socialist, is one of Gutierrez' milder and more responsible critics at this point. Cort suggests that Gutierrez is captive to Marxist ideology to the extent that his perception of the economic and social needs of Latin America is distorted. He maintains that Gutierrez is guilty of "imposing the European abstractions...of Karl Marx onto the Latin American peasant" who desperately wants "his own land and by no means wants to be submerged in some collective farm owned and operated by

the state." Cort also takes Gutierrez to task for what he interprets as the latter's thoroughgoing acceptance of a Marxist view of class struggle. Such a perspective, he argues, destroys even the possibility of the Church functioning as a universal, redemptive body. It establishes a polarity among persons that excludes the "employer" from community and fellowship. (156) An extended discussion of the economic models most appropriate to the Latin American situation is, of course, not within the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Gutierrez' analysis is not universally accepted.

Critical Comparison

This section of the chapter is given to a comparison and evaluation of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' theological and social thought. An initial point of comparison between Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez has to do with their theological orientations: Protestant liberalism and post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism. In light of the historical study of the Bible and openness to cultural wisdom, Rauschenbusch explicates a theology of history that places social problems in an eschatological perspective. He is not concerned with explaining his concerns in terms of natural law or ontology. Rauschenbusch criticizes the Lutheran division between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. He operates out of largely Calvinist assumptions regarding the need to establish a righteous social order. Gutierrez, on the other hand, theologizes as a non-traditional Roman Catholic. He

rejects the language of natural law morality and is markedly influenced by political theology, Marx, and documents such as Medellin. He, like Rauschenbusch, approaches social issues from an eschatological perspective. Rejecting scholastic distinctions between realms of being and much traditional thought regarding salvation and the Kingdom, he relies heavily on sophisticated hermeneutical theory, Marxist social analysis, and a theology of praxis orientation. The distinction between world and Church is much more fluid for Gutierrez than that of traditional Catholicism. This is precisely what makes Gutierrez so radical: his rejection of scholasticism combined with a non-dualistic, immanent Kingdom of God. Hence, though Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez identify with different traditions, there are substantive similarities in the forms and emphases of their theologies.

A point of commonality for Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez is their mutual insistence that theology is not simply an academic or priestly endeavor. Each is convinced that theology must inspire, and be a part of, a Christian faithfulness that is fleshed out in the struggle for a just society. Gutierrez, with his understanding of theology as "critical reflection on praxis," is more explicit on this point than is Rauschenbusch. Nevertheless, both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez articulate political theologies. They understand theology to play a vital role in fulfilling the social needs and desires of humanity. Each runs the

risk, thereby, of "doing theology" in a reductionistically political fashion. Each is guilty, to a certain extent, of theologizing in a manner that is inordinately shaped by political ideology.

Though theology is always the task of interpreting the theological tradition in light of contemporary concerns and presuppositions, it must guard against compromising the integrity of that tradition by appropriating contemporary notions in a fashion that distorts vital aspects of the tradition itself. Herbert W. Richardson, in Religion and Political Society, comments that ideology serves to suppress contradictions in a system of thought or social order, so that the world will appear to be rational--everything fits together to form a coherent whole. (157) Such is the problem, at times, with Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez. Each interprets certain doctrines, such as sin and eschatology, in manners that are consistent with the ethos of their intellectual climates--but they do so in ways that seriously challenge the integrity of the theological tradition's treatment of those themes. In so doing, they make coherence with contemporary intellectual notions a more binding goal than appropriateness to the theological tradition. This is not to argue that philosophical, cultural, or political norms have no role in theological systematization. To the contrary, such norms should be employed critically to the extent that they help make lucid the substantive claims of the Christian theological tradition. The difficulty in the

thought of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez has its roots in a lack of emphasis on God's transcendence and the eschatological nature of the Kingdom. This problem will be examined more fully in the conclusion.

Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez both articulate theologies of history. Each makes the Kingdom's direct relevance for the course of history the central theme of his theological reflection. Rauschenbusch employs this theme in light of his evolutionary view of history. He insists that the Kingdom, with its law of love, is developing in society and will result in a Christianized social order. Gutierrez advocates a dialectical view of history and expects the liberation of the oppressed within the course of history. As noted earlier, Gutierrez' combination of his interpretation of an Old Testament view of history [God intervenes in history to bring about liberation; the Kingdom will be consummated in the future "day of the Lord"] with a Marxist dialectical view of history, which rejects theological talk as dangerous mythicization, is problematic. Although he claims that the Kingdom will not be fulfilled in the normal course of history, Gutierrez also asserts that history is one--this seems to imply that he is concerned only with this world, this life. By combining such a view of history with his overly optimistic anthropology, Gutierrez compromises the eschatological duality that is necessary to sustain the Kingdom's critical relevance. This problem is brought to light by the earlier comparison of

Gutierrez and Pannenberg. The Kingdom becomes too closely identified with a normal human historical project. In his effort to establish the significance of both liberation and salvation, Gutierrez has, as McCann argued, made less than clear use of these theological and philosophical categories.

Rauschenbusch shares with Gutierrez the unfortunate tendency to identify too closely a human historical project with God's Kingdom. Stanely Hauerwas argues, in his Against the Nations, that "Rauschenbusch and his imitators lacked any sense of the eschatological character of the Kingdom." The Kingdom, says Hauerwas, was used "to underwrite ethical commitments and political strategies that were determined prior to the claims about the centrality of the kingdom for Christian ethics." (158) Through his overly optimistic anthropology and lack of emphasis on God's transcendence, Rauschenbusch fails to allow sufficiently for the Kingdom's eschatological otherness. Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez, thus, have theologically questionable views of history in their respective emphases on Christianization or liberation. This critique will be developed further in both the next chapter and the conclusion.

Of a piece with their political hermeneutic and stress on the Kingdom's immanence is Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' view of sin as essentially social. Both understand it to be the cause of selfishness, hate, and oppression. Both are convinced that the presence of sin will be greatly reduced through the establishment of societal justice. Neither

Rauschenbusch nor Gutierrez, however, goes much further in developing a doctrine of sin. While it would be irresponsible to articulate a view of sin that ignored its social aspects, Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez must be criticized for failing to explicate a doctrine of sin that deals explicitly with fundamental claims regarding human nature. It is their mutual affirmation of an optimistic and social anthropology that leads to this difficulty. Such a view of sin is linked with the problematic nature of their view of history and their mutual stress on an overly immanent Kingdom.

Similarly, both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez understand the Church to play a humanizing role in society. Not merely the institution where sacraments are administered or the gospel preached, they define the Church as a body that uses its influence and example throughout society for the sake of justice. The relevance of the Church is validated on non-sectarian, universalizable grounds. Unless the Church is a crusading force for a just social order, they assert, it is evil or at least reactionary. While Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' conclusion on this point may very well be valid, the way in which the argument is developed is theologically suspect in its failure to recognize the significance of Christian faithfulness on its own terms. John Howard Yoder, in his The Priestly Kingdom, argues that there is no system of public, universalizable moral notions that is "not just another particular province." Theological ethics, in his

estimation, should recognize no higher norm than the example of Jesus as portrayed in biblical texts. To begin with common, universalizable norms results, says Yoder, in the Church proclaiming the same broken, watered down morality as the rest of society. "Practical moral reasoning, if Christian, must always be expected to be at some point subversive. Any approach which trusts the common wisdom enough to make specifically subversive decisions unthinkable has thereby forfeited its claim to be adequate." (159)

Similarly, George A. Lindbeck, in his The Nature of Doctrine, advocates a postliberal "cultural-linguistic" approach to theology which rejects the assumption that all religions have their source in a common religious experience. Rather, religions, even as languages, are different. The uniqueness of their theology and moral reasoning should be appreciated and not obscured for the sake of uniformity. At a basic level, Christian convictions are only truly intelligible or interesting to Christians--it would be irresponsible to assert that such convictions are merely one peculiar variation of universal human religious experience. Hence, Lindbeck takes the integrity of the theological tradition quite seriously and urges only the very critical appropriation of contemporary ideals into theology. "Liberals start with experience, with an account of the present, and then adjust their vision of the Kingdom of God accordingly, while postliberals are in principle committed to doing the reverse." (160) Hauerwas, Yoder, and

Lindbeck, then, provide a sound theological basis for beginning Christian ethical reflection within the context of commitment to the Kingdom of God, not in universalizable concepts of justice. But this is only the beginning of the theological ethicist's task. For such subversive Christian notions must be translated into the common moral language of the larger society. It is certainly not in the interest of the Church to deny the importance of universalizable moral norms. To the contrary, it is the task of Christians to bring what they uniquely can to the public forum: commonly understood moral language that is informed, even transformed, by a commitment to the Kingdom. This criticism will be extended in the conclusion.

A point of contrast between Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez is their relation to Marxist thought. Gutierrez, as noted above, is open to both Marxist philosophical presuppositions and social analysis. Rauschenbusch, however, denied any such philosophical claims and accepted Marxist social analysis in only a very limited sense. This divergence has its roots in the historical, political situations of the two figures. Rauschenbusch, a pious evangelical in liberal North America, saw no need to adopt a social philosophy of sheer economic determinism and class war. With his faith in the law of love and the essential goodness of humanity and Western democracy, he could rely on the relatively gentle persuasion of Christianization to bring about the proper ordering of society. Gutierrez, on the other hand, living

in a region of horrid poverty and senseless violence, lacks the optimism about humanity and the Western democratic tradition that informed Rauschenbusch's social thought. He understands capitalism to be a selfish economic philosophy that serves only to establish misery for peasants and common workers. It must be otherthrown, not simply urged to reform with talk of the law of love. This is a central difference between Gutierrez' liberation and Rauschenbusch's Christianization. It is important to note, in addition, that Gutierrez theologizes in a situation that is clearly more oppressive and violent than that in which Rauschenbusch found himself. While there was exploitation and injustice in the urban America of Rauschenbusch's day, the poverty, hunger, disease, and systematized cruelty that is common in Latin America is significantly more dehumanizing and inhumane than that experienced by workers in the early days of North American industrialization. This point of contrast is important for understanding the more radical approach of liberation as opposed to Christianization.

Gutierrez' claim that the poor will be the agents of their own liberation is also denied by the very severity of the oppression which he addresses. As noted earlier, he asserts that the assistance of capitalists and neo-colonialists is detrimental to the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed. Gutierrez' argument reflects an overly optimistic view of history and power which is based on a certain mixture of dialectical and Hebrew

prophetic understandings of history. Both traditions, as he interprets them, affirm the inevitable liberation of the oppressed through either their own conscientized activity or deliverance by God. But each perspective fails to take seriously the broken, sinful realities of history. There can be no guarantee of a future time of relative justice in the societies of the world, much less of a fully liberated humanity.

In light of the entrenched political realities of power and selfishness, oppressed persons cannot rely entirely on themselves or God's direct intervention in history to work their liberation. The poorest of the poor often have neither the skills nor influence required to bring about meaningful social change. Instead, they must accept the assistance of, and cooperate with, individuals and groups that have political and economic power. These powerful groups, of course, will not be entirely free of self-interest as they help the oppressed to achieve liberation. But such cooperation provides the only realistic means for the poor to improve their lot. (161) It is necessary, then, for the Church, particularly in parts of the world where it is a major social institution, to become sensitized to the plight of the oppressed and to speak and act prophetically for the cause of social justice. Such activity by the Church should be undertaken as part of an eschatological and nonviolent commitment to the Kingdom of God--a foundational orientation that will preclude the

Church from prostituting itself to political and cultural ideologies. This argument concerning the Church's role in the campaign for a just society will be developed much further in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Rauschenbusch based much of his hope for a Christianized social order on the political and economic advocacy of the privileged for the sake of the poor. His writings and speeches were directed mostly toward educated people with at least some economic or political influence. He emphasized more strongly than Gutierrez the responsibility of the powerful to use their influence for the sake of the weak. Rauschenbusch was convinced that reasonable persons, when confronted by the truth of a social Christianity, could overcome their selfishness enough to act altruistically on behalf of the less fortunate. Gutierrez, due to an economically deterministic view of the self, does not allow for that possibility.

The method of critical comparison places the thought of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez in creative dialogue and brings to light issues of vital importance for theological ethics. But the present chapter has only introduced this evaluation. Through a continued analysis in the following chapters of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' respective employments of the Kingdom of God as a normative symbol for theological ethics, this thesis attempts to make lucid certain theological issues that are crucial for Christianity.

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Chapter 2: Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez on the Kingdom of God

This chapter provides an analysis of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' respective understandings of the Kingdom of God. Through this undertaking, the critical comparison that was begun in the previous chapter is extended. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes Rauschenbusch's view of the Kingdom and provides various critiques of his position. The second section scrutinizes Gutierrez' understanding of the Kingdom in similar fashion. The third section makes a critical evaluation of points of similarity and contrast in their views of the Kingdom of God.

Rauschenbusch on the Kingdom of God

Rauschenbusch's mature and most systematic treatment of the Kingdom of God is to be found in A Theology for the Social Gospel. Here he argues that the Kingdom, which was the theme of Jesus' preaching, has been rejected historically by Christians. Instead, a doctrine of the Church has risen to prominence and preeminence. This shift of emphasis began with the early followers of Jesus and achieved orthodoxy with Augustine's The City of God. "The beloved ideal of Jesus became a vague phrase which kept intruding from the New Testament." Rauschenbusch maintains that it is due only to the discoveries of history and

biblical studies that the true meaning of Jesus' preaching about the Kingdom is being revived.

Rauschenbusch lists several unhappy consequences of Christianity's refusal to take Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God seriously. Initially, he argues that "theology lost its contact with the synoptic thought of Jesus." Theologians have ignored the simple moral worldview of Jesus; they have done their pious speculation according to their own assumptions--not those of Jesus--about what is most important in Christian faith. Such an independence from Jesus' teaching has resulted in an inability on the part of Christians to understand Jesus' ethical thought. "Only those church bodies which have been in opposition to organized society and have looked for a better city [on earth] with its foundations in heaven, have taken the Sermon on the Mount seriously." (1) The Church, through its abandonment of the Kingdom, has become merely an organization for priestly piety and religious ceremony. This stands in stark contrast to the Kingdom of God, which is "a fellowship of righteousness." Theology has rejected Jesus' emphasis on "righteousness, mercy, solidarity" in favor of an otherworldly and cultic orientation. Hence, the Church has come to exist, all too often, for its own sake. Without the moral tension and ethical scrutiny that are brought about by an emphasis on the Kingdom, the Church has become involved in "lies, craft, crime...war."

