From Babel to Pentecost: Using the Soteriologies of Gustavo Gutierrez and Aloysius Pieris to Challenge Facets of the Project of Neoliberal Globalization and Nurture the Development of New Liberation Theologies

by

Bernard Kevin Smyth

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael's College

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Abstract

This dissertation is a theological response to influential North American expressions of the neoliberal project, including the Harper government’s agenda that began in Canada in 2006. The thesis draws on the works of Gustavo Gutierrez and Aloysius Pieris, and argues that their soteriologies have a relevance that transcends the borders of Peru and Sri Lanka respectively. Their works inform a contemporary theological response by challenging the option for privilege, reconfiguring epistemic justice at the centre of social justice struggles, and confronting Eurocentric linear understandings of history as progress. The dissertation traces several expressions of the neoliberal project as these emerged in North America beginning in the 1980s, gives some examples of increasing popular resistance, and demonstrates ways in which the neoliberal project is theologically unacceptable. It brings Gutierrez and Pieris into conversation to show where their soteriologies provide direction for the development of theologies and movements for church renewal which challenge neoliberal globalization. The project concludes
with a discussion of the implications of these conversations for the contemporary Canadian context. The soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris demand not only the reconnection of theology and history, but also economics and history. They offer theological resources to challenge the Harper government’s attack on the Canadian women’s movement and its re-writing of Canadian history. Their theologies provide direction for the renewal of Catholic Social Teaching. They help us challenge contemporary Islamophobia by situating interreligious dialogue at the centre of the struggle for justice. Lastly, their works inspire us see the presence of the frontierless Christ in those persons and movements struggling against the hegemony of the neoliberal ‘Babel’ and working towards a new Pentecost where the Spirit of hope, compassion and solidarity, is recreating an alternative harmonious world enriched by many voices.
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INTRODUCTION

On February 8, 2012, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (D&P) was informed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) that its funding for overseas programs for the 5-year period beginning in 2011 to would be cut from $49.2 million to $14.5 million. In addition, CIDA also indicated that the money was designated for only seven countries.1 D&P is a Catholic social movement that was set up by the Canadian Bishops in 1967 in response to Pope Paul VI’s encyclical Populorum Progressio. Its solidarity work in the Global South and its educational work in the North are shaped by the “Gospel and the preferential option for the poor.”2 Working with people of all faiths, the approach of D&P is to “work for and with the poor in partnership with grassroots organizations and coalitions in developing countries that are striving to make permanent and sustainable changes in areas such as food security, citizen participation, equality between women and men, conflict resolution and the extraction of resources, which aim to tackle the root causes of poverty and marginalization.”3

The immediate impact of the cuts has included significant reductions in staff and operations, postponement or cancellation of a number of members’ meetings, scaling down programs in Canada, and the complete reconfiguration of the 2011 to 2016 overseas programs. Whereas in 2010-2011, D&P supported 186 partners in 30 countries, since September 2011, the date which the previous 5-year agreement with CIDA ended, D&P has had to reduce financial support to 32 partners and cancel funding agreements with 48 partners.4 The Canadian Bishops expressed

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1 Information on the cuts can be found on the D&P website. See the following: The impact of CIDA’s funding reduction to Development and Peace (May 2, 2012); Q&A on international development (May 2, 2012); Executive Director’s letter to the Diocesan Councils (March 16, 2012); Fact sheet (March 16, 2012). Http://www.devp.org/en/more-than-ever (accessed September 12, 2012).
2 Q&A on international development
3 Ibid.
4 Fact sheet
“regret” and extreme “disappointment” over the cuts. There are several elements to this story that deserve highlighting:

i) The cuts to D&P are in continuity with other cuts by the Harper government. Over the past two years the government has drastically reduced or abolished the funding of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), the Mennonite Central Committee, and the Kairos ecumenical initiative, as well as women’s groups, trade unions, ecological groups and other organizations. In April 2012, Minister Baird announced the closing of Rights and Democracy, the government-sponsored agency which promoted democratic development globally. In its dealings with these organizations and groups, the government has refused to provide information, to dialogue, to negotiate, or to allow for a “phasing-out” period. Many commentators have argued that the funding cuts are ideologically based and that the Harper government is targeting organizations and sectors that have been critical of its policies, especially in the areas of the environment and mining.

ii) The countries that the Canadian government has targeted as a priority to receive aid are

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5 CCCB Statement Concerning CCODP Funding (March 22, 2012). Http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/mediaroom/statements-a-letters/3306-ccbstatement-concerning-ccodp-funding (accessed September 12, 2012). After the cuts, the head of the CCCB Archbishop Richard Smith pressured D&P to cancel its Fall Action 2012 campaign, which was a call by D&P for a public debate and discussion about the direction of Canada’s foreign aid program. This cancellation was done on the urging of a few bishops who disagreed with the campaign, and the decision bypassed the two bishops on Development and Peace’s Board and the Conference’s own Standing Committee on Development and Peace. CCCB President Archbishop Smith acknowledged the bishops themselves had not had an opportunity to discuss the campaign. This was the first time in D&P’s history that the Bishops have intervened to have a D&P campaign cancelled. For a criticism of the CCCB’s position on the 2012 D&P Fall Action Campaign, by the Executive Director of the Centre justice and foi in Montreal, see Elizabeth Garant, “Retreating from Justice: An Open Letter to Canadian Bishops,” The Ecumenist, Vol. 50, No. 1, (Winter 2013): 23-4.

not the poorest countries. In 2009, Bev Oda, Minister of International Cooperation at the time, cut 12 of the world’s poorest countries from CIDA’s priority list. These were replaced largely with countries in the Caribbean and Latin America, which are considered “upper middle income” and were seen by the government to be potential trading partners. A CCIC analysis of the 2012 Federal Budget shows that over the next five years Canada’s aid relative to its Gross National Income will fall from 0.34% to 0.25%. Aid to thirteen countries will be cut, including eight from Africa. Columbia, Peru, Indonesia, Vietnam and Bangladesh which have become important trading partners in recent years saw none of their aid programs cut.\(^7\)

iii) The conservative government is realigning the way that Canada delivers aid by linking International Development Goals with Canada’s economic and foreign policy interests.\(^8\) For example, CIDA has been given a new mandate to support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects of Canadian mining companies through Official Development Assistance.\(^9\) When asked whether this blurred the line between Canada’s trade policy and International Development

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\(^8\) In its 2013 Budget, the Harper government announced that it was shutting down CIDA and that its functions would be merged with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The move serves to align Canada’s development aid with Canada’s trade and foreign policy objectives. On November 7, 2013, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade released the Global Markets Action Plan which will make “economic diplomacy” the centerpiece of Canada’s foreign policy. See Duncan Cameron, “Tall Trade Tales in Harper’s New Global Markets Action Plan,” Rabble.ca, December 3, 2013. Http://rabble.ca/columnists/2013/12/tall-trade-tales-harpers-new-global-markets-action-plan (accessed December 5, 2013).

Goals, Minister Oda replied that she didn’t separate them. Critics of this approach maintain that corporate interests will take precedence over needs of the poor, and that public funds will be used to increase corporate profitability.

Critics point out that the CIDA cuts are part of a larger project: the implementation of neoliberal globalization in Canada. Neoliberalism is a powerful orthodoxy that came to prominence in the United States and Britain in the early 1980s. In the area of political economic practice, proponents of neoliberalism have promoted their vision as objective science and have given priority to the ‘invisible hand’ of the market. Critics have maintained that neoliberalism is more than an economic project. For example, Lee Cormie has argued that neoliberalism is a global project which aims at transforming not only economics, but family life, culture, politics and religion:

. . . as baptized in the agendas of the Thatcher governments and Reagan administrations

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11 Cf. “CIDA has prioritized its aid towards countries that offer the greatest potential for Canadian investment, rather than those where poverty is most prevalent,” Development and Peace, *Q & A on international development,* Tangentially related is that in 2010 CIDA introduced a new financing mechanism where international development organizations and other groups must bid on calls-for-proposals to receive funding for specific initiatives. According to Development and Peace, this process focuses on short term projects rather than long-term sustainable development. As well, it fosters competition, rather than cooperation among Canada’s international development community and has the potential to erode the networks and coalitions that have been established between Canada’s international development organizations. *Q & A on international development.*

12 There is no agreed upon definition of globalization. David Held defined globalization as “a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and the exercise of power.” David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 16. The Lutheran World Federation defined globalization as “the widening, deepening and speeding up of global interconnectedness or integration.” See Lutheran World Federation, “Engaging Economic globalization as a Communion”(Geneva, Switzerland, 2001),7. Http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DTS/Globalization_EN.pdf (accessed November 22, 2002). What is important to note is that globalization has existed for thousands of years, but the roots of its modern form began to emerge 500 years ago. In its economic and political forms, it has passed down from colonialism and imperialism, through export-led development models, to the present neoliberal structure. Critics of neoliberal globalization often use the term globalization in a different sense, e.g., they speak of “globalization from below.” For example, see Lee Cormie, “Genesis of a New World: Globalization from Above vs. Globalization from Below” in *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, ed. Gregory Baum (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 118-131.
after 1979, this project has been far more than ‘economic’. Rather, it has been ‘global’, aiming to transform the whole of society – family life, culture, politics, economy, religion – as well as the whole world, to create nothing less than a ‘new world order’ in the words of Bush the first.  

In the judgment of many critics, the global consequences of the neoliberal project have been increasing gaps between the rich and poor both across and within nations, high global unemployment, the rise of racism and the demonization of the cultural and religious Other, increased conflict and war, and ecological devastation which some have argued will lead to the extinction of the human species.

The purpose of this thesis is to respond theologically to neoliberalism. More specifically, it is a theological response to influential North American expressions of neoliberalism, as these emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the inspirations for this thesis was a call by Rosemary Ruether for theologians to challenge the neoliberal project. In her article “Global Capitalism a New Challenge to Theologians,” Ruether argued for the necessity of a new horizon within liberation theology in light of the neoliberal shifts that have taken place since the mid-1980s.

She proposed that the construction of this new vision needs to be a collaborative endeavour. New liberation theologies must take into account not only the voices of women, the Indigenous and peoples of African descent, as well as the environment, but also the voices of worldwide critics of global capitalism. For Ruether, these critics transcend the old divisions of capitalists and socialists, First World and Third World. They consist of a diversity of groups who believe that the global system of corporate power backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World

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Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), and American military supremacy, is shaping a new stage in world history that is impoverishing the majority of humans and the earth. Ruether called Christian theologians and churches to be part of this struggle.¹⁶ This thesis will provide a modest contribution to the collaborative effort of those theologians who are engaging neoliberalism in its many forms and effects, and offering alternative theologies, visions, and strategies.¹⁷ To accomplish this, I will draw on the soteriologies of Gustavo Gutierrez and Aloysius Pieris.

Gustavo Gutierrez and Aloysius Pieris are prophetic figures whose insights into the struggles for liberation have nourished two generations of Christians and others, both in the Global South and Global North, to chart hope-filled courses towards the future: Gutierrez at the Instituto Bartolome de las Casas in Peru and Pieris at the Tulana Research Centre in Sri Lanka.

Significant for the purposes of this thesis is that the soteriology of each is responding to particular oppressions within his respective colonial and neo-colonial context. Further, in their later writings each warns of some of the challenges posed by neoliberalism. For example, Gutierrez speaks of a “new phenomenon” today which is overwhelming such a huge part of humanity:

>This is what is happening today in the face of the dominance of neoliberalism, which has

¹⁶ Ibid.
been carried to power on the shoulders of an economy more and more independent of politics (and even more of ethics). This autonomy is due to something we have come to know by the somewhat barbarous term *globalization*.\(^\text{18}\)

Pieris speaks of colonialism as a “mere foreshadowing” of the new incarnation of mammon today in the form of “Absolutized Capital:”

Perhaps the need of the hour is a globalized messianism of a non-fundamentalist sort involving all persons of good will against the globalized cultural and economic invasion which this millennium has ushered in. The latter makes all former threats of colonialism a mere foreshadowing of the Attractive Beast (Rev. 13): the Money Demon or Absolutized Capital, which is about to swallow all that is beautiful and holy not only in Buddhism but in all Asian soteriologies. To conscientize its victims (the Asian poor) that they are the Lamb that is slain, from whom alone liberation can come (Rev. 14) is the new evangelical task of the Asian church. A neo-messianism fed by the finest elements in Asia’s revolutionary tradition, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, has to be unleashed against the true enemy of humanity: greed organized into principalities and powers. Such would in fact be the distinctive feature of an Asian theology of liberation. Covenanted with the other religionists, we should exploit our common religious resources for a truly globalized resistance against this global danger.\(^\text{19}\)

Pieris asserts that the distinctive imperative of an Asian theology of liberation today is to conscientize and inspire Christians to work with people of other religious traditions to offer a globalized resistance to the new neoliberal project.

Both Gutierrez and Pieris have acknowledged the part played by the church in colonialism. Each is critical of the sectarianism of the European Catholic church. Each is aware of the limitations of North-Atlantic Conservative and Liberal theologies to address colonialism in both its

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\(^{20}\) I am using Europe here more as a cultural category than a geographic location. In this sense, I am referring primarily to Western Europe and North America. The term Eurocentrism will also figure prominently in this paper. I use the word in the way that Enrique Dussel describes it. Dussel notes that Eurocentrism was first formulated at the end of the 18th century by French and English Enlightenment thinkers, and the German Romantics. Eurocentrism “reinterpreted all of world history, projecting Europe into the past and attempting to show that everything that happened before had led to Europe’s becoming, in Hegel’s words, ‘‘the end and centre of world history.’ ” For Hegel, the European state in the early nineteenth century was the embodiment of the Absolute and the highest form of civilization. Enrique Dussel, “World-System and ‘Trans’-Modernity,” trans. A Fornazzari, *Nepantla* 3.2, (2002): 222. In its more recent version, America has replaced Europe as the centre of world history and progress.
historical and contemporary forms. Gutierrez has said that theology has been written with a “white hand.” Pieris has characterized the dominant theology from the 1500s until the various theologies of liberation emerged in the early 1970s as a “theology of domination.” In an article written in 1993, Pieris judged that the Vatican’s social teaching had yet to respond theologically to the neoliberal vision. Indeed, he pointed out that enlightened Asian Christians and non-Christian partners perceived a link between Catholic social teaching (CST) and new forms of a rapacious capitalist development:

They . . . see the Roman Catholic social teaching against the background of an Asia dominated by the First World, with its developmental model linked to capitalistic technocracy and with so many virtual dictatorships maintained by the very same powers that manipulate the First World. In other words, the Catholic social teaching comes out as a prescription given but never taken seriously in the First World for a disease created in the First World and now exported to our continent.

