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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

HAITI'S TROUBLES:
PERSPECTIVES FROM THE THEOLOGY OF WORK
AND FROM LIBERATION THEOLOGY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN THEOLOGY

BY

LYS S. FLORIVAL
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines “signs of the times” in contemporary Haiti, concentrating on the harsh realities of work and workers in the context of entrenched poverty and ecological devastation. It seeks to formulate a Christian theological ethical framework that will empower movements of both the Church and Haitian society to engage the problems of the degradation of work and exploitation of workers. This investigation adopts the critical method of correlation using insights from certain modern theologies of work (Chenu, John Paul II, and Miroslav Volf) and from liberation theology (Gutiérrez, Godefroy Midy, and J-B Aristide) to analyze key features of the realities of work and poverty in Haiti. This study shows that (i) a detailed and realistic analysis of the key features of work and poverty in Haiti suggests that the theological reflection on work and liberation theology must be made more adequate to the real challenges of poor peoples in the twenty-first century; and (ii) the theology of work and liberation theology need to be informed by both ecological understanding and economic development strategies. This dissertation concludes by arguing that the case of Haiti highlights both how theological understanding of human liberation requires ecologically-sensitive sustainable development and also how Catholic and Protestant traditions of reflection about human work need to be broadened to understand work and labor in an explicitly ecological frame.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a theological ethical treatise on work in contemporary Haiti. It analyzes the conditions of work in that Caribbean state, evaluates the impact of those conditions on its people from the standpoint of liberation theology and theological reflection on work, and argues for policies aimed at the restoration of dignity for work and workers in that country, and for a rethinking of a Christian theology of work. Likewise I will examine how the case of Haiti suggests that broad streams of traditional theological reflection on work need to be revised by a close engagement with Liberation theology and ethics for this provides important tools for grappling with the stark challenges human labor and work face in the harsh conditions of Haiti and other poor countries across the developing world. Similarly an engagement with the harsh realities of life and work in a country like Haiti highlights, I believe, a need to have Liberation Theological reflection explicitly engage a broadening literature that has emerged in the last three decades about concrete policies and practical strategies that are proving successful in promoting just and sustainable economic development in other countries trying to emerge from poverty and oppression.

Specifically I will argue that “the capability approach” developed by Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum and others, including land reform strategies, and micro-investing models used prominently in Bangladesh and elsewhere in agricultural and rural development schemes need to be appropriated into liberation theological discussions and

reflection. Because Liberation Theology in its early decades in Latin America was shaped closely by Marxist understandings of dependency theory the indictment of social injustice and oppression was robust while the positive policy recommendations about how to build toward a just society too often remained underdeveloped. My aim is to show that a case like Haiti cries out not just for indictment against injustice but also for hope, which can be sustained by taking seriously the need to suggest and reflect on the concrete policy steps that can help promote jobs, integral development, and a path out of injustice and poverty.

Similarly a close examination of the case of Haiti highlights front and center how development and work engage not just the human sphere of agency but also engage necessarily the ecosystems and environmental resources that sustain a people. Human communities' dependency on the wellbeing of ecosystems is felt most directly by a people living on a peninsula that is known throughout the world as a tragic victim of vast deforestation with the resulting loss of topsoil and the damage to agricultural production. The case of Haiti highlights that (a) our theological understanding of human liberation requires ecologically-sensitive sustainable development; and (b) our Catholic and Protestant traditions of reflection about human work need to be broadened to understand work and labor in an explicitly ecological frame.

My project follows the method of correlation in theology developed by Paul Tillich, David Tracy and many others. Tillich argued that the present situation poses questions to which the religious tradition offers answers. But Tracy in his *The Analogical Imagination* has offered a revised "critical" understanding of the method of

correlation that holds both the religious heritage and present situation pose questions too, but also can highlight inadequacies in, the religious tradition. Rather than a one-way flow of question and answer, in Tracy's view we have a more mutually critical and mutually engaging dialogue back and forth between both the present situation and the religious heritage. Indeed my view is informed by Pope John XXIII's call in *Pacem in terris* to examine the "signs of the times" and interpret them in light of the Gospel message. Following Tracy I might add that the Gospel message can be and must be engaged also in light of the distinctive "signs of the times."

My dissertation aims to examine the "signs of the times" in present day Haiti and to concentrate on the harsh realities of poverty and work. In chapter 1 I analyze the conditions of agricultural and manufacturing work in Haiti, with focus on worker exploitation, violence, life-situation, and resistance. In so doing this examination seeks to provide a socio-historical framework for articulating a theology of work from the Haitian perspective. Peasants constitute the bulk of Haiti's population and derive their livelihood mainly from agriculture. When they move to cities, in search of better conditions of life, they most likely can land only factory jobs if lucky.¹

While I will marshal economic, social scientific and historical studies to help highlight important aspects of the current life of the Haitian people, in Chapter II, I also argue that two schools of modern theological reflection provide important lens on the ongoing assaults to the dignity of the Haitian people. Because so much of Haiti's tragedy

¹The Haitian bishops acknowledge the hardship of the peasantry, stating "In our country, it is the peasants who suffer the most, either in the countryside or in the cities; they are the ones who are piled up in the slums" ("Donnons-Nous la Main, 'Il Faut Que Ça Change,'" Message du Symposium National de l'Église d'Haiti du 8 décembre 1986, *Présence de l'Église en Haïti : messages et documents de l'Épiscopat 1980-1988* [Paris: Editions S.O.S., 1988], pp. 251-52).

lies in its history of poverty and oppression by elites, I will employ the insights of three of the classic voices of the modern theological attempts to reflect on human work in order to highlight certain aspects of current Haitian realities. These efforts in the theology of work, by Marie-Dominique Chenu, Pope John Paul II, and Miroslav Volf, I argue, offer critical help in interpreting the current "signs of the times" of Haitian society. However at the same time I hold Haitian realities pose questions and challenges to these theologies of work. All three, I argue, for example, reflect in such general terms of the human condition in work that they overlook the harshness of the assault on human dignity found in the Haitian reality. In particular, I note how John Paul II's vision of work in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* frames the natural world as a "thing" or an "object" to be transformed and used by human "subjects." Given the starkness of the connection between Haiti's ecological problems and her poverty and difficulty in providing adequate agricultural development for her people, it would seem that central aspects of the Pope's understanding of the human activity of work need to be revised in light of the ecological sciences.

In order to buttress the frame of interpretation offered by the theologies of work, I argue, that these perspectives need to be complemented by attention to the concerns of liberation theology. I claim that the conditions of life and work in Haiti, and also in much of the rest of the developing world, are so stark that any adequate theology of work that seeks to engage the situation of Haiti must be centrally informed by liberation theology. Liberation theology with its direct emphasis on the structural violence of the conditions of poverty and oppression highlights important aspects of work and labor that the

theologies of work ignore. In Chapter III, I will concentrate my attention on the liberation theologies of Gustavo Gutiérrez, the father of liberation theology, and two Haitians, Godefroy Midy and Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic priest who became Haiti's President for two brief periods.

Liberation theology, I argue, offers a great contribution toward our understanding of the conditions of poverty and work in Haiti and toward pushing the theological reflection on work to engage the stark class-lines of oppression and colonial and neo-colonial violence. However, I believe, liberation theology itself needs development along two trajectories. Liberation theology historically emphasized dependency theory that stressed how poverty and oppression arise from neo-colonial relationships of trade and economic domination by the United States. Liberation theology in its first generations offered a robust indictment of such neo-colonial oppression, but provided few concrete policy recommendations regarding how peoples might help develop agriculture, jobs, freedom and economic hope. I argue that liberationist thinking needs today to be engaged with the important work in development economics that attends carefully to policies that can help peoples develop by attracting investment, securing job creation, offering health and education opportunities, and broadening land reform. Accordingly I argue that liberation theology needs to creatively engage with development theory, specifically the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winning Indian economist, Martha Nussbaum and others. This school draws on development approaches that have shown real progress in some East Asian countries and offers concrete resources for highlighting tangible and practical policy steps for ending poverty and oppression.

Similarly I argue that the Haitian experience highlights the importance of Liberation Theology engaging with ecological understandings of human life and work. Haiti is noted in the global ecological literature today as one of the world's most extreme cases of ecological degradation, pushed mostly by deforestation, top soil runoff, and raw pollution that damage farming and fishing productivity, and also diminish general human health. In Haiti we see with alarming directness how ecological degradation pushes and sustains the trap of poverty. I argue that where early liberation theology stressed how humanity and the sphere of God's saving activity is situated in the dynamics of history, liberation theology today needs to recover a balanced appreciation about how society and history are situated within and sustained by an order of creation. Similarly this same concern leads me to suggest that any adequate theological reflection about work must today be explicit in incorporating an ecological frame of understanding to enrich our reflection about human work. In the final and fourth Chapter, I contend that the intricate connection of work-poverty-ecological degradation in Haiti means that both liberationist thinking and theology of work must become explicitly engaged with ecological concerns as an integral part of their perspective. Happily some liberation theologians, like Enrique Dussel and Leonardo Boff, have already begun this task of integrating liberationist and ecological concerns. I will draw on their views and show how the Haitian example highlights the key importance of this integration.

Thus my dissertation is an exercise in the critical method of correlation where I employ insights from certain classic modern expressions of the theology of work and various sources and themes from liberationist thinking to enrich my analysis of key

features of the realities of work and poverty in Haiti. Likewise I argue that key elements of Haitian reality highlight the need to enrich the theology of work with attention to liberationist concerns. Without such enrichment the theology of work tends to remain rather metaphysical and generalist in its claims and vision. Indeed, I would argue, the views of Chenu, John Paul II, and Miroslav Volf illustrate a Eurocentric and American focus on the dynamics of work informed by the reality of the developed economies of Europe and the United States, but one that is less appropriate for the starkness of the economic dynamics of poor developing, dependent countries such as Haiti.

Similarly I hold that both liberation theology and the theology of work together must be informed by new insights provided by development theory and by ecological analysis. My aim in this dissertation's correlation is two-fold. I seek to develop a detailed and realistic analysis of the key features of work and poverty in Haiti. I also want to suggest how the case of Haiti highlights how we must make liberation theology and the theological reflection on work more adequate to the real challenges of poor peoples in the twenty-first century. Specifically I argue that liberation theology and the theology of work need to be engaged closely with new developments in both ecological understanding and in development strategies, such as those highlighted by the "capacity approach" discussed earlier.

The bulk of research and writing for this dissertation had been completed when the devastating earthquake hit Haiti on January 12, 2010. At that point this project needed closure and, consequently, its current final version lacks a comprehensive analysis of that

heartbreaking event.² Still this dissertation's findings are pertinent to Haiti's local church in its attempt to foster respect for the dignity of work and workers, and to promote social transformation and ecological renovation in that country.

² For such view see, for instance, Alex Dupuy, "Beyond the Earthquake: A Wake-Up Call for Haiti," *Haiti, Now and Next* – Social Science Research Council, <http://www.ssrc.org/features/pages/haiti-now-and-next/1338/1395/> [accessed March, 20, 2010], the whole issue is of interest; Katie Paul, "Naomi Klein Worries Haitians won't Have a Role Shaping their Future," *Newsweek.com*, January 22, 2010 [accessed march 3, 2010].

CHAPTER I
WORK IN HAITI IN THE CONTEXT OF ENTRENCHED POVERTY
AND ECOLOGICAL DEGRADATION

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the conditions of agricultural and manufacturing work in Haiti, with a focus on worker exploitation, violence, life-situation, and resistance. In so doing this examination seeks to provide a socio-historical framework for articulating a theology of work from the Haitian perspective. Peasants constitute the bulk of Haiti's population and derive their livelihood mainly from agriculture. When they move to cities, in search of better conditions of life, peasants land factory jobs if they are fortunate. Peasants and factory workers are seen here as representative of Haiti's working class. An understanding of the problems surrounding agricultural and factory work in that country requires more than a narrow focus on these types of occupation and on their impact on the working poor. It also needs an examination of Haiti's political history, social system, including prospects and proposals for change.

I will first present a summary of the Catholic Church's view of Haitian reality, then a brief personal account of the situation of life and work in Haiti, followed by scholarly studies and analysis of that reality. In so doing contemporary Haitian social problems will be placed in its complex history.

Testimony of Misery and Environmental Destruction in Haiti

In *Présence de l'Église en Haïti*, the Haitian bishops denounce Haiti's societal and ecological situation as a "social and individual sin that hampers communion" with God and among humans and that "constitutes a series of challenges" to which "we cannot close our eyes:"¹

Mass migration towards the cities and foreign countries, sub-human conditions of life imposed upon migrant sugar-cane laborers... illiteracy, atmosphere of fear and insecurity for both individuals and families. The violation of the laws and fair legal standards promotes a process of exploitation and acceleration of poverty. Undernourished children are without schooling, youth without any formation and hope for their future, peasants without land, potential emigrants. Workers and laborers victimized by intermediaries blackmail... despite the official increase of the minimum wage... Even if this reality irritates and exasperates us, we must recognize that these challenges represent a situation of sin, which shocks our Christian sensibilities, and a shame that offends our conscience of citizens so proud of our past.²

In addition to such a pitiful situation, the Bishops call for urgent attention to the widespread ecological destruction besetting Haiti:

Today, we feel a profound uneasiness in regard to the ecological disaster (of our country)... We are witnessing the accelerated degradation of the environment with its immediate consequences: dried out springs, near collapsed hydro-electrical systems, soil

¹Haitian Catholic Bishops, "Missions et Defis de L'Eglise en Haïti," Pastoral Letter of December 21, 1980 in *Présence de l'Église en Haïti: messages et documents de l'Épiscopat 1980-1988* (Paris: Editions S.O.S., 1988), pp. 21, 22: ("Ce péché, dans sa double dimension individuelle et sociale, entrave à la communion... se traduit dans un ensemble de défis... sur lesquels nous ne pouvons fermer les yeux").

² Haitian Catholic Bishops, *Présence de l'Église en Haïti*, pp. 19, 22: ("Emigration massive vers la ville et vers des pays étrangers, conditions infra-humaines des travailleurs haïtiens embauchés pour la canne à sucre... alphabétisme... Climat de peur et d'insécurité, pour des individus et des familles. La transgression des lois, des normes légales les plus justes, qui favorise un processus d'exploitation et d'accélération de la misère. Les enfants sous-alimentés, sans instruction, les jeunes sans formation et sans perspective d'avenir, les paysans sans terre, émigrants potentiels. Les travailleurs et ouvriers, victimes du chantage des intermédiaires, malgré l'augmentation officielle du salaire minimum... Même si cela nous choque et nous irrite, nous devons reconnaître que ces défis constituent une situation de péché, qui heurte notre sensibilité de chrétien, et une honte qui blesse notre conscience de citoyens si fiers de notre passé.").

erosion, loss of precious agricultural resources-trees, unrestrained development of the charcoal industry, and the threat of desertification.³

These poignant statements speak volumes about the poverty, oppression, and environmental devastation that constrain the life of the majority of Haitians. Although this crisis affects all Haitians one way or another, it is the working class poor—factory workers and peasants—that plainly bear the brunt of such socio-economic and ecological disaster as witnessed through my own Haitian experience and research.

Personal Experience of Poverty and Ecological Degradation in Haiti

I have direct knowledge of the pitiful poverty, exploitation, and ecological disaster the Bishops describe through my pastoral involvement with Haitian factory workers and peasants in Haiti and with migrant Haitian sugar-cane laborers in the Dominican Republic.⁴ My caring and supportive ministry to these workers enabled me to witness their hardships, hear their complaints, and journey with them in solidarity as we searched and prayed for a social transformation strategy. Their misery, deprivation, and marginalization affected me so profoundly that I saw in them the disfigured Christ, whose passion continues in workers in Haiti and worldwide. These manufacturing and

³Ibid, p. 287: (“Aujourd’hui, nous éprouvons un profond malaise face au désastre écologique qui est le nôtre... Nous assistons à la dégradation accélérée de l’environnement avec ses conséquences immédiates: l’épuisement des sources, la quasi-annulation des systèmes hydro-électriques, l’érosion, le développement effréné de l’industrie du charbon de bois et la menace de désertification.”).

⁴This personal account stems from seven experiences that I consider significant. They taught me a great deal about the reality of the working class people, including what they think about their work, their employers’ attitudes towards them, and vice versa. These experiences occurred in North East Haiti with the peasants of Mont Organisé in the summer of 1975, in Pilatte (North) in the summer of 1976, in Limbé (North) in the summer of 1977, at the Institut de Technologie et d’Animation (ITHECA) in Rivière Froide (West) in October-November 1980, in Pont-Sondé (Artibonite) between November 1988 and April 1989, in Fondoie (West) between February-June 1995, with factory workers in Port-au-Prince (West) between October 1991 and October 1992, with migrant Haitian sugar-cane laborers in Mao Valverde and Santiago, Dominican Republic, in the summer of 1978.

agricultural workers amazed me by their social consciousness and understanding of their historical circumstances.

In conversations I have had with these workers, they stated that their long hours and hard work on the farm and assembly line do not guarantee them a decent standard of living, since both the wages they get for their labor and the prices they get for their products are so abysmally low. They cannot support themselves and much less provide sustenance and a guaranteed future for their families. They believe it is ironic that their hard work provides enormous riches for the entrepreneurial class, the Haitian state, landholders, factory owners, and their foreign investors.

Women pointed out adamantly several cases of gender bias and inequality. They lack access to landownership and are paid less than peasant men for the same work. Women working in factories are angry at the verbal abuses, sexual harassment and violence they experience daily at work at the hand of their bosses. Moreover, peasants generally complain about the continuing diminishing output of the land as a result of soil erosion. They emphasized that peasant organizations that seek just prices for their products, land ownership, better tools and seeds are intimidated and harassed by the landholding bourgeoisie and the State's repressive apparatus. Similarly, factory labor unions that demand fair wages, decent working conditions, and the right to negotiate and participate in economic decisions (regarding production, trade, etc.) experience intimidation, harassment, illegal firing by management and the State's repressive apparatus.

It pained me to listen to these peasants and factory workers. I easily noticed their anger and frustration, which I shared. Their lived-experiences had a profound impact upon me that informed my vision and faith, and the concrete path to liberation. Wage theft by Haiti's elites and their foreign allies stems from, and fosters, a system of economic, political, and socio-cultural bondage. The denial of economic justice and land-ownership to these workers constrain them to a deprived and short life-span.

Peasants and factory workers protested vehemently against the Haitian State's and employers' handling of their claims. They demanded social justice, fair taxation, adequate remuneration, just and decent conditions of work, respect for their human dignity and basic labor rights. The complaint of factory workers and peasants may be synonymous with condemning Haiti's socio-economic and political system that ensures and protects opulence for the elites to the detriment of these workers' livelihood and wellbeing. I firmly believe with Haitian peasants and factory workers that their poverty stricken existence is unjust.

The conditions of work in Haiti will be described in terms of working time and wages, workplace violence, harassment, and repression that are pervasive in Haitian manufacturing industries and agriculture.⁵ I will concentrate on these aspects in my dissertation to help give voice to Haitian workers' everyday reality. In so doing, I am establishing a relationship between the life-situation of these workers and social scientific studies on their situation of poverty. As will be developed later, these conditions of work—including their socio-historical and ecological context and specially the struggle of

⁵This description results from my conversation with Haitian factory workers and farmers themselves who, through vivid and colorful language, give an account of their lives and experiences.

peasants and factory workers for decency and justice at the workplace – form the signs of the times in contemporary Haiti. What are the conditions of work of factory workers and peasants in Haiti? Why are conditions of work in Haiti so deplorable? How have government proposals addressed those problems?

Conditions of Manufacturing and Agricultural Work in

Haiti: The Empirical Description

The deplorable situation the Haitian bishops condemn and that I experienced in solidarity with Haitian workers finds echo in an array of literature on the economic conditions of work in Haiti. Those writings indicate that factory employees and peasants are generally overworked and underpaid, verbally and sexually abused and harassed, and violently repressed in a brazen violation of their right and of Haiti's labor laws.

Excessive Working Time

In the 1996 report written for the National Labor Committee Eric Verhoogen, assistant professor of economics at Columbia University, observes that in a typical Haitian factory like Quality garments S.A., which makes goods for Kmart in the United States, employees work between eight to ten hours Monday to Saturday. During peak time of the year, even Sunday becomes a normal working day that employees must attend or be terminated. As such, workers may toil over “50 days straight without a day off, up to 70 hours per week.”⁶ Working conditions are even worse at the Alpha Sewing plant, which makes industrial gloves for Ansell Edmond of Coshocton, Ohio. There Haitian

⁶Eric Verhoogen, “The U.S. in Haiti. How to Get Rich on 11 Cents an Hour,” The National Labor Committee. Putting a Human Face on the Global Economy, <http://www.doublestandards.org/verhoogen1.html> [accessed June 12, 2008].

workers labor almost 78 hours per week: “from 6:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Saturday, and from 6:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Sunday.”⁷ Working time schedules in Haitian manufacturing enterprises often fail to allocate break time for factory employees and are inconsistent with their legal right to have rest from work. Haiti’s Labor Code specifically stipulates:

All staff employed in an industrial or commercial, public or private firm will, after a period of six consecutive days of work during a week, be granted a paid weekly rest comprising at least twenty-four consecutive hours, regardless of the number of hours provided during that period. However, a worker who has provided forty-eight hours of work during a period of less than six days a week will be entitled to paid weekly rest. The rest will be given preferably on Sunday and at the same time to all staff of the institution... Workers should benefit, without reduction of wages, weekly rest, public holidays and days of unemployment allowed by Presidential Order, unless they are employed to perform work of a temporary nature.⁸

The calamity of factory workers in Haiti depicted above closely parallels with the ordeal peasants in that country encounter in agricultural production. They constitute the

⁷Ibid.

⁸Code du Travail Haitien, Décret du 24 février 1984 et Loi du jeudi 5 juin 2003 actualisant le Code du travail du 12 septembre 1961, articles 107-108 : (“ Tout le personnel occupé dans un établissement industriel ou commercial public ou privé doit, après une période de six jours consécutifs de travail au cours d'une semaine, bénéficier d'un repos hebdomadaire payé comprenant au minimum vingt-quatre heures consécutives, quel que soit le nombre d'heures fournies durant cette période. Néanmoins, le travailleur qui aura fourni quarante-huit heures de travail au cours d'une période inférieure à six jours de travail au cours d'une semaine aura droit au repos hebdomadaire payé. Ce repos sera accordé de préférence le dimanche et en même temps à tout le personnel de l'établissement. Les travailleurs doivent bénéficier, sans diminution de salaire, du repos hebdomadaire, des jours fériés chômés et des jours de chômage autorisés par arrêté présidentiel, sauf s'ils sont employés pour effectuer un travail à caractère provisoire”), <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/135/64790/F61HTI01.htm> [accessed January 12, 2007].

majority of Haiti's population and represent about 66 percent of the labor force of 3.6 million people. Of this percentage, about 48.5 are women.⁹

Peasants in that Caribbean country typically perform grueling work in strenuous circumstances. They begin at dawn and end after sunset for a total of 10 to 12 hours daily six days a week.¹⁰ Men tend to work longer and harder than women and, consequently, the wages of the former are more than those of the latter. Maria Correia, a leading specialist in the gender sector of the World Bank's Latin America and Caribbean Region, drawing from a study on the social and economic situation of a little village in the Artibonite Valley, suggests that Haitian men generally work about 268 days annually while women labor 236 days.¹¹ To what extent, if any, are the salaries of Haitian workers commensurate with those exorbitant hours of work?

Derisory Compensation

Data utilized in several published studies on Haiti's assembly sector reveal that factory workers get only a pittance, far below legal minimum wages. Assembly workers

⁹Actually this number stems from the rate (61.4%) of women in the labor force in 1971. See for instance, *Femmes Haïtiennes* (Montréal, Québec: Maison d'Haïti Inc., 1980), p.15. See also Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook 2003," <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> [accessed December 15, 2006]. The Library of Congress Country Studies put such rate around 75 percent, cf. lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:field (DOCID+HT0035) [accessed December 15, 2006].

¹⁰*Femmes Haïtiennes* (Montréal, Québec: Maison d'Haïti Inc., 1980), p.16.

¹¹Maria Correia, "Gender and Poverty in Haiti," Haiti: The Challenges of Poverty Reduction, Vol. II: Technical Papers, August 1998, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1999/06/03/000009265_3981005111940/Rendered/INDEX/multi_page.txt [accessed February 16, 2006]. George Easton Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 25, No. 4 ([October, 1940], p. 513) claims "Haitian peasant women do more work than men." Simpson, however, fails to provide evidence to support this assertion.

take home a modicum of 71 cents daily, after deducting the cost for lunch and transport.¹²

Yet it is not guaranteed that workers earn even this meager wage, for employers adopt various tactics to avert from paying workers the minimal wage.

To begin with, the law allows a lesser minimal earning when the worker is in the first three months of probationary work. Once an employee's probation is completed, that worker must receive the minimum wage, including "advance notice of layoff, severance pay rights and other considerations."¹³ Taking advantage of this loophole, management dismisses employees precisely before they finish the three probationary months of work. Another ploy employers adopt consists in making minimum wage contingent on perfect attendance at work. An employee who skips one work-day due to an emergency will receive less than the minimal pay. Management also eludes paying the minimum wage by resorting to "quotas." It means that workers can get the minimum pay provided they produce a certain number of units, which is almost impossible to achieve.¹⁴ As

Verhoogen explains:

¹²Barbara Briggs and Charles Kernaghan, "The U.S. Economic Agenda: A Sweatshop Model of Development," *Haiti. Dangerous Crossroads*, eds. Deidre McFadyen and Pierre LaRamee with Mark Fried and Fred Rosen (Boston: South End Press, 1995), p.148. See also Monique P. Garrity, "The Assembly Industries in Haiti: Causes and Effects," *Journal of Caribbean Studies* 2 (Spring 1981), pp. 25-37. The 1996 report of The National Labor Committee declares factory workers' salary is a paltry "12 cents per hour, an income way below the minimum wage of 36 gourdes a day (or U.S. \$2.40)," cf. "The U.S. in Haiti. How to Get Rich on 11 Cents an Hour," The National Labor Committee. Putting a Human Face on the Global Economy. The minimum wage was raised in 1995 to 36 gourdes from 15 gourdes by President Aristide despite protest from Haitian entrepreneurs and the USAID. Cf. American Center for International Labor Solidarity/AFL-CIO, *Unequal Equation. Labor Code and Workers Rights in Haiti* <http://www.solidaritycenter.org/files/UnequalEquation> [accessed August 1, 2006].

¹³Lance Compa, *Labor Rights in Haiti* (Washington, D.C.: International Labor Rights Education and Research Fund, 1989), p. 38.

¹⁴*Ibid*, pp. 38-39. See also American Center for International Labor Solidarity, "Unequal Equation. The Labor Code and Worker Rights in Haiti," <http://www.solidaritycenter.org/files/UnequalEquation>

One experienced worker we spoke to, for instance, is supposed to sew seams on 204 pairs of Mickey Mouse pajamas in a day, for which she would be paid 40 gourdes (US \$2.67); in 8 hours, however, she is only able to complete 144 pairs, for which she is paid 28 gourdes (US \$1.87). In Creole, this system is referred to as “sa w fè, se li w wè,” or, roughly translated, “what you do is what you get.”¹⁵

Generally, small percentages (20%) of workers receive the legal minimum wage.¹⁶ This miserable salary decreases even more due to gender inequity. A number of scholars declare that male factory workers commonly earn ten percent more than female workers.¹⁷ “In practice more than half of the approximately 50 assembly plants producing in Haiti for the U.S. market are paying less than the legal minimum wage.”¹⁸ This common knowledge deserves the attention of the public and mainstream media. With such pitiful revenue, factory employees in Haiti can hardly support themselves and provide a guaranteed future for their families.

Even with the new minimum wage of 36 gourdes (US\$ 2.40) decreed by President Aristide, Haitian workers have less buying power now than they

[accessed August 1, 2006]; and Marie-Jose N’Zengou-Tayo, “‘Fanm Se Poto Mitan:’ Haitian Woman, the Pillar of Society,” *Feminist Review*, No. 59 (Summer 1998), pp. 127-28.

¹⁵E. Verhoogen, “The U.S. in Haiti. How to Get Rich on 11 Cents an Hour,” *ibid.*

¹⁶National Coalition of Haitian Refugees, *Haiti, Pays Ecorché* (Pétion-Ville, Haiti: Centre de Recherches Sociales et de Diffusion Populaire, 1990), p. 30. See also Andrew Ross, *No Sweat: Fashion, Free Trade, and the Rights of Garment Workers* (New York: Verso, 1977), pp. 63, 73, 98.

¹⁷Joseph Grunwald, Leslie Delatour, Karl Voltaire, “Offshore Assembly in Haiti,” *Haiti-Today and Tomorrow: An Interdisciplinary Study*. Ed. Foster, Charles Robert (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), p. 238. See also, Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich, *Women in the Global Factory* (New York: Institute for New Communications; Boston: South End Press, 1983), pp. 5, 11; Barbara Briggs and Charles Kernaghan deem low paying assembly work in Haiti as constitutive of the United States’ economic design for that country, cf. “The U.S. Economic Agenda: A Sweatshop Model of Development,” *Haiti: Dangerous Crossroads*. Ed. Deidre MacFadyen (Boston: South End Press, 1995), pp. 145-152. Robert J. Flanagan, *Globalization and Labor Conditions: Working Conditions and Worker Rights in a Global Economy* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). A dissenting opinion is George Easton Simpson, see note 12 above.

¹⁸Campaign for Labor Rights, “Haitian Garment Factory Conditions,” Newsletter, 8 July 1997. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/136.html> [accessed June 9, 2008].

did in 1990, before Aristide's election. A minimum salary provides less than 60% of the bare minimum needs for a family of five. A wage of 15 gourdes (US \$ 1.00) common in factory producing for U.S. corporations provides less than 25% of the minimum needs of a family of five.¹⁹

Patrons refuse to pay the legal minimum wage arguing it would be too costly, or that it would prevent them from competing with other firms in the region. In reality, Haiti's daily minimum wage pales in comparison with the daily minimal salaries of certain countries in the region. Mireille Neptune Anglade asserts, "In the offshore assembly, daily salary was in December 1981 US \$2.64 in Haiti versus \$2.80 in Barbados, \$4.40 in Salvador, \$5.00 in Jamaica, \$6.80 in Dominican Republic, [and] \$13.30 in Mexico."²⁰ The disparity of monthly salary of Haitian workers in general compared with other workers in the area is even more blatant.²¹

Not surprisingly, the hard work of these same workers provides enormous riches for local factory owners and their foreign partners. Is there an unwritten but strictly enforced cardinal rule in Haiti that employees must receive minimum wage (if at all), whereas employers get exorbitant earnings?²²

Consider one example: At a subsidiary of the L.V. Myles Corp. in the SONAPI Industrial Park, workers produce shirts and nightwear, including

¹⁹Ibid. In 1997 it was estimated that a minimum salary of 363 gourdes or US \$ 24.40 weekly would be needed to satisfy the basic needs of one family living in Haiti's capital, how must such appraisal be today with the exponential rise in food price? Cf. "Haitian Garment Factory Conditions."

²⁰Mireille Neptune Anglade, *L'Autre Moitié du Développement : a Propos du Travail des Femmes en Haiti* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti : Editions des Alizes, 1986), p. 186. Hereafter quoted as *L'Autre Moitié du Développement*.

²¹*Haiti, Pays Écorché* Dossier 1 notes that "While the monthly wage in Haiti is no more than US\$ 100, for the same work, the Jamaican or Dominican worker receives \$150 and the worker in Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands gets \$600," (Pétionville, Haiti: CRES DIP, 1990, p. 30).

²²Myrlène Daniel, "Ouvriers: Salaire Minimum—Patrons: Avantages Maximums?" *Haiti Progress*, 10-11, 1991.

Disney pajamas decorated with scenes from the movie “Pocahontas.” The production manager of the plant told us that a line of 20 workers can produce 1,000 pairs of purple Pocahontas pajamas in one 8-hour shift. The pajamas sell for US \$11.97 at Wal-Mart. So for L.V. Myles and Disney, the day’s production is worth \$11,970 ($\$11.97 \times 1,000$). The workers at this plant are paid an average of 50 gourdes (US \$3.33) or less per day. All the workers on one line together earn \$66.60 per day (20×3.33). In other words, the workers are paid just .56% ($66.60/11,970 \times 100$), or roughly one half of one percent of the purchase price of the pajamas. That is the equivalent of 7 cents for every \$11.97 shirt. What happens to the \$11.90?²³

The vast chasm separating the gargantuan profit of factory executives and the pittance of factory workers in Haiti just begs the question. What would it take for assembly employees to bridge the gap with factory owners? Verhoogen’s example provides an answer:

The CEO of the Walt Disney Company, Michael Eisner, earned \$203 million from salary and stock option in 1993. That amounts to roughly \$780,800 per day or \$97,600 per hour—approximately 325,000 times that of the workers in Haiti who are producing pajamas for his company. If a Haitian minimum wage worker worked full-time, six days a week, sewing clothes for Disney, it would take her approximately 1,040 years to earn what Michael Eisner earned in one day in 1993.²⁴

The wage of agricultural workers is as pitiful as that of factory workers. Although both men and women engage in planting, reaping, and transforming agricultural products, men oftentimes perform the more exhausting task.²⁵ In return,

²³E. Verhoogen, “The U.S. in Haiti,” *ibid.* See also, “Haitian Garment Factory Conditions,” *ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.* A dissenting view claims that a division of labor exists in Haitian agricultural work wherein women generally “weed, sow, harvest, and take care of the poultry” and engage in childrearing, elder care, and housework. What counts as “work” needs to be dealt with in a critical fashion. cf. *Femmes Haïtiennes*, *op. cit.* p. 15; see also Maryse Jean-Jacques et al. *Femme: Organisation et Lutte [Women: Organizations and Struggles]* (Port-au-Prince: Centre de Recherche et de Formation Economique et Sociale pour le Développement [CRESFED]), 1988, p. 16; Madeleine Sylvain Bouchereau, *Haiti et ses femmes: une étude d'évolution culturelle* (Port-au-Prince: Les Presses Libres, 1957).

peasant men receive US \$1.00 for one day of work, whereas women get only \$0.30 for five hours of work.²⁶ Those peasants, the most impoverished Haitians, rely on income from daily labor for food and other necessities of life.²⁷ Some of them may be landless peasants, compelled to sell their labor force to landholders, renters, and growers like squatters and little farmers.²⁸ Carolyne Culver, head of news at Ofsted, describes the alarming conditions of work, the disregard of basic rights and deplorable income of plantation workers in the northern province of Haiti:

At the plantation that supplies Remy Cointreau workers labor for long hours picking, peeling and grating bitter oranges for shipment to the company's distillery in France. Workers labor flat-out but earn less than the minimum wage of 36 gourdes (around £1) dictated by Haitian labor laws. They are also required to undertake unpaid overtime. Workers have no sick pay or holiday entitlement, they must provide their own tools, and there is no clean water to drink. Work accidents are legion and health hazards enormous. Conditions on the plantations, including the absence of any toilets or first aid facilities, contravene Haitian labor laws. The absence of washing facilities means that workers have no way of removing the acidic orange spray from their skin. It corrodes fingernails and aggravates cuts from the thorny orange trees.²⁹

²⁶Mireille Neptune Anglade, *L'autre Moitié du Développement*, p. 137. Anglade alleges that the glaring discrepancy in agricultural work between men and women shows that more importance is attached to male's work than female's. (Even when men receive the same wage with women for similar work, agricultural work done by men is valorized while that of the women is minimized, cf. pp.136-37).

²⁷Thomas Viens and Carlos E. Sobrado, "Rural Poverty in Haiti," Haiti: The Challenges of Poverty Reduction, Vol. 2, The World Bank Report No. 17242-HA, August 1998, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1999/06/03/000009265_3981005111938/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf [accessed May 20, 2006].

²⁸Jean-Jacques Honorat, "Haïti: la crise paysanne," *Collectif Paroles*, No. 8 (1980), p. 9. Still, it must be noted that as much as 93 percent of rural households have access to land, though it may be parceled, eroded, rocky, mountainous, and distant from the person's house. See for instance, Anne M. Street, *Haiti 2004. A Nation in Crisis* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2004), p. 11.

²⁹Carolyne Culver, "6198: Conditions in Haiti Leave a Bitter Taste for Workers," <http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti-archive/msg05992.html> [accessed March 4, 2007]. See also Charles Arthur, "Haiti's Thirst for Justice," *ibid*; *Femmes Haïtiennes*, *ibid*, p. 16.

The notion that one's salary is proportional to one's work obviously lacks factual basis for Haitian workers on the assembly line and farms. These workers are overworked and underpaid. Besides exploitation, Haitian workers face other grim issues.

Insidious and Violent Workplace

In addition to working unconscionably long hours for miserable pay, Haitian factory employees also toil in an environment that endangers their health and safety. It is common knowledge that Haitian assembly workers labor on outdated machinery in sultry, dirty, poorly lit, and congested plants, which are undoubtedly noxious.³⁰ Worse women, who constitute the majority of manufacturing workers, endure verbal abuses, sexual harassment and violence everyday on the assembly line from their male supervisors. As M. Catherine Maternoswska describes:

Harassment and poor working conditions were, and continue to be, common on the factory floor... Several women also reported gendered abuses, in the form of rape and sexual coercion. Some women were obligated to engage in sexual relations with foremen and floor managers to get a job or to keep it. Lack of resources and the dire need to remain part of the work force required some women to submit to this sexual abuse inside factories.³¹

³⁰Eric Verhoogen, "The U.S.-Haiti Connection Rich Companies, Poor Workers," *Multinational Monitor*, April 1996, http://www.citinv.it/associazioni/CNMS/archivio/paes/theus_haiti.html [Accessed January 12, 2001]; Natacha David, "Mickey a Port-au-Prince, Monde du Travail Libre," October 1996, http://www.citinv.it/associazioni/CNMS/archivio/lavoro/mickey_a.html [accessed January 12, 2001]; and 2007 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, <http://survey07.ituc-csi.org/getcountry.php?IDcountry=HTI&IDLang> [accessed January 12, 2001].

³¹M. Catherine Maternoswska, *Reproducing Inequities. Poverty and the Politics of Population in Haiti* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), p. 65. See also "Haitian Garment Factory Conditions," from Campaign for Labor Rights Newsletter, 8 July 1997 <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/136.html> [accessed June 9, 2007]. For a detailed view of the situation of women in the workplace in Haiti, see, for instance, Francine Tardif, *La Situation des Femmes en Haiti* (Port-au-Prince: Comité Inter-Agences Femmes et Développement, 1992); Mireille Neptune Anglade, *La Femme Haitienne en Chiffres* (Port-au-Prince: Comité Inter-Agences Femmes et Développement, 1995), and Yverose Moïse et al., *Les Conditions de Travail en Haiti* (Costa Rica: International Labor Organisation, 1998).

Workers regularly fall victims to systematic acts of aggression just for asserting their right to unionize, just wage, and decent treatment. Various cases of reported violence on the request of management have caused consternation to workers and observers alike. In September 2003, for instance, employees at the Willbes Haitian S.A. factory No. 5 were assaulted and fired at by armed individuals for defending another worker who was being hit by the firm's security guard because he had come to claim his severance pay.³² "During the course of the attacks, several workers received gunshot wounds, many were beaten with police batons, and one worker who attempted to photograph what was happening was beaten unconscious and then detained overnight in the Cité Soleil police station," reported the Quixote Center.³³

Worse, in June 4, 2004, servicemen from Dominican Republic violated Haiti's sovereignty by coercing and assailing Haitian workers and blocking union organizing at the Dominican company Grupo M, which makes Levi's jeans for the United States market. Some women allege that shots administered to them supposedly against tetanus were in fact contraceptive injections, which cause them to have miscarriages.³⁴

Violence constitutes also a common feature in agricultural work in Haiti. Such phenomenon takes a variety of forms, including compulsory eviction, forced labor, and

³²The Haiti Support Group, "Protest the Physical Abuse of Haitian Workers in Port-au-Prince Sweatshops!" <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/474.html> [accessed July 3, 2004].

³³Ibid.

³⁴"Notes from Observer Meeting," July 27, 2004 <http://haitisupport.gn.apc.org/Ouanaminthereport.pdf> Accessed 6/12/2005; see also Joe Gill, "Haiti Exploitation," *The Morning Star*, 8 September 2004, <http://www.haitisupport.gr.apc.org/Gil.htm> Accessed 6/12/2005, and Jane Regan, "Workers Fight for Rights in Free Trade Zone," *Inter Press Service News Agency*, <http://www.ipsnews.net/print.asp?idnews=24820> [accessed June 12, 2005].

outright killing. Among the most reprehensible acts of violence must be cited the Jean-Rabel massacre. On July 23, 1987, 139 peasants of Jean-Rabel are killed by “paramilitary groups led by *Tontons Macoutes* and acting upon orders from a local land oligarch.”³⁵

No less ignoble was the carnage that occurred at Piatre, countryside of Saint-Marc in the Artibonite department. On March 12, 1990, 11 peasants of that village were fatally shot by “three dozen army soldiers and armed local civilians,” resulting from a land dispute between peasant and large landowners of that rural locality.³⁶ On January 17, 1991, a land altercation in the town of Gervais, in the Artibonite department, between various peasant families in nearby towns with small landholders dated 1973, also culminated in the death of 12 peasants. Furthermore, 8 peasants were reported missing, 20 injured, and 494 houses were presumably burnt out.³⁷

In the summer of 2003, 53 Haitian peasants of the fertile farm area of Maribahoux, northeast department, were evicted from their own land by order from the governments of Haiti and Dominican Republic in view to building “an industrial Free Trade Zone that will house cheap-labor factories producing Levi’s, Gap, Tommy Hilfiger and Hugo Boss.”³⁸ Given the degradation of work and plight of workers in Haiti, what

³⁵Jean-Philippe Belleau, “Chronological Index: Massacres Perpetrated in 20th Century in Haiti,” <http://www.Massviolence.org/Massacres-perpetrated-in-the-20th-Century-in-Haiti>, [accessed August 6, 2008], cf. ICHR, 1988:81; United Nations, 2000:9. *Tontons Macoutes* here refer to François Duvalier’s private militia force, which he created in 1959 to consolidate his power.

³⁶Ibid; cf. United Nations, 2000:9, NCHR, 2004.

³⁷Ibid; cf. Danroc and Roussi re 195:160-162, ICHR, 1991: 470.

³⁸Jacqui Goddard, “Farmers Forced out as Global Brands Build Haiti Free-Trade Area” (unedited version), *The Sunday Times*, July 6, 2003, http://www.haitisupport.gn.apc.org/zone_franche.htm. [accessed February 13, 2006].

constraints do such conditions of work exert on the kind of life Haitian workers endure? And, how do these conditions of work influence Haiti's physical and social environment?

Context of Work in Haiti: Poverty and Ecological Devastation

Haitian factory employees and peasants perform their work in a social location of abject poverty, ecological devastation, and massive inequalities in socio-economic resources and land ownership. These factors characterize the nature of these occupations and sharply determine the life-situation of workers on the assembly line and farm. In fact, there is a broad consensus that Haiti holds the lowest human development indicators in the West and stands among the world's poorest countries. This despicable distinction is compounded by the fact that the Haitian state has been heedless to the needs and concerns of the bulk of the people who crave possibilities to exercise their constitutional rights and to achieve their individual and collective freedom.

Poverty

The United Nations Human Development Report 2007-2008 describes in bleak statistics the human suffering in Haiti. Its per capita income of US\$ 250 (1996 est.) contrasts adversely to that of several countries in Africa and is considerably inferior to that of most countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region.³⁹ Haiti ranks 146 out of 177 countries for its low human development (0.529) mark, according to this report.⁴⁰

³⁹That year Nicaragua, for instance, had a per capita income of US\$380, Honduras \$600, Bolivia \$800, Dominican Republic \$1,460 and Jamaica \$1,510, cf. The World Bank, *Haiti: The Challenge of Poverty Reduction*, Volume 1: Main Report, "The Living Conditions of the Poor," <http://go.worldbank.org/EU9XWYXEZ0>, [accessed May 6, 2006].

⁴⁰The United Nations Human Development Report 2007-2008, "Country Fact Sheets-Haiti," http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_HTI.html, [accessed July 24, 2008].

Life expectancy in that country is simply 59.5 years in sharp contrast to 63.7 in Bolivia and 69.4 in Honduras, the second and third lowest position in Latin America. The infant mortality rate, 62.33 per 1,000 live births, remains extremely elevated considering the next two highest rankings Bolivia and Dominican Republic are 49.09 and 26.93 per 1,000 live births respectively. Haiti has a fertility rating of 4.79 children per woman, which is higher than Honduras and Bolivia with 4.6 and 4.5 respectively.⁴¹ Similarly, maternal mortality of 6 per 1,000 figures among the world's highest rate. Under nutrition is almost general, while 50 percent of children under five suffer malnutrition.⁴² Employment and economic opportunities are scarce. Less than one third of the labor force of 3.6 million holds a regular job, resulting thus in massive unemployment and underemployment. Less than half, 45%, of the population is educated whereas countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region with the second and third weakest literacy rate, Jamaica 79.9% and Nicaragua 76.7%, are markedly distant from Haiti. Eighty percent of Haitians live below poverty line opposed to 60 percent in Bolivia and 50.7 percent in Honduras, two countries in Latin America with the next superior ratio.⁴³

This situation, which affects the majority of Haitians, reflects the inability of the dominant classes to tackle the country's pressing problems. More than being an expression of socio-economic constraints, Haiti's poverty arises from political apathy, weak and unaccountable governments, inefficient opposition coupled with misguided

⁴¹Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook> [accessed August 9, 2008].

⁴²The World Bank, "Living Conditions of the Poor," <http://go.worldbank.org/6ZXY26ENA0> [accessed August 9, 2008].

⁴³The World Factbook, *ibid.*

policy recommendations of friendly governments and exogenous financial organizations.⁴⁴

Environmental Degradation

Ecological degradation poses also a formidable challenge to Haiti, particularly to peasants and factory workers. Manifested mainly in the form of soil erosion, environmental devastation stems from deforested land and causes sediment build up, drought, the wearing out of soil, low production yield, flooding, and mudslides.⁴⁵

Mainstream observers tend to blame deforestation by Haitian peasants as the culprit of erosion. Several recurring themes highlight that, first, the need to eat compels peasants to cut trees and to farm on hillsides. Second, archaic farming method, deficient irrigation and drainage habits coupled with corruption trump efforts to slow Haiti's erosion calamity.⁴⁶ Third, overpopulation, misery, and lack of education constrain Haitian peasants to cut trees even at Forêt des Pins whereby accelerating that country's

⁴⁴"Declaration of the Jesuits Working in Haiti," http://www.sjweb.info/documents/sjs/docs/Haiti_ENG.pdf [accessed October 19, 2009].

⁴⁵Haiti seems defenseless against natural disasters as demonstrated the hurricanes and tropical storms (Fay, Hanna, Ike, and Gustav) of summer 2008 that devastated communities, killed thousands of people and livestock thereby increasing misery and hunger. See, for instance, March Lacey, "Meager Living of Haitians is Wiped out by Storms," *The New York Times*, September 19, 2008; Jacqueline Charles and Trenton Daniel, "Mud and Misery Rule Storm-Ravaged City," *The Miami Herald*, November 2, 2008 <http://www.MiamiHerald.com> [accessed June 28, 2007].

⁴⁶Carol J. Williams, "Haiti Can't Gain Ground on Erosion," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 November 2003. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/445.htm> [accessed June 28, 2007]. See also Elizabeth Bryant, "Haiti: Environmental Degradation Deepens," *Earth Times News Service*, 8 July 1996 <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/257.html> [accessed June 28, 2007]; and Emmanuel W. Vedrine, "Haiti and the Destruction of Nature," <http://www.harford-hwp.com/archives/43a/254.html> [accessed June 29, 2007].

environmental disaster.⁴⁷ Haiti, therefore, is rapidly becoming a desert at a ratio of “15 to 20 million trees a year” to provide cooking energy to about two thirds of its population.⁴⁸

In effect, deforestation and soil erosion worsen the socio-economic situation of the peasants and seriously threatens the survival of human life, animals, and plants in that country. The United Nations allege that about “36 million tons of Haiti’s topsoil” is lost to erosion annually.⁴⁹ Annual loss of the country’s top soil creates widespread concern that, short of drastic measure to address this issue, Haiti will be deprived of arable land.⁵⁰ Soil erosion occurs due to lack of tree roots. “So when the rains fall, water pours down denuded hills, overflows riverbanks and fills up the plains.”⁵¹ As such, sediment buildup from erosion comes to rest in rivers and canals, provoking flooding. In the sea, such increase destroys coral reefs and seafood along the coasts, and endangers marine life.⁵²

Primitive agricultural methods, population pressures, and fuel wood contribute to deforestation. People obviously need to cook and wood is the dominant fuel to the poor. However, the deeper structural causes of Haiti’s deforestation must be considered in any

⁴⁷“Forêt des Pins,” Associated Press, *New York Times*, 23 March 2003. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/448.html> [accessed 6/28/2007]. See also Frito Dolisca, Joshua M. McDaniel, Lawrence D. Teeter and Curtis M. Jolly, “Land Tenure, Population Pressure, and Deforestation in Haiti: The Case of Forêt des Pins Reserve,” *Journal of Forest Economics*, Vol. 13, Issue 4, 5 (November 2007), pp. 277-289; Ernest H. Preeg, *The Haitian Dilemma. A Case Study in Demographic, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996), pp.34-37.

⁴⁸“A Desert in the Caribbean: As Axes Fall, So Do Numbers of Haiti’s Trees,” Reuters, December 15, 1998, <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/253.html> [accessed June 29, 2007].

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰Edouard A. Tardieu, “Nous n’aurons plus de terre,” *Le Nouvelliste*, 16 février 1987, p. 2.