The Kingdom of God is "the revolutionary force of

Christianity." Rauschenbusch asserts that once the Kingdom no longer played a role in the systematic thought of the Church, the Church "became a conservative social influence," usually opposed to needed social change. Struggles for social justice have, therefore, become largely unassociated with Christianity. Many Christians, according to Rauschenbusch, have no interest in such reform for "churchly" reasons: the Church, in terms of its attendance, membership, and financial basis, is not aided by social justice. Rauschenbusch believes that this attitude reflects the belittled value that was placed on secular life by many groups of Christians. Concern focused heavily on religiosity and hopes of eternal salvation, often to the exclusion of any concern for "saving the social order." (2) Christianity has floundered ethically, theologically, and socially for almost two thousand years due to a lack of emphasis on the Kingdom of God. This sad state of affairs can be blamed largely on the inordinate prominence given to the Church. "The Kingdom of God breeds prophets; the Church breeds priests and theologians."

The contribution that Rauschenbusch hopes to make in his social gospel theology is the return of the Kingdom of God to "vitality and importance" in the teaching and life of the Church. He makes several "brief propositions" as to what this will entail. Initially, he argues that the Kingdom of God is the theological link between faith and ethics. The Kingdom was initiated by Jesus, is resisted by

the Kingdom of Evil, "is miraculous all the way, and is the continuous revelation of the power, the righteousness, and the love of God." The dedication of persons to the Kingdom is not merely ethical, it is also theological--for "the establishment of a community of righteousness in mankind" is a salvific act. A theology oriented around the Kingdom will be "dynamic," for it will be concerned with "resistance to be overcome and great ends to be achieved." It will be an eschatological theology in this regard. The Kingdom is also both present and future. It is "always coming, always pressing in on the present, always big with possibility, and always inviting immediate action."

"The Kingdom is humanity organized according to the will of God." Rauschenbusch maintains that the Kingdom requires a social order in which individuals are guaranteed their greatest personal development. This would necessarily entail an end to bigotry, social classes, and "all forms of slavery in which human beings are treated as mere means to serve the ends of others." As well, the Kingdom "implies a progressive reign of love in human affairs." This norm of love would eliminate war, hunger, and economic exploitation. In addition, private ownership of "the natural resources of the earth," monopolies, and the disunity among the various peoples and nations of the world would be called into question by the Kingdom. Indeed, the Church should exist for the sake of the Kingdom. It is to "be tested by its effectiveness in creating the Kingdom of God." But the

Kingdom of God is never exhausted within the Church: "it embraces the whole of life." The Kingdom should be present in all major institutions of society. (3)

Rauschenbusch's emphasis on the Kingdom of God is evident in his treatment of eschatology. Religion, for Rauschenbusch, "is always eschatological." The problem with traditional Christian eschatology, however, is that it has been formulated by "combining fragments of non-christian and pre-christian systems with genuine Christian ideas." As well, it has been articulated in pre-scientific cosmological terms. Hence, Rauschenbusch finds it amazing that "something approximately Christian" came from "this heterogeneous and often alien material." He approaches this subject with the assurance that his generation is the first to have the historical tools necessary to understand the eschatological teachings of Jesus.

Rauschenbusch places great emphasis on the eschatology of Judaism and "the valiant democratic spirit of the prophets." Their notion of the Day of the Lord was the religious equivalent of a "wholesome revolution in which the oppressing class is eliminated and the righteous poor get relief." It was through the Greeks, however, that Christianity acquired its fascination with eternal life for the individual. Recognizing the historically conditioned nature of theological claims, Rauschenbusch asks whether a contemporary understanding of the role of punishment should not affect Christian eschatology. For if imprisonment is

now seen as being essentially remedial, how is it possible to believe in eternal suffering in hell that is in no way redemptive or educational? (4)

In explicating his understanding of eschatology, Rauschenbusch asserts that only that in the Old Testament which the Hebrew prophets taught as a result of divine inspiration should play a role in shaping the eschatology of the social gospel. The New Testament also contains a perplexing mix of Jewish and Greek ideas about eschatology. Rauschenbusch insists that it is only by "the mind of Jesus" that the true ethical insights of the Christ may be gleaned in the biblical witness. He recognizes, however, that it is unclear what Jesus actually believed about the future. Nevertheless, he rejects the claim that Jesus was an apocalyptic figure. Instead, Rauschenbusch simply asserts that Jesus understood the Kingdom to be both present and future. (5) It is clear from his argument that Rauschenbusch thinks that apocalypticism has played a strong role in shaping Christian eschatology--and that such an influence should be rejected by modern persons. He even goes so far as to argue that God's progressive revelation in history--culminating in modern science and historical knowledge--should destroy any remaining vestiges of apocalypticism.

Rauschenbusch rejects a catastrophic view of the coming of the Kingdom. Instead, he is concerned with the development and growth of the Kingdom in the normal course

of history. "This change from catastrophe to development is the most essential step to enable modern men to appreciate the Christian hope." (6) Nevertheless, he also recognizes that there will be serious opposition to the Kingdom of God in the Kingdom of Evil. In the midst of World War I, Rauschenbusch suspected that the conflict was but one catastrophic event through which the Kingdom must struggle. It does not seem, however, that Rauschenbusch ever lost his strong conviction that the Kingdom would ultimately triumph over evil. His eschatology is based on the notion that there can be no final consummation in history. History and humanity are continuously being called forward by God--they are never beyond further prodding. "All true joys on earth come from partial realizations of the Kingdom of God; the joy that awaits us will consist in living within the full realizations of the Kingdom." (7)

Stanley Hauerwas, Carlyle Marney, and Reinhold Niebuhr critique Rauschenbusch's view of the Kingdom as being too immanent, based on an overly optimistic anthropology, informed by a less than clear analysis of the relationship between love and justice, and insufficiently critical of political and cultural ideology's influence on theology. Hauerwas, in his Against the Nations, criticizes Rauschenbusch for lacking a sufficiently eschatological understanding of the Kingdom of God. He asserts that Rauschenbusch thought of the Kingdom as an ethical norm that could be actualized in history through human effort--not as

God's Kingdom which God alone would establish and consummate. Hauerwas also takes Rauschenbusch to task for attributing his own assumptions about social systems and values to the Kingdom. He argues that it is not the task of Christians to transform the world into the Kingdom of God. Rather, it is the task of followers of Jesus to be as faithful as possible to the the Lord of the Kingdom. But this does not mean that the Church is identified with the Kingdom. To the contrary, the Church is "to point to the fact that the kingdom has been and is present in our midst" through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is through acquiring the sort of character that is appropriate to followers of Jesus that Christians are to demonstrate to others the truth of God's eschatological Reign. (8)

Carlyle Marney, the progressive Baptist, though very positive towards Rauschenbusch at many points, charges him with having a naive understanding of human nature, a too limited view of sin as social, and an inordinate reliance on "the evolutionary optimism of his time." Marney also criticizes Rauschenbusch for not placing enough emphasis on the transcendent and ecclesiastical aspects of the Kingdom of God. He quotes Luther to the effect that God, not humanity, will build and consummate the Kingdom. Marney understands the task of Christians to be to "reflect the redemptive action of the Redeemer within the context of the realm of redemption, within the Kingdom of the

Creator-Redeemer." He, like Hauerwas, places great emphasis on witnessing to the truth and reality of the Kingdom that is God's, not on ushering in this Kingdom through human endeavors. Finally, Marney claims that the limitations of Rauschenbusch's theological ethics stem from his failure to preserve God's transcendence and his inadequate understanding of human personality and nature. These criticisms are clearly relevant to our discussion of Rauschenbusch's view of the Kingdom. Hauerwas and Marney identify some of the most glaring difficulties in Rauschenbusch's thought. (9)

Reinhold Niebuhr developed his understanding of the Kingdom as a critique and corrective of what he interpreted as the social gospel's unrealistic claims for social perfection in history. Niebuhr understood the law of love, which Rauschenbusch made central to the Kingdom, to be an absolute, uncompromising norm in Christian thought. "The height of love is certainly more unprudential and uncalculating than mutual love and it contains universalistic demands which challenge any particular community." (10) Niebuhr understood this love commandment to be at the heart of Jesus' moral teaching. However, for Niebuhr this norm finds its source in "purely religious and not in socio-moral terms." It is essentially concerned with the individual's relationship with God, not with other persons. Niebuhr argues that though an absolute moral standard of love may very well have positive social

ramifications, such results are not the intended goal. Jesus taught that his followers were to love and forgive simply because God loves and forgives, not for the social effects of their morality. (11)

But this standard of love could never be carried out in actual life, since it presupposes a sinless and perfect individual. The law of love is not an obligation or a requirement for the Christian; rather, it is a paradox. It is an ideal that is relevant to persons and societies, yet no one is capable of meeting its demands--it is an impossible goal. Its fulfillment will be found only in the eschatological future, the ultimate perfection of the consummated Kingdom of God. Indeed, the crucifixion of Jesus demonstrates the fact that the Kingdom is not attainable in the course of sinful, broken, worldly affairs. Sacrificial love is not compatible with the limited, imperfect norms of historical existence. Consequently, persons are never faced with the possibility of choosing between the purely good and the totally evil. Instead, individuals must work in terms of the relatively good and the relatively bad, for there is no perfection, no ultimate fulfillment of Jesus' command of love, in the realm of human history. The Kingdom of God is an impossible possibility. This is the main thrust of Niebuhr's critique of Rauschenbusch. (12)

But in order to maintain the relevance of the Kingdom of God for society and human history, despite the

impossibility of its historical realization, Niebuhr argued that the Kingdom should be viewed as a transcendent critical principle in terms of which criticism is made of society. For the imperfection of human schemes of justice is seen only from the perspective of this Kingdom, which is the fulfillment of the law of love. In a real sense, only love, in Niebuhr's view, is finally normative for the Christian. This high standard of love, then, should call persons to work for meaningful approximations of peace and love in the world through justice. Love always presents the higher possibilities in a situation; thus, it stands in criticism of usual human habits and standards. It puts human action in perspective, showing persons the imperfection of their endeavors. The most prominent function of love and the Kingdom of God for Niebuhr is that of criticism: making clear the fundamentally flawed nature of human structures of social order. Even the best system of justice needs the criticism of the Kingdom to keep it from becoming exclusively concerned with maximizing its own self-interest and self-aggrandizement. This is the most important function of the Kingdom for Niebuhr, as well as a major point of his criticism of Rauschenbusch, who "did not understand either the height of the pinnacle of love or the base of justice." (13)

Niebuhr argues that Rauschenbusch's inadequate understanding of the Kingdom's relevance for the normal course of human affairs is the result of his failure to

appreciate "adequately the power and persistence of...collective self-concern." He asserts that Rauschenbusch's attribution of the universality of sin to "the transmission of egoistic tendencies through faulty institutions" ultimately leads to the unfounded Marxist hope of creating a new humanity through revolution. Niebuhr correctly maintains that the dream of a perfect social order is an illusion. Due to the pervasiveness of sin, it is irresponsible to claim that "the collective life of mankind can achieve a perfect justice." Instead, only "an equilibrium of power" can assure an approximately just social and world order. Hence, Rauschenbusch was guilty, for Niebuhr, of relying too heavily on the essential goodness of humanity and the immanence of the Kingdom of God in history. (14) Niebuhr's critique of Rauschenbusch is persuasive. He demonstrates the great difficulty with optimistic notions of Christianizing the social order by the law of love. Niebuhr has a sober view of human nature and sin which Rauschenbusch lacked. But, as the argument for nonviolence in the final chapter makes clear, this thesis does not agree entirely with Niebuhr's view of the Kingdom or Christian ethics. Niebuhr's diagnosis of human sinfulness, when seen as a corrective to Rauschenbusch, is profound. Yet his allowance for the use of deadly force in service to the Kingdom undercuts the very basis of God's eschatological Reign: the nonviolent teaching and example of Jesus. This argument for nonviolence will be developed

much more fully in the conclusion of the thesis.

Max L. Stackhouse provides an analysis of Rauschenbusch's understanding of the Kingdom of God which is more positive toward his thought than those of Hauerwas, Marney, and Niebuhr. Stackhouse asserts, initially, that the fundamental category of Rauschenbusch's thought is history. It is in history that God is truly revealed; it is in history that the human drama actually unfolds. The Kingdom "functions as the interpretative concept by which Rauschenbusch exegetes history." History is both descriptive and prescriptive. The Kingdom of God is the "discriminating principle" for determining what is authentically historical and what is destructive and antithetical to the historical. According to Rauschenbusch, there are aspects of human history and culture which persons can describe that have a prescriptive character. It is only from the perspective of the Kingdom, however, that such distinctions may be made legitimately. (15)

Stackhouse insists that Rauschenbusch, though he emphasized the immanence of God, truly maintained the transcendence of God in his doctrine of the Kingdom. This is the case, he argues, in that the Kingdom is always pointing towards future eschatological fulfillment; it transcends human activity, always criticizing broken, imperfect social systems. Nevertheless, it is this same Kingdom which represents the power and righteousness of God in the world. The Kingdom's call for truth and justice in

society comes from God. Actual human efforts to witness to the reality of this Kingdom, however, are never to be identified with God's ultimate will for humanity.

Stackhouse maintains that there are three principal dimensions of Rauschenbusch's understanding of the Kingdom of God. The first of these is "ideational," for theologically this Kingdom means messianic theocracy. As Rauschenbusch wrote, the "entire religious ideal of Israel was the theocracy...the complete penetration of the national life by religious morality. It meant politics in the name of God." (16) Such a theocracy has characteristics which point toward historical moments in which social and political barriers between persons are overcome. Messianic theocracy is universalistic, spiritual, voluntary, and enhancing of individual human personality. This, as Rauschenbusch saw it, was the sort of Kingdom and theocratic rule which Jesus inaugurated.

Another dimension of the Kingdom, according to Stackhouse, is "natural." There is a universal revelation of God through nature; nature "impinges upon history and the Kingdom of God." Nature must be taken into account in any sort of ethical analysis. The fundamental structures of nature imply the desirability of "a fraternal socialistic order." Thus, the ideational and natural structures involve prescriptive and descriptive responses. It is at these points, where the ideational links directly with the genuinely natural uses of natural resources and human

instincts and drives humanity toward the historical realization of fraternity, that the Kingdom of God is made manifest in the world.