21 The problematic nature of traditional Euro-American theologies has been a theme of many liberation theologians from the Global South for over forty years. For example, in the “Final Statement” of their inaugural meeting in Dar-es-Salaam in 1976, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), argued that “theology is not neutral” and that it is conditioned by the socio-cultural context in which it developed. The Christian churches were complicit in the colonial process. Western missionaries saw the commercial and military expansion of the West as a providential opportunity for the salvation of souls. They imported a transplanted version of Euro-American ecclesiastical structures, liturgies, spiritualities and theologies. Their theologies legitimated Western imperialism and their spiritualities emphasized heavenly rewards for earthly trials. The gospel was used to domesticate the minds and cultures of the dominated converts. Their theologies promoted the view that Christianity was superior to other religious traditions and that these had to be replaced with “the truth.” The EATWOT statement insisted that the Euro-American theology of the tri-continental colonial situation could not counter the predatory practices of the multinational corporations. It argued that both conservative and liberal versions of these theologies lacked a critical dimension, were largely academic and individualistic, adapted comfortably to capitalist domination, and were ideological allies of the local elites and middle classes. There was no fundamental alliance with the masses struggling for social justice. The “Final Statement” called for a new approach to theology:

The theologies from Europe and North America are dominant today in our churches and represent one form of cultural domination. They must be understood to have arisen out of situations related to those countries, and therefore must not be critically adopted without raising the question of their relevance in the context of our countries. Indeed, we must, in order to be faithful to the gospel and to our peoples, reflect on the realities of our own situation and interpret the word of God in relation to these realities. We reject as irrelevant an academic type of theology that is divorced from action. We are prepared for a radical break in epistemology which makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in critical reflection on the praxis of the reality of the Third world.

The statement maintained that it is only by adopting a new vision of theology, a vision committed to “integral liberation of persons and structures,” that the churches could remove the stigma of the traditions, theologies, and institutions of the colonial past. “Final Statement,” The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underside of History – Papers from the Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians, Dar es Salaam, August 5-12, 1976, eds. Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella, M.M. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), 269.


Pieris highlighted the need for a CST that could challenge the “economic miracles” that were destroying the Asian ethos of religious humanism and religious socialism that were still available in their monastic and tribal versions.24

I have three main reasons for turning to the theologies of Gutierrez and Pieris. The first has to do with the relationship between neoliberal and colonial hegemony. As a growing number of commentators point out, during the 1980s and 1990s, the architects and supporters of the neoliberal project succeeded in extending and deepening the colonial projects of the past.25

Kevin Phillips gives expression to this connection:

. . . corporations have taken the spotlight as latter-day English-speaking conquistadors – Magellans of technology, Cortéses of consumer goods, and Pizarros of entertainment – reflected the cosmopolitanizing of their profits, a cousinship to earlier Dutch and then British cosmopolitanizing of investment . . . 26

The soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris are responses to the colonial legacies in Latin America and Asia, respectively. The context of Gutierrez’ writings is the decolonial struggles in Latin America, the Cuban Revolution, the struggles against the wave of dictatorships in Latin America since 1963 in Brazil, the radical criticisms of developmentalism by proponents of dependency theory, and opposition to the rise of the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) who also targeted activists associated with the church and liberation theology. The backdrop to Pieris’ work is post

24 Ibid., 88, 89.
Independence Sri Lanka, the anti-imperialist wars in Vietnam and Cambodia, the 1971 JVP Insurrection and opposition to the “Open Economy” policy implemented by the Jayawardana government in 1977. Key themes in the works of Gutierrez and Pieris resonate with the agendas of many decolonial and postcolonial thinkers. Moreover, Gutierrez and Pieris show that many of the issues raised by these writers, activists and politicians, have theological dimensions. By studying the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris as responses to the hegemony of colonialism and developmentalism within their respective contexts, we can draw on their experiences, commitment, and creativity in responding theologically to the hegemony of the neoliberal project.

Second, Gutierrez and Pieris are intellectually situated both inside and outside modernity. Both have studied and lectured in Western institutions shaped by the scientific revolutions of the seventeenth century, the Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century, as well as the industrial revolution and the explosion of historical consciousness of the nineteenth. Yet both have chosen to live and work on the peripheries. Enrique Dussel’s understanding of “trans”-modernity is instructive here. Speaking from a Latin American perspective, Dussel makes visible and then criticizes Eurocentrism. For example, he notes that the post-modern critique does not question Eurocentrism. It assumes as inevitable that all cultures are following paths of development toward the European ideal. For Dussel “post”-modernity “is just the latest moment of Western modernity”27 and its proponents overlook the positive dimensions of excluded cultures. In contrast, “trans”-modernity affirms an “exteriority”, a “from without,” meaning that there are other cultures that interact with, but are not situated entirely within European modernity, that have until now been depreciated and undervalued by Eurocentric critics, but which are alive, resistant, creative, emerging, and growing, and together have the human

potential to give rise to a cultural plurality beyond modernity and capitalism. Many of these excluded cultures have a different internal capacity and reserve essential for humanity’s survival, e.g., capacities that value ecology and human solidarity, rather than profit alone. Two hundred years of European hegemony have not been long enough to fundamentally distort or to eradicate the “ethnico-mythical nucleus” of these excluded cultures. Dussel concludes that the “future ‘trans’-modernity will be multicultural, versatile, hybrid, postcolonial, pluralist, tolerant and democratic.” I will show that Gutierrez and Pieris represent different and overlapping expressions of the “trans”-modern. While each knows and is conversant with the Euro-American modern and postmodern ways of thinking, each is highly critical of these worlds. The soteriology of each draws on resources outside the modern and postmodern traditions, and creatively forges new paths in thinking about Christian faith.

The third reason is that each offers a vision of hope. The set-backs for the World Social Justice movement after September 11, 2001, the limits of discourse established by the mass media, and the aura of inevitability around neoliberal globalization, have generated in many people feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. Gutierrez and Pieris can teach us that the darkness of the present times needs to be taken seriously, yet at the same time people can develop the ability to see where there have been accomplishments and victories in the past, opportunities and political spaces in the present, and alternative possibilities in an open-ended future. I will show that by studying certain dimensions of their respective theologies, it is possible to learn from them and to contribute to the further development of theological debates concerning the neoliberal project, its severe limitations, and other possibilities today.

My thesis is that the soteriologies of Gustavo Gutierrez and Aloysius Pieris provide important contributions for a theological response to the neoliberal project. Specifically,
(1) they challenge the option for privilege and promote a vision of encounter and communion which expands theological discussion to embrace the voices of others, including both the religious and non-religious others;

(2) they expose the imperialistic/hegemonic dimensions of unitary allegedly universal perspectives, and reconfigure epistemic justice at the centre of every hope for truth and all social justice struggles; and

(3) they confront Eurocentric linear evolutionary understandings of history as progress, and expand the past to include multiple diverse histories and open the future to alternative hope-filled possibilities.

The overarching metaphor for the thesis is the *Journey from Babel to Pentecost*. In an address to the Peruvian Academy of the Spanish Language in Lima in 1995, Gutierrez reinterpreted the biblical story of the tower of Babel:

. . . it [Babel] is a political attempt, totalitarian in nature, to dominate people. To the extent that it is such, it is indeed an offense against God. Hence, the single language is not . . . the expression of an idyllic unity of humankind, nor must it be an ideal yearned for; instead, it must be seen as the imposition of an empire. Such language facilitates centralized power and the political yoke . . . the diversity of languages for oppressed peoples, far from being a punishment, helps protect their freedom. It prevents a totalitarian power from imposing itself with no resistance.  

For Gutierrez, Babel represented a totalitarian attempt to dominate people and impose on them a single language in order to centralize power. Moreover, in Gutierrez’ mind, Pentecost is not an anti-Babel story. It does not represent a paradigm for one universal language. Rather, the story prized the ethnic diversity in Jerusalem and celebrated, not only that those who have come from different places could hear the message of Jesus in their own words, but also their willingness to understand each other.  

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29 Ibid.
intent of the Babel-Pentecost metaphor succinctly: “Mammon erases diversity and God fosters pluriformity.” As we shall see, the journey from Babel to Pentecost involves conflict and struggle: for those in the Christian community who wish to challenge the new “neoliberal” Babel, the journey must trace, in the words of Pieris, Jesus’ double baptismal journey from the Jordan to Calvary.

The nature of the task is fourfold. The first movement is to trace several expressions of the project of neoliberal globalization as these emerged in North America beginning in the 1980s, give some examples of increasing popular resistance to neoliberal restructuring, and demonstrate ways in which the neoliberal project is theologically problematic. The second movement is to shift the geographic and temporal focus to Latin America and Asia respectively, and study how Gustavo Gutierrez and Aloysius Pieris have re-contextualized and reframed key theological debates vis-à-vis the “option for privilege,” Eurocentric universality, and linear evolutionary understandings of history as progress. The third movement is to bring Gutierrez and Pieris into conversation to show where their soteriologies provide direction for constructing theologies that can contest neoliberal hegemony. The last movement is to return to the contemporary North American context, especially the Canadian context, to discuss the implications of these conversations for contributing to the further development of theologies and movements for church renewal which challenge the neoliberal project.

It is important to underscore that the main focus of this thesis is to articulate a theological response to neoliberalism. While the thesis will demonstrate the continuing importance of liberation theology and contribute to the understanding of the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris, it is neither an attempt to evaluate these theologians within their own contexts, nor a
comparison. My point of reference is the present and how these theologians can inform theological discussions of neoliberalism in the North American context. Pieris provides direction here. He tells the story of his first meeting with Fr. Etienne Lamotte, a professor of Buddhism at Louvain University, whom Walpola Rahula called the foremost Buddhologist in Europe. Pieris wanted to consult with him about a possible thesis topic: a comparative study between Buddhism and Christianity. Lamotte responded:

No comparisons, please . . . first plunge into the Buddhist lore, unprejudiced; master its own idiom and taste its flavour and make your scholarly assessment from within its own traditions . . . Beginners with superficial knowledge are too eager to make comparisons. Resist that temptation.

Pieris remarks that Lamotte, though qualified to do so, never indulged in any comparative study between Buddhism and Christianity. In the writing of this thesis, I have tried to take Fr. Lamotte’s advice seriously.

The methodological inspiration for my approach to Pieris and Gutierrez is Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Mohanty’s

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33 Pieris, “Buddhist Honours for Christian Priests,” 3. Lamotte also encouraged Pieris to study the Theravada tradition as he believed that more scholarly work needed to be done on the Theravada commentarial tradition.

34 Lamotte’s insight that Buddhism and Christianity use two different idioms to express their core beliefs, and that it was necessary for Christians to grasp the other person’s religion on its own terms, was to have a profound influence on Pieris’ soteriology.
says that she chose the title “to stress that our most expansive and inclusive versions of feminism need to be attentive to borders while learning to transcend them.” While my discussion of Gutierrez and Pieris acknowledges the limits, similarities, and differences of the context of each, it focuses on the emancipatory possibilities of dialogues across distance and difference, and the discovery of common grounds and inspiration.

Finally, I am aware also of the danger in a thesis that seeks to focus on the way two theologians challenge three existing facets of neoliberal hegemony, namely, that in attempting to cover this vast terrain I risk being superficial. I am self-conscious of the complexity of the discussion and aware that each area needs more attention; but I also have a deep sense that each of these major facets is essential. The three facets of the neoliberal project are intertwined and condition each other. They are found in the texts of Gutierrez and Pieris. To leave any one out would be to distort.

I am writing from the perspective of a Canadian middle class Catholic white male of Northern Irish descent who has lived through the many shifts Catholicism has taken from the 1950s to the present day. As such, I am aware that I occupy a position of privilege that often limits my abilities to see the oppression of the poor, people of other races, women, and those of other faith traditions. My parents chose to emigrate to Canada rather than the United States because they did not want their children to be subject to the military draft. For most of my life I have worked as an educator in the Catholic education system in Ontario. There are three major experiences during my working life which have led to the genesis of this thesis.

36 With regard to method, in my treatment of Pieris, I have based my research on his writings which he has published in English.
The first was the initial Gulf War and the aerial bombardment of Iraq which began on January 17, 1991. Like the earlier Vietnam War and subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Gulf war made transparent what is usually opaque, namely, that in the United States the government, especially the Pentagon and State Department, controls the arms industry, oil industry, the major media networks, and foreign policy, and will mobilize massive power to annihilate people and countries that threaten its hegemony. The challenge for Canadians is finding ways to live an alternative politics, economy, culture and spirituality.

The second has to do with the Common Sense Revolution in Ontario and its incursion into the classroom in the mid-nineties. The neoliberal pattern was the same in the educational system, the public hospital system, the hydro-electric system, municipal government and corrections system: tell people the system doesn’t work; create a cash crisis; demonize particular groups, usually the poor; force through restructuring; change reporting relationships; and reduce provincial support. Successful educational practices which did not support neoliberal ideology were discredited; corporations began to write the curriculum; and major decisions revolved around improving test scores to compete with other school boards. Tragically, in the Catholic school system the majority of bureaucrats were oblivious to contradictions between the restructuring and our social teaching, and eagerly implemented the changes.