⁵¹Letta Tyler, “No Place Left to Grow. Deforestation and Erosion Could Turn Haiti into a Desert,” <http://www. Newsday.com>. [accessed March, 31, 2007].

⁵²Letta Tyler, “No Place Left to Grow,” *ibid*.

attempt at understanding this phenomenon. Haiti's deforestation results mainly from landlessness, disparities in land ownership, economic dependence, inflation, foreign debt, unemployment and underemployment, political instability and despotism. Pertinent among these causes is the wood trade, which began with the Spanish invasion in 1492, flourished during the French colonization, and continued throughout Haiti's post-independence.⁵³

Working conditions in Haiti, as noted earlier, need be seen within the context of poverty and environmental degradation, which stems from that country's socio-political history – the topic of the next subsection.

Brief Political Survey

The signs of the times observed in Haiti's conditions of work are also evident in workers' struggle for justice. Indeed Haiti's history can be seen as a perennial search for redress against subjugation. Christopher Columbus' landing on Haiti in December 1492 signaled wretched oppression for the Haitian Arawaks who fiercely resisted the Europeans. The Spaniards colonized the island of Haiti renaming it Hispaniola (little Spain), and pitilessly used their military might to destroy the Arawaks' communitarian society. They dispossessed the Natives and forced them into labor to supply scarce goods like gold, silver, cotton and tobacco, which benefited more the Europeans from exporting,

⁵³Alex Dupuy counters dominant argument suggesting that Haiti's erosion stems from tree cutting for fuelwood by the peasantry. In his "Peasant Poverty in Haiti," Dupuy claims that "soil erosion results from the commercialization of wood...The problem, therefore, is not the use of trees by peasants as a source of fuel but the export of wood by the wealthy combined with the agrarian structure that prevents replanting of fast growing trees that could be used for charcoal [while] rejuvenating the soil and providing a source of cash flow for peasants" (*Latin American Research Review* 24, No.3 [1989], p. 264). For the connection between deforestation and social structure in Haiti see for instance, Paul Farmer, "Haiti's Unnatural Disaster," *Living on Earth*, September 12, 2008, <http://www.loe.org> [accessed November 30, 2009]; Ashley Smith, "Natural and Unnatural Disasters," *Socialistworker.org* [accessed November 30, 2009].

distributing, exchanging and consuming them than the Aborigines from producing them.⁵⁴ One million Indigenous would have their sovereignty usurped, dignity violated, and humanity denied on the twin altar of greed and gold. The aboriginal Haitians, however, reacted courageously against Spanish invasion and enslavement. The Cacique Henri remained the best representative of such resistance.⁵⁵ The Arawaks' repudiation of Spanish imperialism constitutes a sign of the time originating in the fifteenth century.

Haitian Arawaks' anti-colonial resistance continued with the Africans under French colonial rule, which formally succeeded the Spanish under the 1697 Treaty of Ryswick.⁵⁶ Kidnapped and transported to French Saint-Domingue against their will, the Africans were used by the French as slaves to fuel the European colonial enterprise. Transforming Saint-Domingue into the richest colony of the eighteenth century for France's benefit, the unpaid labor of the Africans created what Eduardo Galeano has called a mortal prosperity.⁵⁷ Despite the most ignominious oppression, and perhaps because of it, these Africans, influenced by the French Revolution and led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, organized in 1791 a general revolt against the French colonial regime that culminated in the abolition of slavery in 1802.⁵⁸

⁵⁴Francine Jacobs, *The Tainos. The People Who Welcomed Columbus* (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1992), p. 69. See also, Alex Dupuy, "Spanish Colonialism and the Origin of Underdevelopment in Haiti," *Latin American Perspectives* 9, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 1976), p. 22.

⁵⁵Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969* (Evanston: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 33; see also Placide Justin and James Barskett (Sir), *Histoire politique et statistique de l'île d'Hayti, Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Brière, 1826), pp. 48-52; Eugene Nau, *Histoire des caciques d'Hayti* (Paris: G. Guerin, 1894), p. 4; J. C. Dorsainville et. al., *Manuel d'Histoire D'Hayti* (Port-au-Prince: Henri Deschamps, 1958), pp. 24-26; and Cecile Accilien, Jessica Adams, Elmide Meleance, Ulrick Jean-Pierre, *Revolutionary Freedoms: A History of Survival, Strength and Imagination in Haiti* (Coconut Creek: Caribbean Studies Press, 2006), p. 22.

⁵⁶Thomas Weil, *Area Handbook for Haiti* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), pp. 28, 29.

⁵⁷See Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America. Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. Trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), chapter 2.

⁵⁸Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Hayti*, vols. 5-7 (Port-au-Prince: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1987-1991). See also Martin Ros, *The Night of Fire: The Black Napoleon and the Battle for Haiti* (New York: Sarpedon, 1994), pp. 80-85. Slavery had been abolished in Haiti as early as 1793 by Sonthonax, but only in that country's Northern province, cf. Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, *Unpacking Europe* (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen [u.a.] 2001), pp. 48, 63-64; C.L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*:

Despite Napoleon's 1803 attempt to reestablish slavery in Saint-Domingue, the impetus of the rebellion would later overthrow the White colonial ruling class of French planters and officials including their plantation system with its dehumanizing corollaries of structural inequality and class exploitation. On the first day of January 1804, the heroic exploit of the former slaves, allied with the mulatto bourgeoisie, gave birth (at least in official declaratory policy) to a free, egalitarian, and fraternal society for all persons without exception. The Haitian Revolution would anticipate Latin American independence and the emancipation of Africans enslaved in the United States and the Caribbean.⁵⁹

Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution (New York: Vintage Books 1963); Nick Nesbitt, "Troping Toussaint, Reading Revolution," *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Summer, 2004), pp. 18-33; Aimé Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1981); Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990); Franklin W. Knight, "The Haitian Revolution," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (February 2000), pp. 103-115; and David P. Geggus, "The French and Haitian Revolutions and Resistance to Slavery in the Americas: An Overview," *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, 282-3 (1989), pp.107-24.

⁵⁹ Steeve Coupeau, *The History of Haiti* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), p. 34. Jacob Carruthers, *The Irritated Genie. An Essay on the Haitian Revolution*, ([Chicago: The Kemetic Institute, 1985], p. 114), observes a close similarity between leaders of the French Revolution who abolished the old order and the Haitian Revolution Fathers. "They too were fighting against corrupt classes and institutions like the Monarchy, the Nobility, the Clergy; in other words, the establishment. They were against an international power structure that oppressed mankind in general..." See also John E. Baur, "International Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution," *The Americas*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (April 1970), pp. 398-418; David P. Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 157-174; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The History of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Valentina Peguero, "Teaching the Haitian Revolution: Its Place in Western and Modern World History," *The History Teacher*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (November 1998), pp. 33-41; Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); Patrick E. Bryan, *The Haitian Revolution and Its Effects* (Kingston, Jamaica: Heinemann, 1984); Haitian Revolution, Blackpast.org Accessed 11/29/2009; Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2006); Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988). Jean-Jacques Dessalines' secretary Boisrond Tonnerre, "Birth of Haiti: Declaration of Independence," (*A Haiti Anthology libete*, eds. Charles Arthur and Michael Dash [London: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999]) read on his behalf in Gonaives on January 1st, 1804: "It is not enough to have thrown out of your country those barbarians who have soaked it in blood for two centuries; it is not sufficient to have curbed the factions that still play tricks on the specter of liberty that France has revealed to you all: to guarantee the triumph of freedom in the country that you have seen born, you must make a last act of national authority. If the inhuman government that has held our spirits in the most humiliating torpor for so long is to give up all hope of subjugating us again, we must live free or we must die... If there exists among us any faint-hearts, shrink from and shiver at the taking of the oath that must unite us. Swear to whole world, to posterity, to ourselves, to renounce France forever and to die rather than live under domination. Swear to fight until the last breath for the independence of our country" (p. 44).

Notwithstanding the dethronement and departure of the French ruling colonial class and the formal abolition of slavery in Haiti, the newly freed peoples' cherished dream for political freedom and participatory democracy, land ownership and socio-economic justice failed to materialize. The quest for socio-economic and political emancipation remained an on-going imperative process. Accordingly a second broad period, *anti-neocolonialism*, which began with post-Haiti independence, has consisted in the resistance of the newly freed people (former slaves who became peasants) against compulsory labor and exploitation, deprivation of fertile land and alienation stemming from the old free people's (Mulatto and Black bourgeoisie) control and monopoly of the government, commerce, and large estates.⁶⁰

This color-class conflict would indeed become central in Haitian socio-economic and political history. In fact, the discontentment of the peasantry (of African culture, Creole language, Voodoo religion, and rural social location) with the domination and oppression of the new ruling elite (of French culture and language, Catholic and urbanite) takes shape in numerous peasant based movements. Their demands remained consistent: fair prices and low taxation, social justice and equitable land distribution, in a

⁶⁰ For details see, Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment since 1700* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989); see also David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in Saint-Domingue* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006); Roland Wingfield and Vernon J. Parenton, "Class Structure and Class Conflict in Haitian Society," *Social Forces*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (March, 1965), pp. 338-347.

conjuncture oftentimes marked by political instability, social inequities, economic decline and impoverishment of the majority.⁶¹

Internationally, Haiti suffered diplomatic isolation by the United States, France, Great Britain, and Spain for abolishing slavery. Haiti's former master forced her to pay a huge indemnity as precondition for trade and for recognizing the independence she had courageously acquired on the battle field. That debt crippled Haiti economically, worsened the peasantry destitution, and initiated that country's neo-colonization.⁶²

Foreign meddling and interests, however, would further exacerbate Haiti's stark class division and peasant despoliation. In 1915, the United States intervened militarily in

⁶¹See Beaubrun Ardouin, *Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haiti*, Tome II (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Dalencourt, 1958); J.C. Dorsainville, *Histoire d'Haiti* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1967) p. 153; Steeve Coupeau, *The History of Haiti* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), p. 34; Lyonel Paquin, *The Haitians: Class and Colour Politics*, (Brooklyn, New York: Multi-Type, 1983); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Culture, Color and Politics in Haiti," *Race*. Eds. Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 146-174.

⁶²Peter Hallward, "Option Zero in Haiti," *New Left Review* 27 (June 2004) states: "...France only re-established the trade and diplomatic relations essential to the new country's survival after Haiti agreed, in 1825, to pay its old colonial master a 'compensation' of some 150 million francs for the loss of its slaves—an amount roughly equal to the French annual budget at the time, or around ten years' worth of total revenue in Haiti - and to grant punishing commercial discounts. With its economy still shattered by the colonial wars, Haiti could only begin paying this debt by borrowing, at extortionate rates of interest, 24 million francs from private French banks. Though the French demand was eventually cut from 150 to 90 million francs, by the end of the nineteenth century Haiti's payments to France consumed around 80 per cent of the national budget; France received the last installment in 1947. Haitians have thus had to pay their original oppressors three times over—through the slaves' initial labour, through compensation for the French loss of this labour, and then in interest on the payment of this compensation. No other single factor played so important a role in establishing Haiti as a systematically indebted country, the condition which in turn 'justified' a long and debilitating series of appropriations-by-gunboat." <http://newleftreview.org/A2507> [accessed 4/12/2006]; see also Anne M. Street, *Haiti 2004: A Nation in Crisis* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2004), p. 3; Nick Nesbitt, "The Idea of 1804," *Yale French Studies*, No. 107 (2005), pp. 6-38; Doris Y. Kadish, "Haiti and Abolitionism in 1825: The Example of Sophie Doin," *Yale French Studies*, No. 107 (2005), pp. 108-130; Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Class Conflict and Diplomacy: Haitian Isolation in the 19th-Century World System," *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Spring, 1994), pp. 1-23; Tim Matthewson, "Jefferson and the Non-recognition of Haiti," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 140, No. 1 (March 1996), pp. 2-48; Donald R. Hickey, "America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Winter, 1982), pp. 361-379; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, *Afro-Cuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writings on Race, Politics and Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), pp. 37-39.

the internal affairs of Haiti purporting officially to bring order. Reminiscent of the violence and plunder of the colonization era, the Marines dispossessed the Haitian peasants and gave their land to American companies. Then allied with the mulatto elite, the Marines resorted to unreasonable exaction, barbarous and atrocious killings of the peasantry. Forced into labor and stripped of their livelihood, the peasants endured inhuman treatment and humiliation. The peasantry vigorously resisted American occupation under the leadership of Charlemagne Peralte, the martyred liberationist fighter, and Benoit Batraville. In the first five years of the occupation, more than 3,000 Haitian peasants died while fighting the Marines.⁶³

National mobilization impelled the Marines to leave Haiti in 1934. However, the United States' economic and political domination and influence has endured through the Haitian state, the Armed Forces, and the elite.⁶⁴ The peasantry struggle for socio-

⁶³Suzy Castor, *La Ocupación norteamericana de Haití y sus consecuencias (1915-1934)* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1971); Dantes Bellegarde, *Histoire du Peuple Haitien, 1492-1952* (Port-au-Prince, 1953), pp. 271-72. James Weldon Johnson, *Self-Determining Haiti*, believed that the United States Marines occupied Haiti and massacred three thousand men, women, and children because, among other things, the National City Bank of New York coveted Haiti's National Bank ([New York: The Nation, 1920], p5ff). See also, Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti 1915-1934* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1971); Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); François Blancpain, *Haiti et les Etats-Unis: 1915-1935: histoire d'une occupation* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999); Kethly Millet, *Les paysans haitiens et l'occupation américaine d'Haiti, 1915-1930* (La Salle, Québec: Collectif Paroles, 1978); Roger Gaillard, *Premier écrasement du cacoisme* (S.I.: s.n. 1981), *La guerilla de Brataville: 1919-1934* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Imprimerie Le Natal, 1983), *Charlemagne Peralte le caco* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Roger Gaillard, 1982); Dantes Bellegarde, *La résistance haitienne: l'occupation américaine: récit d'histoire contemporaine* (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1937); Roger Jean-Jacques Magloire, "Domination étrangère et relations agraires en Haiti de 1915 a 1934," Thèse (M.-Sc.) – Université de Montréal, 1980; Walter H. Posner, "American Marines in Haiti, 1915-1922," *The Americas*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (January, 1964), 231-266; Ramsey Clark, "Haiti's Agonies and Exaltations," *Haiti: A Slave Revolution*, <http://www.iacenter.org/haiti/> [accessed March 12, 2006].

⁶⁴Dana G. Munro, "The American Withdrawal from Haiti," *The Hispanic American Review*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (February 1969): 1-26; Donald B. Cooper, "The Withdrawal of the United States from Haiti, 1928-1934," *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January, 1963), pp. 83-101; Kern Delince, *Les forces politiques en Haiti: manuel d'Histoire contemporaine* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1993). The

economic justice and political participation would also continue. Post-American occupation has given peasant resistance an overt anti-imperialist dimension. It was the context in which the Haitian army, assisted by the United States, engineered the ascension of Francois Duvalier into power in 1957 under the banner of “Black Nationalism.”⁶⁵

In his campaign, Francois Duvalier promised to (1) bring honesty, unity, fairness, equality, and democracy in government; (2) provide health care, education for all; and (3) respect the basic rights of all citizens. He put ample emphasis on the peasants and workers, promising that the former will get fair prices for their produce and the latter adequate jobs to match their profession. He guaranteed that his government would battle every day to free “the peasant against misery and agricultural calamities.”⁶⁶ As Elizabeth Abbott writes:

Duvalier also knew what to say, his organizers did their homework, and each speech reflected the specific concerns of its audience. Duvalier was a novice in political stumping, and it showed – his oratory lacked Fignole’s dramatic crowd-arousing presentation. But he conveyed other qualities just as important: absolute integrity and sincerity, no trace of arrogance,

noted Uruguayan novelist Eduardo Galeano declared the United States disengaged its troops from Haiti “when it had accomplished its two objectives: seeing that Haiti had paid its debts to U.S. Banks and that the constitution was amended to allow for the sale of plantations to foreigners.” (“Haiti, Despised by All,” World Press Review, December 1996 <http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/history/recent/despised.htm> Accessed 2/12/2006.

⁶⁵See for instance, Elizabeth Abbott, *The Duvaliers and their Legacy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), *Haiti: An Insider’s History of the Rise and Fall of the Duvaliers* (Simon & Schuster, 1988); David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvaliers: Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996).

⁶⁶François Duvalier, *Ouvres Essentielles*, Vol. III. *La Révolution au Pouvoir* (Première Partie) (Port-au-Prince, 1967), pp. 3-6; quoted in Mats Lundahl, *Politics or Markets. Essays on Haitian Underdevelopment* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 264.

and the common touch that endeared him to hundreds of thousands of those whose buttocks he had once stabbed with yaws-killing penicillin.⁶⁷

Overall Francois Duvalier's declaratory policy showed his awareness of the crucial problems confronting Haiti, particularly peasants and workers. More than any other regime, his government promoted poor rural and urban dwellers as members of his civil militia, and elevated middle-class Haitians to high position in government and administration. Duvalier nonetheless did not fulfill his promises. Sadly his proposals lacked specificity and, more importantly, failed to include land reform, comprehensive agricultural policy, and popular participation — the first crucial steps in any policy proposals for tackling Haiti's problems of poverty, inequalities, and political oligarchy.

Indeed history demonstrates that Black Nationalism turned out to be neither the authentic sovereignty Haiti so badly needed and still needs, nor the socio-economic justice and political freedom to which the majority of Haitians aspire. In fact, it constituted an ideological ploy devised by Francois Duvalier to assume and consolidate power and acquire wealth. For that purpose, Duvalier utilized his personalized dictatorial power, through the Tonton Macoutes, to terrorize and eliminate political dissents, grossly violate the human rights of the citizenry, drastically curb the freedom of independent trade unions, prohibit strikes and bargaining discussions with management, despite abysmally low wages, inflation, and the worsening economic situation of the peasantry and workers. During his tenure, much of Haitian daily reality consisted of

⁶⁷Elizabeth Abbott, *Haiti: The Duvaliers and their Legacy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), p. 64.

disappearances, extra-judicial killings, exaction, racketeering, nepotism, illegal incarceration, political oppression and corruption, and impoverishment of the masses.⁶⁸

All Haitians were touched one way or another. Curfews were common, and roadblocks manned by Macoutes or soldiers who demanded money, often as little as a dime, to allow travelers to continue. Haitians in every city, town, village, and even remote hamlets suffered the terror of midnight searches, the blood-chilling and perfunctory knock before Macoutes broke down the door, the indiscriminate beatings, the destruction of precious family documents, meaningless interrogations, and the tragedy of family members handcuffed and thrust into Macoutes' cars, never again to be seen. Bourgeois families unable or still unwilling to flee their homeland watched as illiterate Macoutes dismantled their bookshelves searching for Communist literature, trampling and destroying entire libraries in contemptuous disregard of a world closed to them.⁶⁹

In 1961, the Kennedy administration, seeking to prevent another communist country in Latin America, launched the Alliance for Progress similar to the first development decade introduced by the United Nations in 1950. That attempt at development failed to improve the socio-economic reality of the majority of Haitians. Overall, the dismal failure of Francois Duvalier's increasingly brutal regime brought

⁶⁸Elizabeth Abbott, *Haiti: The Duvaliers and their Legacy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), explains the discrepancy between Duvalier's campaign promises and his government's policies thus: "By 1959 power in all its dimensions was Duvalier's obsession. The good intentions that had once inspired him dried up as he devoted his life to maneuvering and manipulating to keep control. Duvalier the proud intellectual suddenly shied away from all those who knew him and could articulate what he was becoming. Instead he surrounded himself with illiterate Macoutes who did not reproach him and who guaranteed his political survival. He defied the Church he could not dominate and turned instead to the native practitioners of the Haitian religion, whom he could. He abandoned the principles that had endeared him to his people, and with breathtaking cynicism he breached all natural laws of decency and honor. And though he never forgot that he was a doctor, he personally served up tortured and murders, each one a negation of the Hippocratic Oath" (pp. 98-99).

⁶⁹Elizabeth Abbott, *ibid*, p. 105. Marc Romulus, "Les Cachots des Duvalier," narrates the state of repression under Jean-Claude Duvalier stating, "Peasants expropriated by the Tontons Macoutes or Duvalier's soldiers flee from starvation in the countryside, taking to the sea on leaking boats. Some are killed on the spot, others are arrested either by government agents or by foreign security forces who send them back to Haiti where they go straight to prison. Serge Donatien, a young peasant from the Gonaives area trying to escape from poverty and repression, is arrested as he tries to get onto a boat. Held at Fort Dimanche, he dies in March 1977," (cf. *A Haiti Anthology libète*, p. 63).

large scale discontent against him. Still, he found ways, with Washington's blessings, to consolidate his power. He was fraudulently re-elected in 1961 and self-proclaimed president for life in 1964 by a faked referendum.⁷⁰

In 1971, François Duvalier died. His son Jean-Claude Duvalier assumed the presidency pledging to "make the economic revolution." Another vague proposal that became theoretically and practically inadequate to tackle Haiti's harsh realities. In practice, such revolution consisted in the liberalization of the Haitian economy, coupled with the blind implementation of the neo-liberal economic policies dictated by international financial institutions. The economic program of Jean-Claude Duvalier brought no significant change for the peasants and workers. Despite an appearance of political opening, due to pressure by the Carter administration's foreign policy focus on human rights discourse, the Duvalier government remained fundamentally elitist, pro-business, dictatorial, corrupt, and against workers and peasants. Nonetheless, the regime enjoyed widespread support from the Catholic Church hierarchy, Washington and Paris, and international financial institutions like the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Monetary Fund (IMF).⁷¹

And after more than a decade in power, it became obvious that the economic revolution Jean-Claude Duvalier heralded failed to materialize. On the contrary, there was a deterioration of the situation not only at the political, economic, and social sphere

⁷⁰E. Abbott, *Haiti: An Insider's History of the Rise and Fall of the Duvaliers* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), pp. 101, 148.

⁷¹Alex Dupuy, *Export Manufacture and Underdevelopment in Haiti*. Conference Paper No. 20. Columbia University: New York University Consortium, 1989-1990.

but also in the moral, cultural, and ecological domains as well. Compounding the problem was an acute lack of patriotism and concern for the common good.⁷²

As a result, by 1983, a timid popular protest against hunger and misery – buttressed by John Paul II’s famous declaration “There must be a change here” during his visit in Haiti on March 9, 1983 – gradually developed into an overt opposition to the Duvalier regime with its inefficient, repressive, and predatory state. Youth, socio-professional groups, peasant organizations, labor unions, and the bases of the Catholic and Protestant Churches – overcoming decades of apathy, fear, silence, and collective distrust – peacefully resisted the Duvalier government and demanded an end to injustice, violence, arbitrary...and the creation of a State of rights, democracy, participation, and transparency for all Haitians. This general protest culminated in the flight of Jean-Claude Duvalier and his family to France.⁷³

With the fall of Duvalier, the grassroots movement – made up especially of youth, women organizations, peasant groups and workers’ unions – found a much needed freedom to organize and expand. After four years of struggle for change, they overwhelmingly elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president on December 16, 1990.⁷⁴

⁷²Martin-Luc Bonnardo et Gilles Danroc, *La Chute de la maison Duvalier* (Paris: Karthala, 1989).

⁷³See Marx V. Aristide and Laurie Richardson, “Haiti’s Popular Resistance,” *The Haiti Files: Decoding the Crisis*. Ed. James Ridgeway (Washington, D.C.: Essential Books, 1994).

⁷⁴G rard Pierre-Charles and Margaret Low, “The Democratic Revolution in Haiti,” *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (Summer, 1988), pp. 64-76; see also Francisco Paulc na, “Le ‘mouvement populaire haitien’ des ann es 1980-1990: Pratiques et perspectives analytiques,” (master’s thesis, Universit  du Qu bec   Montr al, 2007); Kim Ives, “The Lavalas Alliance Propels Aristide to Power,” *Haiti. Dangerous Crossroads*. Ed. North American Congress on Latin America (Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1995), pp. 41-45; Haiti-Progr s Staff and Greg Dunkel, “Crushing Victory for Aristide-Despite Bazin’s Maneuvers,” December 19-24, 1990, *Haiti: A Slave Revolution*, <http://www.iacenter.org/haiti/celebr.htm> [accessed April 2, 2006]; G rard Pierre-Charles, “Fondements

In his speech to the 46th Ordinary session of the general meeting of the United Nations on September 25, 1991, six months after his inauguration and five days before his first overthrow, Aristide condemned the wretched poverty in which the majority of Haitians live and rejected Haiti's unequal economic and political system as unjust. He vehemently denounced the exploitation of Haitian migrant sugar-cane laborers in Dominican Republic. He declared that Haitians urgently needed to live in liberty, democracy, love, non-violence, unity, peace; and that the rights of every citizen must be respected so that all Haitians can enjoy "social justice and economic freedom."⁷⁵ He vowed that his government would create "the conditions for all Haitians regardless of their social classes to participate in the search for a solution to the problems besetting the country."⁷⁶

To that end, Aristide proposed to reform public administrations, the judiciary, the Haitian State itself and land tenure.⁷⁷ He called for the abolition of all secular divisions and the establishment of a genuine national integration. He called for all to sit "around the table." This union was essential since, for him, "the mobilization of the entire

sociologiques de la victoire electorale de Jean-Bertrand Aristide," *La république haïtienne: états des lieux et perspectives*. Eds. Gérard Barthélémy et Christian Girault (Paris: Karthala, 1993); and Claude Moïse et Emile Ollivier, *Repenser Haïti: Grandeur et misère d'un mouvement démocratique* (Montréal: Editions du CIDIHCA, 1992).

⁷⁵Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *Névrose Vétéro-Testamentaire* (Montréal: Editions du CIDIHCA, 1994), p. 131.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁷⁷*Ibid.* Aristide declares in his autobiography, "I have often been criticized for lacking a program, or at least for imprecision in that regard. In fact, the people had their own program. It did not require a wizard to formalize it after years of struggle against neo-Duvalierism. It was a simple program: dignity, transparent simplicity, participation. Those three ideas could be equally well applied in the political and economic sphere and in the moral realm" (J-B Aristide, *Aristide. An Autobiography*. With Christophe Wargny. Trans. Linda M. Maloney. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993, pp. 127-128).

population is the engine of change: economic, political, social, and cultural change.”⁷⁸

Aristide insisted that Haiti’s “ways and means of development can be determined only by Haitians. No one can be our substitute, even though we need the solidarity of others.”⁷⁹

Analysis of Conditions and Context of Work in Haiti

The above sections reveal the reality of Haiti’s manufacturing and agricultural work and how conditions in these sectors impact on and simultaneously result from that country’s social structure, destitution and environmental degradation. However, more than describing Haiti’s reality and context of work and establishing a link between them, it is equally important to explain why such context and conditions of work prevail and to offer solutions to change them. Therefore, attention needs be paid on the basic finding of these sections, for the purpose of raising the thorny problem that work poses for Haitians, namely manufacturing and agricultural workers labor in conditions that degrade and exploit them, impoverish and exclude them, hasten their death and destroy the environment. This analysis buttresses a common Haitian assumption that the majority work for the benefit of the minority.⁸⁰ Salient questions emerge from this discovery: Why has work in Haiti contributed to impoverished workers? How can factory and farm work in that country be just, decent, and done in ways that protect the environment? In short, what should be done to eliminate poverty in Haiti?

⁷⁸Ibid, p. 159.

⁷⁹Ibid, p. 160.

⁸⁰The typical Haitian expresses this assumption with the proverb *bourik travay pou chwal garyonen*.

My analysis here will consist mostly in an exposition of historical and social scientific studies on work and/or poverty in Haiti that are significant to my dissertation, for my interest in this analysis is to provide an explanation and solution to Haiti's conditions and offer an understanding of work upon which the foundation of a theological ethics of work can be laid.

Review of Literature

The cause of Haiti's poverty and its remedy has long been the subject of heated inquiry among social scientists and international organizations. The idea that poverty stems from low income; lack of prospects and circumstances for suitable human living has been expressed by Oscar Fernandez Taranco in his article titled "L'Avenir de la Lutte Contre la Pauvreté."⁸¹ To overcome poverty, Taranco suggests creating productive jobs and developing viable institutions that would provide education and healthcare, control fertility, rehabilitate the environment, and promote justice, gender equality, and public participation.⁸² Michael N. A. Azéfor goes further in his "La Pauvreté en Haiti: Comment Lutter contre ce Problème" by attributing Haiti's poverty to chronic recession, state repression and apathy, coupled with low investment in education, oversight of the rural population and lack of essential infrastructure. Azéfor proposes education, economic growth, and good governance as the fastest path to eradicate poverty in Haiti.⁸³ The social indices approach as causal explanation to poverty is typical of international organizations

⁸¹Oscar Fernandez Taranco, "L'Avenir de la Lutte contre la Pauvreté," *L'Avenir de la Lutte contre la Pauvreté en Haiti* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: L'Imprimerie Centrale, 2000), pp. 51-58.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Michael N. A. Azéfor, "La Pauvreté en Haiti: Comment Lutter contre ce Problème," *L'Avenir de la Lutte contre la Pauvreté en Haiti*, pp.10-30.

as Taranco and Azéfor show. Evidence of this model is also found in *Haiti-The Challenges of Poverty Reduction*, and *The Human Development Report 2007-2008*.⁸⁴

This symptomatic framework is also operative in Mats Lundahl's *Peasants and Poverty: A Study of Haiti* and *The Haitian Economy: Man, Land and Markets*, including Paul Moral's *Le Paysan Haitien: Etude sur la Vie Rurale en Haiti* and Ernest Preeg's *The Haitian Dilemma*.⁸⁵

Contrary to the above symptomatic model to Haiti's poverty, Frank Laraque takes a systemic approach to this issue in his *Defi à la Pauvreté*.⁸⁶ He examines the impact of globalization, structural adjustment policies, and economic liberalism in Haiti. Laraque claims that the root cause of poverty in that country lies in the ways these dominant economic strategies and policies have generated social relations of domination, inequities, and exploitation that have impoverished and marginalized Haitian peasants. As a means to eliminate poverty, Laraque advocates fundamental changes that can foster peasant participation such as land reform, literacy programs, increased health care opportunities, reforestation, and political transformation.

Within the systemic approach to poverty in Haiti one finds the class perspective taken by Alex Dupuy and Michel-Rolph Trouillot. They associate the origin of Haiti's

⁸⁴The World Bank, "Haiti. The Challenges of Poverty Reduction," Two Volumes, August 1998, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1999/06/03/000009265_3981005111938/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf [accessed May 20, 2006].

⁸⁵M. Lundahl, *Peasants and Poverty: A study of Haiti* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), *The Haitian Economy: Man, Land and Markets* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983); P. Moral, *Le Paysan Haitien: Étude sur la Vie Rurale en Haiti* (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1961); and Ernest H. Preeg, *The Haitian Dilemma: A Case Study in Demographics, Development, and US. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996).

⁸⁶Frank Laraque, *Defi à la Pauvreté*

poverty and its solution with class outcome, and relate it to that country's social structure. In his article "Export Manufacture and Underdevelopment in Haiti," Dupuy shows how the accession of Jean-Claude Duvalier into power in 1971 facilitated a tripartite partnership between international economic interests, the Haitian state and the business elite that, far from fostering economic expansion, rather consolidated Haiti's economic decline and foreign subordination. He contends that the poverty of Haitian workers and peasants resulted from Haiti's marginal role in the new world order and dependence on foreign economic interests, coupled with the exploitation of the Haitian state and bourgeoisie. Dupuy recommends spheres of solutions entailing implementation of programs with peasant interests and social change involving the type of regime and the dominant groups.⁸⁷

Similar to Dupuy, Trouillot frames Haiti's poverty in terms of its class structure whereby the elites have devised an economic and political scheme to exploit and marginalize the peasants. In his article, "Haiti's Nightmare and the Lessons of History," Trouillot affirms that throughout Haiti's history the concerns of the peasants have been diametrically different from the interests of the elites. Imitating Haiti's foreign masters,

⁸⁷Alex Dupuy, "Export Manufacture and Underdevelopment in Haiti," Conference Paper No. 20 Columbia University (New York University Consortium, 1989-1990): 1-28. Dupuy is Haitian-born professor of sociology and dean of the Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Programs at Wesleyan University. His published works include: *Haiti in the New World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment Since 1700* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989); "Globalization, the World Bank, and the Haitian Economy," *Caribbean Societies and Globalization* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, no date given); *Haiti in the New World Order. The Limits of the Democratic Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); *Slavery and Underdevelopment in the Caribbean: A Critique of the "Plantation Economy" Perspective: Case Study* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1983); "Spanish Colonialism and the Origin of Underdevelopment in Haiti," *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 3, No.2, Issue 9 (Spring 1976); 5-29. In his "Peasant Poverty in Haiti," Dupuy concludes that "Haitian peasants are subject to a chain of domination and exploitation beginning with the international economy and filtered through the Haitian state, the merchant bourgeoisie, the speculators *qua* direct coffee buyers, creditors, landlords, government officials, and medium and large landowners" *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1989), pp. 269.

the bourgeoisie has treated the masses with contempt and the state has constantly acted counter to the benefits of the country it alleges to protect. He proposes re-structuring the relationship between the political-economic elite and the peasantry.⁸⁸

The view that Haiti's poverty ensues from female exploitation, gender inequality, and sexual domination provides a unique spin and singular finesse to the systemic approach as asserted most prominently in a perceptive work that promotes women's rights and concerns. The central figure of this model is Mireille Neptune Anglade. In her outstanding work, *L'Autre Moitié du Développement: A Propos du Travail des Femmes*, she argues that the exploitation of women's work by men forms the basis of Haiti's underdevelopment. She demonstrates her position by pointing out key sectors and techniques of exploitation of women's labor. Women toil long hours on the farm, in the assembly industry, and also at home. Yet they suffer unfair compensation, excessive taxation, wage theft, unpaid labor, discrimination, and ingratitude. Any legitimate strategy of development, Anglade alleges, must consider women's work in the context of a different society.⁸⁹

⁸⁸Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Haiti's Nightmare and the Lessons of History," *Haiti Dangerous Crossroads*. Eds. Deidre McFadyen and Pierre LaRamée with Mark Fried and Fred Rosen (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1995), pp.121-132. In his *Haiti: State Against Nation. The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), Trouillot asserts that "any solution to the Haitian crisis must face the peasant question. It must find its roots in the resources of that peasantry, the very same resources that have contributed to the fortunes of thousands of Haitians and foreigners during a century and a half of unbridled exploitation. And to do this, Haitians must create institutional channels through which all sectors within the peasantry can participate in a political debate from which they have been too long excluded" (pp. 229-230).

⁸⁹Mireille Neptune Anglade, *L'Autre Moitié du Développement: A Propos du Travail des Femmes*, *ibid.* Anglade takes up this matter in *La Femme Haïtienne en Chiffres* (Port-au-Prince: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1995). More than one decade earlier, Collectif des femmes haïtiennes in *Femmes Haïtiennes* (Montréal: Presses Solidaires, 1980) had comprehensively analyzed the severity of such economic exploitation. Maria Correia argues in her article, "Gender and Poverty in Haiti" (Haiti: The Challenges of Poverty Reduction. Volume II: Technical Papers, August 1998), that women play such an important role in

Another approach claims that there is a close association between poverty and ecological devastation in Haiti. A strong proponent of this model is Anthony V. Catanese, who finds in Haiti's history an intrinsic interrelationship between that country's poverty and ecological destruction. In his *Rural Poverty and Environmental Degradation in Haiti*, Catanese asserts that centralization and political disturbance, coupled with government indifference and an isolated peasantry compel peasants to cut trees for firewood and cash, which causes erosion, floods, low soil fecundity, and more misery. To eliminate poverty, Catanese suggests that Haiti must tackle these circular endogenous factors by endorsing long-term policies to adequately increase agricultural production and peasant earnings, achieve transparency and responsibility in government, develop rural cooperation, and utilize alternative cooking energy and foreign aid for common good.⁹⁰

Ernest Preeg, somewhat with slightly different emphasis, maintains that Haiti's poverty is fiercely intensified by overpopulation and charcoal use that induces deforestation-provoking erosion and mudslides, compounded by migration, and reduced soil fertility. Arguing against the backdrop of the United States foreign policy goals that, he indicates, oftentimes take short-term precedence over long-term demographic

Haiti's agriculture and manufacturing that they must be included in any plan for that country's economic development, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1999/06/03/000009265_3981005111940/Rendered/INDEX/multi_page.txt [accessed February 16, 2006]. An insightful and thoughtful analysis of women exploitation in Haiti is done by M. Catherine Maternowska, *Reproducing Inequalities. Poverty and the Politics of Population in Haiti* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), who claims that sexual harassment and violence takes a devastating toll on women's factory workers whose capacity to negotiate fair and decent conditions are inexistent.

⁹⁰Anthony V. Catanese, *Rural Poverty and Environmental Degradation in Haiti* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1991).

considerations, Preeg holds that economic growth can be obtained in Haiti by mitigating deforestation and population increase.⁹¹

The development of Haiti's socio-political arrangement is discussed at length in Simon Fass' book, *Political Economy in Haiti: The Drama of Survival*. According to Fass, since the European forceful penetration in Haiti's internal affairs, the ruling elite have done nothing to better the living conditions of the common people.⁹² Such stark societal division between the well-to-do and the majority of the population constitutes, according to the dossier *Haiti, Pays Ecorché*, by the National Coalition of Haitian Refugees, the fundamental cause of poverty in Haiti. For the above authors, participation of the peasantry is crucial for social transformation in Haiti. However, for David Nicholls' *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti*, the issue of race and color constitutes an important endogenous element that has fundamentally shaped Haiti's political history.⁹³

These books and articles fall into two broad categories: those that argue poverty flows from weak human development indicators and those that claim poverty derives from exploitation. The former approach sees poverty empirically and relies on dominant economic strategies while advocating reform. The latter understands poverty structurally and tends to reject mainstream economic policies while proposing social transformation.

⁹¹Ernest Preeg, *The Haitian Dilemma. A Case Study in Demographic, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996).

⁹²Simon Fass, *Political Economy in Haiti: Drama of Survival* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988).

⁹³National Coalition of Haitian Refugees, *Haiti, Pays Ecorché* (Pétion-Ville, Haiti: Centre de Recherches Sociales et de Diffusion Populaire, 1990); and David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

The most conspicuous effort to formulate a development policy for structural change from Haiti's vibrant sector is that of Camille Chalmers and Jonathan Pitts.

Camille Chalmers and Jonathan Pitts: The Proposal Expounded

The work of Camille Chalmers and Jonathan Pitts represents a serious endeavor made by social scientists to consider and formulate a comprehensive development policy based upon Haiti's own vibrant economic spheres. They articulate and argue for an alternative development program based on Haiti's productive economic sectors. Who are Camille Chalmers and Jonathan Pitts? What do they advocate?

Camille Chalmers is a Haitian grassroots organizer and trained economist at Caracas University who teaches Economics at Haiti State University. His Latin American education influenced him to display a particular fondness for combined policy, which compels him to consider not only people's wants and capacities but also global economic realities and Haiti's economic conditions. He passionately militates against neo-liberal, structural adjustment policies for Haiti. Chalmers claims such programs dismantle the Haitian vigorous economic branches and are incongruous with that country's burning needs.

In 1980, Chalmers was a founding member of the Education of the People Project (GHRAP) and the national coordinator of Caritas Haiti's development projects from 1984 to 1988. He was incarcerated and unmercifully whipped ensuing the 1991 coup d'état that sent Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile. Upon gaining his freedom, Chalmers rejoined Aristide in Washington and became his chief of staff in 1993-1994. He would thereafter abdicate this position in earnest protest against the structural adjustment program

imposed on Aristide as a requirement for his return to power in Haiti. Currently he serves as the Coordinator of the Haitian Advocacy Platform for an Alternative Development (PAPDA).

Jonathan Pitts hails from the United Kingdom and resides in Haiti since Aristide's reinstatement to the presidency in October 1994. Educated in England as a social scientist in development at Oxford and East Anglia University, Pitts taught social sciences, micro-enterprise, and languages in Europe, the Seychelles, and the Dominican Republic. He is presently the assistant executive secretary of PAPDA. Deeply concerned with the deteriorating living conditions of the majority of Haitians, Chalmers and Pitts propose an alternative development strategy grounded in Haiti's reality.

In their pamphlet *Haiti: Responses and Alternatives to Structural Adjustment*, Camille Chalmers and Jonathan Pitts argue for an alternative development model based on Haiti's vital but marginalized economic sectors. Basically, this proposal originates from an integrated view of poverty and from the vigorous, self-sufficient branches of the Haitian economy. It assumes the collective opinion of popular organizations and other social actors. It relies on the power of the citizenry for its implementation, which it considers crucial for its efficiency. It presumes a radical change of the state inasmuch as it is transparent and accountable to civil society.⁹⁴

This development policy establishes a precedent for considering and formulating worker-developed strategies to promote economic growth and self-sufficiency. It

⁹⁴Camille Chalmers, "The Impact of Haiti's Structural Adjustment Programme," Part I and Jonathan Pitts, "Alternatives to the Structural Adjustment, and Policy Recommendations," Part II, *Responses and Alternatives to Structural Adjustment* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1991); see also Camille Chalmers, "L'Ajustement Structurel et les Programmes de 'Lutte contre la Pauvreté' en Haiti," *L'Avenir de la Lutte contre la Pauvreté en Haiti* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: L'Imprimerie Centrale, 1979).

represents the first systematic attempt by social scientists to articulate an alternative development policy for Haiti derived from that country's own economic strengths. It was the inadequacy of neoliberal and structural adjustment programs operative in Haiti to eradicate poverty and foster equitable economic growth that prompted Camille Chalmers and Jonathan Pitts to formulate this theory. As Chalmers explains:

These reforms and structural adjustment policies which require massive sacrifices but which yield no benefits in return are just a fool's trap. They have proved to be a total failure. It is time for us to switch to a development policy that is based on a different logic and that is geared to the promotion of local markets and local production. A development policy that takes advantage of the knowledge and skills of our small farmers in Haiti, and from there we will be able to stimulate export production.⁹⁵

Chalmers and Pitts have four goals in developing this proposal. First, they want to show that Haiti, despite being economically crippled by poverty-producing neoliberal policies, must bank on its vibrant economic sectors and agents to achieve economic development and independence. Second, they seek to argue against global capitalism that foments poverty and social inequities. Third, they want to propose concrete policy alternative to the economic prescriptions of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Fourth, they wish to valorize worker-adopted procedures as efficient economic modes of resistance to the onslaught of mainstream, imported economic models.

The claim they wish to defend is that only a development model grounded in the historically vigorous branches of the Haitian economy can generate equitable economic prosperity and independence. They hold that an authentic development program in Haiti

⁹⁵Camille Chalmers, "The Neoliberal Agenda in Haiti: An Interview with Camille Chalmers," *Haiti Progress*, Vol. 20, No. 16 (July 2002). <http://www.haitiprogres.com/2002/sm020703/eng07-03.html> [accessed 2/6/2009].

requires an integrated framework of poverty and a renovated Haitian state that rearticulates its interventions in favor of the priorities of the vital segments of the Haitian economy operated by peasants, women, workers, and small artisans. Before examining this alternative development strategy, it will be helpful to be acquainted with its theoretical grounding so as to provide some background within which to situate its main components. Camille Chalmers' thought provides the insight for such undertaking.

Chalmers rejects as false the classical notion that attributes Haiti's poverty to scarcity of investment, low capital, scanty savings, and weak local demands, including ineptitude in economic management.⁹⁶ Such established belief supported the general efforts in 1915 and 1970 to revamp the Haitian economy. Both attempts failed, Chalmers states, precisely because they relied on cheap labor and the assembly industry, but failed to invest in agriculture, infrastructure, and staff training. They also overlooked the role of the Haitian state that, since its inception in 1804, has historically served the interests of the bourgeoisie that practices an agricultural export-oriented economy that neglects the peasantry, which consequently develops an autonomous society and even produces up to 80 per cent of internal food consumption.⁹⁷

⁹⁶Chalmers critiques this belief of dominant economic theories "...On présente les différentes données macroéconomiques: faibles investissements, faible capacité à gérer l'économie, faible niveau d'épargne, faible niveau de la demande intérieure, etc. Tout cela serait supposément pris à l'intérieur d'un cercle vicieux. Cette vision passe sous silence les importants flux de transfert de richesses qui enrichissent les espaces centraux du capitalisme mondial et appauvrissent les régions périphériques. Le service de la dette externe et les rapatriements de bénéfices des entreprises transnationales constituent deux des principaux mécanismes d'appauvrissement des pays du tiers-monde." ("L'Ajustement Structurel," p. 62).

⁹⁷Chalmers alleges that the segregation in which peasant society and economy evolved "because of the nature and severity of the sanctions imposed by the colonial powers after the anti-slavery revolution of 1791-1804" factors heavily in today's reality in Haiti. ("The Impact of Haiti's Structural Adjustment Programme," *Haiti Responses and Alternatives to Structural Adjustment*, p. 1).

To him, a rational development policy for Haiti cannot be formulated on the ground of cheap labor and assembly industries, as ordered the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The assembly industry is unstable, and firms readily disinvest on any apparent competitive advantages in the Caribbean. Low cost labor is symptomatic of a “weak valorization” of human being. On the contrary, he affirms, authentic development in Haiti compels substantial and rational human investing.⁹⁸

For Chalmers, the prevailing economic policies in Haiti magnify the reality of poverty because of an “inadequate vision of the problem and of national [and international] economic realities.”⁹⁹ He affirms that poverty in Haiti is a structural phenomenon that derives from exploitation and exclusion concomitant with political power and global capitalism. It creates persistent abundance for a minority of Haitians and utter destitution for the majority. Therefore, he declares that “we need a more dynamic vision of development and realize that a country cannot develop without a rupture (even partial) with the logic of the dominant economy.”¹⁰⁰

Chalmers challenges the dogmatic implementation of the International Monetary Fund’s structural adjustment programs, which pretends to modernize Haiti’s sluggish economy during the 1980s. He characterizes as wrong the idea that reforms would merge the Haitian economy into the global economy and induce foreign investment and

⁹⁸Ibid, pp. 67-68.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰According to Chalmers, “...il nous faut avoir une vision plus dynamique du développement et voir qu’un pays ne peut pas se développer sans une rupture (même partielle) par rapport à la logique Economique dominante.” (L’Ajustement Structurel et les Programmes de ‘Lutte contre la Pauvreté’ en Haiti,” *L’avenir de la Lutte contre la Pauvreté en Haiti*, p. 63). Hereafter quoted as “L’Ajustement Structurel.”

economic development. According to Chalmers, neo-liberal financial plan cannot mitigate poverty and create economic growth because it entails monetary and trade liberalization, reduction of import levies, small government, privatization of public enterprises, and balanced budgets.

Imposition of these policies on Haiti, Chalmers insists, has exacerbated that country's economy. They increase fiscal speculation and interest rates, reduce salary and state taxes on export, and increase bankruptcy. Structural adjustment programs also cause Haiti to squander her human resources and ingenious ability and force her to sell off public estates. As a result, the state's capacity to offer basic services weakens while it expands taxes on the poor, which deepens poverty and the country's dependence.¹⁰¹

To propel Haiti toward economic growth and self-reliance, Chalmers advocates a qualitatively different development strategy resulting from a new vision and approach conducive to the satisfaction of the citizenry's fundamental needs.¹⁰² Jonathan Pitts concurs, pointing up the radical departure of this theory from the dominated, imported policies:

PAPDA is interested in the material and cultural conditions of the majority of the population in Haiti in a way that respects and restores the environment, that includes the oppressed and the marginalized, that builds on Haiti's tradition of independence and resistance, and is nourished by the best of Haitian and Caribbean cultural values and by what an increasingly available world culture has to offer. In other words, we are looking at a definition of development that is much wider than the

¹⁰¹Chalmers, "L' Ajustement Structurel," pp. 69-76.

¹⁰²Ibid, pp. 61, 64.

standard kind of economic GDP per capita approach or even the kind of UN human index approach.¹⁰³

A distinctive aspect of this development theory, Pitts indicates, involves the democratic participation of popular groups and other social actors in the formulation and implementation of what such development model ought to be. He then adds:

A useful starting point for an alternative strategy might be a negative image (in the photographic sense) of the international financial institutions' strategy. We want to start with a different focus. The first things to remember are the overwhelming poverty, the profound levels of exclusion of the majority in Haiti which are the dominant features of society. Any development strategy must be essentially one of broad-based growth aimed directly at raising incomes and the social wage of the majority, at satisfying the needs of the majority. One way to do this is through the development of the domestic market via the development of food self-sufficiency in particular, and peasant production in general. Such a broad-based inclusive model would break the social apartheid that exists in Haiti. One percent of the Haitian population controls 50 per cent of national income and services such as health, education, water, electricity, and telecommunications are limited to a tiny minority.¹⁰⁴

For this purpose, Chalmers maintains that precedence must be given to the pivotal sectors of the Haitian economy namely, agriculture, micro-enterprise, and the informal sector. Lending assistance and other support, he adds, must also be provided to peasants, women, and small artisans whose labor is front and center of production in Haiti.¹⁰⁵ This can concretely be done, Pitts suggests, by energizing Haiti's vital economic branches. An examination of his description of that process is in order.

¹⁰³Jonathan Pitts, "Alternatives to the Structural Adjustment Programme, and Policy Recommendations," Part 2, *Haiti: Response and Alternatives to Structural Adjustment*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵Chalmers, "L'Ajustement Structurel," pp. 77-78 and "The Impact of Haiti's Structural Adjustment Programme," p. 2.