The third dimension of Rauschenbusch's understanding of the Kingdom, according to Stackhouse, is "institutional." He advocated the Christianization of all social institutions: business, education, family, government, and Church. Many find this notion of Christianizing society to be the most preposterous of all his ideas. It is important to note, however, that a Christianized social order and the Kingdom of God are not identical, though they are related. Stackhouse maintains that the Kingdom of God, as a transcendent ideal, is the inspiration and power that gives persons the strength and vision to work for a Christianized social order. Nevertheless, Rauschenbusch understood that the perfect social order will never be actualized in the course of human history. There will always be pain, suffering, and evil. Yet, "every approximation to it [the Kingdom of God] is worthwhile." Within the sphere of history, a truly better social order may be realized which can actually improve the human situation, so long as it is based on Christian principles of how humans ought to relate to one another individually and collectively. (17)

Stackhouse writes, as well, that Rauschenbusch's Kingdom of God is manifested by three different entities: Jesus Christ, the individual, and the Church. Jesus was the revelation of this Kingdom. Through his teaching and

ministry, the ideal of the Kingdom of God was introduced in history and presented to persons as the center and meaning of true religious faith. But this Kingdom is also mediated through the lives of individuals. It is only through individual repentance that a person may come to true faith in God and genuine dedication to the Kingdom. This faith, though it is always the faith of an individual, is also a social faith: it calls believers to see their religious commitment in terms of human solidarity and the vision of the Kingdom of God. It goes beyond personal piety and involves the believer in working for the redemptive transformation of society.

Stackhouse argues that the Kingdom, for Rauschenbusch, is also mediated by the Church. "She does not exist for her own sake; she is simply a working organization to create the Christian life in individuals and the Kingdom of God in human society." Stackhouse asserts that the Church functions for Rauschenbusch as a model for ideal social organization. From the perspective of his "free church" background, Rauschenbusch argued that the Church should become a "universalized, aggressive sect." Such an organization would be the institutional form that combines in history the ideas of the messianic theocracy and the "natural" inclinations toward true social solidarity and fraternity. Hence, the Church would be an instrument for the implementation of certain aspects of the Kingdom in the world by leading the way in Christianizing society. As

Rauschenbusch saw it, the Church would most benefit society by playing the role of a "saving remnant" for a lost and confused world." (18)

Stackhouse provides, finally, an evaluation and critique of Rauschenbusch's understanding of the Kingdom. He writes that Rauschenbusch approached the Kingdom in terms of categories that are crucial for interpreting the meaning of historical existence: the ideational, natural, and institutional structures. Rauschenbusch, through the employment of such concepts, is able to construct "an interpretive frame for reading the dimensions and directions of history and a goal that ever transcends man's accomplishments." Stackhouse asserts that his approach deals with the relationship between God, humanity, and nature in a more responsible way than either neo-orthodoxy or modernism. Each movement, for Stackhouse, fails to take seriously one entity in such a relationship. Rauschenbusch, however, combines a concern for humanity and the world within a theocentric emphasis. Thus, Stackhouse claims that Rauschenbusch preserved the relevance and the transcendence of the Kingdom of God--an overly positive evaluation of his thought. (19)

Stackhouse, nevertheless, recognizes the significance of Rauschenbusch's thought in a way that Hauerwas, Marney, and Niebuhr do not. He realizes that Rauschenbusch could not be so eschatologically oriented that present concerns would be belittled. Rather than despairing at the

brokenness of the present age and passively waiting for the Kingdom's consummation, Rauschenbusch developed "middle axioms" which allowed him to make sense of the concerns and problems of society. He found theological language to analyze the questions posed by history, nature, and institutions. Rauschenbusch rejected an ahistorical or biblicistic orientation to theologize in a manner that was open to the challenges of poverty and exploitation. In so doing, he formulated an understanding of the Kingdom that was largely appropriate and challenging to his situation. His example demonstrates that theologians must not be afraid to appropriate cultural norms critically for the sake of addressing contemporary, pressing concerns and problems.

But Rauschenbusch too quickly attributed the values of the Enlightenment and Western democracy to God's eschatological Reign. Rauschenbusch's anthropology is overly optimistic, his view of the Kingdom too immanent, his understanding of theology's relationship to culture imprecise. The criticism of Hauerwas, Marney, and Niebuhr is persuasive. It is impossible to adopt Rauschenbusch's approach to the Kingdom without first making major revisions.

The theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg is helpful for developing a critique of and response to Rauschenbusch. Pannenberg and Rauschenbusch both place great emphasis on the Kingdom for theological ethics. Pannenberg's approach, however, provides a responsible corrective to that of

Rauschenbusch. Pannenberg is persuaded that the Kingdom of God should be emphasized as "a key to the whole of Christian theology." The Kingdom, the central theme of Jesus' preaching, refers to the eschatological future that is brought about by God. Pannenberg claims that the present must be seen in terms of this imminent future. Priority should be given to the eschatological future "which determines our present [and] demands a reversal also in our ontological conceptions." The being of God is identical only with God's rule which will be consummated in the future. Pannenberg denies that God develops as the future unfolds. What is revealed about God in the eschatological future will have been true, although not fully known, in the past. The unfolding of God's being, as it is entailed in the coming Kingdom, is the future of the world. "Every event in which the future becomes finitely present must be understood as a contingent act of God." (20)

The Kingdom, for Pannenberg, must be the central concern of the Church, if the Church is to remain faithful to Jesus' teaching. This means that the Church should think and act in terms of the future of all humanity and the world, not only in terms of its members. It is to be an eschatological community with a "universal vocation" as it pioneers the future of humanity. The Church, then, is to be devoted to "the utterly concrete reality of justice and love." The perfect realization of these norms is not a present reality; Pannenberg understands the Kingdom to be an

always coming, future reality. The eschatological nature of the Kingdom demonstrates the inadequacies of the present political order and requires persons to be faithful in the present scheme of things. "We possess no perfect program, but are possessed by an inspiration that will not be realized perfectly by us. It is realized provisionally in the ever-renewed emergence of our striving in devotion to history's destiny." It is at precisely this point that Pannenberg challenges the Marxist hope for the establishment of an ideal society in the normal course of history. He insists that it is "still an essential condition of true humanity" that persons are not God. Humans should recognize their finitude and abandon their false hopes of building that which only God can erect. (21)

Pannenberg understands the Church to play a vital critical role in society. It is always to point out the limitations of particular social orders and avoid investing its energy in "the realms of otherworldly fulfillment." By ignoring social issues, the Church is guilty of condoning the status quo. The Church, then, becomes a bastion of conservatism. Instead, Pannenberg insists, the Church should "demythologize" political myths that give an inordinate amount of power to any particular social order. By witnessing to the future consummation of the Kingdom, the Church "helps to stir the imagination for social action and to inspire the visions of social change." Within the confines of secular society, the Church provides individuals

with the opportunity of participating now in the "the ultimate destiny of human life." The life of the Church should be an anticipation of the wholeness that is consummated only eschatologically. This, for Pannenberg, is the probing criticism of the future. The Church, through its example and teaching, is to remind secular society of its secularity and limitedness. "Otherwise, secular society absolutizes its institutions, abandons its secularity, and exercises a tyranny over mankind." (22)

In considering the Kingdom's relevance for theological ethics, Pannenberg argues that God is the ultimate good for ethical thought when God is understood as being related to the world in the coming of the Kingdom. God's rule is in the eschatological future as the "futurity of the good" which is always the object of human striving. Hence, the Kingdom is the highest good for moral discernment. "The Kingdom of God defines the ultimate horizon for all ethical statements." Since Pannenberg understands the Kingdom to refer to God's rule of the world, he calls for "a conversion to the world" on the part of Christians. Faithful people should realize that to participate in God's love for the world is actually to commune with God. "To love God can only mean to participate in the dynamics of his love for this world and for this mankind." It must be remembered that Pannenberg identifies God's being with the coming of the Kingdom. The true service of God necessarily entails service to humanity. Such an approach affirms a

transcendence that is vitally engaged in the dynamics of the world and its history. It "helps us to gain critical distance from the present and still kindles enthusiasm for transformation of the present." (23)

Pannenberg strongly emphasizes the Kingdom's futurity which denies any human construct the "glory of perfection" that would warrant absolute devotion. At the same time, he rejects the sort of evolutionary optimism that finds the Kingdom's fulfillment in the normal course of history. Nevertheless, Pannenberg argues for the real relevance of the Kingdom for ethics, as it "confronts all human activity with the future of God himself." The affirmation of the Kingdom's futurity assumes that there will be radical change and calls persons to respond creatively to that change. It recognizes the current reality of sin and longs for the eschatological consummation of wholeness and perfection. Yet, despite the eschatological nature of the Kingdom, Pannenberg maintains that faithful persons are called to prepare "this present for the future." Recognizing the preliminary character of their achievements, they are to make themselves available for service to the future. (24)

Pannenberg claims that the futurity of the Kingdom became "a power determining the present" in the ministry of Jesus. In Jesus' complete devotion to God, the expectation of the coming Kingdom became the exclusive content of true faithfulness. Whenever such obedience occurs, the Kingdom is present in a way that its futurity is not denied, as its

presence is derived from the future and is an anticipatory sign of its coming. Hence, true faithfulness to God provides a genuine, though not yet fulfilled, realization of the Kingdom. (25)

Pannenberg's understanding of the Kingdom makes for an interesting comparison with, and responsible corrective to, that of Rauschenbusch. An initial point of contrast has to do with the doctrine of God and ontology. Pannenberg makes a carefully articulated analysis of the relationship between the futurity of God, ontology, and the coming Kingdom. He works out of clearly defined philosophical presuppositions to explicate the relevance of God's future being for the eschatological consummation of the Kingdom. His approach is clear and coherent. Though Rauschenbusch makes similar claims for the continued development of the Kingdom throughout the future, he never considers fundamental questions about God and ontology in a sufficiently involved or developed fashion. (26) Harold A. Durfee pointed out in his doctoral dissertation that, while there are clear leanings toward a process theology in Rauschenbusch, his fundamental presuppositions are never made adequately lucid to develop such a position. (27) By comparison with Pannenberg, it is clear that Rauschenbusch lacked, or perhaps simply refrained from using, a theological and philosophical background that was sufficiently developed for the clear formulation and articulation of vital foundational issues.

Pannenberg, moreover, is able to affirm both the radical futurity of the Kingdom and its relevance for criticizing particular social orders. Despite the Kingdom's eschatological nature, he understands it to be present in an anticipatory fashion whenever there is true obedience and devotion to God. Such faithfulness to God is, for Pannenberg, demonstrated through the service of humanity. He views the Kingdom as a solid bridge between the Divine and the human. Rauschenbusch's position is less satisfying. Though he was more "realistic" than many of his contemporaries, Rauschenbusch had an overly optimistic view of history and the possibility for human moral progress. His understanding of the Kingdom, as is often noted, was too immanent. Rauschenbusch never developed an adequate theological basis for maintaining both the eschatological futurity and the present critical relevance of the Kingdom. Unlike Pannenberg, he did not provide the theological apparatus necessary for seeing and evaluating the present in terms of the eschatological future. Hence, it was all too easy for him to confuse a more or less Christianized social order with the Kingdom itself. Rauschenbusch's Kingdom too easily took on the attributes of a progressive or mildly socialist American political order. It would be irresponsible, however, to argue that Rauschenbusch's thought is without insight. As Stackhouse observes, Rauschenbusch dealt in a compelling way with the critical relevance of the Kingdom for ethics. He employed creative

theological language that enabled him to speak a prophetic word relevant to the vicissitudes of history and culture. (28) Nevertheless, the lack of theological precision in his thought, as made evident by the comparison with Pannenberg, still stands out as a prominent characteristic.

Hauerwas, Marney, and Niebuhr all criticize, each in his own way, Rauschenbusch's understanding of the Kingdom as being insufficiently eschatological. Their criticisms focus on Rauschenbusch's inability to preserve both the Kingdom's otherness and its critical relevance for society. This is also the position of the thesis in light of the comparison with Pannenberg. Without a sufficiently sophisticated theological basis for careful delineation between the present and the eschatological, Rauschenbusch's thought tended much too strongly towards an unclear affirmation of the Kingdom's immanence.

On an appreciative, though also critical, note, Charles R. Strain, a professor of Religious Studies at DePaul University, perceptively asserts that "Rauschenbusch created a relatively adequate theological model within a paradigm which is clearly inadequate to our present historical context." Strain reasons that, while Rauschenbusch obviously worked within the paradigm of a liberal and optimistic theology, he was not entirely determined or controlled by it. In fact, says Strain, it was Rauschenbusch's "historical consciousness" as a historian that enabled him to "distance himself" from such a dominant

paradigm. He was self-consciously trying to explicate a theology for a social Christianity in terms that would be acceptable to his contemporaries. This is why Rauschenbusch "persisted in promoting an evolutionary interpretation of the Kingdom" in spite of the contradictory indications of German biblical scholarship. Strain understands Rauschenbusch to have struggled for a theological position that was appropriate to his culture and time. Through his historical studies of the biblical literature, Rauschenbusch became aware of the great diversity of theological positions, regarding everything from eschatology to Christology, that are contained within the Bible. He chose to interpret such a diverse body of theological arguments in terms of a hermeneutical principle that was largely informed by modern, liberal theological and cultural presuppositions. Apocalyptic and catastrophic understandings of the Kingdom, despite their sound biblical basis, were unacceptable to Rauschenbusch due to their contradiction of what he considered to be the most appropriate interpretations of the meaning of history for Christian belief and social involvement.

Strain maintains that Rauschenbusch's view of the Kingdom is remarkably free of "the myth of progress." Rauschenbusch, "in explicit criticism of both liberal perfectionism and conservative pessimism," spoke of the realities of both evil and hope in a way that challenged dominant assumptions about the meaning of history and

Christian faith. Strain thinks that it is only in light of Rauschenbusch's desire to provide a theological analysis that was truly appropriate to his audience, that his understanding of history and the Kingdom may be rightly understood. Rauschenbusch's commitment to the social gospel led him to employ the symbol of the Kingdom as an instrument for unmasking of the cruel ideology of social Darwinism. His experience with the victims of abject poverty encouraged him to speak of Christianizing society--a concept, Strain suggests, that Rauschenbusch never equated with the fullness of the Kingdom. "A fully actualized Christian socialism was no synonym for the Kingdom of God in Rauschenbusch's thought." This was the main thrust of his "appropriate" theology. Finally, Strain suggests that Rauschenbusch was fully aware of "the relative adequacy of his particular model" for theology. His appreciation of the historical relativity of Christian doctrine guarded against any affirmation of theological exclusivity on his part. Strain rightly maintains that Rauschenbusch was a responsible interpreter of Christian faith for his particular historical and cultural milieu. (29)

In concluding this section, it is important to agree with Strain that Rauschenbusch articulated a theological and ethical position which was compelling, coherent, and appropriate for his time. But Rauschenbusch did not, of course, speak the final word on the Kingdom or theological ethics.