The third was an exposure trip to Peru in 1988 organized by St. Michael’s College and the Toronto School of Theology. This was the first time that I experienced the world from a North-South, rather than an East-West geopolitical perspective. I saw firsthand the effects of the Conquest. I heard new expressions that would soon become commonplace in Canada: the debt, the IMF, Structural Adjustment Programs, and belt-tightening.

What is common to each of these three experiences is neoliberalism: a neoliberal war, neoliberal
restructuring and neoliberal exploitation of the Global South. The work of this thesis emerges from my journey that began in Peru and is in continuity with my work in Catholic education. Peru allowed me to move both physically and intellectually outside modernity. I saw what “maximization of profits” and “increasing investment potential” mean for real people. In Peru I heard Gustavo Gutierrez speak about a new more biblically-based theology that united theory and practice, and reconfigured spirituality around the oppression-liberation axis rather than modern theology’s reason-faith axis. I experienced a vibrant socially committed church and attended several base Christian community meetings. It was in Peru that I experienced hope and committed myself to seeking out other theological voices from the Global South, like Aloysius Pieris.37 My hope is that the work of this thesis will be of benefit to both academics and grassroots activists.

Chapter One of the thesis identifies the constitutive dimensions of the neoliberal project and explores several expressions of this project that came to prominence in the United States and Canada beginning in the 1980s. It will identify some examples of global resistance to globalization. The Chapter will conclude by studying the problematic nature of some of the assumptions advocates of neoliberalism make about the option for privilege, the universality of Eurocentric knowledge, and the linearity of history as progress, and why these demand a theological response.

Chapter Two will explore how Gutierrez’ soteriology can be understood as a theological response to developmentalism and colonialism. I will argue that two of Gutierrez great theological achievements were to reconnect theology and history, and to establish a new epistemological framework which revolutionized theological method and opened theology to

37 Since 1996, I have organized many exposure trips for secondary school students in Eastern Ontario to the Cuernavaca Centre for Intercultural Dialogue on Development, in Cuernavaca, Mexico.
alternative voices and knowledges. I will then show how these soteriological moves enabled him to challenge the option for privilege, Eurocentric universality, and linear understandings of history as progress.

Chapter Three studies Pieris’ soteriology within the context of Sri Lanka’s colonial past, the conflicts between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, his approach to Buddhism, and the shifts that have taken place in the Asian church. It examines Pieris’ criticism of hegemonic theologies during the colonial and postcolonial periods, and his criticisms of the theology behind the Vatican’s New Evangelization project that began in the 1990s. The focus of the Chapter is Pieris’ challenge to the “option for privilege.” I will show how Pieris expands the option for the poor within the Asian context of widespread poverty and the presence of many Asian soteriologies to situate interreligious dialogue at the centre of the liberation theological project, and encourage solidarity among members of other religious and non-religious traditions to engage in their common struggle against mammon.

Chapter Four brings Gutierrez and Pieris into conversation. The Chapter explores some of the convergences, differences, challenges and unresolved issues in the soteriologies of each theologian. It begins by looking at what Gutierrez and Pieris have said about each other’s theological contributions and then proceeds to conversations about their reframing of key debates in the areas of dialogue and solidarity with the poor, epistemic justice, and history.

Chapter Five returns to the question of how the soteriologies of Gustavo Gutierrez and Aloysius Pieris can contribute to the further development of new liberation theologies and movements for renewal in the church to respond to neoliberal globalization in North America, especially in Canada.
CHAPTER 1

Neoliberalism as a Theological Challenge

1.1 Introduction
The aim of this thesis is to respond theologically to the project of neoliberal globalization. My hope is to contribute to the collaborative effort of those theologians who are challenging this ideology. I am self-consciously aware of the complexity of the neoliberal project. It is not socially homogeneous. It cannot be essentialized or read as one thing. It looks different in different countries and depends on specific alliances between the business and political elites, and these relations are in constant flux. As the focus of this thesis is theology, not political science, my discussion of neoliberalism in this Chapter will be modest. I will not trace or examine in detail the history of neoliberalism in all its different expressions; nor will I enter into debates about the impacts and consequences of neoliberalism.¹ Rather, drawing on the kinds of critical voices reflected in Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ work, I begin Chapter One with a description of some of the constitutive dimensions of the project. I will then briefly situate neoliberalism in North America, identify some of its expressions, and give examples of resistance. The final part of the Chapter examines from a theological perspective the three facets of the neoliberal project that I identified in the Introduction

¹ For a treatment of the history of neoliberalism and various expressions, see David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
1.2 The Neoliberal Project

1.2.1 A Brief Description

In her book *Another World is Possible if . . .* Susan George says neoliberal globalisation is “the latest stage of world capitalism and the political framework that helps it thrive.” She uses the set of policies known as the Washington Consensus to describe the more general components of neo-liberal globalization. George says that the principle aspects of the Washington Consensus “amount to a kind of economic and political rule-book for neoliberal globalisation.” These include: encourage competition in all areas, at all levels; keep inflation low to prevent a spiral of wage-price-wage increases; concentrate on increased trade volume and reducing tariffs; allow the free flow of capital, including short term speculative capital; reduce taxes on corporations and the rich; keep tax havens open; privatise the state’s assets; create labour market ‘flexibility’ by undermining unions and eliminating protective measures for workers; and practise ‘cost-recovery’ by charging fees for services that have traditionally been free. At the domestic level, George argues that the cornerstone of neoliberal policy is the privatization of the public sector. While neoliberals argue that privatization will improve efficiency and services to the consumer, George maintains privatization is a way of transferring money from public to private investors, as well as breaking the power of unions. At the international level, neoliberals have focused on three strategies: free trade in goods and services, the free circulation of capital, and freedom of

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2 Susan George, *Another World is Possible if . . .* (London: Verso, 2004), 11.
4 George, *Another World is Possible if . . .*, 15.
5 Ibid., 14-19.
investment. During the 1980s and 1990s neoliberalism was imposed on the South and East under the guise of Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the U.S. Treasury and the World Trade Organization. George says the ideological justification for the neoliberal strategy has been that “higher incomes for the rich and higher profits will lead to more investment, better allocation of resources and therefore more jobs and welfare for everyone.” The reality, George notes, is that the neoliberal project has diverted money from social use, has increased economic inequality both domestically and internationally, and has led to stock market bubbles and severe financial crises around the world. According to George, neoliberals usually make one of two claims to support their project: this form of globalization has improved the living conditions of the majority of the planet; or a “radiant” future is on the horizon, but it might be necessary to sacrifice the present or next generation.

Critics of the neoliberal globalization differ on whether neoliberalism is strictly an economic project, or whether it embraces the whole of society including religion, culture, family life, economics and politics. Tangentially related to this issue is that critics have divergent perspectives on the meaning of the terms neoliberalism and neoconservatism. David Harvey is an example of someone who maintains that neoliberalism is an economic rationality:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by

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7 Ibid.

8 George, Another World is Possible if . . ., 20.

9 Part of this has to do with the evolving nature of our understanding of these terms. For example, in the first edition of Dismantling a Nation Stephen McBride and John Shields used the term, neoconservative. In the second edition they replaced neoconservative with neoliberal. They said that after much criticism, they decided that neoliberalism was a more helpful term to describe the dominant political agenda in Canada regardless of whether the Progressive Conservatives or Liberals were in power. See Stephen McBride and John Shields, Dismantling a Nation: the Transition to Corporate Rule in Canada, 2nd ed. (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 12, 13.
strong private property rights, free markets and free trade.\textsuperscript{10} Harvey makes a clear distinction between neoliberals and neoconservatives. He argues, while neoconservative intellectuals supported “the neoliberal turns economically,”\textsuperscript{11} there were two important faultlines within neoliberalism to which neoconservatives readily supplied responses: the concern for order and the embrace of a higher moral purpose.\textsuperscript{12} With regard to societal order, Harvey notes that the effect of free trade, deregulation and governance by self-interest, is to weaken the bonds of social solidarity and move society toward social chaos, anarchy or nihilism. In the United States this process creates the fear, real or imagined, that the nation is threatened by enemies both at home and abroad. The neoconservative solution is the revival of militarism. With respect to morality, Harvey maintains that neoconservatives replaced economic “end-means calculation” with a particular set of values which he argues is the product of a coalition built in the 1970s between the elite class, the business interests and the ‘moral majority’ of disaffected white working class voters:

The moral values centred on cultural nationalism, moral righteousness, Christianity (of a certain evangelical sort), family values, and right-to-life issues, and an antagonism to the new social movements such as feminism, gay rights, affirmative action, and environmentalism.\textsuperscript{13}

For Harvey then, neoliberalism is an economic rationality and it is different from neoconservatism.

In the Introduction, I cited a passage from Lee Cormie who argues that neoliberalism is more than an economic project, that it is a global project which aims at transforming not only economics, but family life, culture, politics and religion.\textsuperscript{14} For Cormie, it is essential to see

\textsuperscript{10}Harvey, A Brief History, 2. Even though he understands these as different rationalities, Harvey maintains that both neoliberals and neoconservatives are driven by the same agenda, that is, corporate power.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., 50, 81-86.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 64-86.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{14}Cormie, “Re-Creating the World: Communities of Faith in the Struggles for Other Possible Worlds,” Section II
beyond the ‘economic’ dimensions of neoliberal globalization. He argues that to see neoliberal discourse as a “single unchanging doctrine, which ‘naturally’ and inevitably’ flowed from the pre-existing structural logics and historical trends,” is to render invisible key dimensions of the history of neoliberal strategies and discourses.\(^{15}\) From the start the neoliberal project has been a “coalition” of people with diverse perspectives on economics, politics, culture, morality and religion. Cormie maintains that they forged a coalition of ‘born-again’ liberals and ‘born-again’ conservatives with “a reformulated faith assimilating the God of traditional Christianity to the God of the market, free trade and empire.”\(^{16}\) Religion and morality were central to the neoliberal project from the beginning. Cormie notes that key spokespeople for the neoliberal coalition in the United States claimed their project was grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition. For example, Michael Novak insisted that the Bible was central to the construction of American capitalist society. Irving Kristol maintained that capitalism was built on the foundation of Judeo-Christian values. Coalitions of conservative and fundamentalist Christians forged a religious movement to target progressive Christians and liberation theologies, and to take over the Republican Party. They constructed an apocalyptic framework, using imagery such as “evil empire” and “axis of evil,” to reinterpret the changing world and to mobilize support for the new agenda.\(^{17}\) Certain proponents of the neoliberal project announced the dawning of “a new golden era” that holds the possibilities of boundless and unimaginable progress.\(^{18}\) For Cormie, the neoliberal project goes far beyond the economic, and the new movement brings together a diverse group of converted liberals and converted conservatives.\(^{19}\)

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
\(^{16}\) Ibid.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Ibid. See also Cormie, “Genesis of a New World: Globalization from Above vs. Globalization from Below” 22-3.
\(^{19}\) Cormie, “Re-Creating the World: Communities of Faith in the Struggles for Other Possible Worlds.” Irving Kristol has noted the neoconservative movement had its origins “among disillusioned liberal intellectuals in the 1970s.” See Irving Kristol, “The Neoconservative Persuasion,” in The Neocon Reader, ed. Irwin Stelzer (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 33-37. See also Duggan, The Twilight of Equality 9. Francis Fukuyama has argued that by the
There are several important consequences of reducing the understanding of the neoliberal project to the economic. I will identify three. First, as noted by Cormie, the separation of the economic from the political/cultural/religious renders invisible the political strategies, shifting coalitions and maneuverings by neoliberals to extend their power and privilege, and to promote their favoured image of social order and direction of historical change. The second consequence is that this separation gives credibility to the idea promoted by many neoliberals that economic policy is a matter of neutral objective science with its own universal laws. In a paper which explores the relationship between neoliberalism and earlier modernisation theories, John Brohman explains:

. . . economic growth and development have been transformed in the neoclassical literature into ‘scientific’ concepts that are products of ‘rational discourse’ and are thus universal in scope and not bound by historical or cultural conditions.20

By claiming their project as ‘scientific’ and not the result of design, neoliberals have been able to promote their agenda as universally inevitable. Susan George has underscored the importance of seeing through and challenging the seeming inevitability promoted by many neoliberals:

They have built this highly efficient ideological cadre because they understand what the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci was talking about when he developed the concept of cultural hegemony. If you can occupy peoples' heads, their hearts and their hands will follow . . . they have made neo-liberalism seem as if it were the natural and normal condition of humankind. No matter how many disasters of all kinds the neo-liberal system has visibly created, no matter what financial crises it may engender, no matter how many losers and outcasts it may create, it is still made to seem inevitable, like an act of God, the only possible economic and social order available to us . . . neoliberalism is not the natural human condition, it is not supernatural, it can be challenged and replaced because its own failures will require this.21

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21 Susan George, “A Short History of Neoliberalism.”
Culture, politics and religion are central to the neoliberal project, and recognizing this enables us to see through neoliberal claims about the scientific and inevitable nature of the project.

The third consequence of reducing neoliberalism to an economic project is that it contributes to blindness on the part of the progressive left. Like Cormie, Lisa Duggan argues that neoliberalism has a complex shifting cultural politics that the progressive social movements must understand to constitute an effective opposition:

Because neoliberalism is not a unitary ‘system,’ but a complex, contradictory cultural and political project created within specific institutions, with an agenda for reshaping the everyday life of contemporary global capitalism, analyses of its recent history and hopefully future demise must be diverse, contingent, flexibly attuned to historical change, and open to constant debate and revision. Neoliberal politics must be understood in relation to coexisting, conflicting shifting relations of power along multiple lines of difference and hierarchy. Developing analyses of neoliberalism must ask how the many local alliances, cultural projects, nationalist agendas, and economic policies work together, unevenly and often unpredictably, rife with conflict and contradictions, to redistribute the world’s resources upward.  