Pitts claims that PAPDA considers agriculture as central to the Haitian economy, for the bulk of Haitians are poor peasants who subsist on small-scale farming. Unlike the prevalent development model in Haiti, this alternative economic policy underscores internal consumption as the guiding principle of farm production. Tariff removal and high interest rate, if any represent two of the stumbling blocks that severely constrain the Haitian economy and peasantry. As Chalmers describes:

Even the historically dynamic sectors of the economy—the peasantry and the micro-entrepreneurs active in the informal sector—are in serious crisis. One reason is their inability to compete, now that import tariffs have been eliminated. So-called Miami rice from the United States is flooding the Haitian market: in 1996 Haiti imported 197,000 tons of this rice, compare to just 7,000 tons in 1985.¹⁰⁶

Pitts addresses the challenging problem facing Haitian peasants to obtain lower loan rates. “Peasant producers have virtually no access to formal credit. Instead they have the informal usurious sector of credit, where they pay at least 20 percent interest a month.”¹⁰⁷ In light of these difficulties, Pitts argues for an integrated rural development that consists in agrarian reform involving distribution of fertile, accessible, and sizable land to peasants; development of agro-business; boosting affordable lending to peasants; promoting technological innovation with Cuban experts help; improving local food yield, supply, and safety; and protecting the environment.

¹⁰⁶Chalmers, “The Impact of Haiti’s Structural Adjustment Programme,” p. 2; see also “L’Ajustement Structurel,” pp. 71-72.

¹⁰⁷Jonathan Pitts, “Alternative to the Structural Adjustment Programme, and Policy Recommendations,” p. 5.

Such renovation also demands “investment in infrastructure, in irrigation, in rural roads, in markets, in information about markets, in techniques of marketing...”¹⁰⁸ He craftily suggests a shift in land utilization advocating that the state, mindful of the ecological crux, apportions irrigable land to peasants to grow crops for local market and to appropriate mountainous terrain to cultivate export crops. Success of this proposed rural development policy hinges on a partial tariff application, enabling the local economy to strengthen and Haitian peasants to strive against imported food.¹⁰⁹

Equally important to PAPDA’s alternative development strategy is the reform proposed in “industry and artisan production.” Both Chalmers and Pitts obliquely remark that offshore assembly industry can be beneficial to Haiti’s economy insofar as such industry uses local raw materials and reinvests part of its profit into the local economy, providing training to staff, among other things.¹¹⁰

However, he promptly remarks that this industry cannot be the driving force of Haiti’s economic growth due to “historical, economical and logical reasons.”¹¹¹ Based upon the Burgeau 1995 study, *Competitivité des Industries d’Haiti*, Pitts alleges that it is very unlikely that Haiti may soon gain “any significant advantage in the area of “electronics, sporting goods, garments and so on that make up the assembly sector [because...] the main mover in Haitian industry [lies in] the dynamic, informal, small and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Ibid; Chalmers, “L’Ajustement Structurel et les Programmes de ‘Lutte contre la Pauvreté’ en Haiti,” p. 3.

¹¹¹ Pitts, “Alternatives,” p. 6.

micro-level economy.”¹¹² Renovation in this area implies that organized effort is made to provide small entrepreneurs with low-cost loans, retailing procedures including business skills, tools, and marketing, and foster artistic production and distribution.

Similarly significant is PAPDA’s call for a radical change of the Haitian state with regard to its policy orientation, size, and relation to the citizenry. Two premises motivate this transformative stance. One prevailing thought entails the belief that the policies of the state have recurrently coincided with the economic interests of the elites, who engage in financial speculation and strictly follow the directives issued by international financial institutions. Contrarily, Chalmers proposes that the state should exercise its interventions to the benefit of the vital branches of the Haitian economy and of the peasantry, women, and workpeople engage in the informal sector.

The second assumption underlying the PAPDA’s demand for *conversion* of the Haitian state constitutes an attempt to resist the persistent pressure of international financial institutions on the Haitian state to curtail the number of its civil servants, to liberalize the economy, and liquidate all public corporations.¹¹³ Instead, PAPDA makes the case for a larger, energetic, transparent, and decentralized state, which is accountable to its constituents and offers them basic services. As Chalmers further explains:

IMF dogma says the state must be reduced. In Haiti’s case the IMF is asking for a reduction of public employment of 50 per cent. It is also insisting on deregulation of the economy and on privatization of the nine remaining public sector companies. There are 47,000 public employees in Haiti for a population of 7 million and the IMF is suggesting that this is reduced by half. By way of comparison, neighboring Dominican Republic,

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid, pp. 77-78, 70-73.

with a population of roughly the same size, has 400,000 public employees. We maintain that the public service is too small as it is. Decentralization of the state, which is both a part of Haitian popular demand and favored by international institutions, would entail the state employing more workers in order to operate throughout the country.¹¹⁴

Pitts emphatically agrees:

We need not a reduced, eliminated or atrophied state, but a transformed state with a different relation to civil society. This is one of the main conditions we see as a necessary for an alternative strategy to succeed....One way of approaching this transformation is through the question of the public sector, privatization or restructuring. No attempt was made to consider whether any of the nine public sector companies could be restructured. The terms of reference for the international financial institutions US \$ 2 million study were not: how do we privatize these services? The Haitian democratic and popular movement and the trade union movement felt this was a slap in the face.¹¹⁵

It can be pointed here quite summarily that, for PAPDA, a state that helps its citizens make good decisions, and promotes their well-being and flourishing is of utmost necessity in Haiti.

Ethical Assumptions

Both Camille Chalmers and Jonathan Pitts would agree that their thought process has been strongly influenced by a prevalent Latin American integrated approach to poverty and development, which focus on the satisfaction of basic human needs. Informed by that combined insight, Chalmers and Pitts undertake an ingenious attempt to construct an alternative development policy. As Chalmers notes aptly:

In Latin America, there is an advanced reflection on the notion of *satisfactores*, namely components that allow individuals to satisfy their basic needs, and [also imply] that their wants cannot be administered to

¹¹⁴Chalmers, "L' Ajustement Structurel," p. 3.

¹¹⁵Pitts, "Alternative," p. 7.

without considering processes whereby factors might easily lead, in the short, medium, or long term, to the satisfaction of essential needs.¹¹⁶

Jonathan Pitts similarly presents that combined model and solidarity as necessary components in the endeavor to achieve equitable economic prosperity and self-reliance through grassroots democracy and Haiti's energetic economic branches.

We are convinced that the way out of the impasse is to use the tremendous potential dynamism of Haiti's popular organizations, instead of excluding them or forcing them into permanent opposition by adopting development policies that go against their interests. . . . We invite you to join the Haitian people in their struggle to build a genuinely popular alternative and a just economic system. We want to counter the kind of globalization driven by transnational corporations and finance capital with a completely different approach, and we want you to help us to build a planetary social contract based on justice and human emancipation.¹¹⁷

This solidarity with Haiti's productive economic agents, over against policy-producing poverty coupled with this engagement to a different, participative, and equitable society in that country underlines a basic ethical presupposition in the alternative development theory of Chalmers and Pitts. Moreover, originating from an integrated understanding of poverty, this model hinges on Haiti's vibrant economic branches and evolves from the participation of that country's marginalized economic agents (women, peasants, and small artisans) under the leadership of a renewed state, inasmuch as it sprightly promotes genuine development and awakens to the citizenry's

¹¹⁶“En Amérique latine, il ya une réflexion très poussée sur ce qu'on appelle les *satisfactores* c'est-à-dire des éléments qui permettent à l'individu d'arriver à la satisfaction de ses besoins de base, et on ne peut pas étudier les manques sans étudier les processus à travers lesquels on met en place des éléments qui, à court, à moyen ou à long terme, sont susceptibles de conduire à la satisfaction des besoins essentiels” (L'Ajustement Structurel,” p. 64).

¹¹⁷Pitts, “Alternatives,” p. 8.

demands. This is a central assumption in the alternative development policy of Chalmers and Pitts.

One would miss the mark to conceive this development theory as simply about right thinking, or as only an alternative proposal for Haiti's grassroots organizations and productive economic agents. The virtues of justice, solidarity, and common good are incumbent upon all, Haitians or others, so that these values may permeate our living style. In other words, this alternative development policy is also about right acting. Such *modus vivendi* entails living in solidarity with those engaged in the struggle for life and liberation, despite constraining human suffering. This is another crucial ethical assumption in this alternative development theory. These moral presuppositions intensely pervade the pre-cited development model.

The proposal of Chalmers and Pitts bears similarity with that of Laraque, Dupuy, Trouillot, and Anglade whose structural understanding of poverty leads them inevitably to advocate social transformation as solution to this phenomenon, which both Chalmers and Pitts endorse. However, Chalmers and Pitts' alternative development theory, grounded in Haiti's vital economic sectors, differs sharply from the above authors' formulated policies.

The recommendation of Laraque et al. only reflects on the reality of poverty. However, Chalmers and Pitts are militants who stand in solidarity with Haiti's excluded productive agents. They both actively participate in the struggle of the marginalized economic agents for an equitable-independent-prosperous economy and a renewed state.

This aspect is noticeably lacking in the proposals emanated from Laraque, Dupuy, and Trouillot.

The operative anthropology underlying the alternative proposal of Chalmers and Pitts is one where not only the marginalized economic agenda energetically participate in the formulation and implementation of this theory but also help produce change in the Haitian state in view of building a new society.

Assessing the Proposal

How have Chalmers and Pitts come to this alternative proposal? Are the explanations they provide for the cause of and solution to Haiti's poverty amply satisfactory? If implemented, would such policy suggestion provide the milieu for factory and agricultural work to be just, decent, and sustainable? These issues will now be explored.

Camille Chalmers and Jonathan Pitts make a convincing case for an alternative development theory skillfully formulated around an integrated approach to Haiti's impoverished people and marginalized vibrant economic branches. These outstanding social scientists deconstruct Haiti's prevalent economic practices emphasizing neo-liberal and structural adjustment strategies by raising important issues regarding their adequacy and applicability. In other words, they break into pieces the dogmatic and destructive disposition of these imported economic models and propose an alternative development paradigm centered on Haiti's vigorous economic sectors. In so doing, they reframe the parameters of development policy for Haiti and make a major contribution to this field of study, and to a just and participatory society in that country.

From now on, a suitably adequate development theory for Haiti must find articulation not only from a fitting grasp of endogenous and exogenous economic realities but also from worker-formulated solutions to their own problems. As such, this worker-centered strategy is the best explanation of the problem and recommendation of the solution that I have seen. It meshes with my first-hand experience and is most adequate of all the descriptions and responses but many of the others also enrich my understanding.

This account of poverty in Haiti is the “signs of the times” that Christian communities in that country need to respond to and evaluate in light of the gospel. From an economical and sociological standpoint I have little to add, for I am not a specialist in development. But as a Christian ethicist what I can add is an ability to highlight the work of these thinkers and bring it to the attention of religious people and institutions in Haiti so that they can see it and respond appropriately to it based on the gospel message. However this is not simply a Haitian problem because “no man is an island,” stated John Dunne.¹¹⁸

Although Haiti constitutes a small country, it is representative of the problems and challenges of Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia. Haiti in many ways stands for the global community – beset by poverty, exploitation, and ecological challenges. However – and this is what I have been leaning towards – the concept and reality of work has significant moral and spiritual aspects, which are missing in the alternative development scheme advocated by Chalmers, Pitts and others. In other words, it is not just the economic dimension of work that matters.

¹¹⁸John Donne, “For whom the bell tolls,” *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1959).

In fact, as a number of Christian voices have long insisted, the spiritual and moral aspects of work convey paramount importance. These theologians have advocated that production stems from the activity of a person who is endowed with *imago dei* (image of God), dignity, reason, rights, autonomy, and the capacity to self-fulfillment through work.

Although the importance of this question can hardly be overestimated, justice must be done to Camille Chalmers, Jonathan Pitts, and others to acknowledge that it was not their intention to consider the moral and spiritual elements of Haiti's productive economic components, nor is such examination in the realm of their field of study. I have analyzed this alternative development theory in order to adopt a scientific explanation and solution to Haiti's conditions and context of work, and to establish the foundation of my ethics of work.

Attention to these spiritual and moral dimensions, if joined to the alternative development policy for Haiti above, can enable a better grasp of the whole spectrum of the realities and concept of work. In so doing, an understanding of the Christian faith and theological reflection on work will be brought to bear upon the realities of work in Haiti. Accordingly, this engagement will deeply enrich an understanding of the depths of the prevailing problems created by current work patterns in that country. My engagement, I argue, can play an important role in charting the need for policy change within Haiti and for reshaping the Church's evangelization and pastoral praxis in that Caribbean state.

Therefore how might a committed faith respond to these challenges? What resources does Christian theology and ethics offer that can address these problems – not

necessarily solve them but, more humbly at least, really engage with the real issues and attempt to respond well?

CHAPTER II

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THEOLOGIES OF WORK

Introduction

This chapter seeks to underline the contribution of theologies of work for further understanding the full range both of the concept of work and of the crucial problems arising from Haiti's conditions of manufacturing and agricultural work.¹ For this purpose, I will sketch briefly the history of Christian reflection on work, including its spiritual and moral significance. Thereafter I will focus on the widely influential theologies of work of three writers – Marie-Dominique Chenu, Pope John Paul II, and Miroslav Volf – who provide a wide range of theological ethical resources that can help inform our understanding of Haiti's bleak conditions of work.

Chenu establishes a connection between the Scripture and tradition of the Church and his ministry with factory workers, in a creative dialogue with European intellectual movements and historical problems of his time.² Informed by the Bible, Catholic Social

¹I contend that empirical studies alone, without the import of theologies of work, are inadequate to provide avenues for fitting responses by both Haiti's social movements and by the church. These theological resources will both allow me to see more clearly certain dimensions of the current realities of the problems and help guide my reflection about policy changes, goals, solutions, and moral responsibilities.

²His meticulous analysis of the crucial features of a theology of work – “awakening of consciousness,” work and human perfection, “the Christian attitude,” and “cosmic spirituality,” reflect a strong influence stemming from Medieval Catholic views, particularly Thomas Aquinas and twentieth-century Catholic European ideas like Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain. Cf. Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Toward a Theology of Work: An Exploration* pp. 5-6, 10-11, 13-14, 20-35, 55-72. Emmanuel Vangu Vangu, *La Théologie de Marie-Dominique Chenu* ([Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007], pp. 148-149), writes: “Le Père Chenu se réfère souvent dans ses écrits à l'engagement apostolique des laïcs dans les

Teaching, and Max Scheler, John Paul II eloquently insists on the nobility of work, highlighting the superiority of labor over capital and on the emphatic recognition of workers' rights.³ Miroslav Volf's fascination with the issue of work begins in 1980 during his doctoral study at Tübingen University. Volf's theology of work—which shows the influence of the eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann and the notion of charisma held by the Apostle Paul and Ernest Käsemann—earnestly advocates that the Christian works according to the charisms the Spirit grants him/her both for self-realization and for transforming work in light of God's "new creation."

Special attention will be put on the moral and spiritual assumptions that inform the theologies of these thinkers. I will also identify and briefly describe common or parallel understandings across their thought, and then evaluate their works in light of the critical issues facing workers in Haiti.

mouvements de réveil du 12^{ème} siècle et la théologie évangélique de saint Thomas d'Aquin. Le dynamisme d'un tel apostolat et l'accommodation courageuse de la pensée de Thomas à son temps serviront de modèle pour son programme théologique... Le recours à l'Écriture et à la Tradition inspirait son sens d'observation et incitait son imagination créatrice. Chenu écoutait la voie de la raison. Rien de ce qui touche à la vie de l'homme et du monde ne lui échappa... Aussi restait-il attentive aux réalités concrètes de ces hommes et femmes pour qui il faisait théologie" (pp. 148-49). (Father Chenu often refers in his writings to the laity apostolic engagement in the revival movements of the 12th century and to the evangelical theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. The dynamism of such a ministry and the courageous accommodation of the thought of Thomas to his time would serve as model for his theological program... The use of Scripture and Tradition inspired his sense of observation and encouraged his creative imagination. Chenu listened to the voice of reason. Nothing that touches human life and the world escaped him... He remained attentive to the concrete realities of those men and women for whom he wrote theology"). See also Pierre Benoit, "Inspiration de la tradition et inspiration de l'Écriture," *Mélanges offerts à M-D Chenu, maître en théologie* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, 1967), pp. 111-126. Philip Kennedy writes that in *Une Ecole de Théologie: Le Saulchoir*, Chenu "underscored the importance of history for theology... [He] combined his academic endeavors with a direct engagement with French social problems" (*Schillebeeckx* [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993], p. 22).

³John Paul II was himself a factory worker and professor of philosophy and ethics prior to becoming the 263rd successor of St. Peter. Ronald H. Preston in his "John Paul II on Work" indicates, "It is safe to say that no previous Pope had worked in a stone quarry attached to a chemical factory, as Karol Wojtyła did at Krakow from September 1940 to August 1944, and this adds interest to the theme of the Encyclical" (*Theology* 86, Issue 709 [1983], p. 20).

Theologies of Work: Brief History

The understanding of work has a rich history in Christian thinking. Although there have been many changes in emphasis and perspective across the years, it has been a subject of increased theological and ethical inquiry since the 1960s.⁴ The teachers and writers of the early church, concerned about the virtues associated with work, tended not to elaborate a sustained theology of work. Latin and Greek fathers differed sharply in their understanding of the idea, reality, and purpose of work. According to the Latin fathers, because work plays no role in the economy of salvation, it has value only to the extent it promotes spiritual growth. For many of the Greek teachers, however, work was held to have a divine purpose and to be impacted both by human depravity ensuing from the Fall and by Christ's redemption. The Greek tradition held that the fact human beings are made in the *imago dei* (image of God) indicates that they share in God's redemption of the world.⁵

Moreover, a prominent Greco-Roman view linking physical work with slavery was in part overturned by the rise of the Christian monastic traditions so powerfully shaped by St. Benedict and his famous Rule. For Benedict and those many influenced by his views, work is to be assimilated into a monk's life and is valued highly along with study and prayer. By the same token, monastic orders are viewed as *divine vocation*.⁶

⁴Pete Hammond, R. Paul Stevens and Todd Svano. *The Marketplace Annotated Bibliography. A Christian Guide to Books on Work, Business and Vocation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

⁵*The New Dictionary of Theology* 1988 ed., s.v. "Work," by E. C. Vacek.

⁶Saint Benedict, Abbot of Monte Cassino and Francis Aidan Gasquet, *The Rule of Saint Benedict* (New York: Cooper Square, 1966); see also Bernard McGinn, *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York: Crossroad, 1985); Michael Ducey, O.S.B., "The Benedictines and Manual Labor,"

During the Middle Ages, Catholic theology held work in high regard as the means of helping the common good of the community and insuring the livelihood of family life. The dignity of work was given prominent affirmation, but still the Church tended to speak of work on a plane below the spiritual life of prayer, sacraments, and the ministry of priests. Although work was believed to have dignity, it was viewed quite secondary to the true pearls of the spiritual life.⁷

An important development, however, occurred during the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther and John Calvin's break with the Catholic Church's theological and ecclesiastical agenda led them also to develop a powerful new vision critiquing the special vocation of the Catholic priesthood with its distinctive role in the performance of the sacraments.⁸ Luther, an Augustinian monk, left the order and married and affirmed a powerful vision of the dignity of married life and of work in the world. Luther, Calvin and other reformers rejected the view of medieval Catholicism that monastic orders are unique divine vocations. They contended that any occupational role could be a profound

The American Benedictine Review 1: 4 (1950): 467-489; James J. O'Rourke, "Work, Leisure and Contemplation," *The American Benedictine Review* 28: 3 (1977), pp. 351-548; and Claude J. Peifer, O.S.B. "The Relevance of the Monastic Tradition to the Problem of Work and Leisure," *The American Benedictine Review* 28: 3 (1977), pp. 373-396.

⁷Edward Vacek notes "The theology of work often appealed to trust in providence, Christian resignation, and *theologia crucis*" *The New Dictionary of Theology* 1988 ed., s.v. "Work."

⁸Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 211-233. Luther believes that one receives the call to follow Christ and serves God within one's own function cf. *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, 1965 ed., s.v. "Work, Vocation, Calling," by H. Echternach; see also Pablo Blanco Sarto, "El ministerio en Lutero, Trento y el Vaticano: un recorrido histórico-dogmático," *Scripta Theologica*, 40 no. 3 (September-December, 2008), pp. 733-776; John Haverland, "Vocation and Kingdom: a Biblical and Calvinist Perspective," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 20 no. 2 (November 1985), p. 385.

Christian vocation, for daily labor is providentially utilized by God to care for humans via their abilities, chances, and life-status.⁹

The modern period has also seen important reflections from a wide number of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant thinkers whose variety of views on the moral and spiritual dimensions of work promote human dignity, justice, and the common good. In Catholic circles, common good thinking was pushed by Leo XIII as a Thomistic revival where he held up Thomas Aquinas as official philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church.¹⁰

This outlook of faith and ethics on work occurred as the response to basic shifts in human life and work. Indeed, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europe and America underwent a socio-cultural evolution with far-reaching impact. The advent of machinery in production coupled with the rise of science and technology, led to industrialization and rational productive techniques with drastic societal changes involving urbanization, commercialization, and mass literacy. Significant social transformation also included widespread consumption, bureaucratization, anticlericalism, increased significance of social institutions, and so forth. Such significant societal

⁹Martin Luther, *Works of Martin Luther, with Introduction and Notes, A Compend of Luther's Theology*; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, [c1960]; W. Niesel, *The Theology of John Calvin* (London, 1956); see also Norman E. Nagel, "Luther and the Priesthood of All Believers," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 61 no. 4 (October, 1977), pp. 277-298; John Richard Crawford, "Calvin and the Priesthood of All Believers," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 21 no. 2 (June 1968): 145-156; Daniele Fischer, "Ministères et instruments d'unité de l'Eglise dans la pensée de Luther et de Calvin," *Istina*, 30 no. 1 (Janvier-Mars, 1985): 8-46; Martin J. Heineken, "Luther and the 'orders of creation' in relation to a doctrine of work and creation," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 4 no. 2 (November 1952), pp. 393-414.

¹⁰Rt. Rev. Joseph N. Moody, "Leo XIII and the Social Crisis," in *Leo XIII and the Modern World*. Ed. by Edward T. Gargan (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), pp. 65-88; see also Henry Donneaud, "Le renouveau thomiste sous Léon XIII: critique historiographique," *Marie-Dominique Chenu: Moyen-âge et modernité* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), pp. 85-119.

transformation provoked a social crisis involving long working hours, oppressive child labor, excessive exploitation and destitution of workers appended to enormous fortune and privilege monopolized by a minority, and expanding crusade for equal opportunities.¹¹

These social problems increased a reaction in Enlightenment, Communist and Socialist circles to concern for rights of workers, just wages, and so forth.¹² Leo XIII followed this upsurge of social concern and expressed it in official magisterial voice. In his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum (On the Condition of the Working Classes)*, Leo XIII spiritedly defends just remuneration for workers, recognizes their human dignity, and calls for the protection of their fundamental economic and political rights, including the right to form labor unions to secure justice.¹³ Prominent among these prerogatives contain the preeminence of labor over capital and societal organization based on justice

¹¹See E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964); William W. Brickman, Stanley Lehrer, *Automation, Education, and Human Values* (New York: School and Society Books, 1966); Clark Nardinelli, *Child Labor and the Industrial Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Pat Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution* (London [u.s.]: Arnold, 1998).

¹²Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2007); Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, S. Moore, G.S. Jones, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002); D. C. Coleman, *Myth, History, and the Industrial Revolution* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1992).

¹³Peter J. Henriot et al., *Catholic Social Teaching. Our Best Kept Secret*, indicate, “The terrible exploitation and poverty of European and North American workers at the end of the nineteenth century prompted the writing of *The Condition of Labor*. The document was inspired by the work of the Fribourg Union, a Catholic Social Action movement in Germany, and by request from the hierarchy in England, Ireland, and the United States” (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), pp. 33-34; see also David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, “The Classic Texts of Leo XIII and Pius XI Introduction,” *Catholic Social Thought. The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), pp. 9-11.

and common good. Leo XIII claims that “whatever shall appear to be conducive to the well-being of those who work should receive favorable consideration.”¹⁴

Common good and social justice constitute the foundation of the moral principles intended to facilitate upward mobility of the proletariat, as articulated in *Quadragesimo Anno* (*After Forty Years*) in 1931 by Pius XI, who called for the reconstruction of the social order. Pius XI utilized these themes as a framework to discuss the problem of work and to establish the collective dimension of private propriety. Pius XI declared that human labor is not a commodity, and wage should be determined by the needs of the worker and his family.¹⁵

Over time these spiritual and moral themes led to an extensive development of just remuneration for farmers found in encyclicals such as *Mater et Magistra* (*Christianity and Social Progress*). In this letter John XXIII argues that the norms of justice, charity, equity, and common good that should guide the economic order and the relationship between workers and employers must also come into play in agricultural work.¹⁶

A renewed interest in the above spiritual and moral themes underlying the supremacy of human labor over other aspects of the economy is developed in *Gaudium et Spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*). Issued in 1965 in an

¹⁴Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1981), no. 27.

¹⁵Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931); see also, Charles P. Bruchl, *The Pope's Plan for Social Reconstruction: A Commentary on the Social Encyclical of Pius XI* (New York: The Devin Adair Company, 1939); Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., “The Papal Plan for Social Reconstruction,” *The Irish Monthly*, Vol. 70, No. 830 (August 1942): 319-326.

¹⁶Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 1961.

atmosphere of openness to the modern world, this document strives to read the signs of the times in light of the gospel so that the church can express her hopes for the world.¹⁷ More than a means of physical sustenance for oneself and one's family, work, according to *Gaudium et Spes*, allows one to encounter one's fellow humans helping them to practice charity and to make God's creation perfect. The Vatican II bishops hold that it is utterly inhuman and reprehensible that work be instrumental in the injury and degradation of a person.¹⁸ Convened in 1962 by Pope John XXIII and concluded in 1965 by Pope Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council sought to open the Church to the modern world. Its main significance has been its spirit of dialogical openness and use of vernacular.¹⁹

Marie-Dominique Chenu

French Dominican and eminent historian of medieval theology and society, Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990) was one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. Affected deeply by the injustices suffered by factory workers, Chenu inspired and helped organize the controversial priest workers movement

¹⁷Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, Introduction.

¹⁸Ibid, no. 67.

¹⁹For details on this view see, for instance, Giuseppe Alberigo, Matthew Sherry, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006); *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 1967 ed. s.v. "Vatican Council II," by the Faculty of Catholic University of America. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon contend that "Vatican II replaced the juridical, hierarchical definition of church with more biblical and symbolic images and clearly articulated a sense of the church as taking its form and function from its relationship to the kingdom of God. A second shift marked by the Second Vatican Council resulted from the long, agonizing effort of church leaders to come to terms with liberal, democratic principles" (*Catholic Social Thought. The Documentary Heritage*, p. 163).

in France during the 1930s. He was instrumental both in the French theological and ecclesial renovation that influenced Vatican II, and in the writing of *Gaudium et Spes*.²⁰

Cosmic Theology of Work

In *The Theology of Work: an Exploration*, Chenu addresses his major concerns regarding the impact of automation and industrialization on work and workers' humanity and on their relationship with nature. He also establishes criteria for a rational theological ethics of work.²¹ This book constitutes a classic in the theology of work. It takes a historical approach that links the relations of production of twentieth century France to the gospel through humanism. This evangelical reading of the economic realities of France claims that the assumptions and data that humanize work, when inspired by the

²⁰Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Regard sur Cinquante Ans de Vie Religieuse," *L'Homage Différé au Père Chenu* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1990), p. 268, *Notes Quotidiennes au Concile : Journal de Vatican II 1962-1963*. Edition Critique et Introduction par Alberto Melloni (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1995). See also Claude Géffré, "Introduction," *L'Homage Différé au Père Chenu* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1990), p. viii. Hereafter quoted as *L'Homage*; Most Rev. Claude Roland, "Le Père Chenu Théologien au Council," *L'Homage*, pp. 249-256; Fergus Kerr, "Marie-Dominique Chenu," *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 17-33; André Duval, "Présentation Biographique de M.-D. Chenu par ses Oeuvres Essentielles," *Marie-Dominique Chenu Moyen-Age et Modernité* (Paris : Le Centre D'Etudes du Saulchoir, 1997), pp. 20-21; Giuseppe Alberigo, "Un Concile à la Dimension du Monde : Marie-Dominique Chenu à Vatican II D'Après son Journal," *Marie-Dominique Chenu Moyen-Age et Modernité*, pp. 155-172 ; Giovanni Turbanti, "Ruolo Del P. D. Chenu Nell'Elaborazione Della Costituzione Gaudium et Spes," *Marie-Dominique Chenu Moyen-Age et Modernité*, pp.173-212 ; Joseph Dore, "Un itinéraire-témoin: Marie-Dominique Chenu," *Catholic francais et l'héritage de 1789* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989); Peter Hebblethwaite, "Chenu, once Banned, Survived to be a Sign of the Times," *National Catholic Reporter*, Vol. 26, Issue 18 (February 23, 1990), p. 18. Although I am mostly concerned about Chenu's theology of work, the ensuing succinct list of a handful of his works indicates the array of subjects that greatly interested him during his lengthy career, *Is Theology a Science?* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), *Faith and Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), *La Parole de Dieu* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1964), *La Doctrine Sociale de l'Eglise comme Idéologie* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1979), *Peuple de Dieu dans le Monde* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1966), *Théologie de la Matière. Civilisation Technique et Spiritualité Chrétienne* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1968), *La Foi dans L'Intelligence* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1964), *Le Père Chenu: La Liberté dans la Foi* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1969), *L'Évangile dans le Temps* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1964), *Liberté Chrétienne et Libération: Instructions de la Congrégation pour la Doctrine de la Foi, 6 aout 1984-22 mars 1985 (i.e. 1986)* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1986).

²¹Marie-Dominique Chenu, *The Theology of Work: An Exploration*. Trans. Lilian Soiron Gill & Son (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co, 1963). Hereafter quoted as *The Theology of Work*.

word of God, are fundamental for a theology of work. The absence of a theology of work and the revolt of nineteenth century workers against their demeaning conditions of life and work motivated Chenu to formulate this theology of work. As will be shown later, Chenu's *The Theology of Work* holds instructive and compelling implications for both the moral and spiritual aspects of work.²²

Chenu has three main objectives in articulating this theology of work: First, he seeks to indicate that work forms the basis of human life and constitutes the means for human fulfillment. Second, he wants to argue that religious liberation is integral to economic ethical liberation. Third, he hopes to show that the human being, in dominating nature, participates in creation and contributes to his/her humanization. In fact, for Chenu, human courageous and productive work represents the sign of God's creative activity. As he notes aptly: *Plus je travaille, plus Dieu est créateur* (*The more I work, the more God is creator.*)²³

Right at the outset of *The Theology of Work: An Exploration*, Chenu establishes the condition for the articulation of an adequate theology of work. He advocates the need of an efficacious "awakening of consciousness," meaning a "retrospective observation" that facilitates a serious treatment of work with respect to its essence, function, and

²²Ibid, pp. 6-9.

²³Marie-Dominique Chenu, *La Liberté dans la Foi* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1969), p. 214. See also Jacques Duquesne, *Jacques Duquesne interroge le père Chenu: un théologien en liberté* (Paris: Centurion, 1975), p. 115 and "L'Homme est le Partenaire de Dieu dans la Construction du Monde," *Témoignage Chrétien*, 16 décembre 1965, p. 18. Emmanuel Vangu Vangu, *La Théologie de Marie-Dominique Chenu* ([Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007], p. 357), suggests that "le Père Chenu a compris que la construction du monde, c'est la création en acte, l'entreprise à laquelle Dieu appelle l'homme comme son partenaire" (Chenu conceives that building the world is creation in action, the undertaking to which God summons the person as partner); see also Chenu, "Théologie du travail," *Source* (Septembre 1953): 19-30, "Pour une théologie du travail," *Esprit* (Janvier 1952):1-12, "Civilisation du Travail, civilisation du Loisir," *Témoignage chrétien* (March 18, 1962), "Prière et Travail," *Rosaire de Vie Chrétienne* (Juin 1963): 8-9.

historical value. Chenu is suggesting that work be studied as an economic phenomenon first and foremost for any theological and ethical consideration on that human reality to be valuable. Failure of the theological ethicist to respect the autonomy of the reality of work, he insists, would translate into dogmatism, or groundless ethical righteousness. As he explains:

It is no longer necessary to adorn the idea of work with a veneer of virtues which, however, praiseworthy in themselves, are alien and irrelevant. In the long run, this can only confirm their inapplicability - a mistake from a theological point of view. We must understand the nature of work and its human and material origins, in order to appreciate its internal laws and its spiritual needs from a Christian standpoint. If the *civilization of work* demands its own ethic, which up to the present no one has yet evolved, Christians can only collaborate in this evolution by considering and understanding, in the first place, what work means to the people of the twentieth century.²⁴

Chenu gives credit to the European proletariat who, in reaction to the degrading conditions of life and work caused by automation, promotes that awareness in the nineteenth century, provoking the development of human values hitherto embryonic. He alleges that, “The collective realization of the dignity of work would raise the workers, and, even more important the community of workers towards freedom and individuality.”²⁵

Chenu claims that the innovation of the machine generates proficiency and fosters a deeper valuation of human beings in their relation with nature. However, he adds, mechanization, rationalization, concentration, and profit motive lamentably pervert work and change labor into merchandise, provoking a sharply irrational and destructive

²⁴Chenu, *A Theology of Work*, p. 3.

²⁵Ibid, p. 63.

exploitation of nature. Christian theology's reverberation of that development can be seen in *The Condition of Labor* and *After Forty Years*. Yet Chenu quickly underplays the adequacy of what he labels "classic morality" to deal with modern technology and its impact on work and workers. He calls for a re-appraisal of that new reality of work brought about by mechanization. Chenu also advocates that an adequate theological ethics of work has to seriously consider human outcry against degrading conditions of work and the worker's awakened consciousness as central to its articulation. As he puts it:

The protest of man against the idea of labor as a commodity which generates the proletariat, a protest which the Christian endorses from his own standpoint, must be reflected in a reconsideration in the domain of theology and morals. The postulates and the data for a *civilization of work* are also, in the light of the Gospel, the postulates and the data for a *theology of work*.²⁶

Such reconsideration requires that work be reinstated into its material, human, and divine purpose. It can therefore be inferred that, in Chenu's opinion, all cosmic and historical factors susceptible to transform work into a noble and liberating human reality represent valuable resources for a sound theology of work.²⁷

Chenu contends that work represents the foundation of individual and social life, and constitutes the means *par excellence* whereby human beings achieve themselves. Through work humans cooperate in creation and in their self-realization. Central to this characterization is the following: first, Chenu defines human as an

²⁶Ibid, p. 8.

²⁷Ibid, p. 22.

indissoluble unity of body and soul and producer of physical goods.²⁸ Second, based on the creation story in Genesis, Chenu further holds that human work occurs through a judicious and noble encounter with nature. “For, if we are to have any hope of overcoming the disasters caused by the present tyranny of the machine, or, more accurately, of passing from an external and necessarily forced adaptation to a real assimilation; it will be by the achievement of a rational and moral conquest of nature.”²⁹ Third, human work results also, not individually, but in community and fellowship with other workers – a basic condition for human spirituality and self-accomplishment. Accordingly, Chenu posits that (a) economic realities influence one’s spiritual state; (b) the workers’ socio-historical situation forms the point of departure of any effort to humanize work and working conditions; and (c) workers are called to realize both that humanization and liberation.³⁰

²⁸Ibid, pp. 9-11, 23-24, 29-31; cf. E. Mounier, “Pour un temps d’apocalypse,” *Esprit* 129 (Janvier) 1947, 1-21; J. Maritain, *True Humanism*, London, 1938, chapter IV. Regarding Thomas Aquinas, Chenu writes: “On the contrary, the theologian who believes with St. Thomas Aquinas in the substantial union of body and soul, in the ontological and psychological unity of man in the hierarchical diversity of his functions, does not consider that the superiority of mind over matter necessarily implies its independence of matter” Chenu, *The Theology of Work*, p. 29.

²⁹Ibid, p. 9.

³⁰Ibid, pp. 49, 53, 54. Chenu conveys this line of thought in “Révolution Economique et Révolution Spirituelle” stating, “L’engagement communautaire se fait dans la mesure où le travail est personnel, lie au delà de l’économie, à des charges, à des fonctions, à des relations humaines. ... Dans cette prise de conscience de la dignité du travail – de tout travail, mais particulièrement du travail matériel – dans cette prise de conscience de la dignité et de la fonction du travailleur, s’accomplit une extension sociale, disons mystique, d’une morale qui fut souvent trop courte, qui le serait de plus en plus pour une humanité de plus en plus communautaire. Vertu propre de l’homme nouveau, qui devra ainsi conduire à leur avènement social des doctrines de perfectionnement qui semblaient parfois élaborées pour quelques élus; maintenant dans un monde adulte, ce sont les masses qui sont appelées à cette grandeur spirituelle, dont le travail est l’une des sources.” [*Revue de l’Economie Contemporaine* (Juin 1944): 32]. (The communitarian commitment occurs to the extent work is personal and binds, beyond the economy, with loads, duties, and human relations.... In this awareness of the dignity of work – any work, but particularly material work – in this awareness of the dignity and function of the worker, accomplishes a social extension, say mystic, of a moral that was often too scanty, which would be scantier for a more communitarian humanity. Right virtue

Chenu believes that the function of work in human life does not consist solely in providing physical sustenance. On the contrary, work nowadays, he asserts, fosters ideas and contemplation, not to mention an avenue for emancipation, and should satisfy “the human end of individual and collective welfare in an economic system of services and needs.”³¹ Chenu concludes this section noting that the innovation of the machine creates a subversive reality of work, which degrades human being. Redeeming work becomes imperative for the restoration of human dignity.³²

Enlightened by Marxist philosophy’s critique regarding the horrifying conditions in the world of work and of the image of human being as maker of goods, Chenu asserts that the Christian must show solidarity with the worker and be for the proletariat a champion of truth and justice, of love and fellowship. He justifies this position with a twofold reason. First, the Christian should be faithful to the evangelical precepts. Second,

of the new person, who will thus lead to their social future development perfecting doctrines that seemed sometimes elaborated to a chosen few; now in a adult world, it is the masses who are called to this spiritual greatness, whose work is one source).

³¹Ibid, pp. 12, 14. In his “Révolution Economique et Révolution Spirituelle”(p. 32), Chenu envisions this reality as a revolution whereby “The travail n’est plus un produit, une chose soumise à un marché comme les autres, une chose qui a un prix, qui se vend et s’achète, objet d’un contrat – un contrat de salaire – entre deux volontés qui s’échangent et se limitent dans une impitoyable concurrence; il est – il sera – dans un service social, un engagement, c’est-à-dire, une mise en gage de toute la personne, demeurant, elle, inassimilable, incommensurable, inéchangeable, inadmissible, irréductible au seul va-et-vient du contrat. A mesure qu’il s’humanise, à mesure qu’il se socialise, le travail passé du régime du contrat, ou le détenait l’économie, a cette forme supérieure où il devient matière éminente de vie commune, parce qu’il est l’œuvre de personnes, de personnes libres, prenant conscience de leur responsabilité et réalisant en lui leur formation” (“Work is no longer a product, something submitted to a market like any other, something that has a price, which is bought and sold, subject to contract – a contract to pay – between two wills that exchange and confine themselves in a ruthless competition; it is – it will be – in a social service, a commitment, namely a pledge of the whole person, staying oneself unassimilable, immeasurable, inexchangeable, unacceptable, irreducible to the mere swing of the contract. As it humanizes and socializes itself, work moved from the system of contract, where the economy kept it, to this superior form where it becomes eminent matter of common life, because it is the performance of people, free people, becoming aware of their responsibility and carrying in it their training”).

³²Ibid, p. 54.

the Christian is better prepared than anyone else to understand the worker and to revolt against his/her hardship. In so doing, Chenu declares, the Christian will contribute to the articulation of a system of principles about the reality of work and help work recover its dignity. He claims that

A Christian, in the spirit of his Gospel heritage, is ever mindful of human affliction; honoring the poor; keeping faith with the lowly, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, exalting the meek, placing his trust in truth, and cherishing his fellow-men, continually aware of the brotherly love which is the sign of God's presence. He is thus magnificently equipped to comprehend the tragedy of the proletariat and to achieve a philosophy of work.³³

Unfortunately, Chenu alleges, nineteenth century Christians failed to grasp the plight of the workers and to develop a doctrine about work. Christians neglected to realize the implications of Jesus' incarnation. In fairness, that there may have been occasional situations of mercy towards workers, he maintains. However, the empathy of Christians fell short to awaken in them the degree of wretchedness to which capitalism has reduced working people. Moreover, Chenu continues, their religious observance proposed neither a reason for work nor any facts about the reality of work upon which a sound theology of work might be enlightened and articulated. "In actual fact, Christians have neither understood the proletarian drama nor the philosophy. In this incomprehension they showed the same failing as their contemporaries; but, after being

³³Ibid, p. 55. Chenu provides the context for this quotation stating: "Marx's conception of his homo oeconomicus was born when he perceived the modern tragedy of man in bondage to labor. His metaphysical theory of production springs from his observation of the appalling conditions in which man destroys himself in the very act in which he should find exaltation" (p. 54).

overwhelmed by the French Revolution, they were even more handicapped and powerless.”³⁴

Drawing from the basic fact of the Incarnation, Chenu declares that work constitutes an ingredient of the divine as a human enterprise and as resulting from the fellowship of workers. His claim rests on the basis that the mystery God becoming human transforms all matter into recipient of Christ’s grace. For Chenu this “cosmic spirituality,” or grace embodied in nature, is deeply rooted in the Bible and in Thomas Aquinas.³⁵

However, mainstream theology’s emphasis on interiority has prevented some Christians from grasping human work as a worthy theme for divine grace. If the reality of work in Christianity can be articulated in terms of an ongoing incarnation and of Christ’s Mystical body, Chenu affirms, work will become one of the abiding topics of spirituality. He holds that this view implies, “Today we have reached a point when the lowly and humble, by virtue of their status as workers, are clearly seen to have access to

³⁴Ibid, pp. 55-56, “L’ ‘homo economicus’ et le chrétien. Reflexion d’un théologien à propos du marxisme,” *Economie et humanisme* (Mai-Juin, 1945): 234. The entire article is of interest.

³⁵Ibid, p.24; see also “A Conversation with Père Chenu,” *Dominicana* 50 (1965), pp. 139, 140. Further down, he notes: “I have been concerned with the demands of the Incarnation. If Christianity is the reality of God incarnate in matter, the divinization of man implies that it must reach even to the level of matter. But I am not sacralizing each level of material being. I respect the levels of understanding of reality, the ‘formal objects,’ as we say in our language of theology...Humanization is already a capacity for divinization. What we call the movement of history is really a disposition for divinization” (p. 143). On this point Paul Philibert, *Theological Studies* (Vol. 65, No. 3 [Summer 2004], p. 651) observes “Chenu drew from Christ’s Incarnation a series of theological formulas that place our social, historical, and anthropological predicament in dialogue with divine grace. Christ became incarnate to take upon himself all that is human, for the human totality is redeemed and divinized (54); therefore, ‘what is not assumed is not redeemed’ (84). So human bodiliness is drawn into the agency of grace. Perfection consists not in escaping relationships to the material world, but in fulfilling the self in work and society” (Book Review, *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu* by Christophe Potworowski). See also, Claude Geffré, “Théologie de l’incarnation et théologie des signes du temps chez le Père Chenu,” *Marie-Dominique Chenu: Moyen-Age et Modernité: colloque organisé à Paris, les 28 et 29 octobre 1995* (Paris: Centre d’études du Saulchoir, 1997), pp. 132-138.

the kingdom of God.”³⁶ Implicit in this anthropological spirituality is Chenu’s belief that undue focus on soul leaves Christians little time to recognize human depravity in work. Reminding us that liberation is at one historical and religious, Chenu advises Christians to apply the Gospel insight to contemporary problems in work.

Economic emancipation is inconceivable without religious “liberation,” just as religious alienation is linked with economic liberation. What we must do is to show that religion is not a superstructure to be imposed on economic analysis... The dialectic of nature and grace can be applied to the *homo oeconomicus* as well as to the *homo naturalis*, for grace today strives to find its earthly sphere of activity in an economy in which matter, in man, is itself saved. To this end Christians have only to rely on their own Gospel and create from its precepts a theology which can take into account the historic growth of Christianity through changing civilizations, in time as well as in space.³⁷

Chenu’s theology of work holds instructive and compelling implications for both the moral and spiritual aspect of work. These premises will be delineated next to determine his approach to the ethics and spirituality of work.

Chenu’s Ethical and Spiritual Assumptions

Before delineating these premises, it would be helpful to identify the sources Chenu draws upon to formulate his theology of work so as to provide some background to situate his ethics and spirituality of work.

Chenu had been significantly influenced by both Medieval Catholic views (particularly Thomas Aquinas) and contemporary twentieth-century European Catholic

³⁶Ibid, p. 25. In the same vein, see also Frei Antonio Moser, O.F.M., *O Compromisso do Cristão com o mundo na Teologia de M.-D. Chenu* (Petrópolis: Pontificia Universitas Lateranense, 1973), pp. 35-40.

³⁷Ibid, p. 61.

thinkers, especially Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain. A brilliant scholar of Aquinas' thinking, Chenu published extensively on the *Angelic doctor*.³⁸

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is generally recognized as the most prominent theologian of the thirteenth century. Aquinas' philosophical anthropology, which advocates the intrinsic unity of body and soul, inspired Chenu to shun inflated dogmatism and to stress the indispensability of the body for grace, and matter for spirit. As Chenu indicates, "...the theologian who believes with St. Thomas Aquinas in the substantial union of body and soul, in the ontological and psychological unity of man in the hierarchical diversity of his functions, does not consider that the superiority of mind over matter necessarily implies its independence of matter."³⁹

Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) was a French personalist philosopher and deeply committed Christian who founded *Esprit* and worked to improve the quality of people's life situation. Mounier's notion that human being is "artifice" helped shape Chenu's conception of human being as contributor to his/her realization through work. In his *The Theology of Work*, Chenu writes "Man, said Mounier paradoxically, is naturally

³⁸Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas* (Chicago: H. Regnery Company, 1964), "L'Evangelisme de Saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 58 (1974): 391-403, "Saint Thomas, Chrétien pour Notre Temps," *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, L'Homme Chrétien. Textes Choisis, and Aquinas and his Role in Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002). See also Wanda Zemler-Cizenwski, "Rediscovering Thomas Aquinas in the Twenty-First Century," *Anglican Theological Review*, 85 no. 4 (Fall 2003): 735-740.

³⁹Chenu, *The Theology of Work*, p. 29; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 75, art. 4 ad 2, quoted in Chenu, *Théologie de la Matière. Civilisation Technique et Spiritualité Chrétienne* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1968), pp. 19-21. See also Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Toward Understanding Aquinas* (Chicago: Regnery, 1964), "Body and Politic in the Creation Spirituality of Thomas Aquinas," *Western Spirituality* (Notre Dame: Fides/Claretian, 1979): 193-214, "Matérialisme et Spiritualisme," *Economie et Humanisme* (Mars-Avril, 1948): 143-145, "Naturalisme et Théologie au XIIe Siècle," *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, XXXVII, pp. 5-21, "Le naturalisme de saint Thomas," *Tomismo e neotomismo* (Pistoia, Italy: Centro Riviste Padri Domenicani, 1975): 142-150.

artificial... We might say, with hardly any distortion of words, that ‘the nature of man is artifice.’”⁴⁰

French Thomist philosopher and political thinker, Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) taught modern philosophy at the Catholic Institute of Paris and in the United States. Maritain became ambassador of France to the Vatican from 1946-1948; and helped draft the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Maritain’s expression enhanced consciousness of the workers stimulated Chenu’s conception of awakened consciousness of the proletariat, condition he posits as imperative for articulating a theology of work and uncovering rudimentary human values. “We would even go so far as to state, as Maritain does, that this new awareness of man in his work – an awareness resulting from the internal revolution in the structure of work – is a historical benefit for human society as well as the basis for a new understanding of Christianity.”⁴¹

⁴⁰Emmanuel Mounier, “Pour un Temps d’apocalypse,” Unesco lecture, Paris 1947, quoted in Chenu, *The Theology of work*, pp. 9-10, E. Mounier, *Personalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970); see also, Roy Pierre, *Contemporary French Political Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) and *Modern Catholic Thinkers, an Anthology*; John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier et the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1981); William R. Rauch, *Politics and Belief in Contemporary France: Emmanuel Mounier and Christian Democracy 1932-1950* (the Hague, Nijhoff, 1972); Eileen Cantin, *Mounier; a Personalist View of History* (New York: Paulist Press, 1973); Jean-Marie Domenach, *Emmanuel Mounier* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972). Candide Moix, *La Pensée d’Emmanuel Mounier* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1960); Etienne Borne, *Emmanuel Mounier ou le Combat pour L’Homme* (Paris: Seghers, 1972); Herve Barreau, “La notion de personne chez Emmanuel Mounier et Paul Ricœur,” *Foi et vie* 101 no. 2 (April 2002): 35-57; Ralph Nelson, “Emmanuel Mounier, between Proudhon and Marx,” *Science et Esprit* 31 no. (May-September 1979): 207-208.

⁴¹Chenu, *The Theology of Work*, pp. 30-31; see Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1970), ch. VI, *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), *The Person and the Common Good* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1947); see also Charles Fecher, *The Philosophy of Jacques Maritain* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1953), Jude P. Dougherty, *Jacques Maritain: an Intellectual Profile* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), Deal Wyatt Hudson and Matthew j. Mancini, *Understanding Maritain: Philosopher and Friend* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987); Joseph W. Evans, “Jacques Maritain’s Personalism” *The Review of Politics*, Vol.

Chenu's notion of human self-realization through work constitutes the key concept upon which he draws for informing moral judgment about work. In fact, he conceives self-realization as integral to the finality of human being in his/her work. This fundamental concept provides both the vision of what work ought to achieve and the principle whereby the quality of human work must be determined. This is a basic moral presupposition of Chenu's theology of work.