Gutierrez on the Kingdom of God

Gutierrez explicates systematically his understanding of the Kingdom of God in A Theology of Liberation. He begins this discussion with his assertion that "evangelical demands" for society are in "radical incompatibility" with an oppressive and unjust social order. The gospel calls for "the creation of a new man" through the destruction of alienated society and the establishment of liberation and true freedom. Gutierrez is realistic enough to admit that this goal may be unobtainable in history. Nevertheless, he maintains that "this dream" is valuable in that it inspires and guides persons in their struggle against injustice. (30)

But this statement of realism should not be interpreted to indicate that Gutierrez reserves salvation, or the relevance of the Kingdom, entirely for the eschatological future. To the contrary, he argues that "salvation is not something otherworldly." It is the "communion of men with God and the communion of men among themselves." The physical and the spiritual, as well as the individual and the communal, are taken up in the realm of the salvific. This is the case in that history is one. "There is only one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history." Hence, history itself is the proper object of salvation. The Kingdom refers not merely to disembodied spirits and the hereafter; rather, it is based on the assumption that "the only man we know has been efficaciously called to a

gratuitous communion with God...The salvific action of God underlies all human existence." (31)

In addressing the eschatological dimensions of the Kingdom, Gutierrez refers to the eschatological "Promise [which] orients all history towards the future and thus puts revelation in an eschatological perspective." Human history is the "slow, uncertain, and surprising fulfillment of the Promise." This Promise unfolds in God's promises throughout history--particularly in the Old and New Covenants--but it is not exhausted by these promises. Instead, there is "a dialectical relationship between the Promise and its partial fulfillments." The Kingdom is present, but not totally consummated, in history. Gutierrez claims that this is the biblical view: "the Bible presents eschatology as the driving force of salvific history radically oriented towards the future." This emphasis on the future does not, however, diminish prophetic concern with current historical events. The Kingdom "is realized in a proximate historical event; at the same time, it is projected beyond this event." The meaning of history, for Gutierrez, is understood correctly only when it is put in eschatological perspective. An openness to the final "self-communication of God" enables persons to be sensitive to God's current liberating and redeeming action. (32)

Gutierrez' argument here is based on his rejection of "Western dualistic thought [which] is foreign to the biblical mentality." He rejects the spiritualization of

Christian faith, and particularly of the eschatological promises. "The grace-sin conflict, the coming of the Kingdom, and the expectation of the parousia are also necessarily and inevitably historical, temporal, earthly, social, and material realities." It is only through a rejection of such spiritualization, Gutierrez reasons, that Christian faith will find a strong and clear link from theology to a commitment for justice in society. Nevertheless, Gutierrez stresses his contention that eschatological promises "cannot be identified clearly and completely with one or another social reality." There must be a "permanent detachment" from ultimate loyalty to particular social systems. Yet at the same time, he affirms that "the complete encounter with the Lord will mark an end to history, but it will take place in history." (33)

Gutierrez harshly criticizes the statement of Gaudium et Spes, and the thrust of traditional Catholic teaching, that temporal progress and the growth of the Kingdom must be sharply distinguished. Such an approach, in his estimation, precludes any real challenge to unjust social systems. Gutierrez treats temporal progress as "a continuation of the work of creation." Such creation is necessarily redemptive, for it requires the participation of humans as they struggle against injustice and oppression. Salvation for Gutierrez, it must be remembered, is focused upon creating a new and liberated humanity. "Christianity, rooted in biblical sources, thinks in history." It is in history that the

growth and relevance of the Kingdom of God are located. (34)

Nevertheless, Gutierrez refrains from totally identifying the Kingdom with temporal progress. He argues that the growth of the Kingdom is "the ultimate precondition for a just society and a new man." The building of a liberated social order is salvific, but "it is not all of salvation." The Kingdom is finally the gift of God; but without historical acts of liberation there would be no growth of the Kingdom. Gutierrez attempts to make a "dynamic" distinction at this point between liberation and salvation, not a distinction between orders or realms of being. He argues for an inclusive view of salvation and the relevance of the Kingdom because of the "very radicalness and totality of the salvific process." Nothing is to be excluded from the redeeming action of Christ. (35)

Gutierrez' understanding of history and the future leads him to place emphasis on the importance of hope for shaping "historical praxis." To hope means to be open to the future, to accept the future as God's gift. But hope must point toward liberation and the growth of the Kingdom, "the struggle for peace and brotherhood." (36) In the Latin American experience, the Church has an important public dimension and has generally supported the established political and social order. Hence, Gutierrez finds it to be impossible to think responsibly about the Kingdom or the calling of the individual Christian without making reference to political and social realities. (37) The Kingdom cannot

be indifferent to societal conditions. "The Kingdom is realized in a society of brotherhood and justice; and, in turn, this realization opens up the promise and hope of complete communion of all men with God. The political is grafted into the eternal." (38)

In discussing the significance of utopia for liberation and the Kingdom of God, Gutierrez asserts that utopia involves both a denunciation of the present order and the annunciation of a new society. "Utopia moves forward; it is a projection into the future, a dynamic and mobilizing factor in history." Utopia must lead to praxis in opposition to the old and in support of the new. It is also a rational affair: utopia relies on the best scientific and theoretical analysis for its inspiration. The praxis for which it calls "is on the level of the cultural revolution which attempts to forge a new kind of man." Gutierrez calls upon Christians to allow their political values and activities to be shaped and guided by the vision of utopia. It is only by the employment of utopia that persons will be able to rise up against their oppressors and achieve liberation. Through this approach to political involvement, a new humanity and a new society can be created. Such an act of creation is a redemptive act and "implies liberation from sin, the ultimate root of all injustice, all exploitation, all dissidence among men." Gutierrez insists that Christian faith requires persons to be vitally involved in the struggle for liberation, in the shaping of the

"history which we fashion with our own hands." Persons are to be guided in specific political actions by the vision of utopia; however, the hope inspired by Christianity should preclude faithful people from identifying any particular social order with the Kingdom. Hope inspires current action and always points beyond that action. (39)

Gutierrez views the Church as playing a vital role in historically concretizing the ideals of the Kingdom. He refers to the Church as the sacrament of history which helps to bring about "the work of salvation...which occurs in history." This means that the Church must no longer consider itself to be the "exclusive place of salvation and [should] orient itself towards a new and radical service of people." The Church is not to be identified with salvation or the Kingdom; rather, the Church bears witness to, and announces the reality of, the redemption that is God's will for all people. "The Church is always provisional"--it should be organized and administered in a way that points toward and serves "the Kingdom of God which has already begun in history." It must be noted that Gutierrez deliberately explicates this view of the Church in terms of his Latin American context. "The Church must be the visible sign of the presence of the Lord within the aspiration for liberation and the struggle for a more human and just society." (40)

Gutierrez also discusses his view of the Kingdom of God in The Power of the Poor in History. He begins here with a

strong emphasis upon God's liberating intervention in history on behalf of the poor and oppressed [i.e., the Exodus]. He points out that "the God of the Bible is a God who not only governs history, but who orientates it in the direction of establishment of justice and right." God is on the side of the oppressed and directs history toward their liberation. Gutierrez claims that Jesus Christ, largely through his solidarity with the economically and socially deprived "is precisely God become poor." Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, "a kingdom of justice and liberation, to be established in favor of the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized of history." Just as God acted in the Exodus to free the Hebrews, Jesus' preaching, ministry, death, and resurrection stand as the ultimate deeds of liberation that initiate and point toward the consummation of the Kingdom of God. (41) Gutierrez refrains from reducing the liberation brought by Christ to political liberation. But he still maintains that redemption "is present in concrete historical and political liberating events." The political realm is somewhat autonomous; "it requires social analyses, and very specific political options." Nevertheless, the political sphere should be seen in terms of the larger, inclusive reality of the liberation of the Kingdom. Any other way of viewing the situation will likely result in a complete loss of the Kingdom's relevance for history or an affirmation of "two histories." (42)

It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance

of the role of the poor for Gutierrez' understanding of the Kingdom. The Beatitudes are crucial to describing both God and the citizens of the Kingdom. They demonstrate "God's love for the poor...simply because they are literally and materially poor," and show how God challenges and overturns the normal human categories as to who or what is most important in life or the social order. This is the nature of the Kingdom that Jesus shows to us in his messianic "practice that turns topsy-turvy not only our values, but historical realities and social status as well." (43) Liberation, then, must extend to all areas of life: economic, social, political liberation; liberation for every person from all types of servitude and sin. Sin inevitably manifests itself in interpersonal and group relationships; it is the root of all oppression. Once again, Gutierrez stresses his point that it is impossible to make an ultimate distinction between the spiritual and the material. (44)

Dennis McCann finds Gutierrez' treatment of the Kingdom's relationship to history to be problematic. McCann argues that Gutierrez' adoption of a dialectical view of history and his claim that history is one seem to indicate that he is concerned only with this world, this life. Nevertheless, Gutierrez also asserts that there is a total consummation of salvation which comes at God's initiative and which is not exhausted by the historical. McCann finds it difficult to see how he can affirm both positions. There must be, he asserts, either a radical division between

historical liberation and the Kingdom or eschatological salvation, or a thoroughgoing identification of the two. Either humans will liberate themselves in a dialectical process or God will intervene periodically for their liberation and eschatologically for the consummation of the Kingdom. McCann maintains that Gutierrez' thought is in need of clarification in this regard. (45)

The Argentinian theologian Jose Miguez Bonino is more positive towards Gutierrez' understanding of the Kingdom. He maintains that Christianity's traditional hope for the eschatological Kingdom of God has served to downplay the importance of historical struggles for liberation and justice. It "empties history of meaning and value" and justifies abominable social conditions. Bonino, however, admires the Marxist utopias which have inspired much needed social change. He claims that such Marxist approaches take history seriously and are not afraid to make relative distinctions between different visions of how society should be ordered. He agrees with Gutierrez that the Christian lack of emphasis on the relevance of the Kingdom of God for the normal course of history is the result of a "two histories" orientation. Such an approach, he asserts, is foreign to the spirit of the Bible. Nevertheless, it is this sort of dualism that has been dominant in Christian thought for almost two thousand years. The Kingdom of God is related to a "univocal, sacred, and distinct" history of faith, while all other history is reduced to "a general

episodic framework devoid of eschatological significance: a mere stage." (46)

But at the same time, like Gutierrez, Bonino warns against a careless acceptance of "a monistic solution" to the above dualism. He insists that theologians must be able to relate the Kingdom and history in a way that does justice both to the basic commitments of Christian faith and the often tragic developments of history. "Deifying man and history" is an unacceptable solution to the problem. But Bonino also states his rejection of an "analogical" understanding of the Kingdom's relationship to history. Such an approach implies that historical action is not truly important for the Kingdom; "at most, it may succeed to project provisory images which remind us of it." An analogical understanding, then, is merely another way of articulating an essentially dualistic view of history. (47) Instead, the Kingdom is "actually present, operative -- however imperfectly and partially -- realized" in history. Bonino recognizes, however, that it is legitimate to protest against "naive optimism" about building the Kingdom on earth. Nevertheless, he claims that the "strong language of growth" must be used to reflect the truth of God's action and initiative in history. (48)

In terms very similar to those of Gutierrez, Bonino calls upon Christians to act in ways that are most consistent with the goals of the Kingdom. But the unity of "action [for] and announcement" of the Kingdom are

"eschatologically significant." The ambiguity and imperfection of historical endeavors will not be overcome until "the Last Judgement." Hence, Bonino maintains that there should be an "indirect relationship between utopia and Christian faith." The Kingdom "judges and transforms" human achievements and warns against the absolutization of human projects. He criticizes Gutierrez for "a certain imprecision" in that he essentially identifies the utopian vision with the historical realization of liberation. (49)

Leonardo Boff, the controversial liberation theologian from Brazil, understands the theological significance of the Kingdom in a fashion similar to Gutierrez. Boff holds salvation to be a process which transforms the whole person and begins "here on earth and ends in eternity." Historical manifestations of liberation are "anticipations and concretizations, ever limited, but real" of the Kingdom which will be consummated eschatologically. Liberation in Jesus Christ is historically identified in social, economic, and political liberation, but it is not exhausted by such events. The utopian vision, for Boff, serves to relativize human achievements, make persons aware of transcendence and point them toward the future, and provide criteria for an "ethical critique and adjudication" of specific historical situations. (50) Boff asserts that there is one history which is oriented toward the Kingdom "that begins here and now and culminates in eternity." Just as Christ is human and divine, just as the sacraments are real but imperfect

realizations of God's grace, just as love for neighbor is at the same time also love for God, salvation is both historical, as in achievements of liberation, and eschatological, as in the consummation of the Kingdom. Confesses Boff, "this relationship cannot be totally grasped by thought." (51)

Boff, like Gutierrez, certainly does not belittle the significance of historical liberation, for the Kingdom of God is "already initiated in this world whenever greater justice is established, greater love reigns, and new horizons that capture God's word and revelation within life are opened up." History is a process leading to the goal of the Kingdom. Historical manifestations of liberation are "mediating gestures" which participate in and anticipate the eschatological consummation of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God calls history into question and precludes it from basking "in self-sufficiency" or degenerating "into orgiastic celebration of itself as the fullness of eschatology." Boff argues that the Kingdom does not evolve in history; rather, "it breaks in." In the normal course of history, there is always ambiguity and uncertainty about the present and the future. But in the Kingdom's fullness, there is a "revolution in the structures of this world"--God's glory will be revealed clearly and unmistakably. It is precisely Jesus' expectation of this sort of Kingdom that led him to inaugurate "a new praxis" that anticipates and strives for the actualization of the

Reign of God. "This new praxis of Jesus Christ is the Kingdom itself already present."

Boff asserts that the Kingdom is uniquely present in Jesus' resurrection, "the implosion or explosion of the new heaven and new earth with the new Adam." But resurrection is not limited to Jesus as an individual; rather, resurrection takes place whenever "elements of oppression are overcome." In light of the resurrection of Jesus, "impulse is given to the process of liberation, which, in the pain of its birth, groans for historical realization." Thus, Boff finds a strong continuity between "the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man." Faith entails "working towards the concrete historical fulfillment of the Kingdom," which will, he admits, never be completed in human history. The present is "intimately bound to the eschatological future." The consummation of the Kingdom is "proclaimed whenever there is a real human growth in justice, in the defeat of oppression and in the establishment of a wider realm of freedom." Boff suggests that the specific actions called for by faithfulness to the Kingdom and liberation will vary according to the situation. Martyrdom, political action, perhaps even revolution may be called for in the task of building a more just society. Hence, Boff, though he reserves the consummation of the Kingdom for the eschatological future, finds the Kingdom to have great relevance for the struggle for liberation in human history.