Duggan maintains that rhetorically neoliberals separate economic/class politics from identity/cultural politics; in reality, proponents of neoliberalism promote their agenda through cultural and identity politics. She notes that since the 1980s progressive left activism in the United States has been undermined by a split between those who emphasize economics, wealth distribution and corporate dominance, and those who emphasize political and cultural equality. As long as this split continues, Duggan argues, opposition to the neoliberal project will defeat itself. Resistance requires a different opposition:

A sustainable opposition would need to connect culture, politics and economics; identity politics and class politics; universalist rhetoric and particular issues and interests; intellectual and material resources.

For Duggan, insisting that neoliberalism is solely an economic project leads to a fissure between class and identity politics. To challenge neoliberalism successfully necessitates recognizing the

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22 Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality*, 70, 71.
23 Ibid., 41.
broader political, cultural, moral and religious dimensions of the neoliberal project.

1.2.2 Some North American Expressions of Neoliberalism

In North America, the first elected government to implement neoliberal policies was the Reagan administration in the United States. Reagan was elected in 1980 and reappointed Paul Volcker to the chair of the Federal Reserve Bank. In 1979 under President Carter, Volcker had abandoned the government’s commitment to the New Deal and embraced monetarism. Reagan attacked labour unions and professional associations. In 1981 he sent a signal to workers by breaking the white collar Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). With unemployment at over 10% in the mid 1980s, corporations could threaten unionized workers with the transfer of companies to the Southern states with “right to work” legislation, or to Mexico or Southeast Asia. The administration reduced federal regulations on industry, the environment, health care and the workplace. Significant for the election of Reagan was the developing alliance between the Republican Party and the religious right in the United States. Jerry Falwell’s “moral majority” emerged as a political movement in 1978 and in 1980 they supported Reagan rather than Jimmy Carter who was evangelical. There are numerous examples of Reagan’s support for the conservative social agenda: a “get tough on crime” policy; the war on drugs; increased military spending; rejection of détente with the Soviets; military attacks on Lebanon, Granada, and Libya; support for General Ríos Montt in Guatemala and José Napoleón Duarte in el Salvador; and the illegal funding of the Contras in Nicaragua.

I have already referred to the Washington Consensus adopted by the World Bank and IMF in the late 1980s. Stiglitz has argued that under Reagan and Thatcher, the IMF and the World Bank had been “purged” of Keynesian influences. Initially established at the end of World War II to prevent conflict by lending countries money for reconstruction and development, and assisting
when markets failed, these institutions became “the new missionary institutions”\textsuperscript{24} to promote free-market ideology. They now lent governments money in the form of Structural Adjustment loans which allowed them to intervene in national policy. The Washington Consensus forced countries in the Global South to open their economies to multinational corporations and foreign banks, and allow foreigners to dictate decisions regarding currency, jobs, social programs, and local businesses. The consolidation in the 1990s of the “Washington Consensus” led to the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO).\textsuperscript{25} I will discuss the Washington Consensus in more detail in Section 1.4.1.

Stephen McBride and John Shields date the systematic shift to neoliberalism in Canada with the Mulroney election victory in 1984.\textsuperscript{26} The government adopted policies of privatization and deregulation, with the energy industry deregulated in 1985, finance in 1986-87, transportation in 1987, and telecommunications beginning in the late 1980s. In 1985, the government removed many restrictions on foreign investment by replacing the Foreign Investment Review Agency with Investment Canada. The Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed on January 2, 1988. Federal corporate tax rates and income tax rates for high income earners were cut in the late 1980s. In the area of labour relations, the temporary wage-control measures of the 1970s were replaced with more permanent changes to labour codes and limits to the right to strike in the 1980s. The government prioritized deficit reduction and inflation control, over job creation and maintaining social programs. The story of 1990s is one of consolidation. In 1993, although the Chretien liberals campaigned on a platform of job creation as the vehicle to reduce the deficit, the new government continued to implement neoliberal policies. The North

\textsuperscript{25} The WTO began January 1, 1995. It replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which began in 1948. Its purpose was to regulate trade between participating countries, by providing a framework for negotiating agreements and providing a dispute mechanism to ensure adherence to WTO agreements.
\textsuperscript{26} McBride and Shields, \textit{Dismantling a Nation}, 22.
American Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Mexico (NAFTA) was signed in 1994. Paul Martin’s 1995 budget slashed federal programs and transfer payments to the provinces. The cuts were deeper than anything proposed by the Mulroney government and by the end of 1998-99, government spending was its lowest in fifty years. Many provincial governments initiated programs of privatization and deregulation. The most extreme example was the implementation of the “Common-Sense Revolution” by the Harris Tories in Ontario who were elected in 1995. The impact of the implementation of neoliberal policies in Canada has included loss of jobs, the reduction of the power of unions, the dismantling of social programs, and has fractured Canada’s cultural integrity and national unity.27

Since the election of Stephen Harper, the neoliberal revolution has intensified. In 2003 while he was leader of the Alliance Party, Harper delivered a seminal speech to Civitas, a private conservative club, where he outlined his vision and strategy.28 The speech illustrates the importance of the coalitional character of the neoliberal project for Harper. Harper argues that the key was to forge a coalition of “economic conservatives” and “social conservatives.”29 Economic conservatives adhere to the values of classic liberalism such as individual freedom, and stress “private enterprise, free trade, religious toleration, limited government and the rule of law.”30 Social conservatives value social order and stress “respect for customs and traditions (religious traditions above all), voluntary association, and personal self-restraint reinforced by

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29 Harper identifies economic conservatism with “classical or enlightenment liberalism” and social conservatism with “classical or Burkean conservatism.” Ibid.

30 Ibid.
moral and legal sanctions on behaviour."  

Harper argued that in the 19th century proponents of classical liberalism and Burkean conservatism opposed one another. However, in the 20th century they came together to fight “radical socialism.” They discovered a common commitment to a set of core values. Harper noted that in the recent Canadian context, the difficulties that conservative coalitions have had was due, not so much to incompatibility vis-à-vis values, but to regional and constitutional questions. The challenge for conservatives was to “rediscover the common cause” and adjust to the realities of the post Cold War world. Harper underscored that it was important for conservatives to understand that as an economic program, socialism was “dead.” Neoliberals had essentially triumphed in the public debates over economic policy. The real battleground now was the social agenda:

There is, of course, much more to be done in economic policy. We do need deeper and broader tax cuts, further reductions in debt, further deregulation and privatization, and especially the elimination of corporate subsidies and industrial-development schemes. In large measure, however, the public arguments for doing so have already been won . . . The truth of the matter is that the real agenda and the defining issues have shifted from economic issues to social values, so conservatives must do the same.

According to Harper the key social issues include public-policy questions, such as foreign affairs and defense, criminal justice and corrections, family and child care, and healthcare and social services. Harper argued that the Left had moved beyond moral relativism and embraced nihilism. The reality was that many harbor a deep hatred for the values of Western civilization.

Conservatives need to reassess our understanding of the modern Left. It has moved beyond old socialist morality or even moral relativism to something much darker. It has become a moral nihilism - the rejection of any tradition or convention of morality, a post-Marxism with deep resentments, even hatreds of the norms of free and democratic

31 Ibid.
32 Harper identifies these:
Both groups favoured private property, small government and reliance on civil society rather than the state to resolve social dilemmas and to create social process. Domestically, both groups resisted those who stood for public ownership, government interventionism, egalitarian redistribution and state sponsorship of secular humanist values. Internationally, they stood unequivocally against external enemies - fascism, communism and socialist totalitarianism in all its forms. Ibid.
33 Ibid.
western civilization.³⁴

He cited as an example, the refusal of the federal Liberals to participate in George W. Bush’s ‘coalition of the willing’ in Iraq. Harper concluded that the new conservative coalition must be driven by conservative ideas. Policy issues needed to be chosen carefully. They should attract adherents of Christian denominations and other faiths by avoiding denominational issues. They needed to attract members of immigrant and ethnic communities by appealing to traditional values and views of the family.

With some good fortune and his considerable political skills, Harper has been able to forge a ‘neoliberal’ coalition, mainly from Alberta and Ontario, of economic and social conservatives. Since 2006, he has won three consecutive elections, the last on May 2, 2011 with a majority of parliamentary seats.³⁵

1.3 Some Examples of North American Participation in Global Resistance to the Neoliberal Project

Responding to the neoliberal project is difficult. The challenge is that during the time it takes to construct a response to a particular aspect of neoliberalism, the global terrain –political, economic, social, personal, and religious –has shifted which demands further and different responses. Another issue concerns the remarkable ability of neoliberals to absorb criticism. The power of corporations and their connections with governments, media, and certain NGOs, means that there are deep rooted structures in place which continue to perpetrate the system that is

³⁴ Ibid.
creating the problems.\textsuperscript{36} One consequence is that those resisting neoliberal globalization cannot rely on the mindset that created the problems to solve the problems. Since the mid 1990s, there has emerged a diversity of global opposition to the neoliberal project which has employed different imaginations. There have been large demonstrations at world meetings of G-8 leaders, the IMF, World Bank, WTO and Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summits.\textsuperscript{37} In expanding the gaps between rich and poor, and intensifying insecurity for the majorities, some have argued that the neoliberal project set the stage for the Arab Spring.\textsuperscript{38} The Occupy Wall Street Movement erupted in Liberty Square in Manhattan’s Financial District on September 17, 2011, to protest Wall Street’s role in bringing about the financial collapse of the United States in 2008 and the subsequent global recession.\textsuperscript{39} More recently, there have been widespread protests in Europe against the austerity measures implemented by governments to deal with the 2010 European debt crisis.\textsuperscript{40}

Opposition to facets of the neoliberal project by grassroots activists has a history of over thirty years in Canada. The highly visible and organized protests in Quebec City in 2001 and Toronto in 2010 would not have been possible without a diversity of earlier struggles. For example, in the late 1980s and early 1990s environmentalists and Indigenous engaged in direct action to protect old growth forests in Temagami, Ontario and Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia. In Oka in

\textsuperscript{36} For example, in her November 16, 2011 speech to members of the Occupy Movement at the People’s University in Washington Square Park, Arundhati Roy underscored the point that neoliberals can be the government, the flag bearers, the media, the NGOs, the resisters and the oppressors, all at the same time. Http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sZrlC9NwM (accessed March 15, 2012)

\textsuperscript{37} Protests have occurred in many places around the world, including Seattle (1999), Prague (2000), Washington (2000), Quebec (2001), Genoa (2001), Cancun (2003), London (2009), and Toronto (2010). Most activists would reject the label “anti-globalization” because many advocate for a different type of globalization.


\textsuperscript{39} The Occupy Wall Street Movement (OWS) was inspired by Kalle Lasn and Micah White of the Canadian magazine Adbusters, and the tactics used in the Arab Spring. See the OWS website: Http://occupywallstreet.net/ (accessed June 11, 2012).

\textsuperscript{40} On May 15, 2011, the Spanish grassroots protest movement called Los Indignados or 15-M began ongoing protests. The movement spread to other European countries: Greece, Ireland, the UK, Italy, France and Portugal.
1990, the Mohawk people organized an armed standoff against that Canadian government over
the plan to expand a golf course and residential development on ancestral lands. The Canadian
Labour Movement has been involved in opposition campaigns and coalition building with other
movements since the 1993 provincial “restraint program” in British Columbia through the free
trade agreements, and including the “Days of Action” against the Conservative government of
Ontario that began in 1995. The global “World March of Women” had its origins and inspiration
in the May 26, 1995 “Bread and Roses March” by the Fédération des femmes du Québec.
University students have challenged the corporate incursion into the classroom and launched
anti-sweat shop campaigns. In 1997 students protested at the APEC summit at the campus of the
University of British Columbia focusing on the human rights records of some of the leaders
attending.41

Carroll and Little describe these actions as taking place in that “ambiguous space between the
local, the national and the global.”42 They argue that during the 1980s and 1990s the resistance
movements in Canada became more organized, built coalitions at the local, national and
international levels, and increasingly focused on the struggle against corporate capitalism. For
example, in the 1980s the “Pro-Canada Network” brought together a coalition of labour and
community groups to fight the FTA. In the campaign against NAFTA, the group renamed itself
the “Action Canada Network” and expanded its networks to include cross border coalitions such
as the “Common Frontiers.” In 1999 they further internationalized with the founding of the
“Hemispheric Social Alliance.” The “Council of Canadians” which began as a liberal-nationalist
movement to oppose the FTA reinvented itself in the 1990s around the implementation of a
“Citizens’ Agenda” in opposition to the corporate agenda. The Council played a central role in

41 The summit included the Indonesian dictator Suharto.
the defeat of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) at the OECD in 1998. In this section I will highlight two particularly influential examples of resistance: the EZLN in Chiapas and the World Social Forum. Canadians have participated in the Encuentros organized by the Zapatistas and in the meetings of the World Social Forum. I will note one successful recent example of resistance in Canada, the victory for the Quebec students over the Charest government in 2012. I will then illustrate several examples of opposition to the neoliberal project from the Christian churches.

Chiapas is well known today for the uprising by the EZLN, the Zapatista National Liberation Army, on January 1, 1994, the eve of the signing of NAFTA. In 1992 Mexico’s President Carlos Salinas modified Article 27 of the constitution to end Mexico’s commitment to land reforms, as well as ending the Ejido system of communal ownership of Indigenous lands. In a Pastoral Letter issued during Lent in 1994, called “Lessons of the Zapatista Uprising,” Bishop Samuel Ruiz described the logic of the Zapatistas:

The reasoning of the indigenous peasants is very simple: if the poor people of Chiapas made no progress with their demands in the period in which the popular or populist principles of the Mexican Revolution were dominant, what can they expect now that the legal framework openly favours the possessors of money? The despair that came over them made a deep impact on their existence.

The Zapatistas’ vision of non-hierarchical decision-making, decentralized organizing, deep community democracy, and autonomous space, has been an inspiration to many in the non-Indigenous world. In 1996, the EZLN held the first of several Encuentros for Humanity and

43 Janet Conway argues that one of the important legacies of the global anti-free trade movement in Canada was a new critical vocabulary on economic restructuring which led to a new kind of politics: It helped activists across movements link austerity/antideficit politics, cutbacks to social programs, deregulation of labour and environmental practices, privatization and growing gaps in wealth and incomes to the SAPs that had been under way in the South since the early 1980s. It enabled new kinds of integrative politics and new kinds of coalitions.