Second, Chenu holds that redeeming work is crucial for the renovation of human dignity. In other words, he believes that restoration of the dignity of work represents the condition that guarantees the worker's self-realization because to produce is central to human beings. Any opposing insight would be considered invalid for authentic moral judgments about the end of work and the workers' prerogatives emanating from such finality. This view forms an essential ethical presupposition of Chenu's theology of work.

Third, Chenu maintains that degrading conditions of life and work, coupled with evangelical fidelity, compel the Christian to manifest solidarity with the oppressed worker and to contribute to the restoration of dignity for work and worker. Chenu's invitation to the Christian to live according to the ideal of the gospel is a critical ethical presupposition of his theology of work. This moral assumption provides the standard for determining the validity of Christian actions.

Fourth, nature plays a crucial role in both the ethical and spiritual presuppositions of Chenu's theology of work. Although he subscribes to the theology of dominion in

Genesis 1:26-27, Chenu repeatedly stresses that dominion of the earth must be reasonable, virtuous, thoughtful, spiritual, and according to the laws of nature.⁴² He believes that nature forms the substance for divine grace and holds the key to human predicament. “This dominion over nature (work) is a divine participation, even with its possible dangers.”⁴³ This ethical presupposition is grounded in scripture and historical purpose of work.

The spiritual assumptions of Chenu’s theology of work do not consist in an inward motion of the spirit in opposition to the natural world and economic reality of work. On the contrary, Chenu interprets spirituality precisely as intrinsic to human work wherein God’s project finds disclosure.⁴⁴ As such, Chenu’s key spiritual presupposition centers on the notion of work as human collaboration in creation and human contribution to one’s own fulfillment. What Chenu implies is that God’s creative activity continues through human work.

A second spiritual presupposition lies in Chenu’s assertion that work represents an ingredient for the divine and that the community of workers forms a matter for grace. This assumption centers on his claim that humanity constitutes the embodiment for divinity. It is worth noting, however, that the incarnation and the Mystical Body of Christ

⁴²Chenu, *The Theology of Work*, pp. 9, 10, 11-12, 13, 20.

⁴³Ibid, p. 23.

⁴⁴Connected with this idea is Chenu’s belief that “economic conditions affect the destiny of the spiritual activities of man,” *The Theology of Work*, p. 49; see his “Matérialisme et spiritualisme,” pp. 143-145, and *Théologie de la matière. Civilization technique et spiritualité chrétienne*, ch. 11. Frei Antonio Moser, *O compromisso do cristão com o mundo na teologia de M.-D. Chenu*, (p. 28) indicates that “para ele uma teologia do trabalho dever ser inteiramente construída a luz do plano divino sobre o homem e sobre o mundo” (for him, a theology of work needs be totally formulated in light of the divine plan for humanity and the world).

provide the reference points for the spiritual assumptions of Chenu's theology of work.

Hence, let us now probe how Chenu's theology of work relates to Chapter I.

Critical Consideration

What general themes and sensitivities does Chenu provide for examining the stark poverty and structural violence of Haitian workers analyzed in the previous chapter?

Although Chenu's outmoded economic analysis needs strong revision for thoroughly engaging current Haiti's economic conditions, his theology of work does offer distinctive features that highlight the moral and spiritual importance of work – recognition of workers' dignity and rights, assertion of work as promoting human self-realization and collaboration in creation, critique of injustice, affirmation of Christian solidarity with oppressed workers, restoration of dignity for work as pre-requisite for workers' self-realization, affirmation of work as ingredient for divinity, community of workers as locus of grace, workers seen as protagonists to humanize work and liberate the world.

Chenu's theology of work, joined to the economic reality of work in Haiti delineated in Chapter I, promotes a better understanding of the notion and phenomenon of work. Indeed more than just satisfying human physical needs, work endows human self-realization and participation in creation, indicates the presence of grace, and relates to salvation. From this view, one can amend Chalmers and Pitts noting that development seeks not only to satisfy human basic needs and but also to create opportunities for human self-fulfillment in co-partnership with God, fellow workers, and nature.

By adhering adamantly to the doctrine of the incarnation, Chenu grounds his theology of work on solid Christian tradition, while he opens it up to the economic

realities of his time and puts dehumanized workers and their self-realization at the centerpiece of his theological reflection. I believe that an increase in awareness of the proletariat that is prominently developed and advocated by Chenu helpfully frames Haitian workers' revolt against dehumanization, injustice, and violation of their rights.

The view that work represents a means for self-fulfillment central to Chenu's descriptive and prescriptive understanding of work can guide and inspire reflection on Haitian reality of work. Moreover, Chenu's view of cosmic spirituality does help bring in sharp focus the presence of grace in human work including its relation to eternal salvation. The idea that the Christian must be for the oppressed worker a champion of truth, justice, and fellowship thoroughly developed by Chenu provides evangelical justification for action of solidarity by the Haitian Church.

In brief, Chenu's theology of work engages the problematic discussed in Chapter I by highlighting not only the ethical and spiritual dimensions of work but also by underscoring the vanguard role of the worker and Christian in redeeming the dignity of both work and workers. Although he wrote his theology of work in the early twentieth century, there was no indication of some emerging global ecological crisis. Moreover, the structural violence and stark poverty pervasive in Haiti is so acute that Chenu's theology of work, developed in and addressed to European social context, cannot ultimately guide our thinking. Chenu would probably agree with this assessment, for he himself indicates: economic liberation goes hand in hand with ethical liberation.⁴⁵ Accordingly, Latin American theology would be more adequate to help guide my reflection about policy

⁴⁵ Chenu, "Economic Conditions Affect the Destiny of the Spiritual Activity of Man," *The Theology of Work*, p. 49.

changes and moral responsibilities. Liberation theology, I shall argue, takes into explicit consideration the conditions of oppression and poverty of the working class in Haiti and challenges the economic structure that produces those problems.

John Paul II

On October 16, 1978, Karol Józef Wojtyła (1920-2005) became the first Pole to be elected pope. Ordained a priest on November 1, 1946 by Adam Cardinal Sapieha, Father Wojtyła pursued theological studies at the Angelicum/Pontifical University of St. Thomas in Rome where he obtained a doctorate in moral theology on June 14, 1948. Shortly after he visited France and learned about the method of the Young Christian Workers – at the time of the theological and spiritual renewal spearheaded by theologians like H. de Lubac, J. Danielou, L. Bouyer, Y. Congar, M-D Chenu and others. Father Wojtyła returned to Kraków in 1948 to a Communist Poland, and was appointed to parish ministry at Niegowic and St. Florian. In 1954, he would receive his second Ph.D. in philosophy from the Catholic University of Lublin, where he taught Philosophy and Social Ethics until 1956.⁴⁶

Appointed a bishop in September 28, 1958 by Pope Pius XII, bishop Wojtyła participated in all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council. On January 13, 1964, he became archbishop of Kraków and was nominated cardinal three years later. Installed as pope on October 22, 1978, he assumed the name John Paul II and forcefully invigorated

⁴⁶Father Wojtyła's doctoral dissertation in philosophy attempted to develop a Christian ethics grounded on Max Scheler's phenomenological system; see also John M. Grondelski, "Social Ethics in the Young Karol Wojtyła: A Study-in-Progress," <http://www.CatholicCulture.org> [accessed December 20, 2009].

Catholic understanding of work and the person by promulgating his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work) in 1981.⁴⁷

A Personalist Understanding of the Nature and Function of Work

At the basis of John Paul II's theology of work is his philosophical anthropology, which he develops under the influence of the Thomism of Father Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, and in conversation with the phenomenology of Max Scheler. Wojtyla adopts a Transcendental Thomist Personalism that underscores the person as a subject having dignity, free will, and the capacity to act toward his/her own fulfillment.⁴⁸ In his doctoral dissertation on the idea of faith in St. John of the Cross, he suggests that the subjective

⁴⁷See for instance, Fergus Kerr, "Karol Wojtyla," *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1007), p. 163.

⁴⁸For details on this view see, for example, Concluding Address, Kraków, Poland, 10 June 1979 *L'Osservatore Romano* [Eng.] No. 31 (texts no. 15, 34, 35) (30 July 1979), quoted in Msgr. William Murphy, *The Person, the Nation and the State*. Texts of John Paul II (October 1978-January 1980), Vatican City, 1980, p. 12. Then Cardinal, Karol Wojtyla points out that "A human person is a free and reasonable being. He or she is a knowing and responsible subject. He or she can and must, with the power of personal thought, come to know the truth. He or she can and must choose and decide..." In his *Love and Responsibility* (Trans. H.T. Willetts [New York: 1981]), in which he notes "The incommunicable, the *inalienable*, in a person is intrinsic to that person's inner self, to the power of self-determination, free will." p. 24. In *The Acting Person* (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), p. 74, Wojtyla writes: "The person, the human being as the person – seen in its ontological basic structure – is the subject of both existence and acting, though it is important to note that the existence proper to him is *personal* and not merely individual – unlike that of an ontologically founded merely individual type of being." See also Robert J. Batue, "The Holy Father Teaches that Work Must Test and Engage the Whole Person, not Just the Physical Aspect," dated April 1996, posted on Homiletic and Pastoral Review-Theology of Work. <http://www.catholic.net/RCC/Periodicals/Homiletic/april96/page24.html>, accessed 10/11/2004. George Huntston William, *The Mind of John Paul II. Origins of his Thought and Action* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), p.117 ff. Hereafter quoted as *The Mind of John Paul II*. Noting the similarity of this personalist stress with the tradition of Christianity, Gregory Baum contends that, "In Christian preaching, the special dignity of the workers has always been derived from his personal engagement, fidelity and dedication, and not so much from the value attributed by society to the work done. Even workers engaged in menial tasks are deserving of honor; their dignity is that of faithful servants." (*The Priority of Labor* [New York: Paulist Press, 1982], p. 15). See also Ronald D. Lawler, O.F.M. Cap., *The Christian Personalism of John Paul II* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982); A. Woznicki, *Karol Wojtyla's Existential Personalism* (New Britain, CT.: Mariel, 1979); J. F. Drane, "The Philosophical Roots of John Paul II," *America*, May 26, 1975; Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, "The Origins of the Philosophy of John Paul II," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (1979 Meetings), pp. 28-35; and George A. Williams, "An Intellectual Portrait of Pope John Paul II," *Worldview*, 22 (January-February 1979), pp. 21-26.

dimension of the human experience of the divine enables all Christians to communicate with and participate in God through faith. All believers are summoned to this mystical union for their self-realization as well as a personal and genuine knowledge of God.⁴⁹ For Wojtyla then, obligation, morality, freedom, and truth are important aspects without which a personal act may undermine human dignity. As he explains in his first encyclical:

The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces, that is to say from the result of the work of his hands and, even more so, of the work of his intellect and tendencies of his will. All too soon, and often in an unforeseeable way, what this manifold activity of man yields is not only subjected to “alienation”, in the sense that it is simply taken away from the person who produces it, but rather it turns against man itself, at least in part, through the indirect consequences of its effects returning on himself. This seems to make up the main chapter of the drama of present-day human existence in its broadest and universal dimension.⁵⁰

It is from this socio-economic perspective that John Paul II’s engagement with the theology of work in *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work) is to be seen. Basically, this encyclical derives from the Roman Catholic social teaching tradition. It upholds the dignity of work and recognizes the human being as the appropriate subject of work. It advocates the preeminence of the person over material objects. It views work as a reality

⁴⁹Karol Wojtyla, *Doctrina de fide apud S. Ioannem a Cruce* [*The Doctrine of Faith According to St. John of the Cross*]. English translation Jordan Aumann, O.P. *Faith According to St. John of the Cross* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981). It is worth noting that, in addition to his mentor Father Garrigou-Lagrange, the lay Catholic spiritual guru of St. Stanislaw Kosta church of Debniki, Jan Tyranowski, influenced Wojtyla’s dissertation topic. Tyranowski founded the Living Rosary youth group and acquainted Wojtyla with St. John of the Cross and Spanish mysticism. See also George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), pp. 85-87; Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla. The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*. Trans. Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 44-47. Hereafter quoted as *Karol Wojtyla*.

⁵⁰John Paul II, *Redemptor Humanis* [*Redeemer of Man*] (March 4, 1979), no. 15 Cf. see also his *The Acting Person*. Trans. Adrzej Potocki (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), p. 172.

whereby human being finds self-realization and collaborates with God's creative activity.⁵¹

John Paul II gives a sense of the historical situation of his encyclical by recording the latest advances in economics, technology, and politics that create broad challenges for work and the modern worker in the twentieth century: the pervasive insertion of machinery into various spheres of fabrication, the escalated price of energy and natural resources, the expanding recognition of the limitations of natural resources and of environmental degradation, including the irruption on the political arena of former colonized nations and people requesting their duly prerogative to participate in the decision-making process. John Paul II declares that the ninetieth anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* [*The Condition of Labor*] prompted him to write *Laborem Exercens* (*On Human Work*) to address human work, in an attempt to formulate a universal principle of justice.⁵²

John Paul II has three objectives in articulating this personalist theology of work. First, he wants to underline the church's duty to highlight the nobility and privileges of workers. Second, he aims to point out that the church must denounce circumstances

⁵¹John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, nos. 5, 12, 25. In his "Work as Creative of Persons: John Paul II's Thomistic Personalism," Reverend Robert E. Lauder remarks "The Pope's vision in everything he says and in everything he writes is a profound vision, perhaps springing from mystical experience, but certainly Karol Wojtyla's background as a professor of philosophy has served him well. Accompanying his faith vision, supporting it and at times elaborating on it, is a profound philosophical vision that is a combination of Thomism and contemporary Personalism." <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/le/papers/lauder.pdf>, accessed 12/11/2008.

⁵²John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* [*On Human Work*], 1981, nos. 253-254; 357. See also, Gregory Baum, *The Priority of Labor*, pp. 5-6; Peter J. Henriot et al., *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), pp. 75 ff; Bishop Jan P. Schotte, "The Social Teaching of the Church: *Laborem Exercens*, A New Challenge," *Review of Social Economy*, Vol. 40 (December 1982), p. 341.

wherein such nobility and prerogatives are infringed. Third, he seeks to indicate that the church needs to accompany the transformation of the reality of work with a view to guaranteeing genuine betterment by both human being and society.⁵³

John Paul II stresses the dignity of human work grounded in the word of God recorded in the book of Genesis. Work constitutes an intrinsic facet of humankind, he points out, since humans are created in God's image to work and care for the earth. This scriptural grounding of his theological anthropology leads John Paul II to define work as every human activity. He regards human being as simultaneously the subject and ends of work, and maintains that work is designed to serve the person and not the other way around.⁵⁴

John Paul II underscores that work comprises both an objective and subjective element.⁵⁵ The objective aspect of work consist of the factors of production such as land, machinery, capital including intellectual/scientific work and service industry or the means thereby goods and services are created based on human dominion over the earth. The subjective aspect of work involves human beings who act upon factors of production to manufacture commodities and provide services. "Man has to subdue the earth and dominate it, because as the *image of God* he is a person, that is to say, a subjective being

⁵³ Ibid, no. 1. See John Paul II, "Constructing a more Just Society," *Origins* 16 (1985): 160-163.

⁵⁴John Paul II, *On Human Work*, no. 4. See Miroslav Volf, "On Human Work: An Evaluation of the Key Ideas of the Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37 (1984): 65-67. Richard McCormick points out, "Hence the evil dimension of any system that reduces the person to a mere instrument. Work should bring about growth and a sense of accomplishment in the human person. It is, therefore, not primarily what is done by the person doing it (work in the subjective sense) that is primary." ("Notes on Moral Theology: 1981," *Theological Studies* 43, No. 1[(March 1982], p. 94).

⁵⁵John Paul II, *On Human Work*, nos. 5-6. "The sources and dignity of work are to be sought primarily in the subjective dimension, not in the objective one" (no. 6).

capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself and with a tendency to self-realization. As person, man is therefore the subject of work.”⁵⁶

The pope gives priority to the subjective aspect of work over the objective dimension, and argues that work symbolizes and enhances human dignity.⁵⁷

Although John Paul II acknowledges the pain and drudgery generally involved in work, he holds that this human reality has personal and social worth for human beings: First, the Pope declares work constitutes a means for both physical sustenance and fulfillment.

[Work] is not only good in the sense that is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being something worthy, that is to say, something that corresponds to man’s dignity that expresses that dignity and increases it. . . .work is a good thing for man – a good thing for his humanity – because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed in a sense become “more a human being.”⁵⁸

Second, human work has also a social worth that forms the basis of the institution of the family, which is created and sustained by work, enabling thus the family unit, in turn, to perform its multiform function, notably teaching its members. On this basis John Paul II states that family plays a significant role in “shaping the social and ethical order of human work.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, the Pope stresses the role of society not only in instilling values to its members but also in incorporating and expanding the general work of fellow

⁵⁶Ibid, no. 6.

⁵⁷John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, nos. 5-6.

⁵⁸Ibid, no. 9.

⁵⁹Ibid, no. 10.

citizens of different epochs. These personal, familial, and societal domains are central to the subjective aspect of work.⁶⁰

A central tenet of *Laborem Exercens* entails John Paul II's belief that human work is a wellspring of indispensable rights for the workers. He examines those rights within the larger framework of human rights. The Pope claims that "Respect for this broad range of human rights constitutes the fundamental condition for peace in the modern world..."⁶¹

First, he holds that humans have the right to employment—which, in his opinion, is a "moral obligation" deriving both from God's mandate to "subdue and dominate the earth" and from human being's biological necessities. As such, he declares that employment should be provided for all workers. John Paul II further underscores that those who work should have in mind not only their individual needs but also the common good of other members of society and of the entire human race.⁶²

Second, another right the Pope examines includes fair compensation. He asserts that just wage for the performance of one's job constitutes a key for measuring the justice

⁶⁰John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, no. 10. Ed Marciniak, "John Paul's Spirituality of Work," claims "The question to which [the pope] asks us to respond is larger, on the one hand, and more personal, on the other. How can a social and economic system best serve workers, their children and grandchildren? How can it enhance the meaning and dignity of work? How can it reach the ideal described by St. Irenaeus: 'The glory of God is man fully alive'" (*The Priest*, 38 [October 1982]: 34).

⁶¹Ibid, no. 16. See Thomas Ewald, "The Immorality of Unemployment," *Our Sunday Visitor*, 71 (1982), pp. 3-4.

⁶²Ibid, nos. 17-18. See Helen Ginsburg, "Teachings of Jean-Paul II on Work and the Rights of Workers," *Social Thought*, Vol. 13 (Spring-Summer 1987), pp. 46-59.

of a socio-economic system. Appropriate compensation enables workers to establish and maintain a family and to provide it with a future.⁶³

Third, John Paul II indicates that workers are entitled also to social benefits that include health care, vacation, insurance against accident, and adequate working environment that facilitates and maintains physical health. It is worth noting the Pope's conviction that medical care for workers should be easily accessible and within their financial means or gratis, if necessary. John Paul II holds that workers have a fundamental right to rest: it includes normally Sunday rest and yearly vacation or, when feasible, brief durations of rest taken twice a year. Fourth, he states that workers have a right to form labor unions. He deems labor unions essential, since they represent a "mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice, for the just rights of working people in accordance with their individual professions" within the common good of a given society.⁶⁴

John Paul II claims that worker solidarity within a nation and among countries constitutes an invaluable tool for achieving social justice. Historically, he recalls that "worker solidarity" is a movement that originated in the nineteenth century among manufacturing workers purporting to unite their action over against dehumanization, oppression, and injustice. The Pope maintains that this problem surfaces because the "liberal socio-political system" favors only capitalistic entrepreneurs and neglects the prerogatives of the worker on the alarming abnormal assertion that work consists only of

⁶³Ibid, no. 19.

⁶⁴Ibid, no. 20.

the factors of production, of which capital is the key, essential component and object of fabrication.⁶⁵

John Paul II believes that worker solidarity can be highly fruitful when, besides the objective element of work, it also takes into consideration the subjective aspect of work and the rights of the worker inherent to such subjectivity. He further holds that such movement must be inclusive and opened to conversation with other groups. John Paul II calls for the growth of more organizations of worker solidarity as a means for the exploited workers worldwide to secure justice; he claims that the church makes such undertaking her own.

In order to achieve social justice in the various parts of the world, in the various countries and in the relationships between them, there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers. This solidarity must be present whenever it is called for by the social degrading of the subject of work, by exploitation of the workers and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger. The church is firmly committed to this cause for she considers it her mission, her service, a proof of her fidelity to Christ, so that she can truly be the *church of the poor*.⁶⁶

Although the manifestation of the poor occurs at different intervals, in divergent shapes and locations, John Paul II recognizes, their presence emanates from the assault on the nobility of work by reason of restricted occasions for work or due to a lack of appreciation for work and of the privileges arisen from it, particularly the right to an adequate compensation and to the social benefits of the worker and of his/her dependents.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid, no. 8.

John Paul II posits “the principle of the priority of labor over capital,” meaning that in the domain of fabrication the person has supremacy over the factors production. In other words, the subjectivity of the worker and the privileges deriving from it hold more importance than the means (land, machinery, and capital) whereby good and/or services are made. As the Pope explains, “In this process labor is always a primary efficient cause, while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere instrument or instrumental cause.”⁶⁷

John Paul II claims that human experience demonstrates the veracity of this axiom: the action of making the resources of nature fruitful to humanity by means of work requires human being to take possession of tiny portions of the wealth of nature. He concludes this subsection stating that this fact, which reiterates a segment of the church’s doctrine, needs to be stressed in light of both the reality of work and the entire social and economic structure. Emphasis and greater significance must be given to the importance of human being in the course of fabrication, the preeminence of the person over objects. The Pope asserts: “Everything contained in the concept of capital in the strict sense is

⁶⁷Ibid, no. 12. Richard McCormick elaborates on this line of thought indicating: “Capital is for labor, not vice versa. Thus the error of economism that considers labor only according to its economic purpose. Both Capitalism and Socialism are critiqued by these principles. John Paul II returns over and over again to these two principles, examines them from several points of view, and traces everything he subsequently says to these bases.” (“Notes on Moral Theology: 1981,” *Theological Studies*, 43, No. 1 [March 1982], p. 94). Contradicting the argument that John Paul II offers a third way, Bishop Jan P. Schotte, “The Social Teaching of the Church: Laborem Exercens, A New Challenge,” writes, “John Paul II destroys any rationalization for the opposition between labor and capital and asks us to go beyond the ideological systems constantly oppressing each other in today’s World. The reasons for his appeal are not of a tactical nature. He does not propose a “third way” between liberal Capitalism and Marxism. He asks us to go beyond, to push further and deeper, in order to reach human persons while respecting the destiny assigned to them by God himself. In the debate between capitalism and communism, he offers elements for a critique of both Systems, elements that enable each system to check and correct itself in order to respond to the full demands of human dignity” (*Review of Social Economy*, Vol. 40 [December 1982], pp. 349-350).

only a collection of things.”⁶⁸ Only human being is a person and subject of work, regardless of his/her function. The veracity of this principle holds significant and crucial outcomes.

What is the significance of this principle? This standard reiterates the church’s position vis-à-vis the contention between labor and capital: the multitude of workers (labor) who, in order to survive, sell their labor force to a tiny but powerful group that manages and/or possesses the means of manufacturing good and/or producing services. This dissension results from the fact that management and ownership, seeking to maximize earnings, overwork and underpay the workers, whose environment is inadequate and living conditions wretched. The Pope believes that class exploitation and injustice can be uprooted through adherence to the criterion concerning the preeminence of the person over material objects. John Paul II claims that work constitutes the “essential key to the whole social question,” particularly when such issues is viewed from the standpoint of human flourishing.⁶⁹

John Paul II’s Ethical and Spiritual Assumptions

John Paul II’s thinking had been strongly influenced by the Scripture and the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church. Consequently the ethical and spiritual presuppositions of his theology of work derive principally from these sources. The Pope utilizes both the Old Testament and the New Testament, but he acquires his insight particularly from the first chapter of the book of Genesis noting that human beings had

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid, no.3.

been created “in the image of God...[as] male and female [to be] fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.”⁷⁰

This biblical text forms the foundation of the Pope’s view that work constitutes an intrinsic aspect of human life, since human beings are made in God’s image to care for the earth. In executing this obligation through work, the Pope believes, humans participate in God’s creative activity. In so doing, human beings simultaneously subdue the earth, take dominion over the earth, and are being responsible for the earth.

Moreover, the Second Vatican Council’s teaching that “Human labor ...is superior to the other elements of economic life” helped form John Paul II’s basic principle concerning the preeminence of the person over material objects. The Pope also built on the Council Fathers’ notion that the mode of production must accommodate workers’ personal and familial needs to develop his view regarding the rights of workers.⁷¹

Accordingly, John Paul II presents a pathway out of economism and materialism, offering a new way of thinking about work. He rejects these ideologies’ one-dimensional view of work that (a) sees labor and capital as inimical to each other; and (b) considers human labor as merchandise whereby “man is treated as an instrument of production.”⁷² In attaching supreme significance to the subjective aspect of work, Jean Paul II relegates

⁷⁰Genesis 1:26.28, quoted from John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, no. 4. Biblical texts are taken from the New American Bible unless otherwise indicated.

⁷¹Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 67. For a detailed account of the link between *Gaudium et Spes* and *Laborem Exercens*, see Robert J. Batule, “The Holy Father Teaches that Work Must Test and Engage the Whole Person, not Just the Physical Aspect,” <http://www.catholic.net/RCC/Periodicals/Homelitic/april96/page24.html> [accessed April 12, 1996].

⁷²*Laborem Exercens*, no. 7.

the objective element to lower standard and treats labor and capital as interdependent. The basis of the Pope's position lies in his belief that the font of the nobility of work resides in the fact that the person who performs it is a subject endowed with *imago dei* (image of God), freedom, reason, rights, and autonomy. This subjectivity endures despite oppression and dehumanization in the world of work, and has more worth than capital. Hence the standard about "the priority of labor over capital," wherein the worker is understood as the "true maker and creator" of production, constitutes the basic ethical presupposition of *Laborem Exercens, On Human Work*.

Furthermore, John Paul II advocates a new way of judging work grounded on its intrinsic value. Work fulfills not only the person and increases his/her human dignity, but also contributes to the welfare of human beings in society and globally. In other words, John Paul II believes that work must be judged in function of the possibilities for the common good and human self-realization it provides for self, society, and humanity. As such, the notion that work must serve human beings is the second moral presupposition of this encyclical. On this basis, any actions that exploit and dehumanize workers are wrong. Similarly, ideologies that lead to degradation of work are invalid for authentic moral judgments about human work.

Implicit to the previous moral premise is the Pope's deep-rooted norm that fair wage not only enables workers to establish and maintain a family and provide it with a future, but also constitutes a crucial criterion for determining the fairness of a social and

economic arrangement.⁷³ Accordingly, this principle forms the third ethical assumption of John Paul II's theology of work.

The underlying significance of these ethical assumptions entails that the "right order of values" be respected. What is the right order of values? John Paul II responds that it consists in the supremacy of the person over material entities. The Pope invites all to behave according to this moral ideal. The employers and the state are to create work that would enable workers to accomplish their moral obligation and to achieve self-realization. Employees are to establish worker solidarity to guarantee justice and respect of their rights. The church has the responsibility to take a vanguard role in this endeavor. Human achievement through work (the Pope's view of the good) is obtained primarily when workers' human dignity and rights are affirmed, their need for solidarity asserted, and their common good given preference.

Equally significant is John Paul II's belief that work, which involves both the body and spirit of the person, is cooperation with God's creative activity. By this he means that God is the true Creator, for only God creates from nothing. Human actions constitute their participation in what God up to now continues to create. This is a basic spiritual assumption of *Laborem Exercens*. Secondly, the Pope claims that human work, which fosters the development of both society and the kingdom, implies exertion and occurs in the context of the cross and resurrection of Christ. This is another spiritual presupposition of John Paul II's theology of work. The underlying significance of these spiritual assumptions lies in that they underscore the role work plays in the economy of

⁷³*Laborem Exercens*, no. 19.

salvation. As such, let us now examine the relationship of *Laborem Exercens* with the social and ecological crisis analyzed in Chapter I.

Critical Consideration

Does *Laborem Exercens* offer any helpful lens for examining the stark poverty and structural violence of Haitian workers analyzed in Chapter One? John Paul II's theology of work does provide important themes and sensitivities to help us see the whole spectrum of the concept of work and the extent of its degradation in Haiti, including the violation of workers' rights. His view that work represents an intrinsic facet of humankind is significant. The Pope's contention that work constitutes a condition for human fulfillment and his claim that work manifests and increases human dignity reveal a salient moral aspect of the notion and reality of work.

Similarly, John Paul II's discussion of the relevance of Jesus Christ as well as his cross and resurrection underscores the spiritual dimension of work. These ethical and spiritual dimensions are imperative for a thorough understanding of work. His advocacy in favor of the rights of workers is insightful. His position regarding the church's obligation in the face of blatant violation of workers' rights is quite beneficial.

Equally noteworthy is the pope's consideration regarding the wrong order of values, which can help scrutinize the Haitian social system and work structure as to whether or not they give preeminence to capital and relegate Haitian working class to low standard. John Paul II's principle regarding the preeminence of the person over material objects and his emphasis on common good, social justice, solidarity, and self-realization

are quite helpful, since they represent broad moral convictions for asking concrete questions to Haitian society and conditions of work.

The encyclical does show cognizance of the ecological devastation threatening the earth.⁷⁴ However, by framing human being the actor and nature the thing acted upon – human as subject/nature as object – *Laborem Exercens* constitutes a tremendously human-centered document that is ecologically unhelpful. When read in the context of the first chapter of this dissertation, John Paul II's distinction between objective and subjective work may prove problematic for the harsh realities of environmental degradation in Haiti. The Pope sets out a human separate from nature model that is very traditional. Haiti illustrates how poverty pushes people into deforestation and ecological degradation, which in turn reinforces poverty and human suffering. Haiti's example demonstrates nature is not a mere object, but a dynamic interactive partner with humanity, exemplified not by Genesis 1 but Genesis 2.

This dissertation can overcome this problem and still benefit from the insights and input of *Laborem Exercens* by illustrating the inadequacy of the frame employed in this letter with Theodore Hiebert's "The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations in Christian Traditions."⁷⁵ This article's basic thrust, which depicts nature as a co-partner to be stewarded, can convincingly expand the horizon of John Paul II's theology of work in

⁷⁴It points, for instance, to "the growing realization that the heritage of nature is limited and that it is being intolerably polluted," *Laborem Exercens*, no. 1.

⁷⁵Theodore Hiebert, "The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations in Christian Traditions," *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*. Eds. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 135-154.

seeing human work not just anthropocentrically but also specifically from an ecological standpoint.

Miroslav Volf

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Son of a Pentecostal pastor, Volf received from his parents a solid Christian education, which sharply contrasted with the dominant, atheistic-communist culture of former Yugoslavia.⁷⁷ At 16, his then future brother-in-law, Peter Kuzmič, currently professor of missiology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, played a preponderant role in Volf's intellectual development by gently guiding him to the study of such masters as Bertrand Russell (philosophy), Rudolf Bultmann (theology), and C.S. Lewis (apologetics).⁷⁸

⁷⁶Miroslav Volf, Curriculum Vitae, <http://www.yale.edu/divinity/cv/MVOLF.pdf> [accessed 10/09/1009].

⁷⁷Volf endorsed such culture in his earlier years, but rejected it at 16. See Miroslav Volf, "Theology for a Way of Life," *Practicing Theology. Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), p. 257; see also M. Volf, "In My Own Voice," *Christian Century*, 116 no. 35 (December 15, 1999), p. 1234.

⁷⁸Tim Stafford, "The New Theologians," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (February 8, 1999), pp. 36-37; Steve Robitaille, "Les Implications Sociales de la Foi Chrétienne chez le Théologien D'Origine Croate Miroslav Volf," (master's thesis, Université de Montréal, 2003, pp. 3-4).

A member of the Episcopal Church (U.S.A.) and of the Evangelical Church (Croatia), Volf holds a B.A. from the Evangelical-Theological Faculty in Osijek, Croatia, an M.A. from Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, and a Ph.D. in theology from the University of Tübingen. His doctoral dissertation, *Zukunft Der Arbeit, Arbeit Der Zukunft: Der Arbeitsbegriff Bei Karl Marx Und Seine Theologische Wertung*, attempts to articulate a theological analysis of Karl Marx's understanding of work. Volf's interest in the subject of work came while serving on the selection committee reviewing drafts of papers being submitted for the second Oxford Conference on Christian Faith and Economics in 1987. He found himself deeply engaged by several of the papers he read and became preoccupied with the subject of work during his doctoral studies at the University of Tübingen under the influence of German theologian Jürgen Moltmann.⁷⁹

Volf has written extensively on a variety of subjects including ecclesiology, pneumatology, the Trinity, peace and conflict-resolution, social justice issues, and so forth. His theology has been characterized as creative, post-modern, and pacifist with political implications. In fact, for him, theology involves both interpreting and transforming the world.⁸⁰ Miroslav Volf's main works include: *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (1991), *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (1996), *After our Likeness: The Church in the*

⁷⁹Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit. Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. xi. Hereafter quoted as *Work in the Spirit*.

⁸⁰See for instance, A. James Reimer, "Miroslav Volf: One of the New Theologians," *The Conrad Grebel Review*, vol. 8, no. 3 (Fall 2000), pp. 4-5; Tim Stafford, *ibid*, p. 36; Steve Robitaille, *ibid*, pp. 5-11. Quoted in Tim Stafford, "The New Theologians," *ibid*, p. 37. Gordon R. Preece, "The Threefold Call: a Trinitarian and Reformed Theology of Vocation in Response to Volf's *Work in the Spirit*," PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1997.

Image of the Trinity (1998), *Zukunft der Arbeit-Arbeit der Zukunft: Der Arbeitsbegriff Bei Karl Marx Und Seine Theologische Wertung* (1998, Tübingen University, Dissertation, 1986), *God Who Forgives* (2005), *The Future of Hope: Christian Tradition Amid Modernity and Postmodernity* (2006), *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (1996).

A Charismatic View of Work

In 1991 Volf published *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, which is a rewriting of his doctoral dissertation. In this publication he postulates a theology of work grounded on Moltmann's eschatology and the Pauline view of charisma. This book represents then a theological consideration of the reality of work from a dogmatic standpoint. It points out that the Christian life is a life in the Spirit; work is just one dimension of the Christian journey in the Spirit. It suggests new *creation* as the fundamental concept upon which to articulate a charismatic theology of work. Volf contends it is the deficiency of the vocational view of work prevalent in the Lutheran tradition that prompts him to articulate this charismatic theology of work.⁸¹

⁸¹Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp. vii-viii. Volf explains that *Work in the Spirit* does not represent "an all-out attack on the vocational understanding of work. Rather, it seeks to draw on its strengths while avoiding what I consider to be its serious weaknesses. ... There is no charisma without call; this is what the use of 'vocation' underlines. But there is no genuine call without an endowment by the Spirit; this is what I wanted to emphasize when speaking about a charismatic understanding of work" ("Eschaton, Creation, and Social Ethics," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 [1995], pp. 131.132). Joanne Elise Engquist contends that Volf's "argument establishing a need for such theological reflection is persuasive..." [Review of "Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work," by Miroslav Volf, *Word & World* 13, no. 2 (Spring 1993), p. 215]. David Brown, however, offers a twofold critique of Miroslav Volf's use of new creation as his basic theological paradigm for articulating his pneumatological theology of work. Brown claims, "...in suggesting that everything be related to new creation the character of much work, so far from being enhanced, is actually demoted... The atheist cleaning a church or an illiterate scrubbing the floor of a school may find themselves diminished by being asked to reflect on their contribution to some wider goal... In short, a more piecemeal approach may be the more effective way of securing dignity. [Moreover] to refer to 'charismata' to the future (new creation) rather than the past (creation) would seem inevitably to distort where the principal question must lie: the realization of already existing capacities and

Volf has three objectives in formulating this theology of work. First, he seeks to show that the vocational view of work is irrelevant to contemporary's industrial and service-oriented societies. Formulated in the medieval conception of divine calling, the theological idea of vocation suggests one stable occupation that contravenes today's prevailing ever-changing and prodigious job-market. Second, he wants to explain that the vocational insight of work is impervious to possible degradation and alienation in work. If work is perceived as divine calling that need be performed in joyful fidelity regardless of one's employment conditions, then Christians, and Christianity for that matter, have no moral obligation to denounce and help transform degrading and humiliating working situations. Third, he strives to argue that "a theology of charisms supplies a stable foundation on which to erect a theology of work that is both faithful to the divine revelation and relevant to the modern world of work."⁸² Therefore, Volf attempts to elaborate a theology of work – by shifting the paradigm of work, from a vocational idea as seen from the dogma of creation to a pneumatological view as formulated from an eschatological standpoint – and to explicate normative standards to establish guidelines for appraising and re-organizing the reality of work.⁸³

potentialities..." [Review of "Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work," by Miroslav Volf, *Studies in Christian Ethics* 6 [1993], pp. 76-77).

⁸²Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 110. Steve Robitaille, *Les Implications Sociales de la Foi Chrétienne Chez le Théologien D'Origine Croate Miroslav Volf*, asserts "Sa théologie a remis à l'ordre du jour l'importance de l'eschatologie, de la christologie et de la doctrine trinitaire, et ce dans le cadre d'une 'théologie politique' qui désire faire de la parole chrétienne une parole socialement efficace, c'est-à-dire, une théologie qui recherche des catégories qui ne servent pas à éclairer la conscience, mais à la former et à la transformer." ("His theology has presented on the agenda the importance of eschatology, Christology and Trinitarian doctrine, within the framework of a 'political theology' that wants to make Christian word socially efficient, that is to say, a theology that looks for categories that do not serve to illuminate the conscience, but to form and transform it" (p. 6).

Volf defines work as collaboration with God in transforming the world for the instauration of the new creation. He declares that work represents an essential feature of human life. He asserts that work guarantees the existence and welfare of individual and societies and also shapes human personal and social identity. However, Volf recognizes that despite being a basic facet of human existence, work has undergone alteration throughout history. He contends that industrialization, technology, and computers have modified both the nature and environment of work. Although his primary concern is to delineate the contours of a “comprehensive contemporary theology of work,” Volf concisely addresses the historical reality of work in agriculture, industry, and information. He posits that a theology of work must provide answers to the problems of work pervasive in these sectors.⁸⁴

Volf holds that the principal and most central hallmark of a theology of work articulated on the notion new creation consists in its being a Christian theology. He declares that the doctrines on the economy of salvation and last end provide the foundation upon which to articulate such theology. A Christian theology of work, he

⁸³Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp. x-xi. In his PhD dissertation, “The Threefold Call: A Trinitarian and Reformed Theology of Vocation in Response to Volf’s ‘Work in the Spirit,’ ” Gordon Robert Preece claims, “A Reformed view strengthened by Volf’s pneumatological proposal is better equipped to provide an adequate theology of work/vocation today and fulfill our original scientific criteria for theories” (Abstract).

⁸⁴Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp. 26-27, 35-45. In her review of Volf’s book, Joanne Elise Engquist states: “In a rather lengthy analysis of the ‘contemporary world of work,’ Volf identifies a gradual transformation of work coinciding with shifts in society’s chief fields of work: agricultural, industrial, and information/ service. Recognizing each successive period augments rather than replaces its precursor, Volf prudently examines these strands which are woven into the basic garment of work in today’s world. He argues this rapid transformation generated a ‘crisis of work’ which surfaces now in the predominance of negative attitudes toward work and severe unemployment; concomitant are issues of discrimination, dehumanization, and worker exploitation—all of which find a place in a vicious circle where work alienates persons from themselves, their community, and God” (*Word & World*, 13 no. 2, p. 215).

contends, “is developed on the basis of a specifically Christian soteriology and eschatology, essential to which is the anticipatory experience of God’s new creation and a hope of its future consummation.”⁸⁵ In this vein, Volf claims that the intelligibility of the Christian faith provides Christianity with a clear-cut ascendancy over rational thinking on work.

The basis for this assertion lies in Volf’s belief that “...judgments about right and wrong can be adequately justified only in the context of religious discourse...”⁸⁶ Still Volf argues that there is a hindrance to consider a Christian framework valid for theological discourse on the reality of work: worldwide problems in work, a pluralistic world weakens adherence to Christian beliefs and to their ethical ramifications. Volf acknowledges that “...I can have the advantage of a solid foundation for ethical reflection only at the price of forfeiting its relevance and persuasiveness to a non-Christian audience.”⁸⁷ He stops short of characterizing non-Christian thought improper for moral discourse. He states that the Christian foundation for ethical reflection promotes a grey vision of social reality. For God’s Spirit dwells both in the church and the world awaiting

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 79.

⁸⁶Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, pp.26-36, “Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation: Toward a Pneumatological Interpretation of Work,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, Vol. 9 (Fall 1987): 173-193. For Amy Plantinga Pauw, of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, this view constitutes a drawback resulting partly from “the enormous scope and highly condensed exposition of Volf’s argument” (Review of “Work in the Spirit: Toward and Theology of Work,” by Miroslav Volf, *Theology Today* 49, no. 2 [July 1992], p. 274).

⁸⁷Ibid.

the new creation. Yet he does think that Christian sources are superior to secular ones and, consequently, the former must always be consulted first.⁸⁸

Volf asserts that a theology of work has the moral obligation to read human work in a particular manner and also to guide the reality of work toward what it will be in the new creation. He further contends that the validity of a theology of work hinges on its capacity to propose a vision (of what work ought to be) and also a path to (what work will be in the new creation) fundamental change. Granting that, how can such theology be elaborated? Volf declares:

The transformative function of a theology of work demands that, in developing it, we not only attentively read its sources (biblical revelation on work) and carefully analyze the nature of the object of study (the contemporary situation of work), but also reflect critically on the praxis that can follow from the formulations produced by a theology of work.⁸⁹

In addition, Volf claims that in articulating such a theology, it is imperative to consider potential propensities for distortion generally entrenched in the reasoning of the socio-cultural location where that theology is being formulated. He maintains that a theological understanding of work that promotes change in the reality of work has to exclude any “evolutionist” interpretation of social phenomena. The reason is that, “The concept new creation precludes all naïve belief in the permanence of human moral progress,” writes Volf. “A truly *new* creation can never result from the action of intrahistorical forces pushing history toward ever-superior states.”⁹⁰ This raises the question, Is there any relationship between this world and the impending one? If so, then

⁸⁸Ibid, p. 81.

⁸⁹Ibid, p. 83.

⁹⁰Ibid, p. 84.

what role does the notion new creation play? Inspired by Moltman, Volf establishes a connection between the actual world and a future one, but with a caveat: the new world, he insists, will not break into existing historical reality in a direct fashion. Furthermore, Volf pretends that adherence to the view of new creation contains some value: it provides a standard whereby to appraise actual human progress and admire the fundamental novelty of God's impending creation, without resorting to utopia.⁹¹

Volf argues for a theology of work articulated on the notion that new creation must be comprehensive. He further affirms that, given new creation (the formation of new heaven and earth) constitutes an all-embracing phenomenon, a theology of work formulated on this basic conception must deal with the issue concerning the relationship of work with God, humanity, and the environment. He asserts that such a broad frame of reference finds justification in the importance attached to the reality of work.⁹²

According to Volf, the history of humanity is best seen as the culmination of the integrated work of preceding generations of people. He attests that a proper interpretation of work must involve the purpose of history – when God, humanity, and the entire creation will enjoy abiding peace. Therefore, in Volf's view, an adequate frame of reference for articulating a theology of work must consider the welfare of human beings individually and socially including that of animals and the entire planet earth. On this

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid, pp. 89-90.

basis, Volf declares that an all-embracing eschatology provides a more efficient frame of reference to elaborate a theology of work than anthropology.⁹³

Volf's Ethical and Spiritual Assumptions

Miroslav Volf's theology of work contains informative implications for the moral and spiritual dimensions of work. To begin with, his theological reflections on work draw heavily from the views of Ernst Käsemann, Jürgen Moltmann, and the Apostle Paul.

Ernst Käsemann (1906-1998) was a Lutheran theologian and New Testament professor. His contention that Christian moral life is charismatic informs Volf's notion that Christian living involves a pneumatological outlook.⁹⁴

Jürgen Moltmann is a German Protestant theologian and mentor to Miroslav Volf. Moltmann's eschatological approach advocated in his *Theology of Hope* inspired Volf's conception that Christian living – including human work – is life in the Spirit because of the new creation.⁹⁵

Paul's interpretation of charisms whereby he distinguishes between "the gifts and the fruit" of the Spirit prompts Volf's description of the fruit of the Spirit as pertaining to

⁹³Ibid, pp. 91-92.

⁹⁴Cf. Ernst Käsemann, "Amt und Gemeinde im Neuen Testament," *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, 1: 109-34 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), p. 204, quoted in Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. 111. In his "Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation: Toward a Pneumatological Understanding of Work," Volf asserts that... "charisms should not be defined so broadly as to encompass the whole sphere of ethical activity by Christians. Ernst Käsemann has argued that the whole ethical existence of the Christian, the *nova obediencia*, is charismatic" (p. 184); cf. E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), *New Testament Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), and *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

⁹⁵Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), "The Right to Meaningful Work," *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), *God in Creation. A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*. Trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

the normal disposition of Christian living, or “the lifestyle of those who are indwelled and energized by the Spirit.”⁹⁶ As for the gifts of the Spirit, Volf states they refer to particular duties with which God summons and assigns every Christian.⁹⁷

In effect, Volf contends that new creation provides him with the normative framework on which to elaborate a theology of work. He warns that a subjective, democratic, or utilitarian criterion would be invalid, for in the realm of Christian theology the desire of one person or a group of individuals has no objective validity. The central question here, in Volf’s opinion, consists in “what human beings *should* desire their work to be.”⁹⁸ He proves this claim stating,

What people desire is objectively desirable only when it corresponds to what the loving and just God desires for them as God’s creatures. And God desires *new creation* for them. New creation is the end of all God’s purposes with the universe, and as such, either explicitly or implicitly is the necessary criterion of all human action that can be considered good. For this reason, normative principles are implied in the concept of new creation, which should guide Christians in structuring the reality of human work.⁹⁹

“New creation” is therefore Volf’s basic moral presupposition. In fact, he asserts that the desire of the people may have political significance but lacks ethical relevance. He points out that the liberty of the citizenry and their choice are important to prevent encroachment and tyranny but not sufficient to determine moral value. Still, for Volf,

⁹⁶This specific view of Volf is informed by his interpretation of Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians. A Commentary on the Greek Text [New International Greek Testament Commentary]* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), p. 251, quoted in *Work in the Spirit*, p. 111.

⁹⁷Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, *ibid.*

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

freedom is an essential characteristic of personhood and should constitute one of the elements of human work. Moreover, politics constitutes another feature of Volf's theology of work, which factors into his ethical presupposition. He claims that "Norms may be politically implemented only when they become public preferences through truly democratic processes..."¹⁰⁰ In other words, Volf believes that human work conceived and practiced in light of the new creation precludes despotism.

Volf further holds that the notion of "new creation" involves also standards of justice and love. He posits that justice represents what he labels "ethical minimum," while love suggests "ethical maximum." Love and justice then constitute other moral assumptions of Volf's theology of work. These operative criteria find meaning from within the notion new creation, which forms their foundation. A short analysis of these standards is given by Volf:

All responsible Christian behavior has to satisfy the ethical minimum and, inspired by the sacrificial love of Christ demonstrated on the cross and guided by the vision of the new creation, move toward the ethical maximum. The ethical minimum is the criterion for structuring the world of work, the ethical maximum the necessary regulative ideal.¹⁰¹

In short, new creation provides Volf with an operative principle to articulate his theology of work. New creation, love, and justice form the ethical presuppositions of his pneumatological theology of work. The underlying significance of these moral assumptions is that, in Volf's perspective, they impart the ground upon which to draw up

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 82.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 82-83.

guidelines for assessing and re-configuring the world of work so that it may conform to the will of God, freedom, and democratic participation.

Volf claims that every ordinary Christian activity - including work - engaged in the church or society at large, occurs under the operation of the Spirit. God's Spirit summons, bestows, delegates, and inspires Christians to work in several pursuits - e.g. academics, physical, practical, artistic, and so on.¹⁰² This is a basic spiritual assumption of Volf's theology of work.

For him, work constitutes an essential condition of the Christian life. This contention represents another spiritual presupposition of Volf's theology of work. His reasoning is that insofar as Christian life constitutes life in the Spirit, work represents one aspect of the Christian pilgrimage in the Spirit.

Finally, as a corollary of the previous assumption and of the notion that every activity of a Christian happens under the guidance of the Spirit, Volf asserts that there is no hierarchy of the different duties that a Christian may carry out. In other words, regardless of the nature of the attribution of a Christian, each function holds identical nobility.¹⁰³ This is a crucial spiritual presupposition of Volf's pneumatological theology of work. The fundamental implication of these spiritual assumptions lies in Volf's belief that the Spirit endows the Christian and enables him/her to collaborate with God in

¹⁰²Ibid, pp. 113-14, cf. Is. 28: 24-29.

¹⁰³Ibid, pp. 124-25.

changing the world in hope of the new creation.¹⁰⁴ Discussion of the ethical and spiritual assumptions of Volf's theology of work requires an evaluation of his position.

Critical Consideration

What themes and sensitivities does Volf's pneumatology of work provide for examining the stark poverty and structuralized violence of Haitian workers analyzed in the first chapter? Volf's theology of work reinforces the position of Chenu and John Paul II in stressing the moral and spiritual dimensions of work. In this vein, his consideration about the relationship between spirit-work-environment, the transformative character of a theology of work, as well as work and the common good are all useful elements to be explored and/or promote in Haiti's conditions of work. However, Volf's deductive method is not helpful. It blatantly overlooks the historical situation of work of real men and women. His methodology cannot help us see the lived reality of Haitian workers including the social structure that constrains their personal growth and freedom.