Deane William Ferm, a friendly critic of the liberation theology movement, recognizes that the relationship between the historical and the eschatological is one that is often not clearly explicated by liberation theologians. He explains this difficulty with the assertion that liberation theologians usually want to avoid a "two-realm" view of history or reality, while at the same time allowing "for a sense of divine sovereignty and mystery in the larger scheme of things." The problem is primarily one of language: it is difficult to find the words to stress immanence or transcendence without one overshadowing the other. (53)

Ferm's comments are definitely applicable to Gutierrez' understanding of the Kingdom of God. It is clear that Gutierrez wishes to affirm both the historical reality of the Kingdom and its eschatological fulfillment. Problems arise, however, in Gutierrez' affirmation of history as one and his theologically weak anthropology. With an overly optimistic view of humanity and the social nature of sin, as well as a rejection of ontological distinctions between the historical and the eternal, it is inevitable that Gutierrez will have difficulty in preserving the truly eschatological nature of the Kingdom.

J. Andrew Kirk makes a similar critique of Gutierrez' treatment of the Kingdom. He argues that Gutierrez, despite his statements to the contrary, is too exclusively concerned with "external liberation" to do justice to the seriousness of sin or the eschatological nature of salvation.

Gutierrez, he asserts, approaches the Kingdom in a manner that actually obscures the relationship between "Christ's once-for-all salvation and the historical process of liberation." Kirk maintains that this weakness in Gutierrez' thought is rooted in his denial of all dualism and his confidence that humanity is "the free agent of...history." Such an approach would not be problematic for "a strictly Marxist interpretation." Kirk reasons, however, that Christianity must emphasize the radicalness of human sin which can transform "newly-won freedoms into new kinds of tyranny." In his failure to stress strongly the pervasiveness of sin, Gutierrez, according to Kirk, is guilty of virtually reducing the growth of the Kingdom to temporal progress. This inadequate formulation of the Kingdom's relationship to history is at the heart of Gutierrez' approach to hermeneutics. A liberationist hermeneutics begins from the standpoint of a commitment to the praxis that brings about liberation in history. Kirk maintains that this way of reading the Bible in the Latin American context will inevitably result in an overly politicized Christianity, for it too quickly appropriates ideological notions into theology. (54)

Kirk also asserts that liberation theology should take Jesus' establishment of the Kingdom more seriously. He reasons that "the biblical revelation of Christ will determine the means of being obedient," not merely the freedom to be obedient in whatever way humans may prefer.

Faithfulness to the Kingdom, Kirk points out, necessarily entails praxis; but such praxis is to be informed by the biblical witness to as great an extent as possible. This is, unfortunately, not the case with much of the praxis associated with liberation theology, which is "often vague, unreal, and tending to romanticism." Kirk suggests that liberation theologians adopt a new praxis based on a "Christological hermeneutic of the Gospel" that seeks to witness to the Kingdom "in light of the both the Cross and the concrete reality of oppression." Kirk stops short, however, of providing any clear guidelines for what sort of praxis this new hermeneutical orientation would entail. (55)

George Hunsinger, a professor at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, provides a Barthian corrective to Gutierrez' view of the Kingdom with his assertion that "only something like Barth's unqualified precedence for God's Word" is able to preclude liberation theologians from viewing the Kingdom as entirely the work of humans in the normal course of history. Instead, Hunsinger suggests a stronger reliance on the praxis of God for liberation theology, not a thoroughgoing faith in human capacity for building the Kingdom. Such an orientation, he asserts, should "mobilize rather than detract from human praxis." It would allow the theology of liberation to be more firmly grounded in a theology of grace. Human activity, from his point of view, would then be placed in proper perspective with the sovereignty and freedom of God. (56) As Barth

comments, God's will for salvation "should be reflected in the earthly material of the external, relative, and provisional actions and modes of action of the political community." The same God who desires the eschatological salvation of humanity also wills a just social order among persons in the course of history. It is the transcendent sovereignty of God, as Barth correctly argues, that implies God's call for righteousness in the world. It is God's transcendence that establishes God's true critical relevance for history. (57)

Charles R. Strain begins his evaluation of liberation theology with the claim that virtually all liberation theologians see their task, in light of Marx, to be the transformation of reality, not simply the understanding or explication of Christian faith. Gutierrez and other liberation theologians, he suggests, are primarily characterized by "advocacy scholarship and passionate rhetoric in contrast to the philosophic rigor and conceptual precision typical of systematic reflection." While avoiding many of the intricacies of formal ethical discernment, liberation theologians highlight, retrieve, and thematize religious symbols which the Church has ignored for some time. Strain maintains that these are important characteristics of the genre of liberation theology which must be taken into consideration in any responsible discussion or critique of it.

Another significant trait of liberation theology is its

sensitivity to the ideological nature of many theological convictions. Gutierrez is strong in his condemnation of the rationalization for oppression which Christianity has often provided. Strain argues, however, that liberation theologians are unwilling to acknowledge "that their frank apology for an alternative vision of humanity is ideological in character." In fact, the stated political intentions of liberation theologians reveal striking similarities to those of an admittedly ideological genre. Strain suggests that there is an analogous relationship between theologies of liberation and ideologies. He refrains from making an identification between the two in light of the fact that liberation theology is a theology. As such, it makes claims about the ultimate value of human history and efforts in terms of religious categories. It should never be viewed primarily as just another political ideology; nevertheless, the similarities are significant enough to call for critical suspicion of its ideological characteristics.

Strain makes this argument against what he finds to be a general inclination among the theologians of liberation to assume that their theological orientation provides the only truly faithful approach to Christianity. He suspects that in the minds of many such theologians "the otherness of the divine reality which relativizes every human word, concept, and proclamation does not operate critically with regards to the words of the oppressed and their theoreticians." As a corrective to this unfortunate inclination, he suggests that

liberation theologians regard their own work as providing a particular theological model which selects and interprets certain Christian doctrines and symbols in light of the major categories of alienation and liberation. Every theological approach, Strain insists, is relative--it cannot claim to be the final, definitive word about God. The motif of God as Liberator, then, should be advocated as a faithful, but relative, hermeneutical principle for further reflection upon particular religious symbols. Any claim for its exclusivity as a way of thinking about God is theologically suspect. The most theologians can hope for are theological formulations that are relatively adequate to the theological tradition and the contemporary situation.

Strain reasons that the task of the liberation theologian must now be to work for the integration of distinctive perspectives entailed in rival theological models. Each model must be subject to rational, critical evaluation in light of its appropriateness, adequacy, and faithfulness to the Christian theological tradition. New approaches to the problems posed by liberation theology must be judged according to their ability "to meet the exigencies of new historical situations, of new breakthroughs in our understanding of the human project, and of new insights into the practical implications of the Christian message." Strain hopes that such rigorous analysis will aid liberation theologians to recognize the often ideological nature of their theological claims and to transcend those aspects to

as great an extent as possible. (58)

Strain's perspective provides a needed corrective to Gutierrez' understanding of the Kingdom. Gutierrez' approach is so heavily informed by his particular philosophical and historical presuppositions that the Kingdom often loses its "otherness" and transcendence. Appropriating Strain's argument, theologians should be able to point out the ideological elements in Gutierrez' view and avoid them in further discussions of the Kingdom of God, which is radically eschatological and transcendent. Unless theologians are aware of the ideological taint that they bring to their definitions of the Kingdom, they may be so committed to a provincial kingdom of humanity that God's Kingdom will be slighted. The line of argument against Gutierrez at this point is similar to that employed regarding Rauschenbusch's insufficiently critical attribution of cultural norms to the Kingdom. Each thinker compromises in this way the radically critical nature of the Kingdom of God.

Alongside this critique of excessive ideology, it is necessary to stress the theoretical inadequacy of Gutierrez' approach to the Kingdom. Due to his dialectical historical presuppositions and weak anthropological claims, Gutierrez has difficulty explaining his affirmation of the Kingdom's eschatological fulfillment. It is unclear how he avoids affirming a Kingdom that is consummated in the course of human history. The strong leaning toward immanence in his

thought, combined with the ideological nature of much of his theology, makes Gutierrez' understanding of the Kingdom of God theologically questionable.

Critical Comparison

This section of the chapter is devoted to an evaluation and comparison of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' understandings of the Kingdom of God. An initial point of similarity is their stress on the Kingdom's immanence. In light of their rejection of otherworldliness and acceptance of an essentially political hermeneutic, they find the relevance of the Kingdom to be in its historical manifestations. Both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez lack, however, an appreciation of the Kingdom's eschatological otherness that is sufficient to sustain a probing social critique. Neither of them interprets the Kingdom in a fashion that precludes identifying a human historical project with the Kingdom itself. Reinhold Niebuhr's critique of Rauschenbusch is also applicable to Gutierrez at this point. Although Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez deny that the Kingdom will be fulfilled in the normal course of history, they do not provide the theological argumentation that is necessary to support its eschatological nature. Gutierrez asserts that history is one, while Rauschenbusch, who reacted strongly against Albert Schweitzer's radical understanding of eschatology, is confident in the victory of the law of love in human affairs. With overly optimistic

views of history and anthropology, they overreact against an otherworldly view of the Kingdom to the extent that the Kingdom's otherness is slighted.

As a result of this emphasis on immanence, Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez are susceptible to the charge of appropriating political ideology into theology in an insufficiently critical fashion. The Kingdom becomes so much a part of human history that their respective political theories largely determine the content of their theology. The primary goal of theological ethics is seen to be the establishment of social justice, the substance of which is determined by the political theory that is popular at the moment. This thesis argues, to the contrary, that no political ideology should be the dominant, determining theme of a Christian social ethic. Instead, the Church, as Pannenberg insists, should concern itself with prophetically denouncing the sinful pretensions of any political movement that claims that it is bringing in the Kingdom or social perfection within history. Pannenberg, whose thought may be placed in H. Richard Niebuhr's "Christ and culture in paradox" category, understands the Kingdom always to be in tension with historical orders. (59) To that extent, he has a more adequate appreciation of the brokenness of history than did the "Christ of culture" Rauschenbusch. It is only through the theological vision sustained by a sober realization of sin's pervasiveness that the Church will be able to make a probing social critique. Otherwise,

Christians will find themselves providing religious ideologies for political theories that are justified on dubious grounds.

As argued earlier, the first task of theological ethics is to make lucid the moral resources of the Christian theological tradition. It is only after such an initial undertaking that theologians should begin the critical appropriation of ideology for the purpose of making sense of the peculiarities of a contemporary situation. The problem with the approach of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez is that they allow the employment of ideology [rational constructs that suppress the appearance of contradictions in systems of thought or social order for the sake of coherence with predetermined notions] to intrude upon and obscure vital points of Christian theology, such as the doctrines of eschatology, sin, and anthropology. Rather than allowing fundamental claims of Christian faith regarding history and humanity to question ideology in a critical dialogue, contemporary political concerns are given the place of preeminence in the explication of doctrine. While it is admirable that Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez have refused the temptation to be eschatological to the point of social irrelevance, it is unfortunate that they have gone so far in the other direction.

Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez, at times, do not employ ideology in a sufficiently critical fashion. This difficulty is evident in their understanding of the Church

as an instrument of the Kingdom, the institution that leads the way in Christianizing or liberating society. They understand the Church's real value to be a function of its advocacy of a political agenda. This position is the necessary result of a theology that is uncritically informed by political ideology. In the theological dialectic between the gospel and the world, both these theologians have opted too quickly for the world. They have adopted a reductionistically political hermeneutic that fails to do justice to the integrity of the Church, the reality of sin, the wonder of salvation, and the eschatological nature of the Kingdom.

This is not to suggest, however, that there is an eternally true theology that must be kept pure from hermeneutical meddling. To the contrary, the theologian is inevitably involved in the interpretation of tradition and present realities. Theologians never speak the ultimately authoritative word of God. The question has to do with how we theologize in a manner that is faithful to the biblical text and the collective wisdom of the Christian faith. Such faithfulness, we assert, will not allow Christian theology to become merely the tool of political ideology or social reform. Though Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez were right in insisting on the social relevance of Christianity, they were irresponsible in making the gospel a religious platform for a secular political agenda.

As noted in the comparison with Pannenberg,

Rauschenbusch's lack of theological precision manifests itself in his failure to provide for both the eschatological nature of the Kingdom and its present critical relevance. Unlike Pannenberg, his doctrine of God is not formulated in a careful fashion that considers fundamental questions of ontology and the meaning of the future. Without a sound grasp on these basic issues, Rauschenbusch's theological vision was stymied. His theology of history is flawed from the beginning. Gutierrez' conception of the Kingdom is similarly marred by confusion regarding the relationship between salvation and liberation. He fails to sort out these terms in an intellectually satisfying way, perhaps due to the combination of his overly optimistic anthropology with a rejection of scholastic distinctions between realms of being. Without a sober anthropology and view of sin, it is virtually impossible to explicate a doctrine of the Kingdom that makes sense of its present critical function and its eschatological consummation.

A point of contrast between Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' conceptions of the Kingdom is the clarity of the political orientations that inform their understanding. While Gutierrez makes extensive use of Marxist analysis to explicate the Kingdom's significance, Rauschenbusch combines various Western democratic and socialist themes. Gutierrez focusses much attention on the poor as both the objects of God's love and workers of their own liberation. Rauschenbusch, however, was not so much concerned to

identify with the poor as to assist them in improving their lot. It is important to remember that Rauschenbusch was never an orthodox follower of any particular political party. By way of contrast, the political assumptions that inform Gutierrez' approach to the Kingdom are more consistent.

Another point of contrast is the type of moral argument implied in Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' views of the Kingdom. Rauschenbusch's thought is developed in deontological terms. The Kingdom is the fulfillment of the eternally binding law of love. He calls persons to demonstrate their faithfulness to the Kingdom by living under this rule. Gutierrez, however, thinks in teleological terms. Liberation is the goal towards which persons should creatively strive. He provides no developed discussion of moral rules that form the substance of liberation. While both forms of moral reasoning may be found in each figure, this distinction does reflect the general tendencies in the ethical theory that informs their understandings of the Kingdom of God.

A further point of contrast concerns Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez as theologians of praxis. Rauschenbusch, despite his emphasis on theological reflection as the servant of the historical struggle for the Kingdom, never explicated his presuppositions regarding the relationship between theory and praxis. He was, it must be remembered, more an activist than a careful systematic theologian. Gutierrez, however,

makes clear his insistence that theology is "critical reflection on praxis." This orientation is telling for Gutierrez' understanding of the Kingdom, which stresses the primacy of human involvement in shaping history. The Kingdom becomes a goal for which persons strive -- reflection occurs secondarily and for the sake of informing further struggles. The only critique of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez on this issue is that their emphasis on human achievement should be placed within a theological context of grace. Redemptive acts of social involvement should be seen as part of the appropriate response to an initiating, forgiving God. Otherwise, the Kingdom of God risks becoming one of humanity.

Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez, despite their differences, share basic theological difficulties that manifest themselves in their understandings of the Kingdom of God. The final chapter of the thesis will thoroughly examine these problematic areas.

Notes

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4. Ibid., pp. 208-215.
5. Ibid., pp. 215-220.
6. Ibid., pp. 220-225.
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8. Stanley Hauerwas, Against the Nations (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), pp. 107-119; see Hauerwas' A Community of Character (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) for a fuller explication of the theological position that underlies Hauerwas' criticism of Rauschenbusch.
9. Carlyle Marney, "The Significance of Walter Rauschenbusch for Today," Foundations, Vol. II, January 1959, pp. 20-24.
10. Reinhold Niebuhr, cited in Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics, ed. by Harry R. Davis and Robert C. Good (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), pp. 131-133; Niebuhr, "Walter Rauschenbusch in Historical Perspective," Religion in Life, Vol. XXVII, Autumn 1958, p. 532.
11. Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (New York: The Seabury Press, 1935), pp. 23-28.
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13. Ibid., 137-154; "Walter Rauschenbusch in Historical Perspective," p. 532.
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21. Ibid., pp. 72-82.

22. Ibid., pp. 83-101.

23. Ibid., pp. 102-114.

24. Ibid., pp. 115-126.

25. Ibid., pp. 127-142.

26. Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel, p. 227.

27. Harold A. Durfee, "The Theologies of the American Social Gospel: A Study of the Theological and Philosophical Presuppositions of the American Social Gospel," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1951, pp. 193-198.

28. Stackhouse, The Righteousness of the Kingdom, pp. 28-31.

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32. Ibid., pp. 154-165.

33. Ibid., pp. 166-168.

34. Ibid., pp. 168-174.

35. Ibid., pp. 174-178.

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Chapter 3: Conclusion

This chapter brings the critical comparison of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez to a close. This is accomplished through the extension of earlier criticisms and the development of an argument concerning the employment of the Kingdom of God as a normative symbol for theological ethics. At the risk of stating a truism, it is clear that Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez each make a significant contribution to the task of theological ethics. Both struggle to speak a prophetic word to situations of oppression and exploitation. Each relies heavily on the Kingdom of God for the inspiration of his thought.

A point of contrast between Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez that is important to note at the beginning of this conclusion is their place within the larger perspective of Christian theology. Rauschenbusch was a liberal Protestant who reacted strongly against otherworldly interpretations of Christian faith. "The Fatherhood of God," "brotherhood of man," law of love, and hope for the evolutionary growth of the Kingdom in history are prominent themes in his thought. Gutierrez, on the other hand, is a post-Vatican II Roman Catholic theologian who advocates a theology of praxis grounded in solidarity with the oppressed of Latin America. Rejecting traditional scholastic dualism, he is concerned with the Kingdom's direct relevance for situations of suffering and oppression. The distinction between Church and world is much more fluid for Gutierrez than that of

traditional Catholicism. This is precisely what makes Gutierrez so radical within his tradition: the rejection of scholasticism combined with a non-dualistic, immanent Kingdom of God.

It is also necessary to emphasize the cultural and political differences between Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez. Rauschenbusch was a firm supporter of a mildly socialist, Western democratic political order. He was very much a Victorian American with his optimism about Christianizing the social order through progressive legislation and moral reform. He had confidence that the social injustice of his day would be eliminated by the cooperation of persons of good will. Gutierrez finds himself in a situation of much greater injustice and inequality than did Rauschenbusch. Standing outside of the Western democratic tradition, Gutierrez relies heavily on Marxist social analysis in his effort to provide a theological vision to sustain redemptive social action. Rather than expecting the cooperation of the bourgeoisie, he identifies with the poorest of the poor in an attempt to liberate the downtrodden from their oppressors. Gutierrez rejects a model of easy evolutionary progress in favor of a dialectic view that recognizes the inevitability of class struggle.

A point of similarity is their treatment of anthropology. Both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez understand humanity in essentially social terms. Persons are products of the cultural orders in which they were socialized.

Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez refrain from making a more abstract analysis of human nature in an effort to avoid ahistorical interpretations of humanity that ignore social conditions of injustice. Similarly, their understandings of human sinfulness are characterized by an emphasis on manifestations of sin within society. Oppression, exploitation, institutionalized cruelty: these are the evidence of humanity's rebellion against God which are of most interest to Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez. Even as humanity and sin are understood socially and politically, they see the Kingdom of God as a historical, social reality. Though not to be consummated within the normal course of history, the Kingdom, in their view, calls for a righteous social order in which God's will for freedom and justice will prevail. They see the Kingdom as being directly relevant to and involved in human struggles for Christianization or liberation.

Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez undergird their theological positions with philosophical presuppositions that deny traditional physical/spiritual, immanent/transcendent dualisms. Rauschenbusch, though by no means a sophisticated philosopher, understood the Kingdom to be progressing in history in a fashion that called for the redemption of individuals, institutions, and societies. He insisted that salvation, though never consummated by human striving, was in a real sense experienced by persons in the betterment of their political, economic realities. Gutierrez, who has

learned much from Marxist social analysis and religious critique, argues that reserving the Kingdom for an entirely eschatological consummation results in a belittling of history's theological importance. Real human suffering is made light of and excused by an interpretation of eschatology that reserves the Kingdom's relevance for an ahistorical, otherworldly realm. Gutierrez rejects traditional scholastic distinctions in favor of an emphasis on the Kingdom's unfolding within history.

But both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez compromise the eschatological nature of the Kingdom by identifying it too closely with a human historical project. It is distinguished from the human struggle for justice only by degree. Rauschenbusch combines his Victorian cultural convictions with a mildly socialist interpretation of Western democracy to formulate a doctrine of the Kingdom that is informed more by his cultural, political ideology than by sound biblical exegesis and careful theological systematization. Similarly, Gutierrez fails to demonstrate how his reliance on Marxist philosophical presuppositions about history is consistent with a truly eschatological view of the Kingdom. Their doctrines of sin, anthropology, and redemption converge to form understandings of the Kingdom that do not sustain its eschatological otherness. They verge on affirming that social reform will eradicate sin and push humanity to a time of blissful fulfillment, even an eschatological Reign. To that extent, they share an undue

optimism about history and a less than adequate view of sin.

In extending the method of critical comparison, it is important to consider the work of T. Howland Sanks, a professor in the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, who provides a thoughtful, though not fully developed, comparison of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez at several points. Sanks observes that both thinkers reject an excessive theological individualism and an exclusively otherworldly view of salvation. Each sees himself in the prophetic tradition and believes that the Kingdom "is continuous with the pursuit of social justice and can only be brought about by striving for righteousness in the world." Nevertheless, he sees major differences between Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez. An obvious initial point of contrast is their social context. Sanks rightly asserts that the oppression of contemporary Latin America is substantially more intense and entrenched than was that of the North American working classes in the early years of this century. Liberationists understand their continent's common people to be victimized by both international neo-colonialism and a small ruling elite in their own societies. Though Rauschenbusch viewed the North American social setting in terms of class struggle, such struggle was never so conspicuous as that described by Gutierrez.

In addition, Sanks points out that the Roman Catholic Church occupies a role of social and political importance in Latin America that is unparalleled in North American

experience. Hence, the relationship between church and society with which Gutierrez must deal is quite different from that which Rauschenbusch encountered. As well, Sanks argues that liberation theology stresses the need for revolution, not merely for the gradual evolution of a just society, as was expected by the social gospelers. "There is more emphasis on discontinuity in liberation theology than in the theology of the Social Gospel." Rauschenbusch trusted in the good sense of the people and the ability of democratic institutions to produce meaningful social reform. Gutierrez does not share this Western democratic tradition and, given the political realities of Latin America, has little faith in such a solution.

A further point of contrast, Sanks reasons, is the lack of desire to "Christianize" society among liberation theologians. Instead of Rauschenbusch's vision of a social order inspired and guided by the law of love, Gutierrez is more concerned with achieving minimal standards of justice for the sake of the oppressed. At least at this level, Gutierrez seems less optimistic about human nature than Rauschenbusch. He would argue that "Christianizing" the social order was a bourgeois ideological justification for a patient, peaceful response--which would not actually achieve their liberation--on the part of the exploited. Sanks comments, finally, that liberation theology is more concerned with "a theological vision than with social ethics, whereas the social gospel was more interested in

providing theological underpinnings for ethical action in the social areas." This is clearly the case for Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez. Rauschenbusch was more interested in analyzing and providing insights for specific social problems than he was in explicating a solid theological basis that was informed by the social situation. Indeed, many find his most theological work, A Theology for the Social Gospel, to be the least satisfying of his writings. Gutierrez, on the other hand, provides a methodical and careful discussion of the theological task. His approach to theology is strongly informed by his commitment to liberation. Gutierrez appears to be more concerned with developing a new approach to theology than with reflecting ethically upon specific social problems. (1)

But, despite these differences of focus, it is clear that both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez stand in a critical, prophetic relationship to their respective ecclesiastical bodies. Each criticizes a dominant type of spirituality that is solely concerned with saving souls for the hereafter. Each points out that such an otherworldly orientation serves to support the status quo and to downplay the significance of human suffering and social injustice. It provides a religious ideology for current oppressive systems. Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez are both accused by some of illegitimately combining temporal concerns with the spiritual. It is interesting that each of the two, in response, argues for an interpretation of the Bible and of

the Christian theological tradition that emphasizes the social or corporate nature of humanity. Each insists that it is impossible to deal adequately with an individual soul or person outside of the political, social, and economic context in which that individual exists.

A related point of similarity is that both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez seek to develop a theology that has its roots in Christian solidarity with the victims of social injustice. They are concerned with evaluating the social order from the perspective of the least advantaged persons in society. Each begins the theological task with redemptive involvement in society that is focused on the high goal of the Kingdom. Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez both rely on the biblical witness and the insights of the social sciences to interpret their respective situations. Each is influenced to some extent by socialism in his analysis of the problem and his proposed solutions. It is likely that their reliance on socialist categories makes them aware of capitalist ideology and the need for power to achieve justice in society. Their awareness of the need for power reflects their rejection of what Tillich called "the bourgeois myth of harmony." (2) Instead of relying on rational analysis of reasonable persons to produce an economic order in which all persons would prosper, they recognize the reality of class struggle and the impossibility of a perfect harmony in the capitalist system. Rauschenbusch, with his great emphasis on the evolution of

the Kingdom and human moral progress, clearly did not stress the need for power to as great an extent as has Gutierrez. Nevertheless, Rauschenbusch's support of unions and his references to the need for struggle against the Kingdom of Evil provide ample evidence of his realization of the necessity of power in the fight for a just society.

It is also important to note that Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez reject an ahistorical, rationalistic approach to theology. They understand the task of the theologian to be rooted in his or her committed involvement in service to the Kingdom. They have learned, directly or indirectly, from Marx that "philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." (3) To that extent, they both explicate theologies of praxis. The only critique of them is at this point is that they, as Hunsinger has said of Gutierrez, should ground their understanding of praxis more fully within a theology of grace. Notions of praxis should be placed within a theological perspective that emphasizes God's sovereignty, freedom, and revelation, so as not to produce simply a theology of human achievement. Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez, in light of their questionable anthropologies and views of history, require such a larger theological perspective to preclude their social agendas from becoming the determining factor in their theologies. (4) To stress the point, an emphasis on the importance of praxis in theology is not tantamount to metaphysical materialism. Praxis, or

redemptive involvement in society, is important in that it makes lucid the performative, transforming dimension of truth in Christianity. The Marxist critique should remind theologians that their reflection ought to grow out of and give rise to redemptive involvement in history that is shaped by a commitment to the Kingdom of God.

Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez employ various political ideologies to enable them to address the needs of their respective situations. As noted earlier, Rauschenbusch adopts a Western democratic, mildly socialist political theory. Gutierrez sides with Marxist social and economic analysis. It is necessary for theologians to use such ideological systems as rational paradigms for making sense of historical developments in specific situations. The only critique of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez on this point is that they do not employ ideological systems in a sufficiently critical fashion. For example, Gutierrez is so concerned with his particular school of social analysis that anthropology, sin, the Church, and service to the Kingdom are essentially defined in terms of a political agenda. Rauschenbusch verges on compromising the eschatological otherness of the Kingdom by attributing to it the values of Western modernity. David Tracy sheds some light on this problem in his argument that the theological critique of ideology performs the tasks of demonstrating the "deideologizing character of the primary Christian self-understanding in the...dangerous memories of...Jesus;

[and uncovering] the ideological distortions of that memory that...will recur unless checked by a Christian critique of ideologies grounded in...the praxis of authentic Christian faith." (5) Tracy is aware that economic and political theories may be incorporated into theology in a fashion that distorts normative aspects of the theological tradition. This is a problem shared by Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez.

James Cone, in his For My People, argues in a responsible fashion for the critical appropriation of Marxism by theological ethics. Cone recognizes that "the Christian faith does not possess in its nature the means for analyzing the structures of capitalism." Marxist analysis is a tool for understanding and critiquing capitalism, "but it certainly cannot serve as a substitute for the faith of the church." Cone is correct in insisting that one cannot be "a follower of Jesus Christ without a political commitment that expresses one's solidarity with victims. But the struggle for justice in this world is not the ultimate goal of faith." Instead, the historical struggle for justice is "a witness to God's eschatological righteousness as defined by Jesus' cross and resurrection." The eschatological Kingdom is, for Cone, "not an opium but a stimulant." (6) Cone is a good example of a theologian who is careful to appropriate ideology in a sufficiently critical fashion.