Against Neo-Liberalism. Over three thousand activists travelled to Chiapas to attend. Naomi Klein notes that many who participated went on to assume leadership positions in the Alter-globalization and World Social Justice Movements.45

The Word Social Forum (WSF) is made up of many activists from around the world, representing many constituencies and struggling with a diversity of issues. The WSF was initiated in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2001, as a challenge to the World Economic Forum held each year in Davos Switzerland. It has hosted annual gatherings in Brazil (2001, 2002, 2003, 2005), Mumbai (2004), Nairobi (2007), Belem (2009), Dakar (2011), Tunis (2013) and polycentric meetings in Caracas, Venezuela, Bamako, Mali, and Karachi, Pakistan (2006), and in 35 locations around the world (2010). Semi-annual ‘world’ gatherings have been held since 2007, along with numerous local, regional and thematic forums around the world. In its second gathering the WSF adopted the motto, *Another World Is Possible.* For Boaventura de Sousa Santos, there is a utopian dimension to the WSF that consists in “affirming the possibility of a counter-hegemonic globalizations.”46 He says it helps to understand the uniqueness of the WSF by describing what it is not: it is not an event, not a party, not a scholarly conference, not an NGO, and not one more social movement. Ethics is central. There is a Charter of Principles. It maintains a consensus on non-violence. De Sousa Santos affirms that the WSF celebrates diversity and pluralism, experimentalism and radical democracy. It provides an open, but not neutral space, to allow individuals, organizations and movements to come together to listen to one another’s stories and experiences, to share ideas and analyses, to discuss possible courses of

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action, and to become linked together to challenge the neoliberal project.47

The strike by students in Quebec started on February 13, 2012 and by March 22 over 310,000 students were supporting the walkout. Initially it started over the Charest government’s plan to raise university tuition $1625 over five years. But as the CLASSE Manifesto makes clear, the initial strike grew into a “people’s struggle.”48 The students were supported by many Quebecers. In their Manifesto, students called for “shared, participatory democracy” and challenged the neoliberal project:

“This is the meaning of our vision, and the essence of our strike: it is a shared, collective action whose scope lies well beyond student interests. We are daring to call for a different world, one far removed from the blind submission our present commodity-based system requires. Individuals, nature, our public services, these are being seen as commodities: the same tiny elite is busy selling everything that belongs to us . . . In providing everyone with the resources they need to develop their full capacities, we will succeed in creating a society where decision-making and the ways in which we organize our lives with one another are shared . . . History has shown us eloquently that if we choose hope, solidarity, and equality, we must not beg for them: we must take them.49

In response the Charest government passed Law 12, a piece of law and order legislation which severely limited the right to protest. Premier Charest called an election claiming that the “silent majority” supported him against the students. On September 4, 2012, the Quebec Liberals lost the election. Premier Charest even lost his own seat and subsequently resigned as party leader.

There has been active resistance to the project of neoliberal globalization from peoples of all the world’s major religious traditions.50 Within the Christian tradition, churches have refined their social teachings, have set up offices, coalitions and networks to encourage reflection and action,

48 CLASSE stands for the Coalition Large de l’Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante. It was formed in 2011 and took the leading role in challenging the proposed fee hikes.
50 For examples of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Aboriginal resistance to the neoliberal project, see Cormie “Re-Creating the World: Communities of Faith in the Struggles for Other Possible Worlds.”
and have fostered ecumenical initiatives both nationally and internationally. For example, in 1987 before the signing of the FTA between Canada and the United States, the Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops released “Free Trade: At what Cost? Ethical Choices and Political Challenges,” which outlined a process for becoming “actively involved in raising ethical questions concerning the economic, social and political implications of bilateral free trade.” The document provided frameworks and resources for individuals and groups to engage in social analysis, ethical reflections, and pastoral strategies. This document had been preceded by “Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis” released by the Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Catholic Bishops on New Year’s Day 1983. The Bishops maintained that “the present recession appears to be symptomatic of a much larger structural crisis in the international system of capitalism.” They warned of a “deepening moral crisis” which was most clearly revealed in the growing gap between rich and poor, both nationally and internationally. They called for a “reordering of values and priorities in our economic life.”

52 Social Affairs Commission, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis.” (Ottawa: CCCB Publications, 1983). Reproduced in E. F. Sheridan, Do Justice: The Social Teaching of the Canadian Catholic Bishops (1945-1986), (Toronto and Sherbrooke: Editions Paulines & The Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, 1987), 402. “Ethical Reflections” did not use the term ‘neoliberal globalization,’ but from the vantage point of 2013, the bishops were addressing the early effects of globalizing liberal economic policies in Canada. The document was published at a time of high unemployment and inflation. 1.5 million people were out of work, and the government’s focus was to fight inflation rather than unemployment. Influenced by the Latin American bishops and John Paul II’s Laborem Exercens, the Bishops’ approach was guided by the preferential option for the poor and the dignity of labour. They criticized the priority that was given to capital over labour. This had facilitated capital flight, lower taxes on the wealthy, poorer wages and working conditions, unemployment, and lax environmental standards. They challenged the prevailing economic model of development that they claimed was capital intensive, energy intensive, foreign controlled, and export oriented. Instead they advocated for “socially useful forms of production; labour-intensive industries; the use of appropriate forms of technology; self-reliant models of economic development; community ownership and control of industries; new forms of worker management and ownership; and greater use of the renewable energy sources in industrial production.” Sheridan, Do Justice, 406, 7.
53 Ibid., 405. Joe Gunn, a past director of the Office of Social Affairs at the CCCB described the public reaction to the document:

Within the first week, 18 editorials debated its contents (11 in favour, 6 opposed), 16 public affairs programs on radio dissected it, and 23 columnists wrote commentaries. The statement received
A second example of resistance from the Christian community is the *Processus Confessionis* from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). At its 23rd General Council, held in August, 1997 in Debrecen, Hungary, WARC called for a “committed Process of Recognition, Education, Confession and Action regarding Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction.” WARC is a fellowship of 75 million reformed Christians in 216 churches. Participating churches were encouraged to learn about and analyze economic processes, adopt lifestyles that rejected materialism and consumerism, formulate a confession of beliefs about economics that was consistent with the gospel, and act in solidarity with the victims of injustice. After a series of international consultations WARC concluded in 2004:

Speaking from our Reformed tradition and having read the signs of the times, the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed churches affirms that global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians. We believe that the integrity of our faith is a stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization and there we confess before God and one another.

The *Processus Confessionis* elevated the church’s position on economic issues to the level of faith commitment.

The third example comes from the World Council of Churches (WCC). The WCC brings together 349 churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world. This represents more than 560 million Christians, most of the world’s Orthodox churches, and many Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed

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international coverage in The New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Time and Newsweek. In the days before fax and electronic mail, over 200,000 copies were sold and the text was eventually translated into seven languages.


churches. In 1998 at their 8th Assembly in Harare, the WCC initiated the Alternative Globalization Addressing People and the Earth Process (AGAPE). After 7 years of study and consultation with Christian communities around the world, the process concluded in 2006 in Porto Alegre at the 9th Assembly. The theme was “God, in your Grace, Transform,” and it focused on alternatives to economic globalization.

The fourth example is the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The LWF is a global communion of 143 churches representing 70.5 million Christians in 79 countries. Inspired by the Ecumenical Jubilee 2000 debt relief campaign, and the initiatives of the WCC and WARC, the LWF released a paper titled “Engaging Economic Globalization as a Communion” to reflect on economic globalization and discern how the church was to respond in light of the faith it confesses. At its 10th Assembly in 2003 the LWF characterized neoliberal economic globalization as a “false ideology” which excluded those without property, ruined cultural diversity, undermined democracy and is destroying the earth.

A final example of church-based resistance to the neoliberal project was the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative (CEJI) launched on September 28, 1998. It was the Canadian expression of the global Jubilee 2000 debt cancellation campaign and consisted of a joint effort of over 30 Canadian churches, ecumenical coalitions and other faith-based organizations. In the bible Jubilee calls for conversion, reconciliation and for restoring right relationships on the personal, societal and ecological levels. CEJI proposed that the occasion of the new millennium provided the opportunity for renewal and a new beginning for the churches. Over three years CEJI explored the implications of the three Jubilee themes for the 21st century. By May 11,

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56 Lutheran world Federation, “Engaging Economic Globalization as a Communion.”
57 The Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, A New Beginning: A Call for Jubilee (Toronto, On: Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, 1999). For a discussion of the centrality of theology to CEJI’s vision and practice, see
1999, when the Jubilee 2000 Petition was presented in Ottawa to the Canadian government, there were over 616,000 signatures.\textsuperscript{58} By the time the G-7 Summit met in Cologne, Germany, in June 1999, over 17 million signatures from around the world had been gathered.\textsuperscript{59}

1.4 Three Facets of Neoliberalism Studied from Below and Considered Theologically

In the Introduction I noted that neoliberal projects extend and deepen colonial projects of the past. A central assumption of this paper is that neoliberalism shares many of the Eurocentric biases inherent in early modernisation theories such as developmentalism, and thus is susceptible to many of the same criticisms that have been directed toward these ideologies. I agree with John Brohman’s assertion:

Neoliberalism is often depicted in the development literature as a new innovative strategy which should be contrasted with the discredited frameworks, such as modernisation theory and other Keynesian approaches, that dominated main-stream development studies during the early postwar period. However, an analysis of the modernisation and neoliberal development frameworks reveals a number of common problems, including those associated with universalistic models, Eurocentrism and ideological biases. In the end, these shortcomings leave neoliberalism prone to many of the same criticisms that have plagued modernisation theory . . . \textsuperscript{60}

Each of the three facets of neoliberalism included in my thesis embraces Eurocentric biases. The connection between the Eurocentric and ideological biases inherent in modernisation theories such as developmentalism and the later neoliberal project, supports using Gutierrez and Pieris as helpful dialogue partners. I have indicated that Gutierrez and Pieris formulated their soteriologies when the developmentalist framework was dominant in the North America and Western Europe.


\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} Brohman, “Universalism, Eurocentrism, and Ideological Bias in Development Studies: from Modernisation to Neoliberalism,” 137.
Exploring how they challenged the Eurocentric and ideological biases in developmentalism will bear fruit for challenging similar biases in the neoliberal project.\(^{61}\) I will now consider each facet of my thesis from a theological perspective.

### 1.4.1 The Option for Privilege

In a 1991 speech Margaret Thatcher asserted: “It is our job to glory in inequality and see that talents and abilities are given vent and expression for the benefit of us all.”\(^{62}\) The claim is that nothing is owed to the weak, but if competition is encouraged, the achievements and successes of the very talented, best educated, well-positioned, and toughest, will flow down to all members of society. The reality of the last thirty years is that this is not the case. The neoliberal project makes an option for privilege. Privatization, lower labour standards, free trade, the free flow of capital, and the freedom of investment, have transferred wealth and power to global elites.\(^{63}\) To explore the neoliberal option for privilege, I will return to an example which I cited above which has had devastating effects of the Global South: Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS).

In their book *Faith and Credit: The World Bank’s Secular Empire*, Susan George and Fabrizio Sabelli characterized the World Bank as “the visible hand of the programme of unrestrained, free

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\(^{61}\) At this point too, I note one caution. Several commentators have argued that one of the difficulties in challenging the various dimensions of Eurocentrism is that in the process of analyzing and criticizing these, critics often employ Eurocentric premises and categories, and thus reinforce the validity of what they are criticizing. For example, Wallerstein has called this “anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism.” Wallerstein, “Eurocentrism and its Avatars,” *New Left Review* (November-December, 1997): 101. [Http://newleftreview.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/l/226/immanuel-wallerstein-eurocentrism-and-its-avatars-the-dilemmas-of-social-science](http://newleftreview.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/l/226/immanuel-wallerstein-eurocentrism-and-its-avatars-the-dilemmas-of-social-science) (accessed June 16, 2007).

See also Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-Colonialism’,” *Social Text*. No. 31/32 (1992): 84-98. [Http://www.jstor.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/466219](http://www.jstor.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/466219) (accessed December 11, 2009); and Brohman, “Universalism, Eurocentrism, and Ideological Bias in Development Studies: from Modernisation to Neoliberalism,” 123. 4. It will be important to scrutinize the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris to examine whether they have reinscribed Eurocentric categories in their criticisms of colonial hegemony.

\(^{62}\) Cited by Susan George in “A Short History of Neoliberalism.”

\(^{63}\) Helena Norberg-Hodge has argued that there are many ways that the world’s peoples subsidize the wealthy. Examples include: money spent constructing roads for long distance transport, large scale energy installations, television and telecommunications R&D money and infrastructure development, tax breaks for the corporate sector, and lower bank rates for global businesses. See Helena Norberg-Hodge, “Local Economies Would be Less Costly than a Global One” *The CCPA Monitor* (September, 2002), 24, 25.
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market capitalism.” Much of the book focused on the Bank’s Structural Adjustment Programs that were a response to the debt crisis which began in the early 1980s with the Mexican default. The authors called the Bank’s handling of the crisis and its aftermath “the development débâcle of the century.” The SAPS entrenched poverty and despair in the South. The conditions for loan restructuring included: eliminating trade and investment barriers; reducing government deficits through spending cuts; boosting foreign exchange currency through exports; servicing the debt and interest using the hard earned foreign exchange currency. George and Sabelli characterized the World Bank’s commitment to Structural Adjustment as an ideological choice which contributed to a new form of colonialism:

The imposition of structural adjustment worldwide is a profoundly ideological choice, not only because it harms nature and the poor, as the NGOs claim, but because it casts the New World Order in stone. This New World Order turns out to look uncommonly like the old one and has been instated in little over a decade without firing a shot. The only troops deployed have been the battalions of uniformed economists.