Volf's consideration of the interaction between work and nature in a sound theology of work is significant. For him, insofar as work forms the site of human encounter with nature where precisely environmental devastation materializes, human survival and flourishing hinges on humanity's capacity to work responsibly in nature. He rightly believes that an adequate theology needs to consider the interaction of work with nature.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 123.

¹⁰⁵Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. 42.

A Comparative Evaluation of the Adequacy of

Chenu, John Paul II, and Volf

There are common or parallel features in the theologies of these three thinkers that are helpful to me for developing my own theological ethics of work in relation to the situation of work in Haiti. I will identify and briefly describe these understandings, and then evaluate their adequacy in addressing the critical issues facing workers in Haiti.

Volf's endorsement of the deductive method for developing a theology of work is opposed to a historical-inductive procedure in Chenu, and a to personalist approach in John Paul II. The basis for Volf's position hinges on the scarcity of biblical texts on work, while Chenu and John Paul II invoke the rise in awareness of the proletariat and the subjective aspect of work respectively. Theological ethical discourse on work must, first, consider the revolt of the proletariat against dehumanization and injustice (Chenu). Second, it needs to keep in view the "right order of values" by instituting the superiority of the person over material objects (John Paul II). Third, it must purposefully link biblical passages relating to work with a particular interpretation of the Bible and the historical situation of a given social location (Volf).

The view that work symbolizes and raises human dignity has been prominently developed and defended by Volf, Chenu, and particularly John Paul II. The Pope bases his claim on scripture, whereas Chenu and Volf establish such nobility on work itself. One particular understanding common to these three figures entails the notion of work not only as a means both of human self-realization and collaboration in creation, but also as a basic facet of human life.

The topic of the spiritual dimension of human work acknowledged in Chenu is also present in both John Paul II and Volf. For Chenu, the divinity or grace of work inhabits the humanity and fellowship of the proletariat. In John Paul II and Miroslav Volf, work embodies a spiritual feature through the person, cross and resurrection of Christ, and the Spirit respectively.

The position denouncing injustice and dehumanization while promoting workers' rights holds distinctive significance for all three thinkers. What Chenu argues passionately about in terms of Christian solidarity with the proletariat on the basis of the gospel finds justification as church's duty and human rights in John Paul II, and correlation between work and common good in Miroslav Volf.

Although Chenu and John Paul II assert that an effective theological ethics of work requires structural economic change, only Miroslav Volf proposes a transformative theology of work. The reason consists in that new creation, the basic concept upon which Volf draws in developing his pneumatological theology of work, provides the criterion of what a theology of work ought to be – transform all things into what they will be in the kingdom. Similarly despite the reality of work holds enormous significance for all three theologians, John Paul II exclusively understands work as the solution to social problems.

All three figures examine work in view of creation and sin. Chenu grants a pivotal role to the doctrines of incarnation and redemption, whereas Volf emphasizes eschatology. Among the three figures only John Paul II notices the work and plight of women.

CHAPTER III
LIBERATION THEOLOGY, THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT,
AND ECOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will note the distinctive contributions liberation theology offers to enrich themes developed in examining conditions of working people and poverty in Haiti (Chapter I) and the theologies of work (Chapter II). For this purpose, similar to Chapter II, I will draw from and discuss prominent themes developed in Latin American theology pertinent to my dissertation from key works of three figures—a well-known representative of Latin American theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, and two Haitian liberation theologians, Godefroy Midy, “Jalons pour une théologie haitienne libératrice en dialogue avec G. Gutiérrez and J.L. Segundo,” and Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *In the Parish of the Poor*.¹

Liberation theology provides invaluable input to a deeper understanding of the socio-historical situation of the poor and workers of Haiti. Indeed Latin American theology—given its energetic and definite commitment to the liberation of the poor; its emphasis on the social and political dimensions of the faith; its preferential option for the poor; its emphasis on the political dimension of the Christian faith; its commitment to the

¹Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *In the Parish of the Poor: Writing from Haiti* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990); and Godefroy Midy, “Jalons pour une théologie Haitienne Libératrice en dialogue avec G. Gutiérrez et J.L. Segundo,” PhD diss., Université de Montréal, 1977.

liberation of the poor—offers a robust indictment of social injustice, neocolonial stratification, and highlights important aspects of work and labor that the theologies of work overlook. Latin American theology, I contend, provides significant contribution toward a better understanding of the conditions of poverty and work in Haiti and toward pushing the theological reflection on work to engage the stark class-lines of oppression and institutionalized violence.

However, Latin American theology has two blind spots which need attention. First, it tends to pay insufficient attention to practical policy suggestions that can help develop agriculture, jobs, socio-economic freedom and hope. Second, it generally shows little awareness of ecological issues and their impact on the poor and oppressed. Liberation theology needs to be fleshed out more with knowledge of ecological issues as that offered by environmentalists like Lester Brown, and with development models such as the “capability approach” developed by Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum and others. For these scholars, the “capability approach” represents a new development framework that emphasizes individual freedoms as criteria for human well-being, rather than simply focusing on a rise in wages and income.

Historical Background

Liberation theology is an intellectual and religious movement that arose in the early 1970s in Latin America over against the prevalent developmental model and corresponding theology. Informed by Marxist philosophy and dependency theory, liberation theology critically reflects on the oppression and injustice of the Latin American people in light of the world of God. The inability of classical theology to

accompany Christians who had been involved in liberating activities in solidarity with the poor provided the impetus for the development of liberation theology.

Although influenced by Vatican II and modern European philosophy and theology, liberation theology would develop its own priority, method, spirituality, and distinctiveness grounded on the winds of change that characterized Latin American socio-political and ecclesial context of the 1950s and 1960s.² Cases in point are the features delineated above. This statement underscores Gutiérrez's position lamenting "the tendency to regard liberation theology as the radical, political wind of European progressive theology. Such a view of liberation theology is clearly a caricature for anyone with a good knowledge of the subject."³ Hence, given the historical development of Latin American theology, are there areas for cooperation between liberation theology and development theories?

At first glance, liberation theology would be suspicious of theories of development and understandably so, given how the developmental approach during the 1950s and 1960s failed to lead Latin America to the promised autonomous economic development. The bad taste of that experience is still vivid in the memory of Latin American theologians.⁴

²Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), p. 5.

³Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation. History, Politics and Salvation*. Rev. ed. with new intr. trans. and ed. by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), p. xxix.

⁴A history of the critique of the developmentalist paradigm can be found in José Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 12-13, 26-27, 31; Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 14-25; and José Comblin, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 31-35, 113-120.

“Developmentalism,” which obviously alludes to development, conveys a worldwide social and intellectual movement that emerged in the 1950s with a view to guiding the southern nations – the underdeveloped countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America – to self-sustained economic development.⁵ Encouraged by the success of the Marshall Plan recovery of Western Europe, developmentalism characterizes the southern nations as backward and static. It claims that capital accumulation, massive foreign aid coupled with technology, diversification, industrialization, and planning would lead those nations to the take-off stage and from there to modernization and high mass consumption similar to Western Europe, the United States, and Japan. With such emphasis, Gutiérrez indicates, instead of being an integral and harmonious process the development envisioned here “would be synonymous with economic growth.”⁶ Naomi Klein, in her informative book *The Shock Doctrine*, corroborates the reasoning underlying the development effort:

Developmentalist economists argued that their countries would finally escape the cycle of poverty if only they pursued an inward-oriented industrialization strategy instead of relying on the export of natural resources, whose prices had been on a declining path, to Europe and America. They advocated regulating or even nationalizing oil, minerals

⁵*Developmentalism* also refers to a multi-disciplinary school of thought that “in the international economic context can be understood as consisting of a set of ideas which converge to place economic development at the center of political endeavors and institutions and also as a means through which to establish legitimacy in the political sphere,” “Developmentalism,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developmentalism> [accessed March 24, 2006]. William Easterly, “The Ideology of Development,” deems developmentalism as a tenet that purports to provide universal solutions to problems in all places. “The power of developmentalism is disheartening, because the failure of all the previous ideologies might have laid the groundwork for the opposite of ideology—the freedom of individuals and societies to choose their destinies” (*Foreign Policy*, 163 [July/August 2007], p. 31); and Immanuel Wallerstein, “After Developmentalism and Globalization, what?” *Social Forces*, Vol. 83, No. 3 (March 2005), pp. 1265-1278.

⁶Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 15.

and other key industries so that a healthy share of the proceeds fed a government-led development process.⁷

State intrusion in economic policy was anything but voluntary. Klein declares that the United States used the Central Intelligence Agency and highly disruptive techniques to push coups and impose developmentalism in many countries in Latin America. In fact, countries like Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Chile were the first to embark in that modernization process, under the sponsorship of international organizations such as the United Nations, which launched the First Decade of Development in 1950 and the Alliance for Progress in 1961. Other agencies that embarked on the development policy include the Organization of America States (OAS), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Agency for International Development (AID), and the International Development Bank (IDB). The influx of foreign technology, the support and guidance of so many agencies, and the development movement itself aroused great hope that the southern nations were indeed about to break out of their traditional economic slump. As Klein notes:

During this dizzying period of expansion, the Southern Cone began to look more like Europe and North America than the rest of Latin America or other parts of the Third World. The workers in the new factories formed powerful unions that negotiated middle-class salaries, and their children were sent off to study at newly built public universities. The yawning gap between the region's polo-club elite and its peasant masses began to narrow. By the 1950s, Argentina had the largest middle class on the continent, and next-door Uruguay had a literacy rate of 95 percent and offered free health care for all citizens. Developmentalism was staggeringly successful for a time that the Southern Cone of Latin America became a potent symbol for poor countries around the world:

⁷ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine. The Rise and Disaster of Capitalism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007), p. 55. Hereafter quoted as *The Shock Doctrine*.

here was proof that with smart, practical policies, aggressively implemented, the class divide between the First and Third World could actually be closed.⁸

Nonetheless the development approach did not produce the desired sustained autonomous economic development in Latin America. Worse, it consolidated Latin America's underdevelopment and dependence. In November 1968, Richard Nixon, then president of the United States, testified that while "the Alliance for Progress was seven years old, malnutrition and food shortage have nevertheless intensified in Latin America."⁹ The fiasco of the development project compels many disillusioned Latin Americans to ask, "What happened and why?" The overall answers of the critics center on the theoretical and practical difficulties that render developmentalism inapplicable to Latin American socio-historical and political conditions.¹⁰

Leonardo and Clodovis Boff observe that the developmental scheme implemented in Latin America reinforced the interests and power of the aristocracy, while it contributed to the exploitation, exclusion, and impoverishment of the vast majority.¹¹

⁸Ibid.

⁹Quoted in Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America. Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 15; see also, Willard F. Barber, "Can the Alliance for Progress Succeed?" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 351, The Changing Cold War (January 1964), pp. 81-91; Scheman L. Ronald, *The Alliance for Progress: A Retrospective* (New York: Praeger, 1988); Joseph Grunwald, "The Alliance for Progress," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 27, No. 4 Economic and Political Trends in Latin America (May, 1964), pp. 78-93.

¹⁰Gustavo Gutiérrez, Judith Condor (translator), "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*. 2nd Ed. Christopher Rowland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 19-38. Enrique Dussel, *A History of Liberation Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); Ian Linden, *Liberation Theology: Coming of Age* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1997).

¹¹Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, p. 5.

Jose Comblin, in his well-known book *The Church and the National Security State*, delineates some of these predicaments stating that the development model advocated by international agencies (1) originates from the authoritative economic theory of the developed countries' universities; (2) tends to foster "a purely quantitative and material development" while overlooking a human development that impinges upon the social, political, cultural, and moral dimensions of life; (3) is exclusivist, pro-business and pro-management; and (4) hinders the citizenry's political participation, evolution of social consciousness and duty.¹²

Gustavo Gutiérrez, in his classic book *A Theology of Liberation*, rightfully declares that the developmental model was formulated and implemented by foreign technocrats without the definite approval, input, and participation of the people whom these policies were supposed to benefit. The advertised imported changes overlooked both the socio-economic and political reality of the Latin American people. For those innovations had to be made within the social structures of the Latin American states without confronting their make-up.¹³

Jose Miguez Bonino, an Argentine Methodist theologian, forcefully rejects the developmentalist claim regarding the nature, prescription, and model of development for the southern countries. He argues that economic development is specific to each country, given the cultural differences between countries. As such it is a fallacy to conceive

¹²Jose Comblin, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 113-17; and Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, pp. 87-94.

¹³Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation. History, Politics, and Salvation*, *ibid*, p.17; Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, *ibid*, p. 86.

economic development in terms of a series of stages in which a nation has to imitate another.¹⁴

Perhaps developmentalism deserves credit for pointing to underdevelopment as the problem facing Latin America. Nonetheless, as Miguez Bonino continues, it is a mistake to pinpoint backwardness as the key reason for that continent's underdevelopment and more so to promote the European/American form of development as the solution to Latin America's economic stagnation. For him "*the take-off* point in Northern societies was dependent on the relations to the then colonized societies. That situation does not obtain today and the process therefore cannot be repeated."¹⁵ This faulty causal explanation and prescription is even more acute when one recognizes that Western Europe's objective conditions at the end of World War II and those of Latin America in 1950s and 1960s were widely disparate.¹⁶

Latin American theologians generally agree that the concepts of development-underdevelopment are flawed, empirically unverifiable in Latin America's social structures, and unsuitable in any attempt to elucidate the problems surrounding underdevelopment or to provide guidelines towards solving them. They unmask developmentalism as an artifice whereby the southern countries become poorer, politically unstable, and more dependent upon rich and powerful northern countries.

Gutiérrez writes:

¹⁴José Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, *ibid*, p. 26.

¹⁵*Ibid*.

¹⁶Paul O. Otubusin, "Exploitation, Unequal Exchange and Dependency: A Philosophical Analysis," PhD diss., Loyola University of Chicago, 1987, pp. 177, 179.

The poor countries are becoming ever more clearly aware that their underdevelopment is only the by-product of the development of other countries, because the kind of relationship which exists between the rich and the poor countries. Moreover, they are realizing that their own development will come about only with a struggle to break the domination of the rich countries.¹⁷

For Latin American theologians, therefore, poverty persisted and even increased despite all the massive effort to stimulate development. The culprit, they point out, is *dependence*. By *dependence* they mean a structural relation of domination and alienation that Europe and the United States maintain with the southern states whereby the northern countries develop their economy, while the southern countries consolidate their underdevelopment.¹⁸

This view contradicts the dominant explanation of mainstream economics, which holds that the developing world's economic stagnation stems from the static nature of its societies. F.H. Cardoso, A. Frank, C. Furtado, T. dos Santos, and others argued that the key rationale of capitalist development attempts consisted in making the southern countries more dependent on northern countries.¹⁹ As Thomas Louis Schubeck declares:

¹⁷Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, *ibid*, p. 17.

¹⁸Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, *ibid*, p. 12. Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, notes: "Our situation of dependence in the underdeveloped, peripheral nations points to a double sin: the social relationship of capital with workers, and the relationship of the developed North with the underdeveloped South. When the *kairos* is reached, the struggle with sin will no longer consist in the implantation of reforms. It will launch an attack upon the very essence of the structure of sin." (Trans. by Robert R. Barr [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988], pp.175-76).

¹⁹See, for instance, Theotonio dos Santos, "La Crisis de la teoria del desarrollo y las relaciones de dependencia en America Latina," *La dependencia Politica-económica de America Latina*, eds. Helio Jaguaribe et al. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1973): 147-187; Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Cuestiones de Sociologia del Desarrollo en America Latina* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1968), pp. 10-16; Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967); and C. Furtado, *Economic*

In its modernization project, the United States continued the basic pattern of domination by means of transnational corporations, which invested relatively little capital in the host-country economy, while drawing out disproportionate amounts of resources and profit. Under the influence of U. S. development, Latin American countries continued to serve as suppliers of foodstuffs, raw materials, and cheap labor, as well as to function as an outpost of an integrated and controlled world economy.²⁰

Naomi Klein argues that the United States used the Central Intelligence Agency and highly disruptive techniques to promote coups and developmentalism in Latin America. To achieve this objective, the United States relied on the military to impose draconian policy recommendations concerning privatization and liberalization through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in return for loans.²¹

The critique leveled at developmentalism laid the groundwork for an alternative strategy called *liberation*. It arose within Latin American societies as a broad social and intellectual movement whereby Latin Americans endeavor to transform their oppressive social conditions, achieve freedom, and become masters of their destiny.²²

This movement found considerable impetus from the ecclesial and theological renewal in Europe (informed by the philosophy of E. Mounier, J. Maritain and others,

Development of Latin America: A Survey from Colonial Times to the Cuban Revolution (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

²⁰Thomas Louis Schubeck, *Liberation Ethics: Sources, Models, and Norms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 217.

²¹Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, p. 163.

²²See for instance, Lee Moerman, "People as Prophets: Liberation Theology as a Radical Perspective on Accounting," *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, Vol. 19, Issue 2 (2006), pp. 169-185; Terry Hoy, "Gustavo Gutiérrez: Latin American Liberation Theology," *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 13, Issue 9 (1986), pp. 3-16; Michael Dodson, "Liberation Theology and Christian Radicalism in Contemporary Latin America," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 11 (1979), pp. 202-222. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 21-22.

and the theology of H. de Lubac, J.-M. Chenu, Yves Congar, etc.) and from Vatican II.²³

In their book, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff state that the wind of liberty and ingenuity that blew from Vatican II Council

gave Latin American theologians the courage to think for themselves about pastoral problems affecting their countries. This process could be seen at work among both Catholic and Protestant thinkers with the group Church and Society in Latin America (ISAL) taking a prominent role. There were frequent meetings between Catholic theologians (Gustavo Gutiérrez, Segundo Galilea, Juan Luis Segundo, Lucio Gera, and others) and Protestant Emilio Castro, Julio de Santa Ana, Rubem Alves, José Míguez Bonino), leading to intensified reflection on the relationship between faith and poverty, the gospel and social justice, and the like. In Brazil, between 1959 and 1964, the Catholic left produced a series of basic texts on the need for a Christian ideal of history, linked to popular action, with a methodology that foreshadowed that of liberation theology; they urged personal engagement in the world, backed up by studies of social and liberal sciences, and illustrated by the universal principles of Christianity.²⁴

Latin American Bishops, aware of the challenges presented by the poverty and pastoral tasks of their continent, define *liberation* as a shift “from conditions of life that

²³See Daniel Hartnett, “Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutiérrez,” *America Magazine*, February 3, 2003, http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2755 [accessed April 20, 2006]. Gutiérrez’s theological formation occurred in Europe under many liberal theologians. “He studied theology in various European universities, having as teachers Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu and Christian Ducoq. Being in touch with modern European theology gave him access to the theologians of the Second Vatican Council, in addition to those already mentioned, Edward Schillebeeckx, Karl Rahner, Hans Kung and Johann Baptist Metz. In contact and dialogue with the world of protestant theology, he came to know the work of Karl Barth thoroughly and he also maintained an interest in theologians like Jurgen Moltmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and in social scientists like François Perroux” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustavo_Guti%C3%A9rrez [accessed 8/21/2006].

²⁴Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, *ibid.*, p. 34.

are less human to those that are more human” in their Second General Conference held in 1968, in Medellin, Columbia.²⁵

In his seminal book, *A Theology of Liberation* published in 1971, Gutiérrez establishes an intricate and interdependent description of *liberation* that is worth noting. First, it implies the longing of the oppressed and dominated classes for socio-economic and political justice. Second, it indicates a conception of history in which human beings take charge of their own destiny, and in so doing acquire the mood and freedom that support the emergence of a new humanity and alternative society. Third, it conveys the rich Biblical image of Christ as the Savior who liberates human beings from sin, which results from injustice and oppression, therefore enabling them to appropriate historically Christ’s saving activity by living freely in communion with God and among themselves.²⁶

Liberation thus, and not *development*, becomes the favorite term whereby Latin American theologians expound the problems involved in the course of historical freedom and Christian salvation. As René Laurentin insightfully comments:

Liberation will not be brought on stage *Deus ex machina* fashion, but through the action of human freedoms enlightened by the rationality of the intelligence and immersed in the realism of a political policy. Liberation cannot be realized without struggle and contradiction – a struggle for the sake of justice and love to establish the very inner life of human realities. Today, as in the time of Abraham or the exodus, it is in

²⁵CELAM, “Introduction” #6, *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council: II Conclusions*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Secretariat for Latin American National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979).

²⁶Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 24-25; G. Gutiérrez, *Essential Writings*. Ed. by James B. Nickoloff (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 195.

the inner working of a human plan that God can reveal himself among [humans.]²⁷

This principle is evident in Latin American theology, which seeks to accompany the people of that continent in their struggle for liberation. In its critical reflection of faith on liberating action in light of Christian revelation, liberation theology offers several distinctive contributions to the overall theological endeavor. First, it puts the preferential option for the poor at the heart of its discourse. Second, it claims that liberation represents an “essential, indispensable, [and] integral part” of evangelization. Third, it understands faith as involving trust and historical commitment. Fourth, it deems the life-situation of the poor as *locus theologicus*. Fifth, it recognizes God as the God of life, justice, and liberation for the downtrodden of the world. Sixth, it sees the Reign of God as a reign of (just) life for the poor in present-day history and in heaven. Seventh, it acknowledges Jesus Christ as the liberator. Eighth, it views socio-historical liberation as one dimension of integral (human and divine) liberation.²⁸

²⁷Rene Laurentin, *Liberation, Development and Salvation*. Trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972), pp. xii-xiii.

²⁸See G. Gutiérrez, R. Lassalle-Klein, J.B. Nickoloff and S. Sullivan (translators), “The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ,” *Theological Studies*, 70, No. 2 (June 2009), pp. 317-326; Segundo Galilea, “Liberation Theology and New Tasks Facing Christians,” *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*. Ed. by Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), pp.163-183; Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991); Leonardo Boff, *Good News to the Poor: A New Evangelization* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1972); Sherron Kay George, “From Liberation to Evangelization: New Latin American Keys,” *Interpretation*, 55 (October, 2001), pp. 367-377; L. Boff, *When Theology Listens to the Poor* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); L. Boff and C. Boff, *Salvation and Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984); L. Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for our Time*. Trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1978); Jon Sobrino, “Central Position of the Reign of God in Liberation Theology,” *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*. Eds. Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J. and Jon Sobrino, S.J. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 350-388; Francisco Moreno-Rejón, “Seeking the Kingdom and its Justice: The Development of the Ethic of Liberation,” *Ethic of Liberation—The Liberation of Ethic* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1984), pp. 35-41.

Like their Latin American brothers and sisters, Haitian thinkers began to concentrate on similar topics. Interestingly enough, a number of these prominent liberation theology themes can be found in the writings of Haitian theologians like Godefroy Midy and Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In what follows, the contributions of these writers to a Haitian liberation theology will be discussed together with the work of a well-known representative of Latin American theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez the author of *A Theology of Liberation*. By taking a clear and firm option for the oppressed poor of Haiti and Latin America, these writers have elaborated a theology from the perspective of the dejected of that country and continent that is not only political, critical of itself and of its underlying socio-historical situation, but also that promotes conversion and social transformation.

Gustavo Gutiérrez

Gustavo Gutiérrez is a renowned Peruvian Roman Catholic theologian and Dominican priest widely viewed as the founder of Liberation Theology. He occupies the John Cardinal O'Hara Professorship of theology at Notre Dame. Before joining the University of Notre Dame, he taught at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru and at various leading North American and European universities. He served as advisor to National Union of Catholic Students and to several pastoral and theological reflection groups in Peru. Gutiérrez holds a B.S. in medicine from National University, Lima, Peru, an S.T.L. and a PhD. in theology from Université Catholique de Lyon, France, including numerous honorary degrees.

A prolific writer, Gutiérrez's publications have been translated into many languages. His major books include *A Theology of Liberation. History, Politics, and Salvation* (1988); *We Drink From Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of A People* (1984); *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (1987); *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (1990); *The God of Life* (1991); *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* (1993); and *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings* (1983).

The overriding principle guiding Gutiérrez's thought consists in his contention that solidarity with the oppressed poor and commitment to their liberation are grounded in the faith of Latin American Christians in the God of Jesus Christ. This principle explains why the major concerns underlying Gutiérrez's theology are to: (a) link together the faith and life of the Latin American people with the teaching of the church; and (b) see Latin American liberation process as a challenge to Christian faith and the church.²⁹

A Theology of Liberation

In his classic work, *A Theology of Liberation*, Gustavo Gutiérrez undertakes to reflect on God's liberating activity among the poor and oppressed of Latin America in

²⁹Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Introduction to the Original Edition," *A Theology of Liberation. History, Politics, and Salvation*. Rev. ed. with a new introduction. Trans. and ed. by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), pp. xiii-xv; see also, Thomas A. Lewis, "Actions as the Ties that Bind: Love, Praxis, and Community in the Thought of Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 33, No. 3 (September, 2005), pp. 539-567; James B. Nickolog, "Church of the Poor: The Ecclesiology of Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Theological Studies*, 54, No. 3 (September, 1993), pp. 512-535; Oscar S. Suarez, "Theology and the Human Condition in the Work of Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Tugón*, 10, No. 1 (1990), pp. 53-75; Guibal Francis, "La force subversive de l'évangile: sur la pensée théologique de Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Recherches de science religieuse*, 77, No. 4 (Octobre-Décembre, 1989), pp. 483-508; Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990); and Curt Cadorette, *From the Heart of the People: The Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Oak Park: MeyerStone, 1988).

light of the gospel. This outstanding theological piece makes the preferential option for the poor at the center of its discourse. It sees liberation as a threefold interrelationship engaging the political, human, and religious aspects of human life. *A Theology of Liberation* represents a prototype in Latin American theology. It is the first systematized attempt by a Latin American to formulate a theology from the liberation experience of the poor in Latin America. It was the need to articulate the correlation between salvation and human advancement that prompted Gutiérrez to develop this liberation theology.³⁰

Gutiérrez's intentions in elaborating his theology of liberation are twofold. First, he wants Christians involved in the liberation process of Latin America to evaluate their action and meditate on their faith, to invigorate their love and find motive for their hope on the basis of the gospel and in the context of a more fundamental, integral, and efficient engagement. Second, he seeks to articulate anew the major topics of Christianity in light of the liberation outlook and new issues raised by such involvement.³¹ Gutiérrez wishes to justify his contention that the political, human, and religious dimensions of liberation are mutually related.³²

³⁰Ibid, pp. xiv, 11, Gutiérrez, "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*. Ed. Rosino Gibellini. Trans. John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 22-25, "Option for the Poor," *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*. Ed. by Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J. and Jon Sobrino, S.J. Trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 235-250, G. Gutiérrez and James B. Nickoloff (translator) "The Situation and Tasks of Liberation Theology Today," *Opting for the Margins*. Ed. By Joerg Rieger (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 89-104.

³¹Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. xiii.

³²In his "Speaking about God," Gutiérrez makes the point abundantly clear stating, "...Only on the basis of mysticism and practice is it possible to work out an authentic and respectful way of speaking about God" (*Concilium* 17 [1/1984], pp. 27-31).

Underlying this allegation is the following: liberation is a trilateral interrelationship that involves (a) the socio-historical enfranchisement of dependent and underdeveloped countries and people; (b) the human freedom of oppressed groups, marginalized classes and races to live with dignity and to determine their destiny, in a society characterized by peace, justice and community; and (c) the deliverance brought about by Christ's death and resurrection, which overcomes sin and injustice, and facilitates communion among human beings, and between God and humans.³³

The idea that faith implies trust as well as service to God and neighbor represents an essential component of Gutiérrez's theology. He contends that faith not only entails the declaration of revealed truths, but also involves love, which impels believers to trust in God and, simultaneously, to give themselves to God and neighbor through service. Gutiérrez believes that such understanding of the faith is grounded in the Bible, and constitutes the foundation of the involvement of Christians in Latin America for social and human transformation.³⁴

The significance of Gutiérrez's affirmation is that, far from leading Christians to embrace a passive, conforming attitude vis-à-vis Latin American societies, faith epitomizes the stimulus underlying the commitment of Christians to justice and

³³Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. xiv, xxxviii, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), pp. 121-124; G. Gutiérrez and James B. Nickoloff, *Essential Writings*, 1st ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), pp. 10-11; see also Tim Noble, "An Introduction to the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Communio Viatorum*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2001), p. 11.

³⁴Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv; see also Rebecca S. Chopp and Ethna Regan, "Latin American Liberation Theology," *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*. Eds. David Ford and Rachel Muers (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 469-484.

solidarity, freedom and participation over against poverty and oppression, injustice and death. In other words, lived out in the church of the oppressed land of Latin America, faith invariably implies commitment to the liberation of those who suffer the tyranny of an unjust system and who worship the Lord as a liberating God.³⁵ The experience for a new society and humanity provides the basis from which Latin American Christians articulate the import of their faith. As Gutiérrez indicates:

Faith proclaims that the fellowship which is sought through the abolition of exploitation is something possible, that efforts to bring it about are not in vain, that God calls us to it and assures us of its complete fulfillment, and that the definitive reality is being built on what is transitory. Faith reveals to us the deep meaning of the history which we fashion with our hands: it teaches us that every human act which is oriented towards the construction of a more just society has value in terms of communion with God – in terms of salvation; inversely it teaches that all injustice is a breach with God.³⁶

Granted that faith conveys trust and forms the groundwork of the action and presence of Christians in Latin America, Gutiérrez prominently advocates that historical liberation is closely linked to the kingdom. He establishes a connection between the kingdom of God and the effort of Christians in Latin America to promote justice and social change. Such commitment provides the foundation whereby Latin American

³⁵Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 6. Reflecting on this subject in *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings*, Gutiérrez writes: “Faith comes to us through concrete historical mediations. The theological endeavor presupposes a critical examination of the forms in which the faith experience has been handed down across the centuries, and is still being handed down today, in the political practice of Christians” (Trans. Robert R. Barr [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983], p. 65), see also his “From Exclusion to Discipleship,” *Concilium* 1994/4, pp. 81-90, “Liberation, Theology, and Proclamation,” *Concilium* 1974, pp. 64-66, “A Conversation with Gustavo Gutiérrez,” *Faith: Conversation with Contemporary Theologians*. Ed. Teofilo Cabestrero. Trans. Donald D. Walsh (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 95-105; and, Roger Haight, *An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 5.

³⁶Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 139, see also his “Liberation, Theology and Proclamation,” *Concilium* 1974, pp. 67-71.

Christians acknowledge that the kingdom connotes love for the poor and oppressed, justice toward them, communion and solidarity with them. However, this does not indicate that Gutiérrez believes social progress squares with the development of the kingdom. On the contrary, he points out that belief in the word of God enables one to realize that human sinfulness, which is the basic impediment to the kingdom, constitutes also the grounds for oppression and exploitation.³⁷ In fact, for Gutiérrez, “the very meaning of the growth of the kingdom is also the ultimate precondition for a just society and a new humanity. One reaches this root and this ultimate precondition only through the acceptance of the liberating gift of Christ, which surpasses all expectations.”³⁸

He further recognizes that the aim of both historical liberation and the kingdom entails total union with God and human beings. But the kingdom and human promotion utilize different strategies to achieve their objectives. The kingdom develops through historical liberation, which involves increased human flourishing. Historical liberation foreshadows a new society and occurs in emancipating worldly affairs. Human liberation also condemns the constraints and uncertainties of historic experiences, announces their realization, and propels them actively in the way to complete communion.³⁹

Gutiérrez also maintains that historical liberating occurrences are imperative to the development of the kingdom. However, he believes that the course of human

³⁷Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p.104. Elsewhere in his writings, Gutiérrez expounds this topic. For instance, in *The Power of the Poor in History*, he declares: “The messianic promises establish a close tie between the kingdom of God and living conditions that are worthy of human beings. God's kingdom and social injustice are incompatible” (pp. 32, 61-63).

³⁸Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 103; *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, pp. 14-16.

³⁹Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 104.

liberation will not have uprooted the basis of injustice and abuse independently of the approaching kingdom, which is God's gratuitous present. For Gutiérrez, human liberating circumstance symbolizes the extension of the kingdom and, as such, evokes a salvific happening. Yet, although it is not the advent of the kingdom or the totality of salvation, it expresses the implementation of the kingdom in history and, consequently, affirms its plenitude.⁴⁰

Equally notable is the starting point of Gutiérrez's theology. Gutiérrez advocates that every study begins with human undertaking. He illustrates this view by grounding his theological reflection in the social involvement of Latin American Christians in the liberation of the poor and oppressed, seen in light of the gospel. For Gutiérrez, such basic experience constitutes the context whereby Christians in Latin America receive the gospel and endeavor to understand the faith. He also indicates that such commitment is central to Christian living and points out the human dimension intrinsic in revelation. "In revealing God to us the Gospel message reveals us to ourselves in our situation before the Lord and with other humans."⁴¹ In this circumstance, the assertion that human practice constitutes the starting point for all inquiry is strengthened by two considerations.

The first one concerns philosophy. Gutiérrez states that contemporary philosophical problems are framed along a different interaction between persons and the natural world due to scientific and technological discoveries. Such new affinity of human and nature impinges upon the consciousness of human beings and also upon their spirited

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 105.

⁴¹Ibid, p. 6, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, pp. 7-8, 144-148.

rapport with other humans. That active consideration seeks to grasp the inner rationale of an undertaking whereby human beings aim at realization through relentless self-elevating.⁴²

The second analysis considers the effect of Marxist thinking on theology, notably the use of notions like “praxis” and “transformation of the world.” Gutiérrez claims that such concepts and underlying realities have been salutary to theology. They have enabled theology to attempt to determine the significance of fundamental change in the world and in human action. “...This confrontation helps theology to perceive what its efforts at understanding the faith receive from the historical praxis of humankind in history as well as what its own reflection might mean for the transformation of the world.”⁴³ Theological reflection, therefore, Gutiérrez insists, starts with Christian historical involvement in the integral liberation of the poor and oppressed.

Gutiérrez also asserts that the life of the church emerges as a factor for theological reflection. That is, for him, the involvement of Christians in the decisive historical actions of their generation constitutes a source for the understanding of the faith. The embodiment of the word of God in the believing community not only propels the church to be of service, but also to be conscious of the issues, challenges, and changes facing the world.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid, p. 7. Cf. Maurice Blondel, *L'Action* (Paris: Alcan, 1893).

⁴³ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 8, and *The Truth Shall Make Your Free*, pp.11-12, 61-63.

⁴⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 6-7.

Gutiérrez observes that the evaluation of the church in Latin America from this perspective shows mixed results. “The Latin American Church has lived and to a large extent continues to live as a ghetto church. [She has adopted a]...defensive attitude as regards the faith” during the nineteenth century, which leads her to uphold the instituted political and economic elites.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, today the Latin American Church becomes sympathetic to the social situation of the poor and is now engaged in the liberation process of the oppressed. What brings about that shift? Gutiérrez indicates the factor contributing to such a radical change stems from the fact that Latin American Christians have realized anew the implications of their faith.⁴⁶

This new stance shows that, since the late 1960s, the Latin American Church has been focusing her concern more on servicing than on wielding power. As Gutiérrez declares:

Individual Christians, small communities, and the Church as a whole are becoming more politically aware and are acquiring a greater knowledge of the Latin American current reality, especially its root causes. The Christian community is beginning, in fact, to read *politically* the signs of the times in Latin America. Moreover, we have witnessed the taking of positions which could even be characterized as daring, especially compared with previous behavior. We have seen a commitment to liberation which has provoked resistance and mistrust.⁴⁷

Human promotion, ramifications of the Christian faith, the word of God, and the social involvement of the church constitute nowadays for Latin American Christians, in

⁴⁵Ibid, p. 58.

⁴⁶Ibid, pp. 68-70.

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 58.

Gutiérrez's view, a liberating impulse that seek to uproot oppression and injustice, and to push the world into the path of the coming kingdom.⁴⁸ Accordingly, what moral and spiritual presuppositions can be delineated in Gutiérrez's liberation theology?

Gutiérrez's Ethical and Spiritual Assumptions

Gustavo Gutiérrez indicates that thinkers such as Marie-Dominique Chenu and Maurice Blondel have had a considerable influence on his thinking.⁴⁹ The ethical and spiritual assumptions of his theology evolve from these and other sources. Marie-Dominique Chenu was, as already noted, a French theologian and medieval historian. Chenu's 1937 article, "La théologie au Saulchoir," views the social involvement of Christians as a significant fact for various Catholic dogmas. Chenu's position inspired Gutiérrez to consider the life of the Church as a key source for theological analysis.

Gutiérrez quotes Chenu stating that the historical actions of Christians

are active *loci theologici* for the doctrines of grace, the Incarnation, and the redemption, as expressly promulgated and described in detail by the papal encyclicals. They are poor theologians who, wrapped up in their manuscripts and scholastic disputations, are not open to these amazing events, not only in the pious fervor of their hearts but formally in their science; there is a theological datum and an extremely fruitful one, in the *presence* of the Spirit.⁵⁰

Maurice Blondel (1861-1949) was a French philosopher whose "philosophy of action" helped form Gutiérrez's description of theology as "critical reflection on

⁴⁸Ibid, pp. 59-71.

⁴⁹Ibid, pp. 6-8.

⁵⁰Chenu, "La théologie au Saulchoir," *La Parole de Dieu*, vol. 1, *La foi dans l'intelligence* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1964), p. 259, quoted in Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 6-7.

historical praxis.”⁵¹ Blondel's view would stimulate Gutiérrez to understand historical praxis in terms of political involvement of Christians for social transformation. As

Gutiérrez declares:

Maurice Blondel, moving away from an empty and fruitless spirituality and attempting to make philosophical speculation more concrete and alive, presented it as critical reflection on action. This reflection attempts to understand the internal logic of an action through which persons seek fulfillment by constantly transcending themselves.⁵²

Grounded in faith, such human conduct illustrates the social duty of Latin American Christians and presents them as protagonists of their history. The commitment of Christians to historical change in Latin America also indicates the incongruity of their belief in the word of God with oppression and injustice.⁵³ In other words, in Latin America, the involvement of Christians for social transformation constitutes an imperative obligation of their faith. This is a basic ethical assumption in Gutiérrez's theology. Second, Gutiérrez believes that politics constitutes the domain whereby such

⁵¹Maurice Blondel, *L'Action* (Paris: Alcan, 1893), quoted in Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 7-8.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 6, 74, 139. Gutiérrez also underlines this point elsewhere. In his “Faith as Freedom: Solidarity with the Alienated and Confidence in the Future,” he declares: “Faith, being an acceptance of and response to the Father's love, penetrates to the last root of social injustice: sin, the break in our friendship with God and in our fraternity with humans. This is not accomplished by leaving aside historical mediations or by avoiding socio-political analyses of historical realities. Sin is found in the refusal to accept another as a brother or sister, in oppressive structures built up for the benefit of a few, in the despoliation of peoples, races, cultures, and social classes...” (*Living with Change, Experience, Faith*. Ed. Francis A. Eigo, O.S.A. [Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1976], pp. 38-39). See for instance, his “The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ,” translators Robert Lassalle-Klein, James B. Nickoloff and Susan Sullivan, *Theological Studies*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June, 2009), pp. 317-327; see also Robert McAfee Brown, “Liberation as Faith Option,” *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2007), pp. 211-226. Marciano Vidal Garcia, C.Ss.R., “‘Teología de la liberación’ y ética social cristiana,” characterizes injustice and oppression the poor endure as the starting point of a Christian social ethics (*In libertatem vocati estis* [Roma: Academia Alfonsiana, 1997], p. 217).

engagement occurs. Not only politics enfolds the totality of human pursuit, he alleges, but also it characterizes the process whereby one must build a society based on solidarity and freedom, responsibility and human flourishing.⁵⁴ This is another ethical assumption in Gutiérrez's theology.

Gutiérrez underscores the radicalism with which modern people face socio-economic and cultural structures. He declares that emphasis is no longer put on ideas and postures of reform. Rather, they focus on the root cause of the existing social situation with the aim to challenge its oppressive foundation.⁵⁵ This is the third ethical assumption in Gutiérrez's theology.

The underlying significance of these ethical presuppositions is that they indicate the longing of oppressed countries, groups, and individuals for authentic freedom and the opportunity to determine their destiny and be subjects of their history. They evoke what Christians ought to do in a social context of oppressive injustice. They also display values and option that drastically oppose the ethos of the prevailing system in Latin America. Accordingly, morally good actions, in Gutiérrez's theology, are deeds that foster the liberation of the oppressed poor against their poverty and untimely death.⁵⁶ It is worth noting, moreover, that these judgments of moral obligation include standards of social

⁵⁴Ibid, p. 8, G. Gutiérrez and Magnus Lundberg (translator), "Faith and Politics in Popular Movements: Christian Commitment Today," *Svensk Missionstidskrift*, Vol. 93, No. 2 (2005), pp. 175-185; see also Stephen D. Glacier, "Latin American Perspectives on Religion and Politics," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1995), pp. 247-255.

⁵⁵Ibid, p. 31.

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 12.

and individual life (e.g., justice and solidarity, participation and communion, life and freedom) as well as the preferential option for the excluded.⁵⁷

In addition to these ethical assumptions, several spiritual presuppositions can also be identified in Gutiérrez's theology. Gutiérrez underscores that political action taken by Christians to build a new society and humanity derives from their belief in God's eschatological promise. That is, the commitment of Latin American Christians to the liberation of the oppressed poor reveals their faith and indicates that they live in the purview of the kingdom. In a continent beset by poverty, the poor constitute the locus par excellence whereby Latin American Christians encounter and recognize God, and bear witness to Christ.⁵⁸ This is a basic spiritual assumption in Gutiérrez's theology.

Second, informed by Jesus Christ's word that "the Spirit of truth...will guide you to all truth" (John 16:13), Gutiérrez sees the Spirit as the true protagonist of liberation. The truth of the Spirit enables Christians to achieve total emancipation. It also gives the liberty to overcome all hindrances, to love God and neighbors, and to commune with

⁵⁷Ibid, p. 67, "From Exclusion to Discipleship," p. 88.

⁵⁸Ibid, pp. 116-120. In this perspective, Gutiérrez affirms "without works, works to the poor, faith is dead" (G. Gutiérrez, "Theology and Spirituality in a Latin American Context," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Vol.14, no. 5 (June-August 1984), p. 5. For Gutiérrez, seeing and meeting God in the poor indicates a fundamental spiritual feature. See his "¿Qué es espiritualidad? *Diakonia*, Vol. 33, issue 1-3 (1985), p. 2 and *We Drink from our Own Wells. The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984). Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," formulates this view distinctly: "The poor, and the world of poverty, are like some huge well filled with water – the symbol of life – for the poor have filled it with their life, their suffering, their tears, their hope, and their commitment. All of this water becomes commitment for others. We can drink of it. It is a grace offered us. Indeed, we must drink from it. It is the basic option" (*Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*. Ed. by Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J. and Jon Sobrino, S.J. [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993], p. 689).

them fully.⁵⁹ In other words, the engagement of Christians in the unfolding liberation in Latin America incites them not only to be moved by the Spirit and live in truth and according to the gospel, but also to abide in the presence of the Lord in solidarity with all people.⁶⁰ This is another spiritual assumption in Gutiérrez's theology.

The pervasiveness of subjugation and the remoteness of liberation appear to render God inconsequential, Gutiérrez remarks. He insists, however, that our faith and hope in God must flourish because God became a human being precisely to uproot inequity and to present us with the gift of complete liberation.⁶¹ Christ is then the liberator who saves us from sin and death, from all enmity between God and humans, and among human beings themselves. Living according to the Spirit compels Latin American Christians to follow Christ, to reject death (the oppressive and unjust situation of poverty in Latin America), to attend to the needs of their neighbors, and to affirm life. Walking in the Spirit requires prayer and implies obviously suffering and martyrdom. This is the fourth spiritual assumption in *A Theology of Liberation*.

Gutiérrez maintains that love for God is expressed through the commitment to transform oppressive structures. "The God of Biblical revelation is known through inter-

⁵⁹Ibid, p. 117.

⁶⁰Ibid. Lizo Doda Jafta, "The Spirituality of Liberation Theology," insists that "Faith in God is not only an inward exercise with no external outreaches into God's world. True believers will be known by their fruits" (*Studia Historiae ecclesiasticae*, Vol. 23, nos. 1-2 [1997], p. 47).

⁶¹Ibid, p. 118. Gutiérrez deems hope and joy as important dimensions of his spirituality of liberation, cf. *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 120, "Theology and Spirituality in a Latin American Context," p. 4; see also Kenneth Melchin, "Liberation and Spirituality in Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Sciences Pastorales*, 6 (1987), p.76. See also James B. Nickoloff, "Church of the Poor: The Ecclesiology of Gustavo Gutiérrez," *Theological Studies*, Vol. 54, no. 3 (September 1993), pp. 512-535.

human justice. When justice does not exist, God is not known; God is absent.”⁶² This is the fifth spiritual assumption in Gutiérrez’s theology.

Gutiérrez holds that all liberation originates from God as a gift. Seen thus, the underlying significance of these spiritual presuppositions lies in the rapport Gutiérrez establishes between historical liberation and eschatological salvation. In this context, political action for social and human transformation is summoned by the word of God and inspired by the Spirit as a sign of love for God and neighbor and a service to them. In this following of Christ to the Father, Latin American Christians walk according to the Spirit towards the kingdom in prayer and conversion, freedom and joy, solidarity and suffering, martyrdom and hope.⁶³ Consequently, an evaluation of the theology of Gutiérrez is in order.

Critical Consideration

What are the implications of the ethical-spiritual aspects of Gutiérrez’s liberation theology for the conditions of work in Haiti and the theologies of work described earlier? What challenges do Haiti’s working conditions present for Gutiérrez’s theology?

A basic statement set forth in Chapter One asserted that Haiti’s manufacturing and agricultural workers labor in sub-human conditions indicative of exploitation and environmental degradation. The ethical-spiritual aspects of Gutiérrez’s theology heartily

⁶²Ibid, p. 111. Elsewhere in his “Theology, Spirituality, and Historical Praxis,” Gutiérrez writes “The truth is that in the deed of love and solidarity the authenticity of our faith in the God of the Reign is verified. It is to that practice that we allude, and not to a practice that would ignore the human condition and the vocation of all to be sons and daughters of God” (*Future of Theology*, trans. Robert R. Barr [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], p. 181).

⁶³G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 116-120.

subscribe to the phenomenon of exploitation that, he alleges, constitutes the root cause of the poverty suffered by the vast majority of Latin Americans. Gutiérrez vehemently denounces poverty as a sinful, unjust, dehumanizing, and degrading situation. It signals a break of friendship among human beings as well as between God and humans. Gutiérrez contends also that poverty marginalizes dominated social classes and gender-racial-ethnic minorities and hastens their death. Gutiérrez rightly attributes workers' impoverishment to wage theft.⁶⁴

The great merits of Gutiérrez's liberation theology consist in its being articulated from the reality of the poor, whereby the presence and power of God is experienced. Gutiérrez's theology also advocates communion with the poor and attentive listening and response to their cry for life. Gutiérrez's liberation theology challenges the prevailing system and ethos, including its dominant understanding of God and church, of faith and sin, salvation, and society.

Gutiérrez convincingly affirms the connection between salvation and historical liberation, Christian faith and the life of the people of Latin America, and establishes the interrelation among the political, human, and religious liberation. The ethical-spiritual elements of Gutiérrez's theology also offer important perspectives that helpfully inform my project. His theology proposes a methodological framework whereby the stark structural poverty and oppressive injustice in Haiti can be formulated based on the word of God and the historical praxis of Haitian workers. The contribution of Gutiérrez's

⁶⁴Ibid, pp. 165-168.

liberation theology to the theologies of work examined above is to be seen in the same light.

Gutiérrez's vision, however, has limitations. He is writing early Liberation Theology, strongly influenced by Marxism and the power of historical action but overlooking nature and ecological issues. Early Latin American theology mostly critiques capitalism and developmentalism, for good reason. The Latin American people got duped. However after thirty to fifty years, the stress on history needs to be balanced by an emphasis on nature. Concern for human communities requires ipso facto interest in the ecosystems that sustain them. Similarly, a critique of injustice needs to be balanced with attention to policies that might possibly help push genuine development. In a latter section, I will attempt to engage liberation theology with current thinking on ecological understanding (like Lester Brown, for instance) and on development strategies such as the capability approach highlighted by Sen Nussbaum, and others.

Godefroy Midy

Godefroy Midy (1932-) is an influential Haitian Catholic theologian and Jesuit priest. He taught Systematic Theology at Notre Dame Major Seminary in Port-au-Prince from 1977 to 1991. Midy holds PhDs. in philosophy from Fordham University and in theology from the Université de Montréal. He obtained Master Degrees in philosophy from Fordham University and in Pastoral Counseling from Iona College in New Rochelle, New York. In 1954, Midy received his B.A. from College Saint Martial, Port-

au-Prince. He thereafter enrolled at Notre Dame Major Seminary and was ordained a priest in June 1959.⁶⁵

Midy describes himself as a Christian and theologian who takes the option for the oppressed Haitians and denounces their domination and exploitation including the capitalist system that perpetuates such socio-economic situation in Haiti. This stance is reflected in his Haitian liberation theology, which constitutes his contribution to structural change in Haiti and to the integral liberation of his fellow Haitians.

Toward a Haitian Liberation Theology

In his “Jalons pour une théologie haitienne libératrice en dialogue avec G. Gutiérrez et J.L. Segundo,” Godefroy Midy sets forth to lay the groundwork of a Haitian liberation theology.⁶⁶ Basically, this work derives from the school of thought typical of Latin American theology. It draws upon liberation as the central theme upon which a political, critical, and committed theology is framed. It sees theology as the second stage of reflection based on liberating pastoral practice and on Haiti’s socio-historical experience of liberation struggle in view of societal and ecclesial transformation.⁶⁷ Written in 1977 during Haiti’s hereditary dictatorship, this Haitian theology is a

⁶⁵Godefroy Midy, “Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Philosophy of the Person,” PhD diss., Fordham University, 1971, Vita.