The brief discussion of Cone serves by way of contrast to make evident the lack of clarity in Gutierrez' thought

with reference to the relationship between liberation and salvation, between history and the Kingdom of God. As noted earlier, Gutierrez is not sufficiently precise in his explanation of this relationship. He attempts to combine his interpretation of an Old Testament view of history [God directly intervenes in history to bring about liberation; the Kingdom will be consummated in the future "day of the Lord"] with a Marxist dialectical view of history, which rejects theological talk as being dangerous mythicization. Though it is possible, as Cone demonstrates, to theologize in a fashion that incorporates critically Marx's critique of religion, Gutierrez makes no effort to explain how he does so in regard to his view of history in a philosophically consistent fashion. Similarly, although he insists that the Kingdom will not be fulfilled in the normal course of history, he also claims that history is one -- this seems to imply that he is concerned only with this world, this life. Unfortunately, Gutierrez goes no further in explicating this relationship. The comparison with Pannenberg demonstrated that Gutierrez' questionable theological anthropology is largely to blame for his difficulty in explicating clearly the distinction between history and the Kingdom. To stress the point, the argument is not that scholastic distinctions between realms of being are necessary for making sense of eschatology. To the contrary, it is possible to abandon such distinctions by explaining the eschatological reservation of the Kingdom's consummation through a sober

anthropology and view of sin, as does Pannenberg. Gutierrez, however, provides no theoretical construct that is sufficient to sustain the eschatological otherness of the Kingdom of God. In his effort to affirm the significance of both liberation and salvation, he has made use of theological and philosophical categories in a less than clear fashion. (7)

Rauschenbusch, however, avoids such a difficulty. Due to his reliance on evolutionary moral presuppositions and God's immanence in history, with no mention of philosophical categories that deny the validity of the religious, he is able to explicate an understanding of the Kingdom in a fashion that is theoretically consistent. Rauschenbusch must be criticized, nevertheless, for an overly optimistic anthropology, a lack of emphasis on the Kingdom's eschatological nature, and a too close identification of a human historical project with the Kingdom of God. While Rauschenbusch was more "realistic" in this regard than Washington Gladden and many of his other contemporaries, his thoroughgoing faith in human moral progress is unacceptable after two world wars, the holocaust, and the advent of nuclear weapons. Reinhold Niebuhr was correct that persons are inevitably so sinful that perfection in history is at best an impossible possibility. As well, the Christianizing of society, in light of Niebuhr's treatment of love and justice, is a goal that is best left by the wayside of theological ethics. Attempts to structure the social order

according to Christian claims, aside from their offensive nature in a pluralistic society, would likely result in either ineffectual utopianism or the crass baptizing of political notions that are established on questionable theological grounds. (8)

Moreover, it is important to agree with Stanley Hauerwas that Rauschenbusch is guilty of violating the eschatological otherness of the Kingdom by attributing to it the values of the Enlightenment, democracy, and socialism. As Hauerwas argues, Rauschenbusch used "the language of the kingdom to underwrite ethical commitments that were determined prior to the claims about the centrality of the kingdom for Christian ethics." (9) This difficulty of attributing various cultural values to an eschatological reality gives rise to the inevitable pitfall of those who think in terms of building the Kingdom on earth. Instead of building God's Kingdom, they construct their own. Hauerwas argues that Christians should be witnesses to the Kingdom through the purity of their character and the faithfulness of their community, and not primarily through their efforts to make the world a better place. For "making the world a better place" is a goal the pursuit of which will likely cause Christians to violate for the sake of some ideology, says Hauerwas, the very ground of their faith -- the call to be a peaceable people on God's terms. Hauerwas insists that theologians should not allow Christianity to become merely a religious means of support for moral notions that are

established on other grounds. Rather, theological ethicists should be involved in the debate about what a "better" world might entail. He by no means advocates that Christians withdraw from political involvement for the sake of preserving their religious purity. To the contrary, Hauerwas thinks that Christians ought to look first to their theological tradition for insight as to what sort of goals they ought to pursue in society. He is correct in maintaining that Rauschenbusch too quickly adopted the values of his cultural milieu as being those of God's eschatological Reign. (10)

Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez interpret the ethical significance of the Kingdom of God in light of their different historical situations, theological traditions, philosophical presuppositions, political and economic theories, and forms of moral reasoning. They are not intellectual twins, yet there are important points of commonality in their thought, a responsible critique of which demands fuller explication.

In beginning to sort out some of the difficulties raised so far in the discussion of the Kingdom, it should prove helpful to consider Paul Tillich's interpretation of the dialogue between Christianity and Marxism. The hope of the Marxist for a classless society in which estrangement is overcome stands in stark contrast to the Christian affirmation that persons are radically estranged from themselves and their "creative ground." The "symbol of

paradise" in Christianity is transhistorical. All persons, not only the oppressed, are understood as experiencing existential estrangement. Every human is in need of "the power of redemption [which] breaks into the historical process vertically and is not its product." Hence, every social group and political order stands under divine judgement. (11) Instead of the Marxist understanding of history as a process working towards a goal within history, Tillich maintains a Christian view of history as "an even curve that emerges from and returns again to the transhistorical." An important problem, for Tillich, with an expectation of the historical fulfillment of utopia is that it will result either in disillusionment, due to continued imperfection or setbacks, or totalitarian domination designed to defend the new order from criticism. Tillich argues that Christianity's refusal to find utopia within history "creates an attitude in which one always looks upward at the same time that one looks forward." (12)

Tillich asserts that the essential difference between a Christian affirmation of providence and the Marxist belief in dialectical materialism is the contrast between the claim that inner-historical facts absolutely determine history and the belief that there is a combination of inner- and transhistorical factors which shape history. It is this affirmation of transcendence that makes it possible for Christianity to avoid the inevitable despair or tyranny of Marxism. (13) The Kingdom precludes Tillich from looking

for the total overcoming of estrangement in the normal course of history. Jesus Christ is the central manifestation of the Kingdom: he is the "center of history." It is impossible to go beyond this center. The only progress in history, for Tillich, is humanity's growth from immaturity to maturity -- no "progressivistic view" of the Kingdom's eventual fulfillment in history is acceptable. The ambiguities of estranged existence cannot be overcome in history. There is always the threat of non-being. "Where the power for good increases, the power for evil increases also." (14)

Langdon Gilkey makes a similar argument concerning the political and historical issues involved in a doctrine of the Kingdom. He agrees with the fundamental assumption of both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez that it is impossible to speak of the individual apart from the collective and the historical. "Individual and community dance together down the corridor of time" and are both under the lordship of God. For Gilkey, the secular and religious realms are "intertwined and interdependent;" no ultimate dualism is allowed at this point. (15) Gilkey is convinced that it is through "the objective consequences of sin--what Rauschenbusch perceptively called the inherited Kingdom of Evil--" that the theological truths of estrangement and destiny are known. The loss of freedom, of the possibility of "creative self-actualization," is the result of estrangement and the sin of humanity. Hence, there is a

need for liberation from estrangement. Yet, in history there is never a complete liberation from sin; rather, there "is a liberation from the consequences of sin." Political efforts oriented towards freedom and justice "transform the fate or the threat of fate into destiny," the possibility of self-actualization for oppressed persons. Gilkey is careful to point out that the "scourge of sin" may be diminished, but not sin itself.

Gilkey's awareness of the inevitability of sin is clear in his argument that the powerful of history are no more sinful than the weak. To the contrary, it is simply the might of the powerful that causes their sin to be actualized and made manifest in the course of history. "They are...more responsible for the forms of fatedness that any epoch bequeaths to its weak and thus are more responsible for suffering." (16) In addition, Gilkey argues that divine providence entails the possibility of, as well as the hope for, new and more just forms of social existence. This is also a major role of the symbol of the Kingdom of God which refers "to a redeemed social order and ultimately to a redeemed history." Even as the perfection and sanctification of individual existence remains an eschatological hope, so is the hope for communal and social perfection reserved for the eschatological future. In the course of history, human experience is merely "fragmentary fulfillment...we remain dependent on the forgiveness and the promise of God for ultimate fulfillment." Hence, Gilkey

refuses to separate the individual and the social for Christianity. These realms are inextricably connected and without fulfillment in history. "Throughout, the divine purpose is not only to establish an inner piety but also a just, ordered, and creative outer historical world." Christian faith is, for Gilkey, necessarily political and social. (17)

Tillich and Gilkey perceptively emphasize the pervasiveness of human sin and estrangement. This realization, which is lacking at times in both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez, must strongly inform Christian understandings of the Kingdom and history. The fulfillment of the Kingdom stands above and beyond human history. Strive as we may, humanity will never usher in the Reign of God. This point needs to be stressed as a corrective to the evolutionary approach of Rauschenbusch and the dialectical, and somewhat inconsistent, orientation of Gutierrez. But given the transcendence of God and the Kingdom, how should the relationship between the eschatological and the historical be understood? Here it is important to consider once more Karl Barth's understanding of civil government as an analogy to the Kingdom of God. As Barth maintains, God's will for salvation "should be reflected in the earthly material of the external, relative, and provisional actions and modes of action of the political community." (18) The same God who desires the eschatological salvation of humanity also wills a just social order among persons in the course of history.

The transcendent sovereignty of God necessarily implies God's call for righteousness in the world. It is God's transcendence which precludes God from becoming merely the projection of the theologian and establishes the Kingdom's true critical relevance for history.

But there are certain limits to human achievement in an estranged and sinful world. Persons are both finite and sinful. Humans inevitably die, governments fall, even the most virtuous are susceptible to corruption. This is the lot of history. Christianity, however, hopes for an eschatological order, the Kingdom of God, in which such limitations will be overcome. While the Kingdom is established through the incarnation, it is necessary to make a distinction between the way in which the Kingdom is established in history and how it will be fulfilled eschatologically. Despite the fact that the Kingdom has not come in its fullness in history, it functions as an eschatological critical principle that stands above and beyond history, constantly challenging persons and communities to make faithful approximations of the law of love -- justice. (19) Salvation is not a possibility within history; but liberation, as an approximation and symbol of, and analogy to, salvation, certainly is. It is legitimate, consequently, to speak of building the Kingdom on earth only if persons are careful to point out that they are working for a historical order that is an imperfect approximation and symbol of the eschatological Kingdom of God.

But this analogical and symbolic approach in no way belittles the significance of historical liberation or the struggle for justice. To the contrary, it places that struggle within a theological perspective. It calls persons to be as faithful as possible to the ways of the Kingdom given the estranged realities of the world. Christians should most certainly work for justice and liberation in society. But they are to do so in a way that does not compromise their faithfulness to the eschatological Kingdom. Otherwise, they will be guilty of identifying God's Kingdom with their own. It is important, as well, to criticize views of the Kingdom, such as those of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez, which rely on a belief in human moral progress due to overly optimistic anthropologies and views of history. Humanity will never evolve beyond its sinfulness and finitude into the Kingdom of God. There is a gap between humanity and God which cannot be traversed this side of the eschatological consummation. The analogical approach, nevertheless, makes it possible to view the struggle for justice in a way that does not make light of human history. The Kingdom is anticipated and in a certain sense approximated, though its eschatological otherness is preserved. Christians open themselves, in this approach, to the most stringent call and criticism possible within the estranged situations of history. It is precisely the eschatological and ultimate nature of this call that compels persons to act in the normal course of history. The

analogical approach is a major aspect of the response to the questions that were raised, but not adequately answered, by Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez.

A particularly troublesome aspect of the thought of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez is their allowance for the use of violence and deadly force in the struggle for the Kingdom. While neither goes so far as to advocate openly the use of violence for the achievement of justice or liberation, they do not specifically reject such violence as being an inappropriate means for response to the call of the Kingdom. Despite his suspicions about the actual reasons for most armed conflict, Rauschenbusch remarked, "I do not hold that the use of force against oppression can always be condemned as wrong." (20) Similarly, Gutierrez does no more than to point out that it is unacceptable to allow the existing order to sustain itself through violent means while denying the use of violence to the oppressed who are struggling to change the social and political order. (21) Neither thinker wrestles seriously with the question of whether the use of violence is compatible with a Christian commitment to the Kingdom of God.

The argument for nonviolence presented in the following pages is made out of agreement with Tracy's claim that "any pluralism faithful to the original witnesses and to the need for diverse expression [in theology] is in principle an enrichment of Christian consciousness." (22) The task of theological ethics is reflection on moral issues in light of

the Christian theological tradition. But there are clearly many different points of emphasis and schools of thought within that tradition with which theologians may side. No particular interpretation of the tradition may claim absolute normativeness. To the contrary, relative adequacy to particular situations, concerns, and traditions is the most for which theologians may hope in their systematization. The task of the theologian is to interpret biblical texts and theological formulations in a manner that is open to the scrutiny and correction of the larger theological community. Theologians must always be open to revision and transformation through dialogue with their colleagues and those outside of the theological circle. Hence, the argument for nonviolence is offered as a doctrine crucial to the theological vision of Anabaptism and a needed corrective to other traditions of interpretation that too easily allow for the taking of human life in service of the Kingdom.

This argument for nonviolence is not one which all theologians would have to affirm in order for it to be deemed reasonable. Rather, it is a challenging position of long standing in Christianity with which all theologians must reckon. This thesis understands nonviolence to be a doctrine of vital importance for the Church, but it recognizes the validity of Tracy's argument that "each [point of theological] emphasis...needs the other as a self-corrective moment in its own particular journey of

intensification...Each needs a real, internal, self-exposing relationship of its thinking to...symbols deemphasized by its own concentration." (23)

It is also important to stress that nonviolence is an issue that fits coherently within the larger context of the critical comparison of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez. Both figures call for societal reform in light of the theological import of the Kingdom. In so doing, they concern themselves with an issue that requires discussion of the means appropriate for the Christian's political involvement. From Jesus, through the Crusades, to Martin Luther, Menno Simons, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Luther King, Jr., the question of how the Christian should act in situations that seem to call for violence has been widely and energetically discussed. When Rauschenbusch is seen in historical context with the rise of Christian Realism, it is obvious that his position on violence is worth investigating. The question is even more appropriate for Gutierrez, in light of the fact that liberation theology has its roots in the violent examples of Che Guevara and Camilo Torres, while some liberationists, such as Jose Miguez Bonino, insist that "nonviolent action is not only most appropriate to the Christian conscience but also to the revolutionary purpose." (24) In considering Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' positions on violence, this thesis focusses on a problem of long standing in the Christian theological tradition that is central to the historical contexts of the

social gospel and liberation theology. Any serious comparison of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez must pay attention to this question.