The authors noted that in 1987 under the influence of the Reagan administration the Bank underwent a major reorganization to support its structural adjustment program and free market

64 Susan George and Fabrizio Sabelli, Faith and Credit: The World Bank’s Secular Empire, (London: Penguin, 1994), 248. The Centre for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) in Washington, D.C., studied the globalized economy during this period, namely, the years of neoliberal globalization from 1980-2000 with the previous 20 years. They found the gap between the rich and poor both within and among countries had increased. Specifically, the growth in income per person had declined; progress in life expectancy had been reduced; progress in reducing infant and child mortality had declined; and progress in education and literacy has slowed. See M. Weisbrot, D. Baker, E. Kraev and J. Chen. The Scorecard on Globalization 1980-2000: Twenty Years of Diminished Progress, Center for Economic and Policy Research, Washington, D.C. (2001). CEPR’s latest study The Scorecard on Development, 1960-2010: Closing the Gap? discovered that during the past decade for the vast majority of low-and middle-income countries there was a sharp rebound to the growth rates of the 1960-1980 period. Contributing factors include the abandonment of failed neoliberal economic policies and the decline in the influence of the IMF in these countries (Latin America, Asia). The exceptions were the rich countries which still pursue neoliberal policies and where the IMF continues to play a major role (Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece). See Mark Weisbrot and Rebecca Ray, The Scorecard on Development, 1960-2010: Closing the Gap? Center for Economic and Policy Research, Washington, D.C. (2011).

65 Ibid., 80-3. George and Sabelli note that within two years of the Mexican default, thirty other major debtors representing half of all developing country debt were failing to pay their debts on schedule.

66 Ibid., 80.

67 George and Sabelli state that the standard components of adjustment packages included: “currency devaluation, trade liberalization, privatization, a reduced role for government and lower social spending, higher interest rates and severe compression of real wages.” Ibid., 58.

68 Ibid., 66.
agenda. The focus was “the single goal of universal adjustment.” George and Sabelli also emphasized that the SAPs not only privileged the wealthy in the North, they integrated ten to forty percent of a given Third World population into the consuming classes and the global market economy.

George and Sabelli argued that the Bank continued to justify its Structural Adjustment policy economically by arguing that if given the time to work, this market-based development model would enable the poor countries to eventually catch up. However, in the late 1980s and 1990s in response to increasing criticism that investment had failed to materialize, the Bank turned to a cultural/political argument: the problem was the poor themselves and the threat that they posed to the civilized world:

“Meanwhile, the poor – the barbarians – are perceived as endangering the globally integrated world – perhaps a third of humanity all told – the Bank has done so much to create. Fears of international class or religious warfare, terrorism and mass migrations which could swamp the industrialized countries are now the stuff of both the reflections of the sophisticated strategists and the bugbears of the popular imagination.”

In 1989 the Bank launched a sophisticated advertising campaign to manufacture consent that the problem was not the Bank’s poverty reduction strategy, but the governments of those countries with large populations of poor people.

This neoliberal strategy of demonizing the ‘Other’ is in continuity with earlier colonial and Eurocentric strategies for excluding and marginalizing the poor. For example, Robert Young says that “translation” is at the centre of postcolonial theory. He explains:

Under colonialism, the colonial copy becomes more powerful than the indigenous original that is devalued. It will even be claimed that the copy corrects deficiencies in the native version. The colonial language becomes culturally more powerful, devaluing the

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69 Ibid., 134.
70 Ibid., 142-61
71 Ibid., 148.
native language as it is brought into its domain, domesticated and accommodated.\textsuperscript{73}

Ramon Grosfoguel describes various “translations” that have occurred since the Conquest in the Americas that have been crucial for Western global designs:

We went from the 16th century characterization of ‘people without writing’ to the 18th and 19th century characterization of ‘people without history’, to the 20th century characterization of ‘people without development’ and more recently, to the early 21st century of ‘people without democracy’.\textsuperscript{74}

Translating and demonizing of the Other has been a common strategy in Christian history for supporting a theological option for privilege. Examples include the persecutions of the Jews, the Crusades against Islam, the various inquisitions against “heretics,” the genocides against the Indigenous of the Americas, and the Witch Hunts and murders of women in Europe and North America. Islamophobia today continues this tradition. The consequences of being translated from subjects to objects for the globally colonized go beyond colonization, racism and extermination. Many internalize the orientalist views and begin to see themselves as Other, different and inferior. For example, Musa Dube says that the colonizers did not only take the land, but also “converted black African . . . minds into white European constructs.”\textsuperscript{75}

The first facet of my thesis is that Gutierrez and Pieris challenge the option for privilege. Each has made an option for the poor. Each criticizes North Atlantic conservative and liberal


\textsuperscript{74} Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Political-Economy and Post-Colonial Studies: Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality.” At the end of his article, Grosfoguel reconfigures the assertion: “During the last 510 years of the ‘European/Euro-American Capitalist/Patriarchal Modern/Colonial World-System’ we went from the 16\textsuperscript{th} century ‘christianize or I shoot you’ to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century ‘civilize or I shoot you; to the 20\textsuperscript{th} century ‘develop or I shoot you,’ to the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century ‘neoliberalize or I shoot you,’ and to the early 21\textsuperscript{st} century ‘democratize or I shoot you’.”

\textsuperscript{75} Musa Dube, \textit{Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible} (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 19.

theologies which translate subjects into objects. Each asks theologians to reflect on how the oppressed have been silenced in our theologies. Each encourages listening and dialogue. Each asks how scholarly theologians can hear the voices of the oppressed, support them in developing their capacities to speak for themselves, and make their voices heard in the centres of political and theological power. Each challenges theologians to articulate their own criteria for theological fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and unmask racist, imperial and orientalist theological constructions which translate Jesus himself into an ahistorical right-wing idol which encourages members of various Christian churches to oppress in his name.

1.4.2 Eurocentric Universality

Lee Cormie says that “it is increasingly clear that no struggles are more important for the future of humanity –and countless other species –than the struggles over knowledge.” My focus in the area of knowledge is Eurocentric universality. The assumption that Western values are universal values forms a cornerstone of the neoliberal vision. For example, in his July 17, 2003 address to Congress, Tony Blair equated Western values with universal values:

(It is a) myth (that) our attachment to freedom is a product of our culture . . Ours are not Western values; they are the universal values of the human spirit. And anywhere, anytime people are given the chance to choose, the choice is always the same: freedom, not tyranny; democracy, not dictatorship; the rule of law, not the rule of the secret police.

Blair’s comments were made four months after the United States and Britain, and other members of “the coalition of the willing,” invaded Iraq. Brohman points out that the earlier Eurocentric “Grand theories,” such as neoclassical economics, orthodox Marxism, and Keynesianism, constructed a “totalizing vision.” which ignored diverse social formations structured around

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76 Cormie, “Beyond the End of History,” 5.
class, race, gender, religion, and language. So too, the neoliberal project assumes a Eurocentric “totalizing vision” which seeks to impose a particular form of capitalist universalism throughout the world.

Cormie notes that the “new voices” have exposed the Eurocentric character of knowledge production. For example, Grosfoguel has argued that Descartes was a major contributor to the shift toward Eurocentric universality:

"The Cartesian "ego-cogito" ("I think, therefore I am") is the foundation of modern western sciences. By producing a dualism between mind and body and between mind and nature, Descartes was able to claim non–situated, universal, omniscient divine knowledge. It is this ‘god–eye view’ that always hides its local and particular perspective under an abstract universalism. Historically, this has allowed western man (the gendered term is intentionally used here) to represent his knowledge as the only one capable of achieving a universal consciousness, and to dismiss non–Western knowledge as particularistic and, thus, unable to achieve universality."

By delinking epistemic location from the subject, certain strands in modern Western thought have produced the myth about disembodied objectivity and universal knowledge. The Columbian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gomez labels the point of view that represents itself as being without a point of view, the “hubris of zero degrees.” Donna Haraway calls this “the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere.” Boaventura de Sousa Santos speaks of “being cannibalized by false universalisms.” Descartes’ position fails to account for the fact that

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79 Cormie, “Beyond the End of History,” 5.
knowledge is always situated. A person always speaks from a particular location. Grosfoguel argues that no one escapes class, sexual orientation, gender, spirituality, language, geography and race. Ania Loomba states that writers such are Bernal, Said and Spivak, have revealed the central figure in Enlightenment discourses, the humane knowing subject, as the “white male colonialist.”

Walter Mignolo calls for epistemic delinking:

The de-colonial shift is the opening and the freedom from the thinking and the forms of living (economies-other, political theories-other), the cleansing of the Coloniality of being and of knowledge; the de-linking from the spell of the rhetoric of modernity, from its imperial imaginary articulated in the rhetoric of democracy.

For Mignolo, there is no other way out of the coloniality of power relations. To challenge universalizing categories requires finding a different epistemic “beginning.”

Recognizing the epistemic imperialism inherent in Eurocentric universality raises many questions for theology. I note two: (1) to what extent has contemporary theology disembedded and decontextualized knowledges from their lived realities and historical contexts, and thus participated in the construction of hegemonic global Eurocentric North Atlantic theological frameworks? and (2) what are the theological alternatives to these rationalized metanarratives which create false Eurocentric universalisms?

With respect to the first challenge, Eurocentric universality in theology is a form of hubris which is pervasive in many conservative and liberal North Atlantic theologies where the Christian world is identified with Europe. This is a contemporary form of sectarianism where various powerful groups promote their own knowledge and experience as the only valid reality, the only

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84 Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 60.
86 For example, in “Epistemic Disobedience and the de-Colonial Option: A Manifesto,” Mignolo returns to Guaman Puma de Ayala’s *Nueva Cronica y Buen Gobierno* (1615) and Ottobah Cugoano’s *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Humbly Submitted to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, by Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa* (1787).
possible orthodoxy, and hence normative for everyone. The result is that many peoples are separated from their own religious experiences and practices, while at the same time others in the Christian community are denied the blessings of witnessing the diverse movements of the Spirit in the world.\textsuperscript{88}

The second question asks about theological alternatives. We have seen that many postcolonial and decolonial thinkers call for epistemic de-linking from Western modes of thought. De Sousa Santos asserts that “global social justice is not possible without global cognitive justice.” Robert Young advocates a non-negotiable starting point for approaching the issue of epistemic colonialism:

Postcolonialism begins from its own knowledges . . . and starts from the premise that those in the west, both within and outside the academy, should take such other knowledges, other perspectives, as seriously as those of the west . . . The only qualification you need to start is to make sure that you are looking at the world not from above, but from below.\textsuperscript{89}

He says that this is nothing less than “a world turned upside down.”\textsuperscript{90} Donna Haraway states the matter succinctly: “‘Subjugated’ standpoints are preferred because they seem to promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world.”\textsuperscript{91} To resist the universalizing categories of modern thought requires that theology find a new epistemic beginning.

Confronting neoliberal hegemony challenges theology to abandon Eurocentric rationalisms and false universalisms, to seek ways to understand the world differently, to find new ways of reading the bible and our traditions, and to give priority to the diverse knowledges of those people whose voices have not been heard. This is an enormous task. In the words of Enrique

\textsuperscript{88} Justo Gonzalez points out that “catholicity” was the early church’s word to combat sectarianism. Catholicity means “according to the whole” and is not the same as ‘universal’ or that which is uniformly present everywhere. Justo Gonzalez, The Changing Shape of Church History (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2002), 63-79.

\textsuperscript{89} Young, Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction, 20.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 114.

\textsuperscript{91} Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” 584.
Dussel this project “will not just be one chapter in the history of theology, but it will require a complete and total re-reading of the whole of theology.” The second facet of my thesis is that Gutierrez and Pieris provide us with the resources to challenge the hegemonic dimensions of allegedly universal perspectives and locate epistemic justice at the centre of theology.

1.4.3 History as Evolutionary Linear Progress

Francis Fukuyama wrote his well-known paper “The End of History” in the summer of 1989, just before the fall of the Berlin Wall. He presented a reinterpretation of Hegel who understood history in evolutionary, progressive, scientific, inevitable and Eurocentric categories.

Fukuyama argued that the end of the Cold War was not just a passing phase in human history, but was further evidence of the end of humankind’s ideological evolution and signaled the end of history as such. Western liberal democracy, with its values of freedom and equality, combined with free markets, had triumphed over socialist and Marxist inspired movements, and constituted “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and . . . final form of human government.”

For Fukuyama, these values that were symbolized in the French and American Revolutions cannot be improved upon, and though they may not yet have been universalized, human societies and cultures throughout the world are evolving towards them.

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93 In Hegel’s thought, the Platonic idea of time as the moving image of eternity was replaced with the idea of history as an inevitable evolutionary process in which the events of life took place. Hegel articulated a way of understanding history teleologically. The dialectic of history reflected the conceptually necessary stages of the unfolding of spirit. Humans in earlier stages of history could not fully grasp the plan of spirit as philosophers now can. Those who lived in patriarchal tribal societies outside the state were either on the margins of history or belonged to prehistory. The highest articulation of society was the European state. Hegel’s philosophy of history can be characterized by the following beliefs: (1) progress or the evolutionary unfolding of the spirit, (2) rational necessity, (3) universality, (4) the exaltation of the world historical individual, and (5) the European state as the embodiment of the Absolute. See G. Hegel, Reason in History, trans. Robert S. Hartman (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, The Library of Liberal Arts, 1953); Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); and Emil Fackenheim, The Religious Dimension of Hegel’s Thought. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

94 Following Alexandre Kojève’s reading of Hegel, Fukuyama says that history ended in 1806 with Napoleon’s defeat of the Prussian monarchy at the battle of Jena. For Hegel, the victory symbolized the ideals of the French Revolution which could never be improved upon. Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” The National Interest, (Summer, 1989).

In the minds of many from the Global South, linear social evolutionary understandings of history initially articulated by Hegel and reinterpreted by thinkers like Fukuyama have lent justification to past and recent colonialisms, and have legitimated the sacrifice of the lives of millions to the narratives of development, modernisation, regime change and democracy. In his article “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” Ashis Nandy offered a powerful criticism of the modern liberal view of history. He has argued that history or historical consciousness functions as a form of intellectual imperialism or dominant ideology which disenfranchises and oppresses the majority of peoples on the planet. History is a construction which supplants other approaches to the past and reduces all of the past to the historical past. It refuses to acknowledge “the possibility that history might be only one way of constructing the past and other cultures might have explored other ways.”