⁶⁶Godefroy Midy, “Jalons pour une théologie Haitienne Libératrice en dialogue avec G. Gutiérrez et J.L. Segundo,” PhD diss., Université de Montréal, 1977. Hereafter quoted as “Jalons pour théologie Haitienne Libératrice.”

⁶⁷Ibid, p. 35.

prototype in the lineage of the Latin American theology tradition. No other work of this caliber is known to have been written at the same time.

Central to this assertion is the following: Midy believes that Roman Catholic theology and ministry in Haiti has, since the eighteenth century, unconsciously supported and legitimized the established order. The church has given itself up to be utilized as an instrument of the elites to dominate and oppress the Haitian people. Midy denounces Catholic Church's mainstream theology and pastoral practices. He sees the capitalist system prevalent in Haiti as partly responsible for that country's socio-religious structure of domination.⁶⁸ However, he argues that parallel to such socio-religious history of oppression there has also been in Haiti a history of resistance, of anti-slavery, of struggle for independence and liberation. Such socio-cultural experience of liberation provides the groundwork for Midy's Haitian liberation theology.⁶⁹ He uses the works of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo to buttress his point, and then in light of their theologico-pastoral insight enunciates three propositions:

- (i) a Haitian theology of liberation presupposes a Haitian liberation of theology.
- (ii) a Haitian liberation theology must consider human/historical liberation in the context of divine/eschatological liberation: correlation between the definitive liberation brought about by Jesus Christ and the Haitian liberation process.

⁶⁸ Midy gives as examples the Black Code of 1865 and the Concordats of 1860 and 1966; cf. *ibid.*, p. 269.

⁶⁹ Midy, "Jalons pour une théologie haïtienne libératrice," *Ibid.*, pp. 274-292.

(iii) a Haitian liberation theology needs to be articulated in the context of the universal Church and of contemporary Christian thought.⁷⁰

Midy's objectives in constructing his Haitian liberation theology, therefore, are threefold. First, he wants to argue that Roman Catholicism, for the gospel's sake, must break ties with Haiti's elites and take a firm option for the oppressed Haitians. Second, he wants to retrieve the liberating element of Christian revelation to uphold the humanity and dignity of the exploited majority of his people, and contribute to their liberation. Third, he seeks to render a service to his country as well as to the local and universal Church.⁷¹

Midy eschews the classical theologico-pastoral approach departing from Christian revelation to atheism that has been so pervading in Roman Catholicism. Such procedure, he alleges, would result in an academic theology alienated from the Haitian socio-historical situation.⁷² Manifestation of such procedure in Haiti, he contends, translates into a Christianity that obsesses about exorcising paganism, communism, and vodouism while it promotes the salvation of the soul, a theology of development, and union with the universal Church.⁷³ He considers such a deductive theologico-pastoral model problematic for two reasons. First, it has de-politicized the majority of Haitians as shown in the

⁷⁰Ibid, pp. 432-442, 443-447.

⁷¹Ibid, pp. 9, 37, 500-1.

⁷²Ibid, p. 264.

⁷³Ibid, p. 494.

“fatalistic vision” and “mythical hope” exhibited by the people. Second, it has overlooked their reality of oppression and their liberation struggle.⁷⁴

Midy’s Haitian liberation theology, in contrast, begins with the life-situation of the oppressed Haitians. “We have reflected on our faith from the base, namely from about 85% of the Haitian population [that the system has] abandoned, defeated, [and] largely ignored. It is from the oppressed and dominated; from the little ones and those below that we have drawn near the world, Church and God.”⁷⁵ Analysis of that socio-historical reality and of the role of Roman Catholicism in it proves resoundingly that “...Haiti is a dominated country where the majority of the people are oppressed both socially and religiously....”⁷⁶ Midy rejects those conditions because they negate the humanity and dignity of the Haitian people.

In so doing, the marginalized and exploited Haitians become the focal point of his liberation theology. Midy explains his theological starting point thus: “Since oppression is for us mortal sin, it is the oppressed Haitians who have been our theologico-pastoral locus...Their groans, clamor, yearning for freedom, desire to be and exist, such is the path that we have followed to walk on the trails of a liberation that has begun but that is not yet finished.”⁷⁷ One of Midy’s major concerns, therefore, has been to determine how

⁷⁴Ibid, p. 506.

⁷⁵Ibid, p. 455-456.

⁷⁶Ibid, p. 266

⁷⁷Ibid, pp. 494-495.

to make a paradigm shift from an oppressive ministry and theology to a liberating ministry and theology.⁷⁸

Equally noteworthy is the rapport Midy establishes between “theology of liberation and liberation of theology.” He claims that a theology articulated in a context of liberation must be conscious of two complementary and invariable features. This approach, which represents Midy’s brilliant contribution to liberation theology, reveals his reading of Gustavo Gutiérrez’s *A Theology of Liberation* and Juan Luis Segundo’s *The Liberation of Theology* as constituting one integral work wherein each author emphasizes, though not exclusively, a specific aspect.⁷⁹

Midy asserts that both dimensions—theology of liberation and liberation of theology—involve deconstruction of ministry and theology by freeing them from bourgeois ideology and domination; and reconstruction of ministry and theology with commitment to and solidarity with the poor and excluded. The second aspect represents the perspective for a new reading of Christian revelation. Midy understands the two elements of his Haitian liberation theology as evolving, first, from socio-historical liberation to theology “in crisis” and, second, from liberated theology to socio-historical liberation.⁸⁰

Praxis of liberation – done in solidarity with the impoverished in a dependent and oppressed social location – raises pressing issues that provoke classical theology into a

⁷⁸Ibid, pp. 33-34, 264.

⁷⁹Ibid, pp. 23-32.

⁸⁰Ibid, p. 22.

crisis, given its inability to adequately address those problems. The theologian therefore, Midy explains, is compelled to re-read Christian sources with different sets of concerns to discover the God who is love and justice for the oppressed. This novel reading of revelation also enables one to articulate a different theology, which is both pro-marginalized and irrecoverable by the established order. Similarly, Midy continues, the theologian must be attentive to, and denounce, the dominant ideology inherent in classical theology. Hence, a fresh reading of Christian sources, done from the theologian's praxis of liberation and solidarity with the oppressed, forms a pre-requisite to proclaim the word of God with a new ideology that reveals social reality.⁸¹

Midy also claims that a Haitian liberation theology must establish a correlation between "Christian salvation and Haitian liberation process." This is not, he insists, an attempt to identify God's salvation in Jesus Christ with a provisional historical liberation that would ultimately lead to a socialist government in Haiti. For Midy, it indicates that divine salvation constitutes a gift and the paradigm for all liberation.⁸²

Another major concern of Midy's Haitian liberation theology consists in ascertaining how to avert any demotion in talking about Christian salvation in the context of Haitian historical liberation. Such curtailing is preventable, he acknowledges, provided the Haitian theologian bears in mind that human being is made of historical and transcendental attributes.⁸³

⁸¹Ibid, p. 18.

⁸²Ibid, pp. 440-441.

⁸³Ibid, p. 436.

This contention suggests that Christian salvation and historical liberation go hand in hand. It also denotes that faith has political ramifications. Midy emphasizes, however, that such implications do not indicate that faith holds a political blue-print with its own policies and programs.⁸⁴ As such, Midy clarifies that the *raison d'être* of the option for Socialism entails a process for the liberation of the oppressed Haitians. It is within such alternative that the religious inquiry is conducted anew.⁸⁵

Midy contends that a Haitian liberation theology must not only be a Black theology but also that it must articulate simultaneously faith and freedom. Informed by James Cone, the African-American Christian theologian, Midy declares that a Haitian Black liberation theology is imperative because Haiti is the country of a Black people. Blackness then represents the situation from which believing Haitian community endeavors to understand the word of God. Midy claims that God takes the option for the Haitian Black community in solidarity with its oppression and struggle for liberation.

Midy also maintains that it is essential to “believe in God and freedom at once.”⁸⁶ He grounds his reasoning on the Fathers of the Haitian Revolution of 1804 who demonstrated the congeniality between faith and liberty. They believed in a God who is freedom and liberator for them. On this basis, Midy contends that the struggles of

⁸⁴Ibid, pp. 437-38.

⁸⁵Ibid, p. 439.

⁸⁶Ibid, p. 459.

Haitians for a new independence today depict “signs of divine grace, for liberty is synonymous with grace.”⁸⁷

Hence an adequate Haitian liberation theology, for Midy, need be articulated within the context of the universal church and in dialogue with contemporary Christian thought. He justifies this view stating that the specificity of Haiti and Latin America results from the “gigantic step that theology has taken relative to research methodology, anthropological vision, and epistemological approach”⁸⁸ As such, what implications does Midy's liberation theology have for ethics and spirituality?

Midy's Ethical and Spiritual Assumptions

Midy affirms that Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo have deeply influenced him. As a result, the ethical and spiritual assumptions of his Haitian liberation theology depend considerably on the social and religious views of these liberation theologians. Gutiérrez's theological method, which starts with the socio-historical praxis of liberation of the oppressed, informed Midy to begin his Haitian liberation theology with the social reality of the oppressed Haitians and with their struggle for liberation.⁸⁹

Midy had also been strongly informed by the Uruguayan Jesuit priest and theologian Juan Luis-Segundo (1925-1996), one of the most forthright proponents of liberation theology. Segundo promotes the liberation of theology, which seeks to expound the Christian faith in a way that hinders its appropriation by the elites and

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid, p. 443.

⁸⁹Ibid, pp. 23-26.

instigates the liberation of the poor. Segundo's assertion that the gospel need be proclaimed from a new reading of Christian revelation, based on a commitment to liberation, encouraged Midy to distrust ministry and theology in Haiti as harboring dominant and oppressive religious ideology that unwittingly strives to justify that country's socio-historical subjection.⁹⁰ These two outstanding Latin American theologians provided inspiration for Midy's thought process, enabling him to lay the groundwork for his Haitian liberation theology. As he states:

Not to walk at random, we have developed our thinking in the context of Latin American theology, so-called 'theology of liberation...' Two leaders of the new theology encouraged us to do for Haiti what they attempted to do for their own country. These are Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo, respectively from Peru and Uruguay. [For them], a theology can be liberating for the oppressed if it is articulated in solidarity with the revolutionary praxis of the exploited and in continual questioning of its own presuppositions. This dual concern constitutes what we have called the two dimensions of one liberating theology. According to Gutiérrez and Segundo, there cannot be a "theology of liberation" without a "liberation theology."⁹¹

Midy's chief preoccupation centers on formulating a Haitian liberation theology. He deems this theology a contribution to the liberation of his fellow Haitians and a service to God and the church. After learning how dominant religion in Haiti has historically been oppressive, Midy breaks ties with mainstream religion and takes option

⁹⁰Ibid, pp. 29-31.

⁹¹Ibid, pp. 501-502: ("Pour ne pas marcher à l'aventure, nous avons élaboré notre pensée dans le contexte de la théologie latino-américaine, dite 'théologie de la libération'....Deux chefs de la file de la nouvelle théologie nous ont encouragé à faire pour Haïti ce qu'eux-même essaient d'élaborer pour leur propre pays. Il s'agit de Gustavo Gutiérrez et de Juan Luis Segundo, respectivement du Pérou et de l'Uruguay. Selon Gutiérrez et Segundo, une théologie ne peut être libératrice pour les opprimés que si elle se fait en solidarité avec la praxis révolutionnaire des exploités et dans un continuel questionnement de ses propres présupposés. Cette double préoccupation constitue ce que nous avons appelé les deux dimensions d'une seule théologie libératrice. Selon l'esprit même de Gutiérrez et de Segundo, il ne peut exister une 'théologie de la libération' sans une 'libération de la théologie'").

for the oppressed Haitians. In solidarity with their suffering and struggle for liberation, he re-reads Christian revelation from the perspective of the impoverished of Haiti. This is a basic moral presupposition in Midy's Haitian liberation theology. This premise coheres with Midy's belief concerning the distinctive feature of Haiti's history: the tyranny of the powerful over the weak.⁹² Midy characterizes that oppression as a "mortal sin."⁹³

Another significant point entails the correlation Midy establishes between human liberation and divine liberation. Informed by Gutiérrez and Segundo, Midy establishes an intrinsic affinity between Haitian liberation process and eschatological liberation.⁹⁴ To him historical liberation in Haiti finds fulfillment in God's liberation in Jesus Christ. This forms the second ethical assumption of his Haitian liberation theology.

Midy also forms a relationship between a Haitian liberation theology and a Haitian liberation of theology. This means that Gutiérrez and Segundo must be read together as one liberating theology with two emphasizes that suggest the primacy of both Haitian historical liberation and Haitian liberation of theological sources. This implies that his Haitian liberation theology will serve the oppressed Haitians provided it is articulated in solidarity with their historical praxis and a constant questioning of its own

⁹²Midy, "Jalons pour une théologie haïtienne libératrice," pp. 441, 498. Elsewhere, Midy proposes the gospel as a resource for the promotion of human life in his country. In his "Évangéliser Haïti pour une culture de vie," he writes "...évangéliser-éduquer au respect des lois justes des institutions, aux 'règles de jeu' de la constitution, si nous voulons vivre dans la société qui ne repose pas sur l'arbitraire, l'improvisation, la loi de la jungle, du plus fort, des nantis et des puissants (evangelize-educate to respect just laws of the institutions, the 'game rules' of the constitution if we want to live in society not based on arbitrary, improvisation, the law of the jungle [or that of] the strongest, the wealthy and powerful) (*Bulletin de Liaison*, Vol. IX, No. 3, Centre Pedro-Arrupe, Haïti, Octobre 2004, p. 9).

⁹³Midy, "Jalons pour une théologie haïtienne libératrice," p. 494.

⁹⁴Ibid, pp. 435-442.

assumptions.⁹⁵ This represents a third ethical assumption of Midy's Haitian liberation theology.

Equally significant is Midy's position that a Haitian liberation theology will be adequate only if developed in the framework of the universal church and contemporary Christian thought. He believes that Haitian and Latin American distinctiveness stems from the outstanding progress made by theology regarding methods, research, and epistemology. Articulating his Haitian liberation theology in light of such theological achievement would make it clearer, more rational and systematized.⁹⁶ This is the fourth ethical presupposition in Midy's Haitian liberation theology.

These presuppositions are significant, since they indicate the theologian's preferences for the oppressed and their liberation. Contrarily, Midy declares, "the theologian would venture to do theology with *hidden options* in favor of the status quo and dominant classes."⁹⁷ His liberation theology also holds important spiritual assumptions.

In effect, Midy brings to the fore a distinctive liberationist spirituality whereby his idea of God, the church, and theological anthropology is closely bound up with each other.⁹⁸ Midy is adamant to specify from the outset that he believes in a God who is love,

⁹⁵Ibid, pp. 432-435.

⁹⁶Ibid, p. 443.

⁹⁷Ibid, p. 503.

⁹⁸G. Midy, "Citations tirées du livre *Marche en ma présence* de Jean-Guy Saint-Armand, S.J." *Bulletin de Liaison*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, Centre Pedro Arrupe (Octobre, 2008), p. 5. <http://liaison.lemoyne.edu/XIII-3.pdf> [accessed March 4, 2009].

justice, creator, and liberator for the oppressed. He asserts that God is biased and very much involved in social conflicts. God opposes evil and its instigators because God stands in solidarity with the poor. By taking the option for the excluded, God shows God's integral love, summoning persecutors to change.⁹⁹ This is a basic spiritual assumption in Midy's Haitian liberation theology.

Scripture constitutes the main font of knowledge and normative authority for Midy's notion of God. As he writes:

Let us take a quick look at some biblical passages that show us God as author and lover of life. In our spiritual and human journey we are called to emulate the God of life and be sowers of life. The central vision of God from which we must read the entire Old Testament is the Exodus: God is the one who brought his people from slavery and the oppression of Egypt (see Ex 20:2; Nb. 11:22; Is 10:22-27, Dan. 9:15). God says *I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, the house of bondage* (Ex. 20:2). Slavery humiliates, oppresses, kills the life and dignity of a people. God cannot accept it because He is the God of life and living, not death. He is the teacher who loves life (Wis. 11:26)...¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Ibid, p. 471. In his "Citations tirées du livre *Marche en ma présence* de Jean-Guy Saint-Arnaud, S.J." [*Bulletin de Liaison*, XIII, No.3, Centre Pedro Arrupe, Octobre 2008, p.5] Midy claims "In what God do we believe? This is a fundamental question because our image of God constrains our image of the church, creation, and human being. Our spirituality depends on it" (En quel Dieu croyons-nous? C'est une question fondamentale car de l'image que nous avons de Dieu, dépendra l'image que nous aurons de l'Eglise, de la création, et de l'être humain. Notre spiritualité en dépend).

¹⁰⁰G. Midy, "Evangéliser Haïti pour une culture de vie," *Bulletin de Liaison*, Vol. IX, No. 3, Centre Pedro Arrupe (Octobre, 2004), p. 13. <http://liaison.lemoyne.edu/Bulletin%20de%20Liaison,%20octobre%202004.pdf> [accessed 3/4/2009]. [Translation: "Jetons un coup d'œil très rapide sur quelques passages bibliques qui nous présentent Dieu comme auteur de la vie. Dans notre itinéraire spirituel et humain nous sommes appelés à être semeurs de vie pour imiter le Dieu de la vie. La vision central de Dieu à partir de laquelle il faut lire tout l'Ancien Testament nous vient de l'Exode: Dieu est celui qui a fait sortir son peuple de l'esclavage et de l'oppression d'Egypte (cf. Ex. 20:2; Nb. 23:22; Is. 10:22-27; Dan. 9:15). Dieu dit *Je suis Yahvé, ton Dieu, qui t'ai fait sortir d'Egypte, de la maison de servitude* (Ex. 20:2). L'esclavage humilie, opprime, tue la vie et la dignité d'un peuple. Dieu ne peut donc l'accepter car il est le Dieu de la vie et des vivants et non de la mort. Il est le maître vivant qui aime la vie" (Sg 11:26)...].

Midy posits that the Church is present wherever injuries are being healed and chains smashed, whether or not Christ constitutes the rationale for the liberating action. This is presumably what Jesus intended, Midy discloses, when he stated that someone would be welcomed or rejected by my Father provided that person rendered service to those in need.¹⁰¹ This is a second spiritual assumption in Midy's Haitian liberation theology. As a corollary of this premise, he summons Christianity in Haiti to stop being a mechanism of oppression for ordinary Haitians.¹⁰² For Midy, the Church's "specific contribution is to be leaven and sign of universal salvation proclaimed by Jesus-Christ."¹⁰³

Midy's notion of God above as love-justice-life-creator-liberation has concrete implications for human beings. To conform themselves to this biblical God, Haitian men and women are called to be the protagonists of life and liberation. This is a third spiritual assumption of Midy's Haitian liberation theology. As he explains it:

According to this view, the human is a missionary of God to transform the world. The specific contribution of the Christian is to preach and proclaim, by word and by deeds, that all humans are called to salvation. Faith is an act of commitment and good news. The human world and God's world form a single universe, both of which are welded together by the man Jesus who is the God of men.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Ibid, pp. 476-77; cf. James Cone, O.C., II, p. 237 quoted in Midy, p. 476.

¹⁰²Ibid, p. 501.

¹⁰³Ibid, p. 451.

¹⁰⁴Ibid, p. 453. ("Selon cette vision, l'homme est missionnaire de Dieu pour transformer le monde. L'apport spécifique du chrétien est d'annoncer et de proclamer, par sa parole et par sa vie, que tous les hommes son appelés au salut. La foi devient un acte d'engagement et une bonne nouvelle. Le monde de l'homme et le monde de Dieu forment un seul univers, les deux étant soudés ensemble par l'homme Jésus qui est le Dieu des hommes").

Midy develops this anthropological theology elsewhere:

In fact, God needs the Haitian man who also needs God for a Great Alliance to serve life in Haiti. It is not any kind of God, nor any kind of Haitian man for such a project. It is the God of Jesus, and of the Haitian becoming that man Jesus proposes, e.g. someone who becomes human so that others may have life. The covenant between God and the Haitian for Life is not possible except between the triune God, who is pure light of love toward one another, and a Haitian when he becomes loving gaze towards the other Haitian. Jesus said: I have come so that you might have life, life in abundance (John 10:10). Can share his dream of alliance only those who live for the lives of others.¹⁰⁵

The basic import of these spiritual presuppositions lies in that for liberation theology, contrary to classical theology, spirituality is a “mode of action” or, better, “contemplation in action.”¹⁰⁶ Midy’s considerations compel ineluctably an evaluation of his position.

¹⁰⁵G. Midy, “Dieu et l’homme haïtien,” l’homme haïtien qui lui aussi a besoin de Dieu pour une grande Alliance au service de la Vie en Haïti. Il ne s’agit pas de n’importe quel Dieu, ni de n’importe quel homme haïtien pour un tel projet. Il s’agit du Dieu de Jésus, et de l’Haïtien devenu cet homme que propose Jésus, i.e. quelqu’un qui se fait homme pour que les autres aient la vie. L’Alliance entre Dieu et l’Haïtien pour la Vie n’est possible qu’entre le Dieu-Trinité, qui n’est que pur regard d’amour vers un autre, et un Haïtien quand il devient regard d’amour vers l’autre Haïtien-ne. Jésus dit: Je suis venu pour que vous ayez la vie, la vie en abondance. (Jn. 10:10). Ne peuvent partager son rêve d’alliance que ceux qui ne vivent que pour la vie des autres.”

¹⁰⁶Ibid. In his “Homélie de la messe solennelle de lancement de l’Année Jubilaire,” Midy stated: “Dieu est un Dieu actif auquel on répond activement...Chercher Dieu, c’est chercher son dessein, son projet, sa volonté ‘dans les choses.’ Ce n’est pas donc une pure contemplation, i.e. contempler pour contempler. C’est se reconnaître et se sentir envoyé au monde par Dieu, pour collaborer avec lui, puisqu’il est activement présent dans le monde et la réalité humaine. Nous devons être alors des chercheurs, des pèlerins du projet de Dieu pour nous. Notre charisme apostolique est centré sur la personne du Jésus historique à suivre. Nous sommes consacrés au Père par l’Esprit, dans la mission de l’Eglise et du monde” (*Bulletin de Liaison*, Vol. XI, No. 1, Centre Pedro Arrupe [March, 2006], pp. 8, 9). “God is a God of action to whom one responds actively. Seek God means to look for God’s purpose, project, and will in *all things*. It is therefore not a pure contemplation, that is, contemplation for its own sake. It is to recognize and feel sent to the world by God, to cooperate with God, since God is actively present in the world and human reality. We must be seekers, pilgrims of God’s plan for us. Our apostolic charism focuses on following the person of the historical Jesus. We are dedicated to the Father through the Spirit in the mission of the Church and the world” <http://liaison.lemoyne.edu/mars%202006.pdf> [accessed March 4, 2009].

Critical Consideration

How do the ethical-spiritual features of Midy's liberation theology relate to the conditions of work examined in Chapter I? What is the significance of these ethical-spiritual aspects for the theologies of work described above? And finally, what challenges do Haiti's conditions of work present for Midy's theology? Midy develops themes and sensitivities in his liberation theology that are highly relevant to my dissertation – critique of domination-oppression of church and society in Haiti, the relation between Haitian theology of liberation and Haitian liberation of theology, God and blackness, to name only these. However, although Midy talks about subjugation and exploitation, he does not address women's domination and oppression. In the same vein, he does not tackle Haiti's ecological problem.

His sharp critique of the domination of church and society in Haiti compels him to take option for the impoverished of that country and to stand in solidarity with their efforts and hopes for liberation. This crucial stance in Midy's liberation theology determines how God is construed; the One in light of whom the church undertakes its mission, and society in Haiti assumes its function.

Midy's theological method – Haitian theology of liberation and Haitian liberation of theology – performs a preponderant role in his theology, which enables him to contribute to the liberation the oppressed Haitians and to serve God and the Church. These two complementing ways of doing theology is pertinent to the development of my theology of work.

Moreover, Midy's firm option for liberation and a socialist system in Haiti over against developmentalism and capitalist economy follows the general position of liberation theology proponents. He even claims that it is a fallacy to conceive of development before achieving liberation. Midy is absolutely right, if the development in question here referred to the failed experiences (bad development) of the 1950s to 1970s. But development in this dissertation, as will be clarified later, seeks to depart radically from developmentalism. It is synonymous with freedom. Therefore, if actual underdeveloped social and human reality in Haiti is classified as A and the liberated society and humanity desired as B, how does one get from A to B? In other words, what policy suggestion would create or determine a course of action to guide the oppressed poor of Haiti to liberation and a socialist state? One would miss the point if one overlooked this question.

It is one thing to name the massive problems with the developmentalist model of unfettered free market globalization, but quite another to offer a positive policy agenda aimed at the economic development of a just and sustainable society. Given its history it is not surprising that Liberation Theology is strong on social and economic critique, and weak on positive policy recommendations.

Furthermore, hardly anyone serious about justice and liberation would disregard the impact gender inequality has on women's poverty, or would overlook the influence of ecological devastation exerts on the misery of the oppressed poor. The importance of these issues can scarcely be overestimated. In a later section I will attempt to engage

Liberation Theology with current thinking on development and ecology to sketch a liberationist development path.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide

Jean-Bertrand Aristide (1953-), former Salesian priest and champion for the poor and democracy in Haiti, has been a proponent of liberation theology and a prophet. He escaped several assassination attempts by the Haitian army and militia (Tonton Macoutes). His homilies and messages—delivered toward the end of the Duvalier’s dictatorship in 1985 and during the ensuing regimes of Lieutenant General Henri Namphy and General Prosper Avril—shed the light of the Gospel on Haiti’s neocolonial stratification and structural violence, and pointed the way to liberation.¹⁰⁷ In 1987, he was removed from the Salesian Order because allegedly he utilized his pulpit to preach politics.¹⁰⁸

Aristide has a Ph.D. in Literature and Philosophy from the University of South Africa, an M.A. in Biblical Theology from the University of Montreal, and a B.A. in Psychology from Haiti State University. He has written several books including *In the Parish of the Poor: Writings from Haiti* (1990), *Théologie et Politique* (1992), *Aristide. An Autobiography* (1993), *Dignity* (1994), *Névrose vétéro-testamentaire* (1994).

¹⁰⁷ See Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*. Introduction by Noam Chomsky (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1994), p. 133; Mark Danner, “The Prophet,” *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 40, no. 19 (November 18, 1993), pp. 27-28; Alex Dupuy, *The Prophet and Power: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the International Community, and Haiti* (Lanham: Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ Aristide, *In the Parish of the Poor: Writings from Haiti*, pp. 66-67. Aristide believes that “the crime for which I stand accused is the crime of preaching food for all people. That is what the Salesians and the Haitian bishops and the Vatican (for all of them agreed upon my expulsion) call politics” (ibid).

On December 16, 1990 Aristide became the first democratically elected president of Haiti by a landslide. A good number of Haitians characterize this historical milestone as the joyful birth of a new Haiti. Even while holding the highest office in that country, Aristide viewed himself as the embodiment of the common people's expectations, a militant, and a poor man with privilege, who lived among the poor and spoke on behalf of their prophetic community.¹⁰⁹

In September 1991 seven months after his inauguration, however, resentful elites overthrew Aristide in a bloody military coup d'état believed to have been supported by the United States government. Some observers saw in Aristide's overthrow the retaliatory hand of the elites against the poor and those yearning for change who had voted for him.¹¹⁰

The abrupt demise of *Lavalas'* participatory democracy experiment returned Haiti to unconstitutionality. The army, police, and militia terrorized the country and Aristide's supporters. Extra judicial killings, rapes, tortures, kidnappings became common occurrences. About 5,000 people were murdered and 400,000 went into hiding. Civil

¹⁰⁹Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *Dignity*, introduction by Christophe Wargny; translated and with an afterword by Carrol F. Coates, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), p.32, "The people's sufferings are my own. I have shared them for so long that there can never be a gap between the president and the aspirations of the majority of Haitians" (*Aristide. An Autobiography*, p. 176; see also Howard French, "A Priest to the Poor: Jean-Bertrand Aristide," *New York Times*, December 19, 1990, p. 6; F. Boers, "Flowers on the Cannonballs: Jean-Bertrand Aristide Inaugurated as President of Haiti," *Other Side*, 27, no. 2 (March-April, 1991), pp. 28-32; Nan Cobbey, "Inauguration is Kairos Moment in Haiti," *Witness*, 74 (April, 1991), pp. 6-8; Greg Chamberlain, "Haiti's 'Second Independence': Aristide's Nine Months in Office," *Haiti. Dangerous Crossroads*. Edited by Deidre McFadyen and Pierre LaRamée with Mark Fried and Fred Rosen from the North American Congress on Latin America (Boston,: South End Press, 1995), pp. 51-56.

¹¹⁰J.P. Slavin, "The Elite's Revenge. The Military Coup of 1991," *Haiti. Dangerous Crossroads*, pp. 57-61; Jean Casimir and John Canham-Clyne, "Haiti After the Coup," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 9, Iss. 2 (Spring, 1992), pp. 349-364.

liberties, press freedom, trade unions, and peasant organizations gave way to censorship and military dictatorship under civilian puppets. To force the putschists to relinquish power, the United Nations and the Organization of American States imposed an economic embargo on Haiti. Trade sanctions did little to dislodge the military leadership and their allies, who obtained their merchandise through contraband from the Dominican Republic. Worse, these sanctions had the unintended effect of further worsening the economic conditions and health problems of the impoverished Haitians. Exiled in Caracas, Venezuela, and in Washington, D.C., Aristide tirelessly searched for a political accord that would reinstate him to power.¹¹¹

¹¹¹J. P. Constable, "Dateline Haiti: Caribbean Stalemate," *Foreign Policy*, No. 89 (Winter, 1992-1993), pp. 175-190; C. de Jonge Oudraat, "Making Economic Sanctions Work," *Survival*, Vol. 42, Iss. 3 (January, 2000), pp. 105-128; E. Gibbons and R. Garfield, "The Impact of Economic Sanctions on Health and Human Rights in Haiti," *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 89, Iss. 10 (October, 1999), pp. 1499-1504; Michel Chossudovsky, "US Sponsored Coup D'Etat. The Destabilization of Haiti," <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO402D.html> [accessed November 12, 2006]. Much was said to discredit Aristide. Brigadier General Raoul Cedras, one of the coup leaders, stated vehemently that toppling Aristide was "a correction of the democratic process" because the president had encouraged the common people "to attack the rich," had infringed the constitution and had sought to form his own force. Juan González, *Roll Down Your Window: Stories of a Forgotten America* ([New York: Verso, 1995], p. 157), writes that "what [Cedras] neglected to mention was that Aristide had also decreed a doubling of the minimum wage...and had instituted reductions in university fees and in the price of basic food products like flour." See also R. Fatton, Jr., "The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of President Aristide," *Haiti Renewed: Political and Economic Prospects*. Ed. Robert I. Rotterg (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1987), pp. 136-153. Refuting the claim that Aristide was a dictator, Roland I. Perusse, *Haitian Democracy Restored, 1991-1995* ([Lanham: University Press of America, 1995], p. x), declares "Aristide made an attempt to bridge the social gap between rich and poor during his first eight months in office but made little progress. In fact, his efforts at social reform were the principal reason for his ouster in the military coup of September 30, 1991." He added, "The conclusion to be reached is that democracy under Aristide was not perfect, but it was democracy nonetheless, and certainly democracy compared with the government that preceded him and the government that succeeded him. He made a good start toward instituting democracy in Haiti, and his efforts should not be denigrated." See for instance, R. Fatton, Jr., "The Impairments of Democratization: Haiti in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (January, 1999), pp. 209-229; and Aarón Gamaliel Ramos, "The Prophet and Power: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the International Community, and Haiti," *Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (January-June 2008), pp. 157-160.

My family and I fortunately escaped the repression directly and have stood in solidarity with the impoverished Haitians whose life has been negatively impacted. Some members of my family are in the United States, while others still remain in Haiti. Once more the hope of the majority for political participation and socio-economic justice has been deferred.¹¹² My family and I are proud to continue participating in the construction of such hope—the perspective in which Aristide’s story is narrated.

On October 15, 1994, finally, Aristide returned to Haiti from exile to resume his Presidency, ironically escorted by the United States Marines, reportedly after he had formally agreed to implement International Monetary Fund structural adjustment policies.¹¹³

Elected president in 2000, Aristide was again deposed four years later by former members of the disbanded army, sponsored by Haiti’s business class, termed the Group of 184, and the United States government.¹¹⁴ Aristide stated he was abducted with his wife to a French military base in Central African Republic and then to South Africa,

¹¹²Cf. Robert Fatton, Jr., *Haiti Predatory Republic: The Unending Transition to Democracy* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

¹¹³Ian Martin, “Haiti: Mangled Multilateralism,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 95 (Summer, 1994), pp. 72-89.

¹¹⁴Jean-Bertrand Aristide and Christophe Wargny, *Aristide: An Autobiography* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993). Contrary to United States officials, Aristide reported he was involuntary removed from office and taken out of Haiti. See also Farah Stockman, “Aristide Alleges US Forces him into Exile,” *The Boston Globe*, March 2, 2004; Paul Farmer, *Who Removed Aristide? The U.S. in Haiti*, *London Review of Books*, Vol. 26 No. 8 (15 April 2004), pp.28-31 <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n08/paul-farmer/who-removed-aristide> [accessed 11/22/2009]; W. Andy Knight, “U.S. Complicity in Pushing Aside Aristide,” *Global Forum Policy*, March 2, 2004 <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/97/32129.html> [accessed November 22, 2009]; Charlie Rose, “A Conversation with author Randall Robinson,” PBS, December 26, 2007; “Editorial, Coup d’état in Haiti,” *The Jamaica Observer*, Internet Edition, Monday, March 01, 2004 http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/editorial/html/20040301T000000-0500_56431_OBS_COUP_D_ETAT_IN_HAITI.asp [accessed 11/22/2009].

where he found refuge. Similar to the 1991 coup, Haiti returned to illegality. Harsh political reprisals were carried out against the poor, Aristide's supporters, and government officials.¹¹⁵

There is a striking similarity between Aristide's removal from the Salesians and the two coups d'état he endured. His use of his religious and political offices on behalf of the poor made the Haitian elites, the Church hierarchy, and Washington uncomfortable. Some people believe he compromised too much with the old regime (macoutism, Duvalierism, and others) to return to power in 1994 and to hold office thereafter. Others allege that he is a demagogue and populist. Certainly the poor via Aristide showed they could take political power but proved themselves unable to hold it or to change the social structure that maintains poverty and iniquity.

A New Church and Society in Haiti: Background and Context

In the book titled *In the Parish of the Poor: Writings from Haiti*, Jean-Bertrand Aristide deals with the darkness and light permeating church and society in Haiti. He argues that, through solidarity and the struggle for liberation, a new church and society can become a reality in that country and urges his congregation to "grow into holiness" and "walk in the light of Christ." Fundamentally, this work belongs to the tradition of Latin American theology. It connects political activism to Christian salvation for social and ecclesial liberation. It considers the oppressed poor and base ecclesial communities

¹¹⁵Peter Hallward, "An Interview with Jean-Bertrand Aristide," *The London Review of Books*, Vol. 29 No. 4 (22 February 2007), pp. 9-13 <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n04/peter-hallward/an-interview-with-jean-bertrand-aristide> [accessed November 22, 2009]; Randall Robinson, *An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, From Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2007).

as the paramount locale for God's self-disclosure. It makes the option for and solidarity with, the poor and oppressed Haitians central to its articulation.¹¹⁶

Aristide's aims in writing this work are threefold. First, he wants to inform Latin American Christians about the struggle, suffering, and hope of the church of the poor in Haiti. Second, he seeks to solicit the solidarity of his brothers and sisters in Latin America. Third, he strives to bear evangelical witness to Haiti's tragedies.¹¹⁷

Aristide is particularly concerned with the liberation of poor and oppressed Haitians. On this basis his theological project endeavors to articulate: (a) How is he to speak of God to the majority of impoverished Haitians who unjustly suffer oppression? and (b) How are the oppressed poor to follow Christ in a church whose hierarchy collectively favors the status quo and preaches forbearance, compliance, and devotion?¹¹⁸

Aristide makes a number of noteworthy points in response to these questions. He argues convincingly that speaking about God to the poor in contemporary Haiti requires a clear option for them, a firm commitment to their cause, and the freedom to proclaim the Good News with a truth that (a) resonates with the hopes for food, liberty, equality, democracy, dignity, decent job and housing, land, respect, peace, and life of the oppressed and marginalized; and (b) mobilizes them to undertake, with solidarity and in the name of their faith, non-violent political action for a new humanity and the

¹¹⁶Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *In the Parish of the Poor: Writings from Haiti*. Translated and edited by Amy Wilentz (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990).

¹¹⁷Amy Wilentz, "Foreword," *In the Parish of the Poor*, pp. xxii-xxiv.

¹¹⁸*Ibid*, p. xi.

construction of a society, based on justice, community, love, participation, rights, and participatory democracy.¹¹⁹

Aristide holds that following Christ implies that the excluded (a) reject the oppressive socio-religious system in which they live; (b) demand the conversion of the elites; (c) deliberately choose God; (d) reflect the light, holiness, and truth of the Lord; and (e) fight for liberation and agrarian reform. This entails that, in Aristide's opinion, theology does not lead to contemplation but to action.¹²⁰

Underlying Aristide's *In the Parish of the Poor* is his theological anthropology. It states that, despite their destitution and maltreatment, the poor are created in the likeness of God, who dwells in their midst and speaks through them. Aristide believes that, in Jesus, the poor have a brother who manifests solidarity with them *under the table* to lead them to liberation.¹²¹ Crucial to understanding Aristide's theology is his metaphor of "table" through which he explains the basic reality of church and society in Haiti. He maintains that the bulk of the population is compelled to live tight under the table in misery because the tiny minority sits comfortably at the table in abundance. To him, members of the common faithful, clergy, religious orders, and bishops find seats both at the table and underneath it.¹²²

¹¹⁹Ibid, pp. 68, 78, 84.

¹²⁰Ibid, pp. 78, 79, 80.

¹²¹Ibid, p. 10.

¹²²Ibid, pp. 9, 17, 87.

Aristide deplores that several of his fellow citizens attempt desperately to flee from their sub-human conditions under the table. He declares that this strategy is deficient. Not only does the problem persist, but also those who succeed in leaving Haiti fail to achieve socio-economic progress. The best path to success, he advises, is for Haitians to remain in their country and organize to solve their problems with solidarity.¹²³

In this perspective, Aristide: (a) summons his fellow country people in the Diaspora to return home to build a new Haiti and create a decent way of life; and (b) urges those living underneath the table to revolt at their situation, to break the table, and make a new one so that all Haitians can take their rightful place at the table to live as human beings in dignity.¹²⁴ As he told his congregation in a homily at a youth Mass: “We are a people who stand up, and we keep fighting, with another Moses leading us, with many Moses, who go forward to break the chains, to denounce the Pharisees, to trace the design of deliverance which will call up a revolution that will change Haiti for once and for all. Amen.”¹²⁵

Comparably notable is Aristide’s notion of “darkness,” which defines the sub-human conditions – e.g. corruption, hunger, exploitation, prostitution, inequalities, institutionalized violence, military dictatorship, and injustices resulting from “the deadly economic infection called capitalism” – that engender death and constrain the lives of the majority of his fellow citizens. He contends that darkness strikes young and old, peasants

¹²³Ibid, p. 8.

¹²⁴Ibid, pp. 7-8, 9, 84, 87-88.

¹²⁵Ibid, pp. 89-90.

and workers, men and, particularly, women and children. Those who exploit the poor and prevent their liberation are also considered as darkness. Aristide denounces these realities as evil and those who perpetrate them as devil.¹²⁶

Despite the evil character of these conditions, Aristide claims that they are significant, since they depict the life-situation of the impoverished. Not only do they indicate what is happening, but also they represent the privileged location for the proclamation of the word of God. They also form the first step of the theologizing process.

Aristide manifests his solidarity with the poor by taking an option for them over against their situation of darkness and against the perpetrators of such evil. In this context, he exhorts his congregation to "...shun the ways of death, and embrace the ways of life. To run from the evildoers' darkness, and toward the light of life. That is, to move always toward freedom, away from slavery"¹²⁷ Accordingly, he exhorts his congregation to keep "walking in the light of Christ." This implies not only a firm option for Jesus Christ and for living according to the gospel, but also a practice of the people's church to speak boldly the truth.¹²⁸

At the basis of these assertions lies Aristide's conviction that Christ's light has religious and socio-political ramifications for members of the people's church. He suggests that, religiously, the light of Christ indicates the effort undertaken to inspire,

¹²⁶Ibid, pp. 6, 75, 76.

¹²⁷Ibid, p. 24.

¹²⁸Ibid, p. 88.

guide, sustain, and nurture members of the people's church in their struggle against darkness. More specifically, the light of Christ includes hope, liberation and base ecclesial communities, as well as Aristide's own preaching and church.¹²⁹

Socio-politically, the light of Christ conveys liberty, human rights, agrarian reform, peasant organizations, youth groups, trade unions, professional unions, and solidarity.¹³⁰ In this vein, Aristide declares that members of the church of the poor "will live in peace when [they] wrap [their] faith and commitment together to build a people's church that will permit the people's power to boil over in a people's revolution – so that this country can breathe free."¹³¹

Aristide firmly believes that a solution for socio-ecclesial change in Haiti will not come from the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church but from the progressive segment of that church. For this purpose, he implores the oppressed multitude beneath the table to organize for social change in the Lord's name. "God asks that a conversion takes place among those who sit at the table of privilege, so that God's light may shine on them also, so that one day all of us may find ourselves upending the table."¹³² It is in this context, relying on John 9:39-41, Aristide feels compelled, in the name of truth, to

¹²⁹Ibid, pp. 13, 15, 23-24, 65, 68.

¹³⁰Ibid, pp. 14, 15, 16.

¹³¹Ibid, p. 83.

¹³²Ibid, p. 88.

denounce the hierarchy of the church for what he claims is their blindness and their support for the Haiti's elites.¹³³

Similarly pertinent is Aristide's call to his congregation to "grow in holiness" because God, who is the font of all holiness, demands it (cf. Lev. 11:45; 19:2). Alluding to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and to the Last Judgment in Matthew, Aristide distinguishes between the saints and the wicked. Commitment to liberation constitutes the criterion whereby one is differentiated from the other. Aristide claims that the holy ones live under the table. He welcomes them: "Long live all of you who feel yourselves crushed beneath the weight of this society! Come to me tonight, because tonight I want to raise you up, I want to help you recognize what you have already become—holy before God!"¹³⁴

He indicates that the saints are the exploited factory workers, the landless peasants, and the multitude of virtuous men and women in Haiti who repudiate the Haitian system and refuse to participate in "the gluttonous pillaging by a band of the bloodthirsty," to practice human trafficking, or to be indifferent to the needs of another person.¹³⁵ Aristide then illustrates his point: "In the factories here, the workers of iniquity pay Haitians seven percent of what they pay people in other countries. Isn't that eating the people? Isn't that sucking the blood of my brothers and sisters who work here, of the

¹³³Ibid, pp. 17-23, 85.

¹³⁴Ibid, p. 75.

¹³⁵Ibid, p. 80.

poor who work in the factories for the big bosses?”¹³⁶ He lashes out against the tragic gulf existing between the enormous profit of the investor/owner of factories and the pitiful wage of the worker, whose labor makes production possible.

And every time the big capitalist bosses pay out one dollar, they take in four. When they invest \$400, they make four times that; when they invest \$1,000, they make \$4,000. They make a lot of money, while the little that they pay you can barely buy food enough for you and isn't enough to feed your children, to pay for your rent, to pay all your bills. Is it right for these unholy ones—who supposedly invest in our country—to come here and stop us from living?¹³⁷

Aristide praises God for those under the table whom he considers holy because they live according to God's word, rejecting darkness and embracing integrity.

Hallelujah for men and women in Haiti who do not join forces with the malevolent regime. Hallelujah for the Haitians who do not enter into the gluttonous pillaging by a band of the bloodthirsty, in whose midst brother sells brother, in whose midst a brother is not his brother's keeper. Hallelujah, because the path of those Haitians who reject the regime is the path of righteousness and love, and that is what the Lord requires. Where there is beating, breaking, and destruction, the righteous man is not. The way of the Lord is the way of justice, and justice blooms on the banks of Deliverance.¹³⁸

He claims that the oppressed poor, who sit underneath the table will become holier if they pray, obey God's will, promote land reform, choose God deliberately against Satan, and voluntarily be ready to suffer.¹³⁹ Then he quotes two verses of Psalm 94, which states: “shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which framed

¹³⁶Ibid, p. 75.

¹³⁷Ibid, p. 76.

¹³⁸Ibid, p. 80.

¹³⁹Ibid, pp. 78-79.

mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.”¹⁴⁰ The wicked, in contrast, sit at the table.

Aristide maintains that they are the ones who hinder the people’s quest for liberty, equality, and liberation. He quotes heavily the Old Testament (especially Lev. 11:45, 19:2; 25:10.35; Ps. 14:4; Is. 61, etc.) to support his assertion. Due to the attitudes (superiority complex and neglect) and practices (oppression and exploitation) of the wicked, he declares that they make it difficult for the saints to grow in holiness.¹⁴¹

In the section that follows I will examine the moral and spiritual presuppositions that undergird Aristide’s theology.

Aristide’s Ethical and Spiritual Assumptions

The first point that perhaps deserves attention is that Jean-Bertrand Aristide draws upon scripture and, particularly, on his socio-religious experience as the sources of his theology. The ethical and spiritual assumptions of his theology, therefore, depend on these sources.¹⁴² Aristide utilizes an inductive method that prioritizes his socio-religious experience. He describes his social and ministerial involvement first because it constitutes, with the life-situation of the poor, the starting point of his theological reflection. The other source that informs Aristide’s theology, and which he utilizes in second place, is Scripture. Contemporary Haitian events are put in parallel with specific biblical narratives and interpreted in function of their liberation insight. One finds

¹⁴⁰Ps. 94:20-21.

¹⁴¹Amy Wilentz, “Foreword,” *In the Parish of the Poor* p. 75.

¹⁴²Obviously reference is being made to the theological dimension of the work under consideration and by no means implies Aristide’s overall theology.

examples of this both with the Old and New Testaments. The landlessness situation of most Haitian peasants is seen in light of Leviticus 25:10.23 with Isaiah 61, and Luke 4:18, from which Aristide declares in a homily:

The year of grace demands a redistribution of the land. So says the Bible. Someone who does not work to ensure that the children of God have a little land to farm, so that the children of God have a little land to build a house upon, a person who does not work for this, and who does not allow others to work for this, that person is not living in a state of grace, but he is living in a state of sin.¹⁴³

Then he adds: “Today we can say that a Christian who wishes to grow in holiness must ask that the land be redistributed. He must ask that the big landholders give land to the poor, and that the poor work that land and make it fruitful.”¹⁴⁴ Faced with the darkness of church and society in Haiti, Aristide musters the courage to take a preferential option for the impoverished over against the Haitian elites, the violence, exploitation, and death to which the oppressed poor are constantly subjected. Such choice represents a morally good action based on a firm commitment to the liberation of the excluded. This is a basic ethical assumption in Aristide’s theology.

Aristide also argues that such good is not obtained through flight or *assistencialism* (i.e. aid that keeps the recipient passive and dependent). Rather, he exhorts the church of the poor and oppressed Haitians to form solidarity and organizations to achieve social and ecclesial liberation. In this vein, he advocates truth both as a way of “walking in the light of Christ” (in opposition to the darkness of

¹⁴³Ibid, p. 78.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

falsehood) and as a pedagogical value that facilitates the annunciation of the gospel to the poor and oppressed in Haiti. This is a second moral presupposition in Aristide's theology.

Equally significant is the task politics performs in such human associations.

Aristide holds that political involvement of the poor, in the name of their faith, constitutes the manner through which the oppressed foster their liberation. The liberation to which Aristide subscribes involves social transformation and a radically qualitative manner of existing as a human being and of relating to one another. Such a novel mode of being a person represents Aristide's invitation to Haitians to live according to the ideal of justice, peace, truth, holiness, and light of Christ. This view forms the third ethical assumption in Aristide's theology.

Implicit to Aristide's consideration is the idea that theology does not perform only a speculative function. Instead, Aristide's theology assumes a preponderant role in the liberation of the oppressed poor in Haiti. In other words, theology seeks to understand the Christian faith and to transform the lives of the oppressed poor who profess such faith. This implied conviction forms the fourth moral assumption of Aristide's theology.

In addition to the above ethical presuppositions, one can also delineate various spiritual assumptions in Aristide's theology. For him, God is not a distant, otherworldly being who, too busy to deal with human problems, assigns intermediaries to tackle them. On the contrary, he conceives God as light, truth, holiness, life, justice, good, freedom, and liberation for the poor. God stands in solidarity with the oppressed under the table to journey with them toward liberation. This is a basic spiritual assumption in Aristide's theology.

Aristide stresses God's involvement with human beings in their problems. God speaks through the church of the poor. As the spokesperson of God, the church of the poor must denounce darkness and announce the light. God summons and empowers the church of the poor to fight evil and to organize for liberation. Despite persecution and death, the church of the poor must make a firm option for God and voluntarily accept suffering for doing God's will. This is a second spiritual assumption in Aristide's theology. The succinct identification of the ethical and spiritual assumptions of Aristide's theology logically prompts an evaluation.

Critical Consideration

What are the ramifications of the ethical-spiritual dimensions of Aristide's theology for Haiti's reality of work? How might his liberation theology strengthen the theologies of work considered in Chapter Two? How might the Haitian reality, in return, influence Aristide's liberation theology?