In beginning a critique of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez on this point, it is necessary to consider Stanley Hauerwas' argument that a commitment to nonviolence is crucial for the Church's service to the Kingdom. He asserts that Christian ethics calls persons to live in a way that is faithful to the Kingdom, to be "the foretaste" of the Kingdom, as that way is revealed in the history of Israel and the life of Jesus. Hence, the Church is to be a "servant community" that is striving to be true to its peculiar calling. Hauerwas calls the Church to live by its own agenda of patience, love, and nonviolence as it faces the world's injustices and social perversions. "The church must learn...that its task is not to make the world the kingdom, but to be faithful to the kingdom by showing the world what it means to be a community of peace." Such a witness is in keeping with the type of justice that God demands, "for God does not rule creation through coercion, but through a cross." Christians are to live as "an eschatological people" who stake their very lives on the claim that God has redeemed them through the life and work of Jesus. It is their trust in the ultimate sovereignty and victory of God that allows them to witness without fear, and yet nonviolently, to the peaceable Kingdom. (25)

Hauerwas maintains that it is not the task of the

Church "to make history come out right." Such a goal for the ultimate manipulation of history would reflect the sort of pride that is most unbecoming to the people of God. Instead, Christians are to approach ethical issues as persons who recognize their own impotence in the face of many of life's dilemmas. They are to be a people who are faithful to the high calling of the Kingdom, even though "they must often endure injustice that might appear to be quickly eliminated through violence." While such a faithful witness may very well appear both ineffective and foolish to those outside of the community of faith, it is still the calling of the Church, says Hauerwas, to be a peculiar and committed people who risk everything on the truth of God's Kingdom and affirm the possibility of "miracles, of surprises, of the unexpected." (26)

Hauerwas' argument for Christian pacifism is insightful particularly within the context of a discussion of the Kingdom. This is the case in that theological concepts necessarily inform and impact the sort of ethical discernment that is pursued in this thesis. It is unquestionably legitimate to argue that the essential "agenda" of the Kingdom should be determined by explicitly theological, and often biblical, notions. Such a theological emphasis on nonviolence is a necessary companion to the earlier emphasis on the analogical role of the Kingdom for ethical reflection, because an analogical, symbolic approach can be manipulated all too easily to

include virtually any sort of moral reasoning. A fundamental commitment to nonviolence, however, provides a much needed point of reference and orientation to such an ethics of the Kingdom. It goes a long way toward precluding this type of ethic from becoming one of the kingdom of the world.

This is so, initially, because of the ultimate eschatological commitment which is involved in an ethic of nonviolence. The willingness to lay down one's life for the sake of faithfulness to the Kingdom is the most perfect statement of trust in an order that is not of human design. When persons understand that their Christian commitment may very well lead to their untimely and, by the larger society's standards, unnecessary deaths, they will be strongly deterred from identifying any historical project with the fullness of God's Reign. When faithful persons refuse to take human life for the sake of their own defense, they dramatically locate the meaning of their existence within the eschatological realms of the Kingdom. An orientation of nonviolence provides a much needed corrective to Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez' insufficiently eschatological views of the Kingdom. By placing matters within a larger theological perspective, it calls into question the reasoning of those who would use violence for the sake of Christianization or liberation.

This approach also allows the Church, in situations of injustice or oppression, to function as a credible, free

witness to the Kingdom that is unhindered by the fetters of political ideology. When the Church identifies itself so closely with particular political struggles that it even advocates violence and the use of deadly force, it will likely find itself affiliated so closely with a certain political order that it will be rendered ineffective as a prophetic voice of social criticism. A responsible appreciation of the pervasiveness of human sinfulness should preclude Christians from ever placing themselves in a situation in which their freedom to speak and act prophetically and critically would be curtailed for the sake of their own vested interest in a social order. But such a position may very well result in a significant loss of political liberty for the Church at particular times and in certain places. Perhaps, this thesis responds, the suffering faithfulness of the Church in such a situation will remind Christians that friendly relations with civil government are not the highest value; rather, faithfulness to the Kingdom must be. As well, the spectacle of the Church's suffering may very well have the happy result of vividly exposing the ideological nature of many governmental claims about political freedom. This approach is definitely needed as a corrective to the Constantinian leanings of a Christianized social order or even a society that is liberated through Christian praxis.

Yet perhaps the strongest case to be made against a Kingdom ethic of nonviolence is the claim that Christian

ethics must be informed by modern understandings of human rights, justice, and political theory. Is not sectarian pacifism merely a backwards, biblicistic way of moral reasoning? Does not such an approach rest on a primitive and unenlightened theological methodology? Despite the persuasiveness of such a charge, it is necessary to insist that Christian nonviolence preserves the stumbling block of the gospel in a way that is lacking in Rauschenbusch, Gutierrez, and most other political theologies. The foundational problem that gives rise to the justification of violence in these theologies is the denial of the revelatory ultimacy of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in favor of a reliance on supposedly universalizable values that are based upon the claims of various political ideologies. Hence, the Kingdom of God is informed at a basic level by theological claims that do not take seriously God's central act of revelation in Jesus -- theology fails to make sufficiently critical appropriation of secular moral claims. When Christian ethics does not insist on the normative nature of Jesus' initiation of and witness to the Kingdom, it becomes guilty of theological perversion. As John Howard Yoder argues, "the recorded experience of practical moral reasoning in genuine human form that bears the name Jesus" should be the ultimate ethical norm for Christian moral discernment. (27) Hauerwas is correct in his claim that Christians should learn to see the world in terms of Jesus' life and death. "The resurrection is not a symbol or myth

through which we can interpret our individual and collective dyings and risings. Rather the resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate sign that our salvation comes only when we cease trying to interpret Jesus' story in light of our history, and instead we interpret ourselves in light of his." (28) Thus, the argument for nonviolence is validated on explicitly theological terms.

It is at this point that the inadequacy of Reinhold Niebuhr's rejection of Christian pacifism is made clear. Niebuhr allowed notions of "realism" to guide Christian ethics to the extent that the moral relevance of the biblical portrayal of Jesus' nonviolent life was belittled. He interpreted the ethical importance of Jesus in terms of what he perceived to be the demands of political situations, rather than allowing the example of Jesus to transform his interpretation of things political. To that extent, he failed to appreciate the centrality of nonviolence in an ethics of the Kingdom. (29)

It is also the case that persons throughout history have been, and continue to be, all too ready to kill and coerce for their various ideologies, national myths, views of justice, and provincial loyalties. Currently, terrorists of both right and left, Afrikaner and Israeli defenders of the status quo, and leaders of the "super powers," are plotting and carrying out missions of death and destruction. Instead of articulating a religious ideology in support of these various violent endeavors, the Church ought to witness

to the truth and relevance of the peaceable Kingdom. Rather than casting its lot with particular factions and seeking the validation of its message from political ideologues, the Church should embody with its presence and proclamation the incredibly challenging criticism of the Kingdom which calls every historical project into question. It is only when the Church is truly faithful to the Kingdom that it is also truly challenging to the larger society. There is perhaps no more credible way for the Church to be "salt and light" than through the peculiar and, if necessary, suffering example of nonviolence. Such a witness can sensitize society to its own moral imperfection, cause it to question its reliance on coercion, and challenge its members to take seriously the radical social critique of the gospel.

Against both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez, this thesis argues that nonviolence is not merely an ideology for sustaining present systems of injustice or oppression. (30) Rather than simply taking away the means of liberation, nonviolence places the Church in a position from which it can provide the always needed message of the Kingdom. This sort of nonviolence is in no way quietistic or irrelevant to the cause of social justice. As Martin Luther King, Jr. maintained, "True pacifism is not unrealistic submission to evil power....It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love." (31) Christians, of course, should be heartily involved in the struggle for justice. But they must do so on terms that are strongly informed and

shaped by their faithfulness to the gospel. They are called to stand in a critical relationship to every sort of political ideology, whether Marxism or Western democracy. Christians are to bring what they uniquely can to the debate about societal justice. Otherwise, they compromise the moral integrity of their faith and become, for all practical purposes, irrelevant to the public discussion by simply providing religious trappings for various ideological positions that stand on their own grounds. It is precisely this lack of a sufficiently critical stance towards Marxist historical and ideological presuppositions that makes Gutierrez' treatment of the Kingdom suspect. (32)

But this critique should by no means obscure liberation theology's "lesson" to North Americans: Christian theology must have its source in following the way of Jesus in identification with and ministry to the suffering and oppressed. The critical employment of various ideologies is, of course, necessary to know anything substantive about particular situations of oppression or violence. But such ideologies must be placed within a theological perspective that calls the use of violence into serious question. The social action of the Church must be held accountable to and informed by a theological vision of the Kingdom's ethical relevance. This is an orientation that calls all culture, all ideology into question for the sake of a clearer understanding of the redemptive social involvement that is always the task of the Church.

Similarly, Rauschenbusch is guilty of an inadequately critical appropriation of liberal thought and culture. This is, of course, a standard and often heard criticism. (33) Donovan E. Smucker provides helpful insight into this situation with his claim that Rauschenbusch "lumps the Puritans together with the Anabaptists as belonging to the same general family of Christians." Though he fancied himself a descendent of sectarian Anabaptists, Rauschenbusch was heavily dependent on the Calvinist theme of demonstrating God's sovereignty through the righteousness of the entire social order. Unlike the Anabaptists, who tended to have a more pessimistic view of history and society, Rauschenbusch was determined to Christianize the entire social order--to bring it under the reign of Christ. (34) His great concern for the larger society was bolstered by the transformationist thought of F.D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Emile de Laveleye, Leonhard Ragaz, and Hermann Kutter -- theologians who each emphasized God's desire for the redemption of society in the here and now. (35)

It is Rauschenbusch's great openness to liberal culture, which has its roots in his orientation toward the larger society, that caused H. Richard Niebuhr to include him in his list of "Christ of culture" theologians. Niebuhr argues that Rauschenbusch, following Ritschl, envisioned Jesus as the great leader of the cultural cause against nature, ignorance, and obscurantism. (36) It is difficult to defend Rauschenbusch against Niebuhr's charge precisely

because of his lack of a sufficiently critical, eschatological understanding of the Kingdom of God. By investing his thought so heavily in liberal cultural and religious presuppositions, it became difficult for Rauschenbusch to speak with the critical distance necessary for a truly probing theological and social critique. This is not to say, of course, that Rauschenbusch was an inept theologian and social critic: he prophetically challenged many of the cultural and theological assumptions of his contemporary Christianity. But, despite his significant reliance upon certain sectarian forms of theological and ethical thought, the main content of his approach came from the liberal idealism of his culture. (37) His great concern for speaking in terms acceptable to all, combined with his Calvinist orientation toward structuring a righteous social order, caused him to lose much of his sectarian leaning. Though Rauschenbusch never lost his evangelical emphases on faithfulness and discipleship, his great openness to, and concern for the redemption of, culture led him to downplay the sectarian stress on the peculiarity and uniqueness of the Church. Rauschenbusch's largely immanent and insufficiently eschatological view of the Kingdom has much of its source in precisely this sort of reasoning.

But this thesis advocates neither a withdrawal ethic nor a merely pietistic, individualistic view of salvation. While Christian faith begins with an individual within a community of believers, that individual commitment is not

complete unless it compels the believer to participate in a redemptive fashion in the affairs of the larger society. Salvation refers not only to eschatological fulfillment but also to the active and redemptive involvement of the faithful community and individual in the struggle for justice. While Christians must insist on undertaking a praxis that is informed by their theological commitments, they may make use of the larger society's language and ideology in a critical fashion for the purpose of more relevant action in particular situations. The purpose of this argument is not to protect Christians from the taint of needed social involvement. It is, rather, to provide some insight into the sort of social involvement in which Christian communities and individuals are called to participate--to place their involvement within a larger theological perspective.

John Howard Yoder's understanding of the Kingdom and the relevance of the Church for social criticism stands in an arrestingly critical relationship to the thought of both Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez. Yoder, an able Mennonite theological ethicist, explicitly rejects any "natural law" argumentation in his effort to affirm that Christian ethics is based solely on the revealed truth of the Kingdom of God, as known in the person of Jesus Christ. He eschews the notion of the creation of an ideal social order in the normal course of history, as the Kingdom lies "beyond both the capacities and intentions of fallen society." He

understands the role of the Church to be that of a nonresistant minority which accepts "the powers that be" and attempts to deal with them in a redemptive fashion. "Such a group cannot speak to every conceivable issue and adds nothing significant when what it has to say is no different from what others say." The Church's social agenda, he asserts, should include care for the dispossessed, concern for the enemy, and nonviolence.

Yoder maintains that the first task of the Church is to be faithful to the calling of the Kingdom. This means that it will always be a sectarian, minority community, though he denies that this sort of body is the only true church. Faithful persons, he asserts, should address the rest of society in terms of "middle axioms," terms [freedom, equality, justice, etc...] which the Christian uses "to clothe his social critique without ascribing to those secular concepts any metaphysical value outside of Christ." By rejecting abstract appeals to justice or love as ultimate norms, Yoder insists that God's revelation in Jesus Christ must be the final norm for theological ethics. Hence, middle axioms provide a way of communicating the meaning of Christian ethical thought to those who are not part of the Christian community. (38)

Yoder's denial of the validity of philosophical claims about the nature of justice, or any other such ethical norms, is based on both his suspicion about entities claiming "revelatory authority apart from...Jesus Christ"

and his argument that "the meanings of nature [as regards natural law claims about morality] have been as varied as the histories of men who have tried to define what would be natural." Consequently, Yoder constructs his ethics of the Kingdom in as biblical a fashion as possible. He realizes that such a way of approaching ethics necessarily limits the Church's social critique to basic issues regarding the state, economics, nonviolence, and a few others. But Yoder is willing to accept such a limitation, due to his conviction that these issues comprise the basic social agenda of the Kingdom. As well, his middle axioms provide a way of speaking a redemptive word concerning other pertinent, though non-biblical, matters. (39)

Yoder's approach to ethics is insightful, particularly in that he carefully articulates a position that is faithful to the radical social critique of the Kingdom. By limiting his field of interest, Yoder directs ethical concern to the points where it is inevitably needed the most, such as violence and poverty. Through his acceptance of a sectarian ecclesiology, he provides for the establishment of a societal institution that is vitally concerned with explicating and witnessing to the social demands of the Kingdom. Yoder's thought, though by no means overly stressing God's immanence, makes a probing social critique that is centered on Christian faithfulness. His emphasis on nonviolence stands as a good example of the incorporation of the truly eschatological stumbling block of pacifism into an

ethical system. Yoder's understanding of the Kingdom is a responsible and much needed corrective to that of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez.

The critical comparison undertaken in this thesis has brought to light several crucial issues for theological ethics: foundational claims regarding theology and ethics, political ideology, the role of the Church in the struggle for social justice, the importance of a commitment to nonviolence, the relationship between history and eschatology, and the meaning of the Kingdom of God as a normative symbol for theological ethics. As well, the comparison of Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez has placed two political theologians from very different cultural settings into creative dialogue. Through the description, comparison, and critique, it has become clear that Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez were right in employing the Kingdom as the normative symbol for theological ethics. The argument against them, however, is that they have interpreted the Kingdom's significance in a manner that is insufficiently eschatological. Hence, this thesis concludes with the hope that its critical and constructive statements might be of assistance to interpreters of the Christian theological tradition as they struggle to think and act in a fashion that is characterized by a clear understanding of the Kingdom's significance for theological ethics.

Notes

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16. Ibid., pp. 118-123.
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27. John Howard Yoder, The Priestly Kingdom (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 11, 37-40.
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32. see earlier references to McCann, Strain, and Kim.
33. see Carlyle Marney's criticism of Rauschenbusch, as cited above.
34. Donovan E. Smucker, "The Origins of Walter Rauschenbusch's Social Ethics," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1957, pp. 80-130.

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