History “now owns the globe” and has a totalizing effect of incorporating prehistorical, primitive and prescientific “ahistorical”s into history. The frames of cultural continuity and historical progress allow for history to be constructed in evolutionary stages, often proceeding according to scientific laws. In both its Hegelian and orthodox Marxist forms, this understanding of history gives weight to certitude, reliable and valid knowledge, inevitability, and the disenchantment of nature. It promotes Eurocentrism. Further, there is a “deep collusion between ‘history’ and the modernizing narratives of citizenship, bourgeois public and private, and the nation-state.”

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96 Nandy has Hegel in mind as the intellectual force behind the liberal Enlightenment understanding of history, but he also includes Fukuyama and Marx in his critique: “Usually, however, when historians talk of the end of history, from Karl Marx to Francis Fukuyama, they have in mind the triumph of Hegelian history”. Ashis Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” *History and Theory* 34, no. 2 (1995): 52. Cf. also “the orthodox Marxist vision of history was never very distinct from that of its liberal opponents, at least not as far as the molar philosophical assumptions of its methodology went.” Ibid., 49.

97 Ibid., 52.

98 Ibid., 46.

99 Ibid., 53. “‘Europe’ remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian,’ ‘Chinese,’ ‘Kenyan,’ and so on.”

industrialization and urbanization, has contributed most to the uprooting of peoples. The global reality is that most people live in exile from their pasts, cultures, communities and traditions. In civilizations where there are many pasts, historical consciousness attacks and undermines the organizing principles of those civilizations. Nandy cites Orwell who said that those who own the past, own the present. By shaping the past in evolutionary, scientific, progressive and Eurocentric categories, history obliterates multiple pasts and with these the possibilities of multiple futures. History then is really a theory of the future disguised as a theory of the past. The inevitability of progress functions as a moral apologetic to justify imperialism, colonialism and violence. “For the higher purposes of history” was the justifying ground, Nandy argues, for the killing of most of the 110 million people during the last century.

Interpreting history has presented many difficulties for modern theology. There are conservative perspectives which have stressed that salvation was the saving of souls and that this belonged properly to the evangelizing mission of the church, whereas the realm of history was the domain of governments, social classes and ordinary citizens. Thus, there are two histories: salvation history and secular history. These theologies have been criticized for underestimating the magnitude of changes occurring today, for avoiding questions about the openness of history, for

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101 Nandy offers an important criticism of history. While historical consciousness relativizes the ahistorical and might even admit that historical truths themselves are contingent, it refuses to relativize the idea of history. It denies the historicity of history. Ibid., 50.
102 Ibid., 54.
103 Ibid., 49.
104 Cf. “History allows one to identify with its secular trends and give a moral stature to the ‘inevitable’ in the future. The new justifications for violence have come from this presumed inevitability”. Ibid., 56.
105 Ibid., 65.
106 Nandy makes the important point that secular historians are quick to identify religion as a source of violence, yet render invisible the violence that has its roots in the historical worldview. Speaking of his own Indian context he says:

Secular historians assume that the past of India has been bloody and fanatic, that the Hindus and Muslims have been fighting for centuries, and that the secular state has now brought to the country a modicum of peace. They believe that the secular faiths – organized around the ideas of nation-state, scientific rationality, and development – are more tolerant and should correct that history (despite the more than 110 million persons killed in man-made violence in this century, the killing in most cases justified by secular faiths, including Baconian science and Darwinism in the case of colonialism, biology in the case of Nazism, and science and history in the case of communism). Ibid., 64.
ignoring the prophetic tradition that holds that salvation includes life in this world, and for being profoundly political in that they support the status quo.\textsuperscript{107} Modern theologies which accept liberal assumptions and focus on the great continuity of history which leads teleologically to Western modernity have been criticized for disregarding evil in history and ignoring the radical interruptions of history, the suffering of peoples, and the destruction of the planet.\textsuperscript{108} With respect to history as evolutionary linear progress, my theological focus is its determinism which undermines hope.\textsuperscript{109}

The neoliberal view that sees history in evolutionary, linear, scientific, progressive and Eurocentric categories obliterates the histories of other cultures and denies the possibility of reconfiguring the past to generate multiple hopeful possibilities for the future. It is important here to clarify the distinction between history and the past. In \textit{The Changing Shape of Church History}, Justo Gonzalez argues that the past does not change, whereas history or our interpretation of the past does change.\textsuperscript{110} Each historical perspective operates from particular assumptions and leads to alternative future possibilities. At its best, history is a dialogue in which the past not only addresses us, but allows us to put the questions arising from our shifting contexts to the past. For Gonzalez the study of history both illumines our present and announces our future. Cormie notes that over the past two hundred years our sense of history has expanded:

\begin{quote}
In the course of the last 200 years, developments in astronomy, geology, evolutionary biology, archaeology, and social history have expanded our sense of history by orders of magnitude. Our horizons of space and time now include the births of great stars and their deaths in explosions of brilliance billions of years later, and the movements of plate
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{107} See Lee Cormie, \textquotedblleft CEJI and Ecumenical Coalitions: Hope for a New Beginning in History,\textquotedblright 316. 17.
\textsuperscript{109} I agree with Gregory Baum’s assertion that Christians cannot adopt sociological perspectives and analyses which contradict the gospel by undermining human freedom in history: \textquotedblleft Christians do not accept deterministic theories; for them history remains a wrestling, a struggle, in which man’s [sic] freedom is involved and in which the novum, God’s gracious gift, remains a possibility.\textquotedblright Gregory Baum, \textit{Three Theses on Contextual Theology}, \textit{Theology and Society} (New York: Paulist Press, 1987),166, 167.
\textsuperscript{110} Gonzalez, \textit{The Changing Shape of Church History}, 1-4.
tectonics transforming the surface of the earth. They include the birth of whole species of living creatures and their extinctions, as well as the rise and fall of great civilizations. Proponents of the neoliberal project reduce the complexity of history to linear progress. The repressive conclusion of Fukuyama’s “end of history” framework is that there has been only one history which has reached its “end” in American empire.

The third facet of my thesis is that Gutierrez and Pieris provide direction for confronting linear evolutionary understandings of history as progress. They expand the past to include multiple histories and they open the future to alternate possibilities. Their soteriologies impel us to ask new questions vis-à-vis history: who tells the stories of the past? who has been silenced and written out of history? how do people of colour, women and the poor, understand the past differently from privileged white male Western academic historians? what criteria can be used to evaluate different versions of the same historical events? and which histories from the plurality of diverse histories generate hope that another world is possible?

1.5 Conclusion

In this Chapter I have described the some of the constitutive components of the neoliberal project and given examples of its implementation in Canada and the United States. I noted global and local expressions of resistance, and discussed challenges to the neoliberal project from the Christian churches. I concluded by examining three facets of the neoliberal project from a theological perspective. My argument is that neoliberalism, like developmentalism, is a new form of colonialism, and that the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris can provide contemporary theologians with the resources to construct new liberating theologies to challenge this hegemonic project. In Chapters Two and Three I will examine the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris respectively, to show how they challenge the option for privilege, Eurocentric universality and

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111 Cormie, “CEJI and Ecumenical Coalitions: Hope for a New Beginning in History,” 316.
linear evolutionary understandings of history.
CHAPTER 2

Gutierrez’ Soteriological Challenges to Developmentalism and Colonialism

2.1 Introduction

Gustavo Gutierrez was one of the architects of a major pastoral, ecclesial, theological movement in Latin America, a movement which quickly rose to international prominence and influenced many around the world, inside and outside the church. In two of his major works, Gutierrez opted for a critical discourse concerning colonialism and neocolonialism as the roots of the problems confronting Latin America. In A Theology of Liberation, published in 1971, he confronted the theory of national development called developmentalism that was influential in the United States and other Western governments in the period after World War II. A Theology of Liberation showed that developmentalism was not only politically, economically, and socially problematic, but that it raised profound theological issues. In Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ, published in 1992, the fifth centenary of the conquest of the Americas, Gutierrez studied the response of Bartolomé de las Casas to the realities of colonialism in the Americas during the sixteenth century. Gutierrez was inspired by both the theological analysis and the witness of Las Casas. One of the great achievements of the work was Gutierrez’ own theological analysis and critique of the mainstream colonial theology of the period which legitimated the Conquest, the encomienda system and the brutal treatment of the Indigenous. The focus of this Chapter is Gutierrez’ theological responses to developmentalism and to colonialism. My

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1 Referencing Medellin, Gutierrez located the principal cause of dependency in the historical forms of colonialism. These manifested themselves at the time A Theology of Liberation was written as “internal colonialism” and “external neocolonialism.” See Gustavo Gutierrez, The Power of the Poor in History, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 28. Hereafter, cited as Power
rationale is to study how Gutierrez challenges the Eurocentric biases inherent in developmentalism and colonialism in order to glean how these apply to recent developments of neoliberal globalization and reiterations of empire. I will begin Chapter 2 with a brief examination of two elements of the context at the time *A Theology of Liberation* was written: the post World War II project of developmentalism and Gutierrez’ growing awareness of the inadequacies of modern theologies to speak to the realities of Latin America. Then I will show how Gutierrez interpreted both developmentalism and colonialism to be theologically problematic. Next I will outline two great achievements of Gutierrez’ soteriology: the reconnection of theology and history, and the creation of a new epistemological framework. The last part of the Chapter will examine how he challenged privilege and universality, as well as certain dimensions of history as linear progress.

### 2.2 Some Notes on Gutierrez’ Political and Theological Context

#### 2.2.1 Developmentalism

Gutierrez, with many other Latin Americans and the UN’s Economic Commission for Latin America, maintained that Latin America in the 1950s was characterized by great optimism regarding the possibility of ending economies based on the exportation of raw materials and moving towards internal development and industrialization. The foreign policy of the United States and Western European governments was informed by theories of national development which equated development with modernisation and constructed a single model of development based on the experience of these Western powers. This view was known as developmentalism and was widely supported by both international organizations and populist movements. In his article, “The Sociology of Nation Development and Salvation History,” Lee Cormie identified three related theories of national development that had been influential since the end of World
The first was outlined in W. W. Rostow’s *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, written in 1960. Cormie noted that Rostow’s paradigm informed social scientific thinking and influenced U.S. foreign policy in the 1960s. Rostow argued that the economic, social and political growth of every nation occurred in five stages. ‘Traditional Society’ was the first stage and this was usually an agricultural or hunter/gatherer society. It was centered on the family or clan. During the second stage, ‘Pre-condition for Takeoff,’ a society made the transition from a regionally oriented commerce to a national or international orientation. This stage required the development of a centralized national state, and a new specialized elite, politicians, soldiers and intellectuals, had to replace the old elite. The stage of ‘Takeoff’ depended on the generation of capital and investment in production, the rise of manufacturing industries for goods for export and domestic consumption, and the development of political, social and institutional frameworks to support the expansion of the modern sector. The fourth stage was the ‘Drive to Modernity’ which included diversification of the industrial base, as well as infrastructure investment. This led to the final stage, the ‘Age of Mass Consumption.’ The second type of theory of development noted by Cormie concentrated on various psychological theories of modernity. These theories emphasized attributes such as individual motivation, the need for achievement, mental flexibility, or psychic mobility, in dealing with new situations. The third set of theories emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and these were evolutionary theories. Cormie argued that theorists like Spencer, Morgan, Main, Comte, Tocqueville, Durkheim, Tonnies, and Freud, all assumed that the evolution of human society was unilinear and that all societies had to develop through these universal stages. Cormie maintained that all three theories shared commonalities which suggested something of a paradigm. First, all theories assumed a single, unilinear evolutionary

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view of history and held that the endpoint of development was the modern Western state.

Second, these theories focused on individual nations in the development process and assumed that societies were autonomous units where differences were due to internal factors. Third, the three types of theories shared a certain optimism about the possibility of development throughout the world.³

Gutierrez was writing *A Theology of Liberation* at a time when many in Latin America were criticizing developmentalist policies and calling for a re-examination of basic categories and approaches. For Gutierrez, the developmentalist position was a seductive ideology that was problematic on many levels. Developmentalists ignored the root causes of poverty and refused to challenge powerful existing financial and political structures. By the end of the 60s the gap between rich and poor countries had widened.⁴ Gutierrez rejected the idea of inevitability implicit in developmentalism. He maintained that developmentalists ignored the complexities of history and that it was impossible for contemporary Latin American societies to evolve to the levels achieved by Western societies.⁵ Gutierrez agreed with proponents of dependency theory, who argued that the centre-periphery divide was not innocent, and that much of the poverty at

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³ Cormie offered several criticisms and concluded that these theories have “contributed to policies promoting exploitation, poverty, and death for millions throughout the world.” Ibid., 76. ⁴ Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 83. In the Introduction to the 1988 version of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutierrez admitted that in light of the ways in which the world economy had evolved and the particular dynamics of each Latin American country, dependency theory had become inadequate. See Gustavo Gutierrez “Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View,” *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), xxiv. Hereafter cited as “Expanding the View”. In his opening address to a conference at the Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas in June 1992 on “Liberation and Development,” Gutierrez reiterated this position. He noted six global shifts since the 1960s and 70s: the declining middle classes; the collapse of authoritarian socialism and the advent of a unipolar world; the rise of the market-driven economy; the revolution in technology; the increasing indebtedness of the poor countries; and the inflexibility of the international organizations to deal with poverty in the Global South. See Gustavo Gutierrez, “Liberation and Development: the Challenge to Theology,” *The Density of the Present: Selected Writings* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 129-31. Lee Cormie has noted that in addition to the changing character of the capitalist system, Gutierrez’ shift in perspective was also due to his insights into new modalities of oppression, especially those associated with culture, race and gender. See Lee Cormie, “Unfinished Revolutions in Latin American Liberation Theology,” (Canadian Theological Society Annual Meeting. Learned Societies Conference, Calgary, Alberta, 1994), 35. ⁵ Ibid., 84.
the peripheries was caused by exploitation by the centre:

The underdevelopment of the poor countries, as an overall social fact, appears in its true light: as the historical by-product of the development of other countries. The dynamics of the capitalist economy lead to the establishment of a center and periphery, simultaneously generating progress and growing wealth for the few and social imbalances, political tensions, and poverty for the many.⁶

Moreover, internal elites collaborated with foreign capital to exploit local workers and communities in order to enhance their own wealth and power.⁷ While developmentalists argued that history was unilinear and uniform, dependentistas emphasized that Latin American countries had different histories and that they had entered modernizing processes not as autonomous states, but as colonies of the Iberian Peninsula. Gutierrez agreed with those dependency theorists who maintained that in the 50s and 60s, Latin America was experiencing a new kind of dependence. They argued that during colonial times dependence was external, that is, it centered on enclaves such as mining, whereas with the growth of multinationals, modern dependence had become internal too.⁸ Local political elites were enlisted to support ‘investment’, to work in factories and offices, and even help to manage these at lower levels. Gutierrez warned that Latin Americans must beware of “new forms of imperialism.”⁹

I have stated that one of Gutierrez’ original contributions to this discussion was his theological reflections on developmentalism. However, before examining this, I will discuss a second dimension of Gutierrez’ context at the time A Theology of Liberation was written, namely, the limitations of modern European theologies to speak to the Latin American context.