The chief value of Aristide's theology consists in the themes and sensitivities it provides to understand the basic reality of church and society in Haiti. To begin with, the overriding metaphor of "table" brings depth and clarity to Aristide's theology because it enables him to determine and elucidate the essence of social life in Haiti—all men and women inclusively have the right to participate and commune around the table of goods and services of the national heritage, for their well-being and flourishing. Aristide's idea of darkness epitomizes the flaw and challenge of the Haitian system. His call to continue "walking in the light of Christ" and to "grow in holiness" represents the means whereby to overcome the pressing issues facing Haiti.

Read from the viewpoint of Aristide's option for the poor, his theology helps us understand how his condemnation of darkness and proclamation of light fostered hope for genuine independence and socio-ecclesial liberation in Haiti. Aristide has a point both in his diagnosis that Haiti's problems result from exploitation and in advocating organization and liberation as solution. However, how does one concretely move from oppression to organization and liberation? Might a real development model help achieve that?

Although Aristide is committed to the liberation of the poor, he fails to consider Haiti's ecological woes and their devastation on the oppressed of that country. He also discards *assistencialism* as inadequate.¹⁴⁵ By pointing out organization and solidarity as means for members of the church of the poor to advance their liberation, Aristide's theology goes a bit further than Midy's. Yet Aristide fails to consider Haiti's troubling ecological woes. Such failure represents a considerable lacuna in Aristide's thinking.

Comparative Evaluation of the Adequacy of Gutiérrez, Midy, and Aristide

At the inception of this chapter, we declared that liberation theology made outstanding contributions that could importantly enrich the theologies of work examined in Chapter II and our analysis of work in Haiti. At this point, we wish to verify this claim in order to appraise the effectiveness of the liberation theologies of these three figures. For this purpose, it would be well to recall the striking realization that the first two chapters reveal: the stark poverty, widespread exploitation, gender domination,

¹⁴⁵Ibid, pp. 67-68.

institutionalized violence, and ecological degradation in Haiti's sphere of work and social structures present for me as a theologian problems that the theologies of work, even with their merit, cannot adequately address. Accordingly, how does a liberationist perspective help enrich the theological reflection on work examined earlier and on Haiti's context and practices of work? What problems, if any, are there with these liberation theologies? How might they need to be in dialogue with Lester Brown's and others' ecological insights and the "capability approach" of Sen. Nussbaum and others? These questions will now be investigated.

Gutiérrez, Midy, and Aristide articulate several essential themes and sensitivities in their liberation theologies that are pertinent to me as I attempt to formulate my theological ethics of work in light of the Haitian context. The notion that faith involves trust as well as service to God and neighbor is vehemently promoted by all three figures. Gutiérrez's view is grounded on the Bible, while for Midy and Aristide such an idea of faith stems from their commitment to the liberation of the impoverished Haitians.

All three figures would recognize that politics constitutes the domain whereby faith demonstrates its authenticity through acts of solidarity with the oppressed poor for their liberation. Aristide's historical praxis illustrates this reality to perfection, while Gutiérrez and Midy use political language to explain the perspective and content of their theology.

These three theologians would concur that theology begins with human action. In Gutiérrez, examples of this conviction are the manifold actions of solidarity of Latin American Christians with the oppressed poor, whereas in Midy and Aristide such cases

comprise Haiti's socio-religious reality of oppression and socio-historical struggle for liberation. The image of table is specific to Aristide, though in Midy it is the formulation of a Black theology in conjunction with faith and freedom.

A critique of church and society, for their role in the oppression and exclusion of the poor, is common to all three figures. In Aristide, the concept describing this reality would be "darkness." All three thinkers reject development and advocate liberation as a strategy for societal and human transformation. Such an approach results from their understanding that poverty in the southern countries has its root cause in dependency, institutionalized violence, and oppressive injustice. Development, at least the one prescribed by international institutions and northern countries in the 1960s to 1970s, has been synonymous with increased misery and dependency for Latin America and its people. However, Gutiérrez qualifies his position, stating that development is achievable in the context of liberation. Midy, in contrast, believes that there cannot be any development without liberation. For Aristide, development in Haiti is viable if conceived and implemented by Haitians themselves with the solidarity of friendly nations. Accordingly, morally good actions, for all three theologians, are deeds that challenge the existing system and lead to the liberation of the oppressed.

The conception that human liberation foreshadows the expansion of the kingdom in history is framed in both Gutiérrez and Midy. Gutiérrez claims that the kingdom grows in history through social and human advances, while Midy holds that salvation represents the model for all historical liberation. God, in all three theologies, is the liberator who struggles with the oppressed poor for their liberation. In Aristide, God calls the

marginalized to “grow in holiness,” to “live in the light of Christ,” and according to justice, peace, and truth. All three theologians would acknowledge that the liberating activity of the faithful receives the guidance of the Spirit, who is the true protagonist of liberation.

Profoundly involved in the life-situation of the oppressed poor, liberation theology provides a prophetic attitude whereby it condemns the oppressive situation of the poor and proclaims a new human reality, Christ’s liberation, and the coming of the kingdom. The great merit of liberation theology thus lies in its courageous and militant stance on behalf of the poor for their liberation—a position that characterizes the theological reflection of the above three figures.

The correlation of this liberationist perspective with the modern expressions of the theology of work analyzed earlier imparts themes whereby these theologies of work can engage the austere conditions of work and workers in Haiti, in light of the Haitian workers’ historic struggle to overcome exploitation and degradation. The crucial questions center on the meaning and beneficiaries of these spiritual and moral presuppositions.

In other words, what do these spiritual and ethical assumptions—dignity of work, human rights and dignity of workers, priority of the common good, the coming of the new creation, the interconnection between work and nature, human self-realization and collaboration in creation through work—convey in a social location notorious for its ecological degradation, for its wretched injustice and ruthless oppression of the majority of its population? Simply put, the dignity of whose work is it question here? Is it the work

of factory management/owner and large landowners, or the dignity of the work performed by the working class?

One can go on and on, but the implication is obvious. The crux of the matter is that the ethical and spiritual benefits of these theologies of work are not extended to Haitian manufacturing and agricultural workers. These principles expose the chasm existing between the working class versus the ownership class. Accordingly, these liberation theologies compel us to build on the affirmations of Chenu, John Paul II, and Volf to develop a theology of work that prioritizes the rights, needs, life, human dignity and self-realization of the poor, namely the Haitian working class.

Notwithstanding the significance of these liberation theologies they do not subscribe to or prescribe any specific economic policy that could create jobs, promote integral development and a path out of the cycle of poverty and injustice. Nor do they tackle the problem regarding the environmental devastation of Haiti and its impact on that country's people and ecosystem.

Liberation theology, I argue, needs to distinguish between bad development (developmentalism) and good development that fosters participation, ecological sustainability, solidarity and social change. Sen's portrayal of development as freedom is alluring and provides a good opportunity to engage liberation theology with a real development model and policy suggestions that can stimulate citizenry's participation and transformation. Moreover, Lester Brown's view that the ecosystem is the key foundation of any economy or human community is vitally important.

In the following section, I will develop these two themes that are needed to expand a liberation theology and a theology of work that are adequate for the real issues confronting Haiti and the developing world today.

Theories of Development and Ecology

Liberation theology is great in its preferential option for the poor and in its critique of systemic oppression, but inadequate on practical economic policy suggestions and on ecological problems and the way they impact on the poor. In this section, I intend to describe these two blind spots and to suggest how liberation theology needs to be strengthened with (a) an insight of real development models like the “capability approach” of Amartya Sen and micro-lending strategy of Mahammad Yunus; and (b) an understanding of ecological sensitivity like the one advocated by Lester Brown.

Liberation Theology Versus Developmentalism

Liberation theology’s option for the poor, as seen earlier, leads it naturally to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and to reject developmentalism. Proponents of Latin American theology argue for liberation as a strategy for societal and human transformation and note that developmentalism has been ineffective in eradicating poverty and helping the oppressed realize their aspirations. They expose developmentalism as a subterfuge whereby Latin American countries became poorer, socio-politically unequal and unstable, and more dependent on northern countries.

This position is typical of the first paradigm of liberation theology that attributes poverty to capitalist domination and neocolonialism. Informed by Marxist philosophy, Latin American theology chooses socialism over against the capitalist system, which

liberation theology deems alienating, unjust, violent, and harsh. Society should be re-cast, Latin American theology contends, based on human freedom and socialist mode of production. Prominent also in this original articulation of liberation theology is an emphasis on the book of Exodus purporting to highlight God's historical liberation of the Israelites. The Church is viewed as a sign of God's liberation, with the historical task to denounce injustice and manifest solidarity with the poor in their struggle for life. Christian responsibility entails also a prophetic commitment to the liberation of the poor.¹⁴⁶ Buttressed by dependency theory, this initial paradigm of liberation theology voices a marked aversion for developmentalism. As Midy demonstrates:

And we, Haitians, we join the rank of those of our compatriots who find in dependency theory the explanation of Haiti's underdevelopment. The situation of oppression, domination and dependence of our country must be attributed, at least partially, to dependent capitalism that forms its structure. To move from dependence to liberation, one needs to choose a system that aims to replace the capitalist system. All foreign aid to this small country did not help it get out of its underdevelopment, because it does not go in its interest. It serves, at most, to broaden the gap between the ruling classes and dominated classes. A small group takes the opportunity to get richer, becoming more and more united with the international capitalism, and resistant to any change that would make it lose its privileges of class.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶See Ronaldo Muñoz, "The Historical Vocation of the Church," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*. Ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 151-162; Alvaro Quiroz Magaña, "Ecclesiology in the Theology of Liberation," *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*. Eds. Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J. and Jon Sobrino, S.J. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 194-209.

¹⁴⁷Midy, *Jalons pour une théologie libératrice*, p. 5 ("Et nous, Haïtiens, nous joignons le rang de ceux et celles de nos compatriotes qui trouvent dans la théorie de la dépendance l'explication du sous-développement d'Haïti. La situation d'oppression, de domination et de dépendance qui est celle de notre pays, doit être attribuée, au moins partiellement, au capitalisme dépendant qui forme sa structure. Pour passer de la dépendance à la libération, il faut opter pour un système qui vise à remplacer le régime capitaliste. Toutes les aides étrangères à ce petit pays ne l'ont pas aidé à sortir de son sous-développement, parce qu'elles ne vont pas dans son intérêt. Elles servent, tout au plus, à élargir le fossé qui sépare les classes dominantes des classes dominées. Un petit groupe en profite pour s'enrichir davantage, devenant

Coherent with the central assertion of dependency theory, Midy continues:

Underdevelopment is a by-product of development. It is the effect of the economic dependence of one country or one people over another. It is not true that underdevelopment is uni-linear to development. One must, however, break with the situation that creates developed countries and underdeveloped countries. One must pass from liberation first before reaching development.¹⁴⁸

Similarly Aristide rejects *assistencialism* because it alleviates the problem of hunger, for instance, but fails to tackle the problematic or root cause of the conflictual issues surrounding starvation. To him, *assistencialism* is hypocritical and tacitly supports the pervert system. Unlike Midy, however, Aristide advocates a development model whose strategy consists in organizing social actors like peasants, for example, around the mechanisms of society that create conditions that confine the peasantry in exclusion and sub-human conditions.

Would it not be better—and I ask the question in all humility, in its fullest simplicity—for the peasant to organize with others in his situation and force the large landholders to increase the peasants’ pay? Would it not be wiser—more Christian—for the pastor, while he feeds those children, to help the peasant learn to organize? Isn’t it a better way to stop the children’s cries of hunger forever? As long as the pastor keeps feeding the peasant’s children without helping deliver the peasant from poverty, the peasant will never escape the humiliating fate to which he has been assigned by the corrupt system. When the pastor only feeds the children, he is participating in that corrupt system, allowing it to endure. When the pastor feeds he children and helps organize the peasants, he is refusing the

ainsi de plus en plus solidaire du capitalisme international, et réfractaire à tout changement radical qui lui ferait perdre ses privilèges de classe”).

¹⁴⁸Midy, *Jalons pour une théologie libératrice*, p. 3 (“Le sous-développement est le sous-produit du développement. Il est l’effet de la dépendance économique d’un pays ou d’un peuple par rapport à un autre. Ce n’est pas vrai que le sous-développement va en ligne continue vers le développement. Il faut, au contraire, rompre avec la situation qui fait qu’il y a des pays développés et des pays sous-développés. Il faut passer d’abord par la libération avant d’arriver au développement”).

corrupt system, bringing about its end. Which behavior is more Christian, more evangelical?¹⁴⁹

Aristide chooses the second strategy, which indicates that there lurks in his liberation theology an implicit development approach that seeks to accomplish social change on behalf of the poor.

I chose the second course, along with many of my colleagues here in the parish of the poor. You have chosen that course, too, brothers and sisters. I chose to help organize youth, I chose to preach deliverance from poverty, I chose to encourage my congregation into hope and belief in their own powers. For me it is quite simple: I chose life over death. I preached life to my congregation, not life as we live it in Haiti, a life of mud, dank cardboard walls, garbage, darkness, hunger, disease, unemployment, and oppression. But life as a decent poor man should live it, in a dry house with a floor and a real roof, at a table with food, free from curable illness, working a meaningful job or tilling the fields to his or her profit, proud.¹⁵⁰

Gutiérrez also discards developmentalism because it implies “reformism and modernization,” and has proven inadequate to accomplish structural change in Latin America. As he claims, “Development must attack the root causes of the problems and among them the deepest is economic, social, political, and cultural dependence of some countries upon others – an expression of the domination of some social classes over others.”¹⁵¹ Still, Gutiérrez believes liberation forms a “more appropriate and richer” concept than development. “Liberation in fact expresses the inescapable moment of radical change which is foreign to the ordinary use of the term development. Only in the

¹⁴⁹Aristide, *In the Parish of the Poor*, p. 68.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 17.

context of such process can a policy of development be effectively implemented, have any real meaning, and avoid misleading formulations.”¹⁵²

Obviously as liberation theology spurns developmentalism, which it considers unjust development, it identifies good development with liberation. Midy’s position that liberation precedes development seems contradictory, for if there is liberation development becomes unnecessary. It can be argued that development, for him, is also synonymous with developmentalism or *assistencialism*. He certainly would endorse a genuine development that tackles the root cause of Haiti’s poverty and leads to social transformation. And there lies the problem.

In utilizing the social scientific discourse of dependency theory Latin American theology stresses so exhaustively its critique of capitalism and neocolonial oppression that, after almost four decades, it has become old news and blind to socially-oriented development economics and to strategies for economic empowerment from below. However, as a theology committed to the liberation of the poor from the sin of material poverty caused by oppression and injustice, I contend, liberation theology needs to distance itself from this original articulation of dependency theory’s negative appraisal of the capitalist system.¹⁵³ Rather, this first phase of Latin American theology could

¹⁵²Ibid. Nothing would be further from the truth for one to think that Gutiérrez is advocating development. On the contrary, adhering to the dependency theory prescription, he states: “This analysis of the reality is at the level of scientific rationality. Only a radical break from the status quo, that is, a profound transformation of the private system, access to power of the exploited class, and a social revolution that would break this dependence would allow for the change to a new society, a socialist society – or at least allow that such a society might be possible” (p. 17).

¹⁵³Dependency theory, at least in its original version, has suggested that the southern countries can develop only through a socialist revolution. This claim has not been historically proven. In fact, it has been refuted not only by a lack of development in a socialist country but also by the dissolution of Eastern

perceptively examine new currents in development thinking and practices that have proven their effectiveness in mitigating poverty.

Based on the “capability approach” developed by the Indian economist Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen, and the micro-financing strategies of the Bangladeshi economist-banker and Nobel Peace Laureate, Muhammad Yunus, I argue that Latin American theology will critically reflect on the historical praxis of the poor in light of God’s word even better insofar as it puts development economics concerned with social justice at the heart of its articulation. I believe that the post-Cold War experiences of East Asian countries, which include micro-lending job creation and economic investment strategies that have been successful, will benefit liberation theology a great deal provided it engages economic theories of genuine development in its discourse. In so doing, liberation theology would move away from a negative critique of failed development models (e.g.

Europe and the economic development of Japan and East Asian countries including Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. Using Ghana as a test case to evaluate dependency theory, Paul O. Otubusin “Exploitation, Unequal Exchange and Dependency: A Philosophical Analysis” argues that “Even though dependency theory may give an accurate account of the facts of the present world by telling us why the underdeveloped countries have remained underdeveloped, it does not necessarily follow that this theory provides a policy prescription as to how to overcome this situation. In fact, some of the advice it seems to suggest is questionable, namely that countries ought to ‘delink,’ they ought to ‘pull out,’ they ought to get rid of multinational corporations, they ought to nationalize foreign enterprises. The experience of Ghana demonstrates clearly that policies which rely on delinking or autarchic development through a break in relations of dependency, may not lead to development of the kind already arrived at in the developed countries because of the inability to recreate the same historical conditions, but it might lead to a greater impoverishment of the society in question” (PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 1987, p. 234). See also Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989); Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Gabriel Palma, “Dependency and Development: A Critical Overview,” *Dependency Theory: A Critical Assessment*. Ed. Dudley Seers (London: Pinter, 1981), chapter 1; Gary Gerefi, “Rethinking Development Theory: Insights from East Asia and Latin America,” *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (December, 1989), pp. 505-533; and David Simon, “Development Reconsidered; New Directions in Development Thinking,” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (1997), pp. 183-201.

developmentalism) to a positive affirmation of some new successful strategies that offer realistic hope.

In fact, the examination of working conditions in Chapter I shows that a case like Haiti cries out not just for indictment against injustice but for hope, which can be sustained by taking seriously the need to suggest and reflect on concrete policies that can help promote integral development, decent jobs, empowerment and a path out of poverty and injustice. Stated bluntly, liberation thinking about structural change in Haiti cannot just dwell on the sins of capitalism, neither on elites and state oppression nor on socio-ecclesial domination, but must look to East Asia and global strategies for economic development both in industry and agriculture. This second phase of liberation thinking I am proposing constitutes one of the distinctive features of my dissertation.

The basic thrust of Sen's welfare economic model is that people's well-being depends on their freedom to conquer wretchedness and marginalization that, in Yunus' opinion, epitomizes the essential condition for them to realize their potential and live in peace.¹⁵⁴ To illustrate two of these new currents of people-oriented models of development, I will focus on Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom*, and on the micro-lending strategies promoted by Muhammad Yunus in his book, *Banker to the Poor*.

¹⁵⁴ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), p.3; Muhammad Yunus, *Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty* (New York: PublicAffairs, 1999), p. 101; and Abu N. M. Wahid, "The Grameen Bank and Poverty Alleviation in Bangladesh: Theory, Evidence and Limitations," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 53, no. 1 (January, 1994), pp. 1-15.

“Capability Approach,” Micro-Lending Strategy, and Liberation Theology

Similar to liberation theology, the “capability approach” and micro-financing method manifest concern for problems of poverty, social justice issues, and promotes social transformation. The reciprocal objective of these three disciplines begs for essays linking their respective contributions.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, the reality of Haiti indicates that theological understanding of human liberation requires integrating the “capability approach” economic understanding of development and micro-lending strategies in its theologizing.

Originally articulated by the Indian economist, 1998 Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, and thereafter by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum and others, the “capability approach” has become a leading evaluative tool for development policy discourse. Informed by Aristotle’s virtue theory—and formulated in the 1980s over against the Rawlsian theory and utilitarianism – the “capability approach” derives from the tradition of welfare economics.¹⁵⁶ It advocates individual, societal, and institutional freedoms.

Indeed in his *Development as Freedom*, Sen proposes assessing and evaluating societies’ and people’s well-being in terms of humans’ capabilities to reach valuable states of life. Based upon this normative framework, Sen distinguishes destitution from

¹⁵⁵A good start is, Javier Iguñiz Echeverría, “Freedom in Amartya Sen and Gustavo Gutiérrez. Religious and Secular Common Grounds,” *How Should We Talk About Religion? Perspectives, Contexts, Particularities*. Ed. James Boyd White (Notre Dame: University of Indiana Press, 2006), pp. 194-210. To my knowledge there is no treatise linking liberation theology with the capability approach and successful micro-financing experiences.

¹⁵⁶A. Sen, “Utilitarianism and Welfarism,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 76, No. 9 (September, 1979), pp. 463-489; Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, *The Quality of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and S. Deneulin, “Intellectual Roots of Amartya Sen: Aristotle, Adam Smith and Karl Marx,” *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2009), pp. 305-306.

well-being. Poverty implies a lack of capabilities in choosing a valued lifestyle. Sen observes squarely this deprivation of functionings and capabilities, which contrasts sharply with the abundance and progress enjoyed by a few.

And yet we also live in a world with remarkable deprivation, destitution and oppression. There are many new problems as well as old ones, including persistence of poverty and unfulfilled elementary needs, occurrence of famines and widespread hunger, violation of elementary political freedoms as well of basic liberties, extensive neglect of the interests and agency of women, and worsening threats to our environment and to the sustainability of our economic and social lives. Many of these deprivations can be observed, in one form or another, in rich countries as well as poor ones.¹⁵⁷

Prevailing against these constraints makes development imperative, whose task consists in extending the freedoms (i.e. capabilities/real opportunities) necessary for a person to reach functionings (i.e. valuable states of life). It is from this standpoint Sen claims that “Development can be seen...as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.”¹⁵⁸ To him, freedom constitutes the means (processes) and favorable circumstances (opportunities) whereby a valuable lifestyle is chosen. More than this individual evaluation of well-being, freedom plays also a preponderant role in assessing societal structures. In other words, Sen determines the accomplishment of a society in terms of the degree of freedom it offers its members, and the extent to which such freedom increases the capacities of those members to achieve self-fulfillment and

¹⁵⁷Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, p. xi.

¹⁵⁸Ibid, p. 3.

transform the world. Individuals, institutions, and societies must play an active and complementary role in promoting human capabilities.¹⁵⁹

In brief, Sen suggests that development be understood as the process of extending freedoms essential for a person's fulfillment. For this purpose, it is incumbent upon societies to erect fitting institutions to provide the opportunities (i.e. political and civil liberties, access to health care and education, socio-economic opportunities, and so forth) necessary for a person to achieve functionings (i.e. doing and being that enhance one's quality of life). In deconstructing self-interest and putting freedom as people's fundamental motivation for action, Sen has made a major contribution to development economics.

This succinct overview of Sen's capability approach aims at engaging liberation theology with the normative framework of this socially-oriented development paradigm. Rather than calling for revolution or regime change, the capability approach invites liberation theology to flesh out better its commitment to the poor with an understanding of a people-centered development economics. One crucial insight formulated in Sen's capability approach entails the role of societies and institutions in establishing capabilities to allow valuable human functioning.

By integrating this insight in its theologizing, liberation theology could focus its attention on Haitian society and institutions for adopting public policies that socially exclude and impoverish the working class. Liberation theology could further its concern

¹⁵⁹Ibid, pp.18, 53, "Capability and Well-Being," *Development: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 3-28.

for the poor by challenging a host of national policies that create havoc on workers and represent major sources of bondage for the majority of Haitians. They include: tariffs reduction and/or elimination of imported products (e.g. rice, for instance), which not only increases rural unemployment and flight but also bankrupts Haitian peasants/vendors because of their inability to compete with foreign merchandise. Landlessness: most peasants lack access to fertile land. Less than 5 percent of the Haitian population own 61 percent of arable land. Agrarian reform is imperative for job creation and empowerment of women. Child labor (domesticity) is a deep-seated problem in Haiti. Peasants with few resources and too many children to care for them generally give a child to an acquaintance in a city. The hope is that the child would be well treated and sent to school in exchange for work in the household. However, oftentimes the child's condition borders on slavery.¹⁶⁰ In its defense of the life of the poor, daunting problems like gender inequality and peasant discrimination need be tackled head on by liberation theology. A few of these issues will be developed in the next chapter.

In a society historically entrenched and stratified along social classes and rural-urban division as Haiti's, one would wait in vain for the elites to offer the working poor institutional capabilities for reaching valuable states of life. However, Sen emphasizes that individuals bear primary responsibility in overcoming the bondages that keep them in

¹⁶⁰See Tome Sommerfelt, "Child Labor in Haiti," *The World of Child Labor: An Historical and Regional Survey*. Ed. Hugh D. Hindman (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), pp. 427-430; Jon Pedersen and Anne Hatley, "Extent and Demographic Characteristics of Haitian Child Domesticity," *Domestic Labour in Haiti: Characteristics, Contexts and Organization of Children's Residence, Relocation and Work*. Ed. Tone Sommerfelt (Oslo: Fafo, 2002), pp. 32-43; Jean-Robert Cadet, *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle-Class American* (Austin: Texas University Press, 1998).

destitution, deprivation and social exclusion. However he fails to specify how. Happily, Muhammad Yunus has given an answer that is worth consideration.

In his book, *Banker to the Poor*, Yunus argues for micro-credit lending to the poor as a basic antipoverty strategy and human right. Essentially, this program derives from development economics concerned with the daily life-reality of the poor in southern countries. It sees the impoverished as potential entrepreneurs and concrete human beings yearning for help and change. It emphasizes that extending micro-credit to the poor through a financial institution represents the most efficient approach to permanently tackle the problem of poverty and to ensure the socio-economic empowerment of the destitute.¹⁶¹

This method is a prototype in people-oriented economic development. It is the first systematic attempt by an economist to unveil a banking strategy for alleviating poverty based on the life-conditions of the poor and on their yearning for help and change. The inadequacy of Yunus' economic theories to explain the cause of pervasive hunger in Bangladesh in 1974 prompted him to learn economics anew from the poor and to prescribe micro-credit as remedy for such tragedy.¹⁶²

Yunus has three goals in articulating this socially-oriented development economics: First, he seeks to demonstrate that direct micro-financing to the poor should be considered as a fundamental human right and a key ingredient in eradicating famine in the world. Second, he wants to emphasize that once the poor become socio-economically

¹⁶¹Yunus, *Banker to the Poor*, pp. 48, 80, 150.

¹⁶²Ibid, p. ix.

empowered, they act as the most ardent advocates for population control, literacy, healthier lifestyle, and more valuable lives. Third, he intends to prove that socially-conscious businesses are essential to counterbalance greedy companies. He characterizes himself as a pragmatist with a social goal.¹⁶³

Central to this perspective he formulates the basic principles underlying his micro-financing method: Yunus claims that people are poor because societies' structures and policies prevent them from enjoying the fruits of their work. Micro-lending, not charity, has the power to transform the lives of the poor. They only need a small capital, with which to undertake whatever their talents predispose them.¹⁶⁴ Women—because they generally manifest more concern about the wellbeing of their household—are better suited for this undertaking than men. As Yunus explains:

If the goals of economic development include improving the general standard of living, reducing poverty, creating dignified employment opportunities, and reducing inequality, then it is natural to work through women. Not only do women constitute the majority of the poor, underemployed, and the economically and socially disadvantaged, but they more readily and successfully improve the welfare of both children and men. Studies comparing how male borrowers use their loans versus female borrowers consistently show this to be the case.¹⁶⁵

Contrary to a traditional banking system, Grameen bank operates in rural area; utilizes a system of trust instead of collateral; requires low interest rate; goes to the

¹⁶³Ibid, pp. 205, 137, 143, 206.

¹⁶⁴Ibid, pp. 141, 205.

¹⁶⁵Ibid, pp. 72-73.

houses of the borrowers, whom it organizes into groups; and provides them with social programs.¹⁶⁶

The logical question thus is, has Yunus' micro-credit method been able to achieve its objective in mitigating hunger and poverty in Bangladesh? How might this strategy be applicable elsewhere? In Yunus' estimation, his micro-financing strategy has been a resounding success. "Since Bangladesh became an independent country, our population has almost doubled. But we are certainly not twice as poor. Indeed, we are better off today than we were twenty-seven years ago. We have fewer food shortages and though we feed twice the population we are far more self-sufficient in food grains."¹⁶⁷ But adequate food production is not the only marker of progress. Indeed small family size, education, political participation are prominent among women associated with Grameen.¹⁶⁸ Abu Wahid, professor of economics at Tennessee State University, concurs:

In consideration of the success and failure of the Grameen Bank, it can safely be concluded that it is an innovative positive step forward toward the alleviation of poverty in Bangladesh. It has achieved a remarkable success in reaching its target group and delivering its credit package to them without any middlemen or brokers. It has also succeeded in mobilizing the hitherto neglected poor people of the rural Bangladesh, especially the women who have been put to work by its credit programs. This has not only improved their economic conditions and living standard but also improved their self-esteem and social status.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶Ibid, pp. 62, 63, 69, 70, 78, 87.

¹⁶⁷Ibid, p. 133.

¹⁶⁸Ibid, p. 134.

¹⁶⁹Abu N. M. Wahid, "The Grameen Bank and Poverty Alleviation in Bangladesh: Theory, Evidence and Limitations," p. 13.

Micro-financing method has been applied with success in the Philippines, Canada, the United States, and elsewhere. It is probably being implemented in Haiti.¹⁷⁰ Both the theology of work and the first paradigm of liberation theology would make a creative advance by consideration micro-financing and the capability approach in their articulation.

Liberation Theology and Ecological Sensitivity: Lester Brown's Plan B

Notwithstanding the courageous stance of liberation theology on behalf of the poor and oppressed, it is deficient on ecological issues and the way they affect the poor. In fact, the examination of working conditions in Haiti highlights front and center how development, liberation, and work engage not just the human sphere of agency but also involve inevitably the ecosystems and environmental resources that sustain a people. Human communities' dependency on the wellbeing of ecosystems is felt most directly by a people living on a peninsula that is known throughout the world as a tragic victim of vast deforestation with the resulting loss of topsoil and the damage to agricultural production. The Haitian case shows that Catholic and Protestant traditions of reflection about liberation and human work need to be broadened to understand work and labor in explicitly ecological frame. Lester Brown's environmental perspective provides a striking example.

¹⁷⁰Bryan Schaaf in his article entitled, "Microfinance and Economic Justice in Haiti" <http://www.haitiinnovation.org/en/2008/07/05/microfinance-and-economic-justice-haiti> [accessed July 10, 2009], describes the work of several organizations involved in micro-financing in Haiti including Fonkoze, FINCA, World Concern, Lambi Fund, Children's Nutrition Program, FAVACA, Floresta, World Relief and others.

Lester R. Brown is a preeminent environmental analyst, founder and chairperson of the Earth Policy Institute Policy. Brown has an M.S. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Maryland, an M.P.A. in Public Administration from Harvard University, and a B.S. in Agricultural Science from Rutgers University. Brown's research has been primarily on the environment and sustainable economy. He has been awarded various prizes and honorary degrees. Prominent among them is the 1987 United Nations' Environment Prize. He has written and co-written more than fifty books, papers, and monographs.¹⁷¹

In his book, *PLAN B: Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*, Lester Brown claims that global economic policy need be reshaped and promptly implemented in congruity with environmental sustainability.¹⁷² Basically this book derives from the environmental ethical perspective. It seeks to educate individuals and policy makers, contending that worldwide economic demands—coupled with

¹⁷¹Cf. http://www.earth-policy.org/index.php?/about_epi/C32/ [accessed November 14, 2009]. Among Lester Brown's publication see, for instance, *Man, Land, and Food: Looking Ahead for Food Needs* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Regional Analysis Division, 1963), *Increasing World Food Output: Problems and Prospects* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Regional Analysis Division, 1965), with Patricia McGrath and Bruce Stokes, *Twenty-Dimensions of the Population Problem* (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, 1977), *Building a Sustainable Society* (New York: W.W. Morton & Company, 1981), with Pamela Shaw, *Six Steps to a Sustainable Society* (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, 1982), *The Agricultural Link: How Environmental Deterioration Could Disrupt Economic Progress* (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, 1997), *Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2001), *Outgrowing the Earth: The Food Security Challenge in an Age of Falling Water Tables and Rising Temperatures* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005).

¹⁷²Lester R. Brown, *PLAN B: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003).

overpopulation and climate change—apply undue pressure on the earth’s ecosystem and endanger human civilization.¹⁷³

Brown studiously examines the state of the world economy and its corresponding environmental deterioration and societal problems. Alarming increase in population and economic production in the last half a century has exerted injurious pressure on the earth’s ecosystem. Request for food in the same period expanded threefold and rapidly outpaced food production, resulting in additional hunger and undernourishment, which undoubtedly shortened life expectation. As a corollary to growth in population and economic output, water and fossil fuel consumption rise by threefold and fourfold respectively causing water shortage and climate change.¹⁷⁴

These problems, Brown declares, impact negatively on the world’s farmers and population by curtailing food production. “Either one by itself could make it difficult to keep up with the growth in demand. The two together provide an early test of whether our modern civilization can cope with the forces that threaten to undermine it.”¹⁷⁵ Worse, hunger, illiteracy, the HIV pandemic and other infectious diseases (tuberculosis, malaria, and so forth) continue to plague the developing world, taking away healthy people from

¹⁷³Lester Brown, *PLAN B: Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), pp. 3-19. Hereafter quoted as *Plan B*.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid*, pp. 23-25, 56-60, 103-108.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid*, p. 11.

both children rearing and development work.¹⁷⁶ What has he deduced from these considerations?

The current situation is counterproductive and unsustainable. In fact, a lead team analyst scientist at Redefining Progress, Mathis Wackernagel, declares “We are satisfying our excessive demands by consuming the earth’s natural assets, in effect creating a global bubble economy.”¹⁷⁷ The vitality of the ecosystem has proven ineffective in certain countries. “Business as usual—Plan A—is clearly not working,” Brown adds.¹⁷⁸ Actual deteriorating paths humankind has taken must be rapidly overturned by “an urgent reordering of priorities, a restructuring of the global economy.”¹⁷⁹ What are those priorities Brown so passionately talks about?

Brown advocates: (a) maximizing the efficiency of water usage; (b) increasing food production and consumption through novel techniques seeking to boost efficiency of land use through multiple cropping systems and double harvest; (c) curtailing greenhouse gas emissions by half in the year 2015; and (d) tackling social problems like illiteracy, hunger, and diseases.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶Ibid, pp. 6. 7-8; cf. United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision* (New York: February 2003; Erik Assadourian, “Economic Growth Inches Up,” in Worldwatch Institute, *Vital Signs* 2003 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), pp. 44-45; USDA, *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates* (Washington, D.C.: 12 May 2003).

¹⁷⁷Mathis Wackernagel et al., “Tracking the Ecological Overshoot of the Human Economy,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 9 July 2002, pp. 9266-71, quoted in Brown, *ibid*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁸Ibid, p. 19.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Ibid, pp. 113-130.

In brief, Brown posits that environmental destruction has a profound impact on the earth's ecosystems and imperils human communities and most living species.

Interestingly, Brown's basic thrust entails the connection between ecological degradation and social problems. Their interrelation, in his opinion, compels individuals, corporations and governments to address them conjointly.

From this perspective, ecologists worldwide point to Haiti as one of the saddest examples of a people massively held back by tremendous ecological problems stemming from deforestation, soil erosion, and resource squandering. This then means that liberation theology and any theology of work must be directly informed by ecological concerns and make environmental sustainability as a core emphasis. This notion will be development in the next chapter as part of a second stage of liberation thinking.

CHAPTER IV
CONSTRUCTING A LIBERATIONIST THEOLOGICAL
ETHICS OF SUSTAINABLE WORK

Introduction

I have hitherto argued that the conditions of work in Haiti cry out for the engagement of the theology of work, which needs to be made critical by appropriating key insights from liberation theology. However, I suggested that the first paradigm of liberation theology has become repetitive in its critique of capitalism and developmentalism and needs to enter a second phase by positively engaging Amartya Sen's capability approach and Muhammad Yunus' micro-lending strategy. These socially-oriented economic development models require greater attention in liberationist circles and should be made central in our theologies of work. For, unlike the longstanding indictment against American imperialism, these policies offer realistic hope in fostering land reform, jobs creation, integral development, responsible government, and justice to Haitian workers. I also indicated that Haiti's massive ecological degradation is highlighted by environmentalists as one of the saddest examples of a people restrained by enormous ecological problems stemming from deforestation due to wood trade, overpopulation, chronic poverty, and farming in hilly slants, to name only these. Haiti represents a key illustration of how human development, societal health, and economic vitality are negatively impacted on by ecological devastation. The situation of Haiti, I

declared, should serve as a brilliant reminder to all Catholics and Christians that theology, church doctrines, and Christian ethics must closely engage ecological concerns and appreciate as a core value ecological sustainability. In this fourth and final chapter, I take a fivefold step toward sketching the outline of an ecologically informed liberationist ethics of sustainable work in Haiti. I utilize the perspectives of the Worldwatch Institute and other environmentalists to underline the extent of Haitian ecological destruction and how it sustains poverty and economic stagnation. I delineate four linked ecological challenges that as society we face globally and in Haiti based on the *State of the World 2008: Innovations for a Sustainable Economy*. Then, in light of those environmental pitfalls, I assess the adequacy of the theological reflection on work and liberation. Next I utilize Theodore Hiebert's article "The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations in Christian Traditions" as well as Wendell Berry's "The Gift of Good Land" to illustrate the path for a more adequate ecologically informed theological reflection on work and liberation. Finally, I draw from Enrique Dussel and Leonardo Boff's engagement between liberation and ecological issues to sketch the main points of an ecologically sensitive liberationist thought.

Haiti and Global Ecological Degradation

Haiti is known worldwide as the poorest and most deforested country in the Western hemisphere. The dominant rationale underlying this phenomenon contends that the poor destroy the environment and ecological devastation heightens poverty. The extent of this vicious cycle has been reported alarmingly by ecologists, social scientists, and others in ways that underscore an inimical relationship among the triad

overpopulation-poverty-environment. For instance, Tommy Ventre of the *Worldwatch Magazine* indicates that from 1972 to 2007,

Haiti's population has grown from 5.5 million to more than 8.7 million, half of whom earn less than \$60 per year, according to globalsecurity.org. As population has grown, trees have disappeared. Forests cover less than 2 percent of Haiti's land mass, and Jean-Baptiste says conservative estimates suggest 20 million trees are felled for charcoal production each year.¹

For Ventre, a government vacuum coupled with political instability that forced foreign environmental workers to leave the country contributed to this situation that sharply contrasts with the reality in the Dominican Republic, where the government has been formulating policies to protect the environment.² In the same vein, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations contends "absolute poverty" constitutes a key factor contributing to deforestation in Haiti.³ Jacqueline Charles of the *Miami Herald* adheres to the mainstream analysis stating, "At one time, Haitians respected the land. But an exploding population and deepening poverty have created a vicious circle. It is not uncommon to hear among the poorest that if they don't cut down the trees or farm on the

¹Tommy Ventre, "Planting Hope on Hispaniola," *Worldwatch Magazine*, January/February, 2008, Vol. 21, No. 1, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5519> [accessed December 8, 2009].

²Ibid; see also Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking, 2005), pp. 329-57.

³Food and Agriculture Organization, "Les Données Statistiques sur les Produits Forestiers Non-Ligneux en Haïti," <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/X6738F/X6738F04.htm#6915> [accessed December 8, 2009].

slopes, their children will die of hunger.”⁴ Anthony Catanese captures the acuity of this dilemma when he writes in his *Rural Poverty and Environmental Degradation in Haiti*:

Haiti’s dependence on domestic energy production, symbolizes the plight of Haiti’s rural poor. Wood gathering and charcoal production are among their main sources of income, but as poverty worsens, and as more people gather and cut firewood, even more deforestation occurs. In recent years, more persons than before have entered the fuelwood industry, which underscores the growing poverty and its relationship to environmental degradation.⁵

There certainly exists a linkage between human economic behavior and ecological degradation in Haiti. Available literature attests that deforestation in that country impoverishes the soil, diminishes agricultural productivity and forestry output, and sustains poverty, hunger, economic stagnation, migration and so forth.⁶ The *Worldwatch Magazine* points out that Haiti loses its arable land at a rate estimated “at 1,600 metric

⁴Jacqueline Charles, “Haiti Remains at Risk Unless Environmental Damage is Healed,” *The Miami Herald*, originally published on 10/14/2008, <http://www.miamiherald.com/2009/04/19/v-fullstory/1007225/haiti-remains-at-risk-unless-environmental.html> [accessed December 8, 2009].

⁵Anthony V. Catanese, *Rural Poverty and Ecological Degradation in Haiti* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1991), p. 11.

⁶“Environmental Scarcities And Conflict in Haiti. Ecology and Grievances in Haiti’s Troubled Past and Uncertain Future,” prepared by Philip Howard for the Canadian International Development Agency, June 1998, <http://faculty.washington.edu/pnhoward/publishing/articles/haiti.pdf> [accessed December 8, 2009]. This by no means seeks to lay blame on the poor for this unfortunate situation. As William French, “Ecology Security and Policies of Restraint,” recognizes: “The poor have few options and therefore cannot be expected to rectify habits that cause habitat degradation. Nor, given the constraints that poverty imposes, should the poor be held morally culpable for the degradation they cause. It is from the rich – those whom much has been given – that much is required. The global differential between rich and poor requires that we design policies to restrain the overconsumption of the rich and quite different policies designed to empower enhanced, but ecologically more appropriate, consumption for the global poor” (*Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of the Earth and Humans*. Eds. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000], p. 481).

tons per hectare per year.”⁷

The point here is to concede that there exists a close and well-recognized connection between Haiti and a history of ecological damage. The ecological impacts of the economic practices of the poor in the last thirty years or so have come to the forefront. The case of poverty and ecological devastation is obviously not just a Haitian problem but one shared by many countries in Latin America, Africa including Indonesia and India for example.⁸

⁷Tommy Ventre, “Planting Hope on Hispaniola,” *ibid.* The World Bank considers that amount to be 6,000 hectares, according to Robert I. Rotberg, “Preface: Haiti’s Last Best Chance,” *Haiti Renewed: Political and Economic Prospects*. Ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Washington, D.C.: Bookings Institution Press, 1997), p. viii. However, stating the poor destroy the environment does not seek to overlook their need for survival; particularly given the Haitian government has consistently failed to provide them with any economic possibilities to live a decent life. Such consistent neglect couples with repressive policies compelled the peasantry to retreat to the mountains for survival, which also accounts to deforestation in that country. Another underlying factor of deforestation in Haiti that merits consideration is the destructive economic behavior of the dominant classes during colonization and post-revolution periods. As the Haitian collective for the Protection of the Environment and an Alternative Development claims: “During the Spanish and French colonization, the use of new agricultural techniques, the practice of monoculture, and the destruction of virgin forests in the mountains were some of the factors that favored the weakening of the soil and the degradation of the environment...Environmental degradation during [1804-1915] was accentuated by the anarchic intensification of precious wood extraction, and the excessive use of wood as the only source of energy....During the American occupation agricultural and rural policy was based on the establishment of big companies practicing monoculture extensive agriculture, and the reestablishment of [forced labor]. All of this accelerated the process of movement of the poorest peasant sector towards the mountains and the anarchic clearing of the land...Urbanization and the partial expansion of industry brought about an increase in the use of wood as an energy source in urban households and in industries such as dry cleaning, vetiver factories, rum distilleries, etc. During the Duvaliers’ dictatorship some hectares of forests were also razed for political reason – destruction of forest cover in order to flush out the opponents of the regime who took refuge there” (“A History of Degradation: Causes de la degradation de l’environnement en Haiti. COHPEDA,” *A Haiti Anthology: libète*. Eds. Charles Arthur and Michael Dash [Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1999], pp. 100-101).

⁸See for example, David Satterhwaite, “The Links Between Poverty and the Environment in Urban Areas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America,” *Annals of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 590, Rethinking Sustainable Development (November, 2003), pp. 73-92; Douglas Southgate and Morris Whitaker, “Promoting Resource Degradation in Latin America: Tropical Deforestation, Soil Erosion, and Costal Ecosystem Disturbance in Ecuador,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (July 1992), pp. 787-807; Peter Dauvergne, “The Politics of Deforestation in Indonesia,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (Winter, 1993-1994), pp. 497-518; and V. Ratna Reddy, “Land Degradation in India: Extent, Costs and Determinants,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 44 (November 1-4, 2003), pp. 4700-4713 .

Global Ecological Threats

As a global society we face an array of ecological pitfalls, which underscores the unsustainability of our economic practices. Leading experts dutifully alert governments, corporations, and individuals to the challenges posed by greenhouse gas emissions, overpopulation, malnutrition, and water shortages. They advise us to take drastic measures to mitigate our carbon footprint and ensure long lasting economic prosperity. For example, the *Worldwatch Institute* states unequivocally in its *State of the World 2008: Innovations for a Sustainable Economy*, “To avoid tipping Earth’s climate into a dangerous runaway mode, global carbon emissions must be slashed by upwards of 80 percent by 2025. Improved energy productivity, deployment of renewable energy technologies, and enlightened government energy policies are key to achieving this goal.”⁹ The significance of curbing carbon emissions is that such emissions threaten to promote global warming, which affects food production, causes harsher calamities and elevates the ocean plan. Lester Brown, a prominent American environmentalist delineates the disastrous consequences of global warming resulting from greenhouse gas emissions:

Rising temperature is not an irrelevant abstraction. It brings countless physical changes – from more intense heat waves, more severe droughts, and ice melting to more powerful storms, more destructive floods, and rising sea level. These changes in turn affect not only food security and habitability of low-lying regions, but also the species composition of local ecosystems.¹⁰

⁹*State of the World 2008: Innovations for a Sustainable Economy: a Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society*. Ed. Linda Starke (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), chapter 6, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5561> [accessed December 8, 2009].

¹⁰Lester Russell Brown and Bernie Fischlowitz-Roberts, *The Earth Policy Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), pp.117-18.

Another global ecological threat lays in today's world population, which is currently estimated at 6.8 billion. This population growth is putting tremendous strain on the earth's natural resources, energy and food consumption including the quality of life or lack thereof of millions of people. Projecting a 1.5 population increase within twenty years, the Population Institute raises alarm to the danger of inaction in its "2030: The 'Perfect Storm' Scenario":

It is predicted that by 2030 the world will need to produce around 50 percent more food and energy, together with 30 percent more fresh water, whilst mitigating and adapting to climate change. This threatens to create a 'perfect storm' of global events... There's not going to be a complete collapse, but things will start getting really worrying if we don't tackle these problems.¹¹

Overpopulation pushes various inevitable consequences. More people require raising food production, utilizing additional hectare of land for agriculture and human habitat, and harnessing extra water. Evidence indicates an imbalance between demand and supply of life-sustaining resources. For example, David Pimental and Anne Wilson, of the *Worldwatch Magazine*, suggest, "Increases in food production, per hectare of land, have not kept pace with increases in population, and the planet has virtually no more arable land or fresh water to spare. As a result, per-capita cropland has fallen by more than half since 1960, and per-capita production of grains, the basic food, has been falling

¹¹The Population Institute, "2030: The 'Perfect Storm' Scenario," http://www.populationinstitute.org/external/files/reports/The_Perfect_Storm_Scenario_for_2030.pdf [accessed July 10, 2009]; see also David Pimental, "World Population, Agriculture, and Malnutrition," *The Worldwatch Magazine*, September/ October 2004, Vol. 17, No.5 <http://www.worldwatch.org/system/files/EP175D.pdf> [accessed July 10, 2009]; Robert Angelman, *More: Population, Nature, and What Women Want* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2008).

world-wide for 20 years.”¹² In his *Plan B: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*, Lester Brown recommends a broad set of policies for tackling both the causes and effects of overpopulation:

As a species, our failure to control our numbers is taking a frightening toll. Slowing population growth is the key to eradicating poverty and its distressing symptoms, and, conversely, eradicating poverty is the key to slowing population growth. With time running out, the urgency of moving simultaneously on both fronts seems clear... The challenge is to create quickly the social conditions that will accelerate the shift to smaller families. Among these conditions are universal education, good nutrition, and prevention of infectious diseases. We now have the knowledge and the resources to reach these goals. In an increasingly integrated world, we also have a vested interest in doing so.¹³

Haiti also faces serious overpopulation challenges. As a country of 27,560 square kilometers, its population is estimated at 9,035,536 or 2,605 people per 1,000 hectares—making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world.¹⁴ It is worth noting that two-thirds of that country is mountainous and seventy percent of the population lives on subsistence farming in rural, hilly areas far away from government indifference and/or repressive policies. So many people crowded in such a little area with very few economic possibilities utilizing archaic agricultural techniques have, to make a living, resorted to cutting the last one or so percent of forest for fuelwood and charcoal. As a consequence, deforestation and soil and wind erosion occur contributing to desertification, low

¹²David Pimental and Anne Wilson, “World Population, Agriculture, and Malnutrition,” *Worldwatch Magazine*, September/October, 2004: 23-25, <http://www.worldwatch.org/pubs/mag/> [accessed July 10, 2009].

¹³Lester R. Brown, *Plan B: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), p. 176.

¹⁴Central Intelligence Agency, “Central America and Caribbean: Haiti,” *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html> [accessed July 10, 2009]; Robert I. Rotberg, *Haiti Renewed: Political and Economic Prospects*, p. viii.

agricultural yield, diminished rainfall, malnutrition, hunger, diseases, migration, and more misery. Other ecological hazards threatening Haiti include severe hurricane events furthered by climate change and deforestation, flash flooding with mudslides and sediment buildup.

Lester Brown's proposal for a sustainable global economy with the task of creating decent socio-economic conditions for more than two-thirds of the world population is applicable to Haiti, provided there is political will to address the chronic problems besetting that country. Brown contends that tackling social problems like illiteracy, hunger, and diseases represents a daunting undertaking that involves communities, corporations, and governments. Controlling population growth is imperative if pressure put on scarce resources such as land and water is to subside. Access to basic healthcare and elementary education is crucial, particularly for girls and for lowering HIV infection rate. This is essential because it ensures the quality of life and ecological responsibility. In the same vein, serious effort is needed to provide potable water and eliminate hunger and contagious diseases in the developing world. For Brown, developed countries ought to help the developing world to control its population, and to overcome hunger and diseases. After all it is worth investing in the world future generations will inhabit.¹⁵

¹⁵L. Brown, *Plan B: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*, pp. 176-195.

Theologies of Work, Liberation Theology and Our New Ecological Concerns

I believe an adequate treatment of work must involve a theological consideration of this essential human activity including an explicit recognition that (a) work impacts on nature; and that (b) work practices to remain productive across decades and centuries, human simply must work within the capacities and constraint of nature's processes and ecosystems. The expanding global crisis underscores the significance of that mindfulness. It is from this perspective that our theologians of work and liberation will be looked at. In other words, what dominant version of their Christian theology best characterizes human work in nature? Are some of these theologians of work and liberation inadequate in light of the above ecological challenges? Do their theological understandings of work and liberation subscribe to the environmental claim that human wellbeing and societal security depend very deeply on the ecological sustainability of our productive and consumption patterns?

Adequacy of Chenu, John Paul II, and Miroslav Volf

All three of these theologians contend that work occurs from the encounter of human beings with nature. However, their theological understanding of work is not equally sound given how they frame God's relationship to humanity and creation. Chenu, John Paul II, and Miroslav Volf tend to perceive God's activity primarily in human history and not also in creation. They even deem humans above the created world rather than as participants within a broader community of creation.

Although both Chenu and Volf particularly advocate an interconnection between work and the environment, Chenu's theological understanding of work is less adequate than Volf's. Chenu relies on Gen. 1: 26-27, which without question does set humans above the rest of creation. As Chenu himself points out, "God has appointed [humanity] lord of creation."¹⁶ That human being is put on top of the natural world in Chenu's theology of work does not justify exclusion and despoliation of nature. In fact Chenu affirms that humans dominate (the problematic term) nature through morality and wisdom in respecting its laws and by forging a new world through participation in divine creation.¹⁷ Still, Chenu's theological understanding of work is too anthropocentric.

Volf's theology of work is the most adequate, for it recognizes that human survival and flourishing hinges on humanity's capacity to work responsibly in nature. The cardinal premise behind this conception is that "the Spirit of God calls and gifts people to work in active anticipation of the eschatological transformation of the world."¹⁸ Informed by this pneumatological perspective, Volf claims that the Spirit who inspires people in their work also inhabits humans and nature, for both are God's creatures. Human beings and nature exist close together but independent from each other, despite the particular service the nonhuman world renders to humanity. Still, in light of today's ecological awareness, his *Work in the Spirit* needs to see the global ecosystem as the location of God's action.

¹⁶M.-D. Chenu, *The Theology of Work*, p. 10.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 23.

¹⁸Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. 123.

John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* totally views nature as a resource or an "object" to be mastered and dominated by human "subjects." This anthropologically-centered theology of work finds grounding in Genesis 1, which states that humans have been created "in the image of God... [as] male and female [to] be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it."¹⁹

The Pope's stress on human subjectivity squarely counters liberal and materialist viewpoints that deem human labor as commodity and factors of production whereby hostile to capital. Herein lies the great merit of this encyclical. It recognizes the worker's preeminence over the means of production and the interdependence of labor and capital, regardless of oppressive and inhuman working conditions. Today's global overpopulation and ecological degradation cast serious doubt on the usefulness of characterizing workers as subjects and nature as object. Given the stark connection between Haiti's ecological problems, her poverty, and her difficulty in providing adequate agricultural development for her people, it would seem that central aspects of the pope's understanding of the human activity of work need to be revised.

William French rightly suggests that the entire created world be instead conceived as subject.

By understanding subjects as both embodied and integrally within creation and responsible for sustaining the stability of the biosphere, the creation-centered approach provides a more balanced understanding of the scope of human freedom and agency... In a broader sense, too, the earth community

¹⁹Genesis 1: 27.28 (NAB).

as a whole is viewed as a primary subject from whom the human emerged and on whom we remain dependent.²⁰

French's argument confirms the inadequacy of the anthropological emphasis of *Laborem Exercens*. In light of human's dependency on the well-being of species and ecosystems, John Paul II's theology of work is less adequate than the theological understanding of Chenu and Volf.

Adequacy of Gutiérrez, Midy, and Aristide

All three of these theologians have written in the context of the first paradigm of liberation theology. Influenced by Marxist philosophy, their theologizing process includes analyzing the socio-historical and religious reality of Latin America and Haiti that invariably leads them to critique religious oppression and capitalist exploitation and to stand in solidarity with the oppressed for their liberation. This preferential option for the poor provides the perspective from which the great themes of Christian revelation are treated.

The liberation theologies of Gutiérrez, Midy, and Aristide focus on God's action in history on behalf of the oppressed. They tend to prefer the biblical narrative of the Exodus that represents God as a God of liberation, while overlooking the book Genesis where God is depicted also as the God of creation.²¹ Human action is similarly seen in

²⁰William C. French, "Subject-Centered and Creation-Centered Paradigms in Recent Catholic Thought," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January, 1990), pp. 68, 69.

²¹Liberation theologians generally contend that the liberator God is also the God of creation. For instance Gutiérrez posits that "only the concept of mediation of human self-creation in history can lead us to an accurate and fruitful understanding of the relationship between creation and redemption. This line of interpretation is suggested by the outstanding fact of the Exodus; because of it, creation is regarded as the first salvific act salvation as a new creation" (*A Theology of Liberation*, p. 101).

history and as anthropocentric. These theologians argue, for example, that both faith and morality acquire significance in function of the liberation of the oppressed poor.

Accordingly, they overlook a key Latin American and Haitian reality concerning colonial and post-independence history of ecological degradation associated with poverty. They similarly fail to see that God works also through nature to sustain human communities, animals and other life forms. This first phase of liberation theology would be strengthened by understanding human action within the larger created world and by acknowledging God's liberating activity within the global ecosystem – which is also the object of dignity and God's care.

In brief, my point is that the new emerging ecological condition demands a response from Church reflection and theological articulations. Today's global ecological sensitivity compels the theological understanding of work and liberation to account for God's action both in history and nature because God is an actor in both spheres. Similarly, humans are political creatures as well as stewards of nature. Adequacy of any theology of work and liberation requires that such theological reflection be articulated within the global ecosystem where God and humans endeavor to sustain human communities, animals, and other living beings.

Dominion and Dependence in the Hebrew Bible

For too long Papal encyclicals, mainstream theologians and liberation theologians have understood humanity's relationship to the rest of nature by attending to the account offered by Genesis 1. For many centuries this text has dominated Christian views about humanity's role vis-à-vis the rest of nature. This section illustrates the way one biblical

scholar sees that modern theology has overemphasized Genesis 1 – a strong hierarchical image of humanity as sovereign over nature – and has overlooked the depiction of humanity as a soil creature and part of the natural order in Genesis 2.

In his instructive article entitled “The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations in Christian Traditions,” Theodore Hiebert, the Francis A. McGraw Professor of Old Testament at McCormick Theological Seminary, offers an ecologically-informed explication of dominion theology, especially by focusing on the social context of this expression in Genesis 1 and on its general biblical perspective.²² He argues that Genesis 2 conveys a creation theology of dependence, humility, and stewardship that is more appropriate as a guide for Christian reflection. Today’s environmental deterioration and the absence of a balanced and integrated understanding of dominion in Genesis 1:28 motivated Hiebert to revise this biblical concept in light of human-nature relationship.²³

Hiebert claims that the expression “dominion” (*radah*) in Genesis 1 implies human ascendancy over animals and plants including the authority, subjugation, and influence of one person or faction above another. To him, the biblical framework of dominion theology in Genesis 1 suggests that dominion was to be exerted for good and with self-control. In other words, the context of the first account of creation turns “a

²²Theodore Hiebert, “The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations in Christian Traditions,” *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*. Eds. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 135-236.

²³Ibid.

rather straightforward dominion theology into a stewardship theology,” even though humans still stand above creation and rule over it. They act on God’s behalf.²⁴

However, Hiebert believes that it would not be fair to transform dominion theology into stewardship theology without grasping the rationale behind the use of the expression dominion. Examining the social milieu of Gen. 1:28, he first discovers that this passage originates from an agrarian economy of subsistence whose archaic tools and mountainous soil required extraneous work that made life a perpetual challenge. Hiebert sees in this historical reality “how the human relationship with the earth could be viewed in adversarial terms, and how human task of producing food could be regarded as overpowering the intractable ground, as gaining the upper hand over it, of ‘subduing (*kavash*) the earth,’ in the words of Gen. 1:28.”²⁵ However, the advances in science and technology of today’s modern world have remarkably empowered human beings with virtually unlimited capacity to control nature. Given the scientific progress of today’s world over that of ancient Israel, Hiebert wonders whether the connotation of dominion theology then is still applicable to our modern world.

Another discovery equally significant for Hiebert underlies the impact of the biblical writer’s public function on the meaning of Gen. 1:28. Drawing from Robert Coote and David Robert Ord that Genesis 1 stems from the priestly or sacerdotal tradition, Hiebert suggests that the eminent status maintained by priests in Israel may

²⁴Ibid, p. 138; cf. Douglas John Hall, *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) and Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1992).

²⁵Hiebert, “The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations in Christian Traditions,” *ibid.*

have provided ground for the view concerning human ascendancy over the created world. Is not this contention contrary to the idea that the continuing existence of humans depends on the mastery over the natural world? Not really, in Hiebert's opinion, because when Genesis 1 is seen within the general biblical backdrop in which it emanates, one encounters other passages and theological positions on the human place in creation that need consideration for an adequate grasp of the term dominion.²⁶

One such piece, Hiebert maintains, is Genesis 2 in that it presents a contrasting view of creation from Genesis 1. Nothing distinguishes human beings from the rest of creation, or sets them above animals and plants. Interestingly, Genesis 2 declares that human task consists in caring for the natural world or in the Biblical language "to cultivate and care for it" [i.e. the garden] (Gen. 2:15b NAB). This Yahwistic account is a more humble image in which the human works with nature and both have dignity, which God saw that all was "good." The theology operative in this alternative Biblical text is one of reliance. Hiebert's own words on the opposing viewpoints sustained by these creation stories deserve quotation:

Genesis 2 contains what many biblical scholars have regarded as an alternative story of creation – not a continuation of the account of creation in Genesis 1 but a truly distinctive tradition about the origin of the world. In this tradition, the human being is positioned very differently within the world of nature. Here the archetypal human is made not in the image of God but out of topsoil, out of the arable land that was cultivated by Israelite farmers (Gen. 2:7). As a result of this kind of creation, humans hold no distinctive position among living beings, since plants and animals also were produced from this same arable soil (2:9, 19). Moreover, the role assigned humans within creation in this story is not to rule (*radah*) and to subdue (*kavash*) but rather to "serve" (*avad*; Gen. 2:15; 3:23). The

²⁶Ibid, p. 140.

Hebrew term *avad* is properly translated “till” in these verses (MRSV), since it clearly refers to the cultivation of arable land. But *avad* is in fact the ordinary Hebrew verb “serve,” used of slaves serving masters and of humans serving God (Gen. 12:16; Exod. 4:23).²⁷

Genesis 2 exhibits a creation “theology of dependence” that counters the creation “theology of dominion” articulated in the first book of Genesis, Hiebert affirms. This theology of reliance bears also similarities elsewhere in the Bible, especially in Psalm 104 and the Book of Job.²⁸

Hence Hiebert attempts to determine which biblical theological tradition – theology of dominion or theology of dependence – may better assist human beings in eliciting a fitting response to the planet ecological degradation? He acknowledges that accountability to the Bible requires thoughtful dealing with both theologies. He believes it is only in examining both traditions and the social locations from which they originated, can their comparative usefulness for responsibly determining human role in nature be satisfactorily evaluated. If so, then are both theological traditions identically pertinent to present-day socio-ecological reality?²⁹

Today’s humans’ scientific and technological achievements, Hiebert posits, make it well-suited to articulate a theology of dominion similar to Genesis 1. However, he continues, human beings are just a lone species within a vast and intricate network of

²⁷Ibid, p. 139.

²⁸Hiebert, *The Yahwist’s Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. ; cf. Bill McKibben, *The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job, and the Scale of Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

²⁹Hiebert, “The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations in Christian Traditions,” pp. 140-142.

mysterious and unmanageable life. “Our only hope of survival, in fact, is in recognizing our dependence on this web of life and adapting our behavior to conform to the process created into it and to the demands it makes upon us.”³⁰ In this perspective, formulating a theology of dependence as the one in Genesis 2, in which humans recognize their accountability and benevolence to the created world, is both appropriate and essential.

According to the Yahwist, the human vocation is not to manage the ecosystem of which humans are a part, but rather to align its activity to meet the demands and observe the limits imposed by this system upon all of its members. Humans must measure their activity by the health of the larger biotic community which they share. In an age of relentless economic growth and rising consumerism, an image of the human vocation emphasizing limit and restraint may provide a more powerful challenge to the prevailing values of exploitation than an image of dominion and rule, no matter how benevolently that dominion is understood.³¹

For Hiebert, the creation theology of dependence in Genesis 2 merits particular consideration because of it has been overlooked in the past and of human propensity for pride. This age craves, he believes, “not [for] a new view of power, a sanctified dominion theology, but rather [for] a new humility, a new sense of our dependence upon the larger realm of creation.”³² Humans need a new paradigm that enables us to “read our texts and our lives from the point of view of the whole creation rather than our human perspective

³⁰Ibid, p. 150.

³¹Ibid, pp. 150-51.

³²Ibid, p. 200.

alone.”³³ In so doing, humans will be able to change our way of life in conformity to the needs of the whole creation and to the survival of planet earth.³⁴

Hiebert concludes that the theology of dominion seems applicable to our modern world whose scientific and technological achievements have definitely empowered humans, enabling them to control nature. However, such human-nature dominating relationship is problematic for its destructive trend and for disregarding the needs and well-being of the rest of creation. This explains Hiebert’s suggestion that the theology of dependence is more suitable than the theology of dominion to reshape human-nature rapport in our modern world.

Hiebert’s insight reminds of how John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* relies so heavily on Genesis 1 and its account of nature as a field of objects-subject to human mastery. This suggests the inadequacy of the Pope’s appropriation of Genesis 1 and of his anthropocentric theology of work. Today work must be ecologically framed, not anthropologically understood as appropriate domination of nature.

Along the same lines, one can see in the first phase of liberation theology a tendency to highlight an anthropological emphasis stressing Exodus as a journey of a people in history from condition of slavery to freedom. Gutiérrez, Midy, and Aristide correctly claim that God acts in history in favor of the oppressed. But such a view restricts God’s action to history enabling liberation theology to uncritically embrace the general anthropocentrism of mainstreams theology from the 1960s to 1980s that

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

disregarded humanity's interconnection with nature, or God's sustaining care of the natural world. In his article, "The Gift of Good Land," Wendell Berry, for example, argues that the end goal of the Exodus is not an abstract freedom but rather freedom in a land flowing with milk and honey.³⁵ This refrain about milk and honey conveys that God is liberating the Hebrews to live in a covenant with God in freedom and sustained by a set of material gifts and ecosystem blessings that provide the Hebrews with crops, sheep, and children. Berry shows the centrality of an ecological reading of the Exodus story that is an enrichment of the history-saturated reading of the early liberation theology approach. The ecological reading does not undercut the stress on history but adds a highlighting for a liberationist emphasis that God's blessings and curses to the people of Israel come through the fertility of the ecosystem and from God hardening the land so that it will not be fertile if Israel falls into injustice or away from faith in God.³⁶

Berry's essay further enhances my argument based on Hiebert's position that any theological anthropology today utilized by the theology of work or liberation theology must be an ecologically theological understanding of the human condition. Together these two studies illustrate the path for a more adequate ecologically informed model of liberation theology and the theology of work.

³⁵Wendell Berry, "The Gift of Good Land," *Flourish Magazine*, Fall 2009, <http://flourishonline.org/2009/12/wendell-berry-gift-of-good-land/> [accessed September 9, 2009], see also *The Gift of Good Land. Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981), pp. 267-281.

³⁶Ibid. See also William C. French "Chaos and Creation," *The Bible Today* 31:1 (January 1995), pp. 9-15.

Beginnings of an Ecologically Informed Liberationist Revision

In this section I examine the efforts of Enrique Dussel and Leonardo Boff at developing an engagement between liberationist concerns and ecological awareness. I join them as part of a broader endeavor to revise Latin American theology by sketching the main points of an ecologically-sensitive liberationist thought. The father of liberation theology wrote such a compelling history saturated paradigm that it caused a delay of several decades before Dussel and Boff began to attempt integrating liberationist and ecological issues.

Liberation Theology and Ecology in Enrique Dussel

Enrique Dussel is an Argentine philosopher and historian, and one of the most creative liberation theologians. A lay-Catholic and father of three, Dussel holds PhDs in philosophy (Madrid) and history (Paris), and a licentiate in theology from the Catholic Institute of Paris. He taught at Cuyo University (Mendoza), Lumen Vitae (Brussels), and Bogota. Forced to leave Argentina in the 1970s for his liberation praxis, Dussel went to reside in Mexico where he has been teaching ethics, history of theology and of Latin American church at the Institute of Superior Studies of Mexico. He is presently president of the Commission on the History of the Church in Latin America (CEHILA).³⁷

³⁷Rosino Gibellini, "Appendix I Biographical and Bibliographical Data on the Contributors," *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 309-311. Dussel's extensive published works include: *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, 3 vols. (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973-1975), *History and the Theology of Liberation*. Trans. John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976), "An Ethics and Many Moralities," *Concilium* 150 (10/1981): 54-61, *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation (1492-1979)*. Trans. and Rev. Alan Neeley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), *Philosophy of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985).

In his “Ethics of Culture and Ecology,” Dussel argues for a popular praxis of liberation whereby oppressed countries and excluded classes can resist the destruction of their ecology and culture by hegemonic centers and endogenous dominant classes, and establish the basis of a culture of life through faith and communal solidarity.³⁸ Basically, this chapter derives from Dussel’s book *Ethics and Community* and serves as a prime example of his imagination and attempt to tackle the issues of culture and ecology from a theological ethical perspective of liberation.³⁹ To my knowledge “Ethics of Culture and Ecology” constitutes the first endeavor by a Latin American theologian to closely engage ecological issues with liberation theology. It establishes a connection between environmental devastation in the developing world and the exploitation of its people. Similarly it associates peaceful coexistence of human-nature and North-South interaction with human liberation in the southern countries.

Dussel starts by considering the inexorable decay of today’s global ecological devastation that he links to the subjugation and eradication of indigenous civilizations, which began in the fifteenth century. He claims that such a hideous relationship of people-to-nature and of people-to-people endangers the biosphere and casts doubts on the morality of human progress in science and technology. He puts the blame of that destructive domination and threat to planet earth on mainstream industrial and technological practices.

³⁸Enrique Dussel, “Ethics of Culture and Ecology,” *Ethics and Community*. Trans. by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), pp. 194-204.

³⁹Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, pp. 1, 194.

We read in the newspapers everyday that the European forests are dying, that birds can no longer migrate, that the fish of the Mediterranean and other waterways in industrial countries are perishing, that environmental pollution in Mexico City has reached deadly levels, that a lethal gas has escaped in India, that contamination from a nuclear accident poses a threat to human life in the cities for hundred of miles around. Our gigantic technological and scientific miracles turn against us, and our lives hang in the balance. Further: as we know, a self-styled universal culture is dominating and extinguishing autochthonous cultures, ethnic groups, tribes, and peripheral nations – whole peoples, as in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Along with nature, the cultural diversity of humanity is disappearing from the globe.⁴⁰

Yet, initially God’s creation was “very good,” Dussel declares quoting the first book of Genesis.⁴¹ Accordingly, his aim in this chapter is to (a) elucidate the paramount causes of existent ecological deterioration and cultural subjugation; and (b) prescribe evangelically faithful practice to transform actual relationships of person to nature and of person to person.⁴²

Dussel bluntly declares that today’s ecological and cultural calamity results from “transnational corporations,” “Western culture,” “industrial center,” or “hegemonic center,” and “bourgeois class” of dominated countries, which victimize peripheral countries and people of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.⁴³ These southern people are subjugated and mistreated “as workers, as impoverished nation, as wage-earners of the poor nation, as the tortured and annihilated victims of the arms of empire, sucked dry by debts they have neither contracted nor profited from but that they must pay with their

⁴⁰Ibid, pp. 194, 200-201.

⁴¹Cf. Gen. 1: 1-3.26.31, quoted in Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, p. 195.

⁴²Ibid, pp. 1, 195.

⁴³Ibid, pp. 197-198, 200-202.

blood.”⁴⁴ They suffer unjustly, he delineates, because of (a) toxic plants transnational firms establish in developing countries, disregarding the well-being of workers and nature; (b) profit and growth-oriented decisions of industrialists and policy-makers in developed societies; (c) substandard technology transnational companies utilize in host countries; (d) pernicious rapport (e.g. based on destruction, affluence, consumption, speed, violence, disdain, and so forth) between human beings and nature, and among humans themselves.⁴⁵

The developing world’s environmental deterioration by ascendancy of transnational enterprises over capital production in those countries, Dussel indicates, is concomitant with transcultural hegemony. The “transnational culture” treats with contempt the way of life, deity, emblems, customs, and dancing of people in the developing world. Dussel even deems Christianity as an accomplice of that cultural subjugation for lending support to the devastation of the values and representations of peripheral people.

An invisible, forgotten *cultural domination* accompanied the expansion of the transnationals in the period beginning in 1945... “The universal culture” is the “new Enlightenment” of those who regard themselves as “cultivated” because they are familiar with mechanisms imported from the European and North American cultures and superficially implanted in peripheral countries... The church itself is profoundly involved in this whole problematic, not only by reason of its worldwide presence, but because the churches of the central countries of capitalism are hegemonic within Catholicism and Protestantism, and transmit willy-nilly the guidelines and models of their cultures of origin. Thus a cultural

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 204.

⁴⁵Ibid, pp. 197-199.

domination frequently employs the church itself as its tool and instrument.⁴⁶

Dussel denounces ecological devastation and cultural subjugation as gross abominations, for both humankind and nature are God's creation. "Sin is the destruction of the work created by God. God's most perfect deed is the human person. But the earth, too, is the work of God. Its destruction is the annihilation of the locus of human history, of the incarnation, and hence the gravest of ethical misdeeds."⁴⁷ At the conclusion of the chapter, Dussel specifies the link between human habitat and customs of the oppressed, and the iniquity committed against them.

The destruction of nature and the annihilation of the culture of the poor go hand in hand. Both are the fruit of sin – the sin of the domination exercised by the "rich," or sinners, over the "poor," or the dominated Job of the Bible. We destroy the land we live in. And we destroy the cultures of the dominated, in their dignity, in their beauty, in their splendid multiplicity as so many varieties of "lilies of the field."⁴⁸

Granting Dussel's explanation of the ecological and cultural devastation pervasive in the developing world, what could mitigate the destructive and dominating character of today's transnational culture?

Dussel advocates a twofold solution to abate the ecological and cultural havoc raised by the world of work in developing countries. First, he obliquely suggests that humans adopt a "new attitude" toward planet earth (people-to-nature rapport) and each other (North-South relation) that is salutary, frugal, and respectful. However, that

⁴⁶Ibid, pp. 201-202.

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 197.

⁴⁸Ibid, p. 204.

propitious and cooperative rapport between human-nature and human to human will not originate from the developed countries or universal culture. Rather, Dussel secondly proposes that such transformed relationship will come only from marginalized people of dependent countries insofar as they resist the dominant culture and rely on their popular culture and community of solidarity and faith. “With their songs, their dances, their living piety, their ‘underground economy’ (their own consumption or production, invisible to the capitalist economy), their communal solidarity, their system of feeding themselves, and so on, they continue to do today what they have done for hundreds of years – bypass the oppressor’s ‘universal culture.’”⁴⁹ He approves the insights of Paul VI and the Latin American bishops who argue, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Medellin* respectively, that the culture of the common people is imperative for their evangelization. “Indeed, popular culture is the locus of life, the realization, and the growth of the faith of the people,” he suggests.⁵⁰

To recapitulate, Dussel condemns the socio-ecological crisis of the developing world, which destroys God’s handiwork. Skeptical that resolution of that problem would emerge from the industrial center where it originates, Dussel recommends a benevolent human-nature and people-to-people rapport and upholds the peripheral people’s

⁴⁹Ibid, p. 202.

⁵⁰Ibid, p. 203. Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on “the ‘Evangelization of Cultures’” notes that “the kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them” (no. 20). Moreover, the Latin American bishops write that “Faith, and consequently the church, are sown and grow in the culturally diversified piety of the people” (*Medellin, Popular Pastoral Ministry*), quoted in Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, p. 203.

resistance as a crucial point of departure to their practice of the faith and the evangelizing movement of liberation.

Liberation Theology and Ecology in Leonardo Boff

Happily in recent years the renowned Latin American theologian Leonardo Boff has joined Dussel in calling for Liberation Theology to engage ecological concerns. In his book *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, Boff underscores the interconnection between the cry of planet Earth and the oppressed, and contends that liberation theology and ecological thought are natural allies in attempts to recover the dignity of mother Earth and human feeling of a cosmic solidarity. Essentially, this work derives from a dexterous application of liberation theology's growing perceptions to ecological concern. It sees the very rationale underlying the exploitation of workers and the plunder of countries at play also in the devastation of the natural world. It views integral liberation as having historical, spiritual, and ecological implications.⁵¹

Central to this perspective, Boff posits that the biosphere is ailing and faces serious peril. Over two thirds of the world population is condemned to hunger, abject poverty, and untimely death. In addition, the onslaught of current dominant development model systematically despoils the Earth, suffocating into (or threatening with) extinction millions of living species. Obviously, he states, "a death machine is mowing down life in

⁵¹Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. Trans. by Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997).

its most varied forms.”⁵² It was to join the lament of planet Earth with that of the wretched, and to provide humankind with the hope of a practical and compassionate solution to avert this tragedy that spurred Boff to write this book.⁵³ Accordingly, where does Boff heed the cry of the Earth and of the poor? What are the immediate causes of such raucous and hysterical cry? What framework might impart the best avenue to protect living and nonliving beings? These are the crucial questions this subsection will attempt to answer.

Boff suggests that the sturdiest and most frantic cry of the Earth and the poor reverberates in the Amazon, a region in South America that constitutes the “temple of the planet’s biodiversity” and the last resort of 100,000 Amerindians.⁵⁴ Such emotional cry resounds concomitantly from within that ecological patrimony of humanity for filial reverence and ecological justice, and from the guts of the indigenous population longing for social justice and collective solidarity. Informed by C. Benjamin, P. Fearnside, J. Lutzenberger, E. Salati and others, Boff notes that the Amazon and the Natives are violently threatened by invasion of large number of people, by tree cutting and burning, and the execution of ambitious works (e.g. roads, extensive hydroelectric powers,

⁵²For statistics on this affirmation see, C. Allias, “O estado do planeta em alguns números,” ed. M. Barrère, *Terra patrimonio comun* (Sao Paulo: Nobel, 1992), pp. 243-51, quoted in Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, p. 1.

⁵³Ibid, pp. xi, xii.

⁵⁴Ibid, pp. 87, 89. Boff writes that, in addition to having “the largest mass of water on the globe [and being] the site of the largest tropical rains forest on the planet,” the Amazon “contains 30% of the broad leaf forest reserves in the world and indeed the greatest genetic wealth. The various kinds of forests and soils existing there (riverbanks, dry earth, swamp, farmland, brush, pasture, and mangroves) house an astonishing biomass: more than 60,000 species of plants, 2.5 million species of arthropods (insects, spiders, centipedes, etc.), 2,000 species of fish, over 300 mammal species, and an inconceivable number of microorganisms,” p. 87.

factories, mining industries, agriculture, animal breeding ventures, and so on), which disrupt the fragile ecological balance of the land, create rural slums, contribute to pollution, diseases, and outright merciless killings.⁵⁵ He depicts the magnitude of recent environmental destruction in the Amazon, stating:

During three centuries of colonization, no more than 39 square miles were cleared. In a mere thirteen years of the military dictatorship 117,000 square miles were mowed down. The extent of deforestation is now estimated to be 9 to 12%. That may seem small, but in absolute terms it is an area of over 234, 000 squares miles, which is larger than the reunified Germany, larger than all the land producing soy, wheat, or corn in Brazil. Researchers estimate that the Amazon tropical forest requires at least a thousand years to recover its previous splendor. Moreover, deforestation upsets the entire regional system, damaging what were intended to be development projects.⁵⁶

Furthermore, enlightened by D. Ribeiro and A. Hall, Boff shows how the same violence against the Amazon is simultaneously and unscrupulously exerted on the indigenous population. He affirms:

To speed up the clearing, many ranchers used the defoliant Tordon 155-Br (Agent Orange) or Tordon 101-Br, which is even more destructive, sprayed from a plane, whereby polluting soils and river, and killing many people, especially the Nhambiquara Indians, who were almost wiped out. The peasants who were expelled or threatened became organized and formed many rural unions. The implementation of these projects in the hills of Carajas provoked a real war in the countryside. In 1985 around one hundred were killed, and in 1986 the figure rose to two hundred; in the following years the figure decline but still remained high. The thirteen

⁵⁵Ibid, pp. 92-100.

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 91, cf. C. Benjamin, *Diálogo sobre Ecologia, Ciência, e Política* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1933), p. 177; P. Fearnside, "Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon: How Fast Is It Occurring?," *Interscientia*, no. 2 (March-April 1982), pp. 82-85; J. Lutzenberger, "Besidlungspolitik und Zerstörung des Regenwaldes Amazoniens," in Yanomamis, eds. J. Helbig, O. Iten, and J. Schiltknecht (Frankfurt: Piquin-Innsbruck, 1989), pp.18-23; E. Salati, "The Forest and the Hydrological Cycle," *The Geophysiology of Amazonia*, ed. R. E. Dickinson (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1987), pp. 273-296, quoted in Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, p. 91.

thousand Indians from thirty-four different tribes in the region saw their lands invaded by cattle growers and lumbermen and many Indians were killed.⁵⁷

Boff indicates several factors that produce the thoughtless negligence of ecological issues and socio-ethical concerns in planning and implementing development projects in the Amazon. First, he ardently believes that such wanton deterioration results from actual dominant civilization whose “myth of progress” consists in amassing the maximum of worldly fortune possible, in the shortest time and with little investment, oftentimes assisted by science and technology.⁵⁸ Prevalent developmental practice and modes of technology, he insists, endanger the natural world and engender poverty. He convincingly declares that the notion *sustainability* is inapplicable to mainstream development policy and to any society whose economic system subscribes to current view of progress. “The expression *sustainable development* masks the modern paradigm operative in both capitalism and socialism, even of the green sort, always with its all-

⁵⁷Ibid, p. 97; cf. B. Ribeiro, *Amazonia Urgente: Cinco Seculos de Historia e Ecologia* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia, 1990, p.196; and A. Hall, *Amazonia para Quem? Desmatamento e Conflito Social no Programa Grande Carajas* (1980), pp. 200ff.

⁵⁸Ibid, pp. 93-93. Boff does recognize the benefits of technology, but he believes it is unequally distributed. “In large areas of the world there is too little of the technology needed to improve food production, handle the health conditions of populations, and develop safe and decent transportation. In a few other areas there is excessive technology, to the point where it unnecessarily complicates domestic and social relations, damaging the quality of life and pouring contaminants into the biosphere.” (*Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, p. 73). Drawing from I. Hedstrom, Boff indicates that today’s technology directly contributes to wantonly destroy nature, particularly when employed in the context of modern society’s material evaluation of progress. His position contradicts J. Huber and J. Maddox, who claim that technology can fix the environmental troubles that it has created. “Is it not an illusion to think that the virus attacking us can be the principle by which we will be made well?” Boff asks, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, p. 65; cf. I. Hedstrom, *¿Volverán las golondrinas?: la reintegración de la creación desde una perspectiva latinoamericana* (San Jose: DEI, 1988); J. Huber, *Die verlorene Unschuld der Ökologie* (Frankfurt, 1982); and J. Maddox, *Unsere Zukunft hat noch Zukunft: Der Jugste Tag findet nicht statt* (Stuttgart, 1973).

devouring logic.”⁵⁹ Revealing the fallacy inherent in the idea that development does mitigate poverty, Boff writes:

A very grave error is at work here. The real causes of poverty and environmental deterioration are...the result of precisely the kind of development being practiced, one that is highly concentrating and that exploits people and nature’s resources. Hence, the more intense this kind of development that benefits some, the greater the dire poverty and deterioration produced for the vast majority. Indeed, that is the situation around the world, where a tiny number of countries have a great accumulation of goods and services at the cost of two-thirds who are marginalized or outcast. As a rule, it can be said that whenever conflicts arise between the two sides, the decision falls on the side of development and growth and against arguments for ecological sustainability.⁶⁰

It must be noted that Boff critiques mainstream development practice for its exclusively material focus, its devastation of and resistance to nature, and its exploitation of workers. However, he does subscribe to a development model that considers the multidimensionality of human beings and their connection to nature, which, in his opinion, capitalist and socialist societies and mode of production deplorably neglect. He obliquely proposes the aim of genuine development censuring the accepted view: “What is sought is not development in the sense of the flourishing of human potentialities in their various dimensions, especially that spiritual dimension proper to *Homo sapiens (demens)*, ever tied to the global interactions of human beings with the cosmos or the Earth in its immense diversity and in its dynamic equilibrium.”⁶¹

⁵⁹Ibid, p. 67.

⁶⁰Ibid, p. 66.

⁶¹Ibid, p. 67.

Second, Boff claims that human understanding of self and of one's position in nature, which stems from prevailing societal organization and growth stress, looms large in current socio-ecological disaster. Alluding to the vertical ranking metaphor prevalent in Genesis 1, he notes that humans presumptuously and erroneously assume that they stand at the height of a ladder at the bottom of which reside, for the gratification of their royalty, animals and nature. As Genesis 2 illustrates, Boff states that humanity overlooks the fact that not only the natural world exists for its own sake and precedes human arrival on Earth, but that also human actually stands beside living and inanimate beings.⁶²

Boff characterizes such human self-awareness as imperious and hostile to nature. "The imperial and anti-ecological anthropology at work in the contemporary dreams, projects, ideals, institutions, and values can be summed up in one word: *anthropocentrism*."⁶³ He holds that not only this view sees humankind as the standard of all realities, but it also represents a cultural element of modern Western society. It is admirably illustrated by Pope Nicolas VI and Pope Alexander VI in their bulls *Romanus Pontifex* and *Inter Coetera*, which granted to the Portuguese and Spanish rulers the right to conquer lands and dominate people on behalf of God and the Catholic Church.⁶⁴

⁶²Ibid, pp. 70-71.

⁶³Ibid, p. 70.

⁶⁴Cf. Paulo Suess, ed., *A Conquista espiritual* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1992), pp. 227, 249, quoted in Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, pp. 69-70.

However, Boff points out that Nietzsche decried such cultural mindset for its strong desire to conquer and coerce.⁶⁵

Boff attributes such coercive tendency to humankind, more specifically to men, asserting that dominant culture, embodied in masculinity, resorts to force to subjugate both the Earth and femininity. Informed by J. Plaskow and C. Christ, he states:

Such *anthropocentrism* when considered historically is exposed as *andocentrism*. It is the male rather than the female who proclaims himself lord of nature. He regards woman as part of nature that he must possess exclusively, domesticating her and subjecting her to his rational, objective, and voluntarist logic. Hence, the male, centered on his own exclusionary masculinity, tends to repress what is connected to the feminine and, in it, to woman: the spontaneity of nature, the emergence of vital and free energies, sensitivity, the logic of the heart and of tenderness, the ability to grasp the message of things, and the *esprit de finesse* for the dimensions of mystery and the sacred...He has forced into women this same overall self-understanding of the human being, alienating them from their uniqueness as women.⁶⁶

For Boff, such subjugating and alienating human attitude, which uses coercion for its sake, diminishes life and fosters insecurity and vulnerability. Inspired by S. Moscovici, he alleges that modern culture's "organizing axis is not life – the wonder of life, and the defense and expansion of life – but rather its own power and the means for greater power, which is domination."⁶⁷

That destructive and dominating tendency, Boff asserts, reveals a disjointed relationship of humanity with nature and its Creator, which has been reinforced by the

⁶⁵Ibid, p. 69, cf. F. Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht: Versuch einer Umwertung aller Werte* (1887) (Stuttgart: Kroner Tb., 1964).

⁶⁶Ibid, p. 71; cf. J. Plaskow and C. Christ, *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989).

⁶⁷Ibid, p. 71.

Abrahamic religious traditions. Indeed the sacred writings of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims narrate their message in a patriarchal, monotheistic, and anthropocentric cultural context whereby they feel exclusively elected from among all other people and from within a depraved nature.⁶⁸ The framework of those scriptural texts, Boff alleges, not only contradicts the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, but also those views create gender and socio-ecological imbalance and overlook “the great cosmic community that bears the Mystery and hence reveals the Divinity...”⁶⁹ Hence, Boff believes, a novel framework that fosters a sustainable relationship between the Divine, living and nonliving beings is imperative.

Boff advocates the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi as an essential framework for preserving planet Earth and for rescinding the socio-ecological destruction inherent in Western cultural and spiritual traditions. Accordingly, who was Francis of Assisi? And, how is the spirit he embodied pertinent to actual socio-ecological crisis?

Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), Boff writes, was an Italian layman who deeply influenced human and Christian spirituality. Son of Pietro Bernardone, a prosperous textile salesman, Francis underwent a lengthy vocational crisis that resulted in his courageous renunciation of his family possessions to adopt extreme poverty and to dedicate his life to practice the Gospel of Jesus Christ with joy, gentleness, simplicity, humility, and genuine love for God and for God’s creation. He was a poet and mystic. His “Canticle to Brother Sun” represents one of the masterpieces of “Western poetry and

⁶⁸Ibid, pp. 78-81.

⁶⁹Ibid, p. 79.

nature mysticism.” In 1209, he founded the First Order of Franciscans. On November 29, 1979, Francis was canonized “patron saint of ecologists” by Pope John Paul II.⁷⁰

Boff maintains that St. Francis of Assisi conveyed an intimate spirit that enabled him not only to encounter God in all things, but also to be so harmoniously united with nature that he saw in it the symbolic presence of God’s epiphany. St Francis interacted with all things, animals, and human conditions affectionately by standing alongside them so much as loving them dearly and considering them his siblings. He believed that all things in the natural world interacted with and depended upon each other.⁷¹

Drawing from H. Schneider, Boff describes the mindset underlying St. Francis’ deep love for the created world:

Everything makes up a grand symphony – and God is the conductor. All things are alive and personal; through intuition Francis discovered what we know empirically that all things are brothers and sisters because they have the same genetic code. Francis experienced this consanguinity in a mystical way. We all live together under the same parental roof. Because we are brothers and sisters we love one another; violence among family members is never justified.⁷²

In light of this perspective, Boff remarks, St. Francis prohibited “the brothers to cut trees down at the root, whereby leaving hope that they might grow back.”⁷³ Citing the first biographer of St. Francis, Thomas Celano, Boff indicates that St. Francis even instructed the gardeners to keep a plot of ground tilled for all types of herbs to grow “so

⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 203.206.207.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 211.

⁷² Ibid; cf. H. Schneider, *Brunderlich Solidaritat durch Franziskus von Assisi* (Mönchengladbach: B. ühlen Verlag, 1981), 44-52.

⁷³ Boff, *Cry of the Poor, Cry of the Earth*, p. 211.

that...they might announce the beauty of the Father of all things.”⁷⁴ Accordingly, Boff holds that St. Francis’ cosmic kinship transforms “ecology – the science of living well in our shared planetary home – [into] ‘eco-sophy’ – the wisdom of living well among all beings.”⁷⁵

Central to this assertion Boff points out that St. Francis’ mystical experience constitutes the fount from which springs his affectionate respect for and union with the created world. Through faith St. Francis realized that all creatures came from God. “If we have the same origin...then we are all sons and daughters...brothers and sisters [living] under the same rainbow of God’s grace and under the same parental roof.”⁷⁶ Similarly, St. Francis cosmic kinship involves that humans are “sons and daughters of the Earth...from which come and toward which all” return.⁷⁷ For Boff, St. Francis’ lifestyle proves that in him “the self is called to rise above itself, to open the closed circle, and to become kin with things, so as to sing jointly the hymn of praise to the Creator.”⁷⁸ Such disposition is possible, Boff affirms, insofar as one creates community with all existing things and sings the praises of the Creator.⁷⁹

St. Francis developed also this mindset, Boff explains, because “he was an ontological poet...capable of grasping the sacramental message echoing from all

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid, p. 214.

⁷⁷Ibid, p. 215.

⁷⁸Ibid, p. 213.

⁷⁹Ibid.

things.”⁸⁰ This implies that, for St. Francis, the poor and lepers, weeds, cricket, mum creatures, and so on, constitute the historical locus of the crucified God.

St. Francis’ cosmic kinship, Boff states, derives also from his “radical poverty.” This expression does not merely convey a lack of material possessions, but also “a way of being by which man and woman let things be; they cease dominating them, bringing them into subordination, and making them the object of human will.”⁸¹ According to Boff, one attains radical poverty by practicing strict self-denial. By such practice, St. Francis felt kin to the created world and ultimately became free of consideration for material things, gain, or efficacy. Through simplicity, humility, and gentleness, St. Francis manifested the viability of, and direction to, cosmic kinship that his “Canticle to Brother Sun,” so eloquently testifies.⁸²

In brief, Boff establishes a connection between liberation theology and ecology. He rejects the dominant paradigm at play in the disruption of humanity-nature relationship resulting from an anthropocentric, masculine, monotheist and patriarchal propensity that defines progress in material terms. In contrast, Boff advocates a socio-ecological framework grounded in St. Francis of Assisi’s authentic love for God, humanity and nature.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid, p. 215.

⁸²Ibid, pp. 215-219.

Outline of an Ecologically Sensitive Liberationist Ethics of Work

The central question underlying both this section and the dissertation is what theological ethical framework might offer the best path for empowering movements of both church and Haitian society to engage the problems of oppression, ecological degradation, and poverty?

Interestingly enough, the first step toward attempting to answer such question starts with the recognition of the gifts that have been bestowed upon us Haitians – the land, selfhood, and fellow companions. Insofar as work occurs from the interconnectivity between oneself and the environment in fellowship with other workers, the means of our product have been given us independently of our request or merit. Accepting these gifts makes us responsible for our well-being, that of the environment and our fellow workers because obviously one's flourishing depends radically on the welfare of both other companions and the environment. In other words, given how work is central to human fulfillment, protecting the elements that make work happen – the environment, oneself and fellow workers – would seem a wise way to ensure long term prosperity. The point I seek to make here entails that the notion of gift, inherited from Wendell Berry's article "The Gift of Good Land," is important for formulating a theological ethical framework of work for Haiti, at least at the beginning of such attempt.

In effect, originally the land was good. Acute observers keep saying how the land was covered with lavish forests when Christopher Columbus invaded it. For example, Tom Byers of Crosscut.com remarks, "All the trees were green and full of fruit and the plants tall and covered with flowers. The roads were broad and good. The climate was

like April in Castile; the nightingale and other birds sang as they do in Spain during the month, and it was the most pleasant place in the world.”⁸³ What happened to all those trees is known to all, repeating that tragic story precludes necessity. What is unquestionably alluring, however, involves why it occurred.

The powerful weapons of the invaders enabled them to usurp the land as if they had they right to use it, whichever way they wanted to, without any obligations to the land itself and irrespective of the needs and values of those who had already inhabited it. Thomas Aquinas’ definition of justice as giving to others what they deserve seems applicable here, for the conquerors ignored the right of the Native Haitians to live peacefully on their own land. Or, to put it better, they failed to see the land and those who inhabited it as gifts. This attitude is commensurate with obligation, respect, stewardship, and so on. The golden rule, “do to others what you would have them do to you” seems appropriate here, provided one establishes no hierarchy between oneself, the environment and others.⁸⁴ In light of Berry’s insight, the invaders acted like gods, as if they had created that land themselves. “Looking at their fallowed fields, the people are to be reminded that the land is theirs only gift; it exists in its own right, and does not begin or end with any human purpose.”⁸⁵

⁸³Tom Byers, “To Restore Haiti, Reforest its Denuded Hills,” Crosscut.com News of the Great Nearby, <http://crosscut.com/2010/04/15/environment/19743/To-restore-Haiti,-reforest-its-denuded-hills-/print/> [accessed August 7, 2010].

⁸⁴Lk. 6:31 NIV.

⁸⁵W. Berry, “The Gift of Good Land,” *Flourish Magazine*, Fall 2009, <http://flourishonline.org/2009/12/wendell-berry-gift-of-good-land/> [accessed August 7, 2010]. See also W. Berry, *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural & Agricultural* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981).

How is this observation to become reality for poor Haitian peasants who desire to own the land, good land for survival? Or, for those well off, who own the land and do not use it? Berry enumerates several qualities that one has to remember in regards to the land. First, it is a gift and accordingly one must practice humility, faithfulness, justice, and gratitude. Second, one must be kind to one's neighbors and be a good steward so future generations may utilize the land.⁸⁶ The virtue of love also comes into play in one's relation with the land and other companions. For Berry, charity bestowed on a fellow worker must also be extended to the land because both are God's creatures. That means one requires dexterity.⁸⁷

The American Old Testament scholar and theologian, Walter Brueggemann echoes Berry's environmental stewardship call by writing, "The land is also a responsibility, for it can be kept only by keeping Torah in it."⁸⁸ Berry and Brueggemann's observation is invaluable for articulating a theological ethical framework of work for Haiti. It complements the contribution offered above by Dussel and Boff.

Both these writers teach us to condemn the conditions of work in Haiti, for they exploit human labor, devastate the environment, dominate women, impoverish workers and marginalize them politically. In rejecting these conditions, Dussel and Boff summon us to listen to the lament of the poor and the earth simultaneously and to adopt St. Francis' cosmic kinship.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸David Baer's review of Walter Brueggemann, *The Land. Place As Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), Canterbridge.org [accessed August 7, 2010].

From this perspective, an ecologically sensitive liberationist ethics of work seeks new conditions of work for men and women that are decent, just and conducive to well-being for humans and creation, and for right relationship with the Creator, humanity, and creation.

Implicit to this view, Haiti's conditions of work constitute both a socio-economic-political-cultural predicament and a moral-spiritual crisis. Seen thus, love of neighbor indicates that priority be given to peasants and workers who have been historically kept landless or given abysmally low wages and prevented from having equal access to life sustaining resources from participating in the affairs of their country. By the same token, love of neighbor includes respect, liberation, means for socio-economic achievements for both men and women including reverence and regard for the Earth as God's handiwork.

In the same the affirmation of human dignity and human rights of peasant and factory workers in Haiti will be recognized and defended to the extent that the basic contention above is implemented. This, in our opinion, is the standpoint from which Haitians need to assert solidarity with peasants and factory workers, give priority to the common good, and concretely love their neighbors. This policy suggestion forms the central criterion for solving agricultural and manufacturing problems in Haiti including the way in which every viewpoint on human, moral, and Christian conditions in Haiti's working conditions should be framed.

An ecologically liberationist theological ethics of work informed by the capability approach for Haiti implies both a lament for land (from landless peasants) and a lament

from the land (for rehabilitation and protection). Such theological ethical framework shows that both workers and nature form the loci of God's historical presence and action. We cherish hope that the Haitian people forge their own capabilities to live as ecological stewards. For that purpose, this theological ethical framework would be a small impetus to a systematic reflection in the same vein, as Haitians seek to build better conditions of life in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of January 2010.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the conditions of work in Haiti from the perspective of the Christian reflection on work and liberation theology, arguing for policies aimed at the restoration of dignity for work and workers in that country, and for a rethinking of a Christian theology of work.

It has shown that manufacturing and agricultural workers labor in conditions that degrade and exploit them, impoverish and exclude them, hasten their death and destroy the environment. It has noted that Haiti's political history provides the context for these daunting problems, which stem from that country's societal structure and that, in turn, they reinforce. It has also espoused Chalmers and Pitt's development model based on Haiti's vibrant economic sectors headed by women, peasants, and artisans.

This dissertation has asserted that it is not just the economic dimension of work that matters and that the spiritual and moral aspects of work have key importance. It then insisted that both these social, empirical data of work need to be engaged by theological reflection of work. However, it has also shown the need to closely revise mainstreams of traditional theological reflection on work in light of Liberation theology and ethics, for they provide important tools for wrestling with the stern challenges human labor and work confront in the bleak conditions of Haiti and other poor, developing countries.

This dissertation has also suggested the necessity to further develop Liberation theology with socially-oriented development economics – e.g. the capability approach

developed by Sen and Nussbaum as well as the micro-lending strategy championed by Yunus – that has proven successful in promoting integral development, mitigating poverty and empowering common people. It declared that the first phase of Liberation theology, informed by Marxist philosophy and dependency theory, tended to critique capitalism and neocolonialist exploitation. However, as the Haitian case reveals, people need development, job creation and a way of overcoming injustice and oppression, more than indictment.

This dissertation has also demonstrated that Liberation theology similarly requires further development with greater attention to ecological sensitivity, for genuine development involves environmental stewardship. It sought to accentuate that Haiti's well-being depends on a healthy ecosystem and the ecological devastation of that country proves that (a) our theological understanding of human liberation requires ecologically-sensitive sustainable development; and (b) our Catholic and Protestant traditions of reflection about human work need to be broadened to understand work and labor in an explicitly ecological frame. In light of this perspective, this dissertation attempted to formulate an ecologically-informed paradigm of liberation theology mindful that nature matters as core themes of a theological ethical framework that could offer the best path for empowering movements of both church and Haitian society to engage the problems of oppression, ecological degradation, and poverty.

This framework is important because theologians and ethicists have failed to develop a theological ethic of work specific to Haiti. It also will fill a much needed void

for those searching a connection between God and factory agricultural work and sustainability in Haiti.

We hope that God's revealing love in the life-death-resurrection of Jesus Christ may find concrete embodiment in the social reality and natural world of that fragmented society.

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