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⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid., 85.
⁸ Ibid. For some of Gutierrez’ early reflections on the internationalization of capitalism, see Power, 83-88.
⁹ Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 27. Quoting Medellin, Gutierrez spoke of a new kind of colonialism. This included: “the hexagon of concentration of economic, financial, military, technological, commercial and alimentary power in a small clutch of countries, headed by the United States.” Gutierrez, Power, 84.
2.2.2 The Inadequacy of Modern Conservative and Liberal Theologies

Gutierrez’ criticism of dependency went beyond the political, social, and economic realms. It extended to the church and its theologians:

The majority of the Church has covertly or openly been an accomplice of the external and internal dependency of our peoples . . . The situation of dependency which pervades the continent is also present in the ecclesiastical realm. The Latin American church was born dependent and still remains in circumstances which have prevented it from developing its peculiar gifts.10

Gutierrez maintained “overcoming the colonial mentality” was one of the key tasks of the Latin American church. For four hundred years influential sectors of this church manipulated the gospel in order to justify the colonial regime. The institutional church entered into a symbiotic relationship with the state: it understood that its religious interests depended on the success of the colonial enterprise and the state needed the church to give theological justification for subjugating and plundering the Indies. For most of the 20th century the church projected an image of a wealthy institution aligned with the elite and the military. Gutierrez described this church and called for prophetic conversion:

In many places the Church contributes to creating ‘a Christian order’ and to giving a kind of sacred character to a situation which is not only alienating but is the worst kind of violence – a situation which pits the powerful against the weak. The protection which the Church receives from the social class which is the beneficiary and the defender of the prevailing capitalist society in Latin America has made the institutional Church into a part of the system and the Christian message into a part of the dominant ideology. . . Within this framework the Latin American Church must make the prophetic denunciation of every dehumanizing situation, which is contrary to fellowship, justice and liberty. At the same time it must criticize every sacralization of the oppressive structures to which the Church itself might have contributed.11

It was not until the period from 1955 until 1968 that some sectors of the official church began questioning its colonial approach. In 1955 at the First General Conference of the Latin American Bishops in Rio de Janeiro, the Bishops created the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano

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10 Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 140.
11 Ibid., 265-67.
(CELAM). In 1968 CELAM met at Medellin, in Columbia, where some of the documents called for liberation from all forms of slavery, hunger, misery, oppression and ignorance. Gutierrez noted that the CELAM Conference at Medellin represented a shift in the official church’s perspective on development and liberation. The Bishops studied Latin American reality from the perspectives of the countries on the peripheries rather than the centres. They reflected on the conflictual nature of their reality and at the same time re-discovered that Jesus’ mission was one of liberation. They reframed ‘authentic liberation’ as calling for personal conversion which would bring about social movements and structural change.\textsuperscript{12}

Gutierrez was critical of Euro-American theologies which assumed a necessary connection between Christianity and European history: “I believe that a large part of European theology thinks the only human questions are the questions posed by the modern (and European) mentality.”\textsuperscript{13} He maintained that North Atlantic theologies were inadequate to deal with the realities that confronted the church in Latin America. Gutierrez identified two fundamental theological streams, progressive or liberal, and traditional or conservative:

Theology today in Europe and North America has come to grips with this modern mentality. Its historical agent is the bourgeois middle class. For, from an exclusively economic turf in the beginning, this class moved out to the realm of the political, assumed complete power, and endeavoured to create a complex of new social relationships. Thus it is the point of departure of ‘progressive’ theology – which it explicitly and perceptively recognizes to be its conversation with the ‘modern human being’ –that distinguishes it from ‘traditional’ theology, ‘Traditional’ theology is theology still bearing the mark of the feudal world, It has stuck fast in the ancient regime and the world of classical philosophy.\textsuperscript{14}

These liberal and conservative theologies represented European and North American reactions to

\textsuperscript{12} Medellin, “Justice,” 3. For references to the Medellin conference (August 20 – September 6, 1968), see Louis M. Colomese, ed., \textit{The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council} (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1968-89). Gutierrez was a theological \textit{peritus} at the meeting and played an important role in formulating several of the most important documents, especially those on “Peace” and “Poverty.”


\textsuperscript{14} Gutierrez, \textit{Power}, 92.
modernity. Conservative sectors of Christianity argued that there was a clash between the ancient religious tradition which had once informed Western civilization and a modern culture which dispensed with religious authority. They rejected modernity and worked for the restoration of the old order. For Gutierrez the conservative position reinforced the social, economic and political \textit{status quo} and contributed to the oppression of the majority of Latin Americans. A different reaction to modernity led to the development of liberal European progressivist theology in both Protestant and Catholic forms. In the Catholic church this received its fullest official articulation at Vatican II.

Gutierrez was critical of liberal theology. For example, he pointed out that \textit{Gaudium et Spes} avoided “conflictual aspects of the political sphere,” and offered “no radical challenge to the unjust system.”\footnote{Gutierrez, \textit{A Theology of Liberation}, 172. \textit{Power}, 182.} He indicted the interlocutor of progressive theology, the bourgeois class, for oppressing and marginalizing the poor. The reality was that Western freedoms were achieved at the expense of Third World peoples. He carefully and forcefully distinguished Latin American liberation theology from progressivist liberal theology. The former was not a radical left wing version of Europeans progressivist theology:

\begin{quote}
The interlocutor of progressivist theology is the modern spirit and liberal ideology, whose agent-historical subject-is the bourgeois class . . . The theology of liberation begins from the questions asked by the poor and plundered of the world, by “those without a history,” by those who are oppressed and marginalized precisely by the interlocutor of progressivist theology . . . The modern spirit, whose subject frequently is the nonbeliever, questions the faith in a context of the meaning of religion. The critique from the standpoint of rationalism and the affirmation of the modern freedoms prefers a debate on the terrain of religion and the philosophical presuppositions of religion, together with the role of the church in modern, bourgeois society. The questions asked by the ‘nonperson,’ the ‘nonhuman,’ by contrast, have to do with the economic, the social, and the political.\footnote{Gutierrez, \textit{Power}, 212, 13. See also Gutierrez, \textit{Truth}, 106-116. Gutierrez did acknowledge that modern theology was “a necessary theology that has to meet the challenges of unbelievers and counteract the secularizing influence these challenges exert in the Christian world.” \textit{Truth}, 114.}
\end{quote}
Gutierrez argued that progressive theology sought to answer the questions of the nonbeliever, whereas liberation theology answered the questions of the nonperson. In Latin America, the rift that separated rich and poor did not centre on religion, but rather was the consequence of the oppression of the poor by the bourgeois class. It is from this commitment to the liberation of the nonpersons that Gutierrez offered his theological criticisms of developmentalism and versions of earlier colonial theology.

2.3 Developmentalist and Colonial Hegemony Theologically Considered

2.3.1 Developmentalism

At the centre of Gutierrez’ argumentation in *A Theology of Liberation* was his insight that the situation of dependency was not only an economic, social, political and cultural problem, but also a theological problem. He maintained that the term development not only gave a false picture of the conflictual realities affecting Latin America, but obscured the theological issues inherent in the developmentalist position. The term *liberation* was a richer expression to voice the aspirations of the Latin American peoples, and it allowed for a more biblical approach to the issues. In addition, the theological category of sin, both personal and structural, offered a more comprehensive lens to see the present realities more fully, and to conclude that they represented a rejection of God and neighbour. The notion of ‘structural sin’ represented an important shift in the early development of Latin American liberation theology, as it signaled a departure from the dominant individualism of liberal theologies, and static conservative notions of history without change.

Gutierrez framed the theological understanding of liberation around three reciprocally interpenetrating levels of meaning: social, political and economic liberation; the creation of a

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17 Gutierrez, *Power*, 92, 93.
new humanity and a new society; and liberation from sin. The first level, social and political liberation, aimed at eliminating the immediate causes of injustice and poverty. This dimension sought to transform societal structures which dehumanized. What was being called for was a “qualitatively different” society where the needs of the poor took precedence over the desires of the rich. The category of political liberation expanded the understanding of sin. Without this mediation of human self-creation in history, theology glossed over the conflictual aspects of the political sphere. The second dimension operated on a deeper level. The focus here was the vision of a new human being:

The liberation of our continent means more than overcoming economic, social, and political dependence. It means, in a deeper sense, to see the becoming of humankind as a process of human emancipation in history. It is to see humanity in search of a qualitatively different society in which it will be free from all servitude, in which it will be the artisan of its own destiny. It is to seek the building up of a new humanity.

The second level involves an interior liberation on the psychological dimension. It mediated between transformation at the level of dehumanizing structures and redemption from sin. The third level is liberation from sin. Gutierrez asserted that liberation from sin was a central concern of his theology. Sin was defined as “a breaking of friendship with God and others.” It was both personal and social, and could only be overcome through the gift of God’s grace. For Gutierrez “this radical liberation is the gift which Christ offers us.” Through his death and resurrection, we “passover” from sin to grace, from injustice to justice. To avoid the possibility of a dualistic understanding of liberation, Gutierrez used the classic theological distinction freedom from and freedom for. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus freed us from sin in all its dimensions and restored the possibility of freedom for full communion with others.

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18 Ibid., 37.
19 Ibid., 175.
20 For example, Gutierrez criticized the theology of Teilhard de Chardin. Ibid., 173-5.
21 Ibid., 91.
22 Gutierrez, Truth, 138.
23 Ibid., 135.
24 Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 176.
Gutierrez’ theological reflections articulate a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of human liberation than the claims about economic prosperity made by developmentalists. The latter looked at the world from the perspective of the centres. They ignored the necessity for interior liberation and liberation from sin. Even judged on its own political and economic terms, Gutierrez concluded that developmentalism was a failure.

2.3.2 Colonialism

In order to understand more deeply the struggles for liberation in which Latin Americans were involved and the paths leading to the present, Gutierrez began to ‘re-read’ Las Casas.²⁵ He said that Las Casas was one of those people who “become contemporaries of all ages,” and that his contributions included, not only his criticisms of colonization and his defense of the inhabitants of the Americas, but also his decisive insights into human rights, religious freedom, democratic institutions, and the effort to understand the ‘other’ of Western civilization.²⁶ My focus in this section is Gutierrez’ theological analysis and critique of 16th century colonial theology which supported the colonization of the Indigenous.

In Part V of Las Casas, Gutierrez sketched the historical context and provided an evaluation of the theology of the Yucay Opinion (Parecer de Yucay, 1571). The Yucay Opinion was representative of the mainstream colonial theology of the 16th century. The immediate purpose of the document was to challenge and discredit the positions adopted by Las Casas in condemning the unjust suffering of the Indigenous and the encomienda system.²⁷ The document

²⁵ Quoting the North American historian, Lewis Hanke, Gutierrez said that “Las Casas was too important to leave to the Las Casas scholars.” Gutierrez, Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ, trans. Robert Barr (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), xv.
²⁶ Ibid.
²⁷ Through the encomienda system the Spanish crown granted the encomenderos a specific number of natives. The encomenderos agreed to instruct the natives in Spanish and the Catholic faith. In return the encomenderos could impose forced labour, tributes and tithes on the Indigenous. Gutierrez said that for Las Casas the encomienda was at the heart of the colonial system in the Americas. Gutierrez, Las Casas, 287.
presented a theology to legitimate both the rights of the Spanish crown in the Indies and the rights of the *encomenderos* to exploit the wealth of the lands. The *Yucay Opinion* was commissioned by Viceroy Francisco Toledo of Peru and its focus was Peru. The document formed one strategy in Toledo’s campaign to re-establish the authority of the Spanish monarch and silence those who questioned the monarch’s rights in the Indies.²⁸ Scholars think that the author was a cousin of viceroy Toledo, a Dominican named García de Toledo. Gutierrez noted that the theology of the *Yucay Opinion* was similar to the position of Las Casas’ adversary Gines de Sepulveda and resonated with certain viewpoints of another Salamancan theologian, Francisco de Victoria. The text discussed many issues at the heart of the great theological and political controversies of the sixteenth century: the relationship between gold and the gospel, the salvation of unbelievers, the right to war, Indigenous sovereignty, the just titles of the Spanish Crown, and the *encomienda*.

The author of the *Yucay Opinion* claimed that Las Casas was the one person in all of Christendom who had falsified reality and deceived the Emperor, the Council of the Indies, *encomenderos*, bishops, friars and Spanish theologians, by arguing against the political legitimacy of Spanish rule in Peru. The author noted that he himself was once a Lascasian, but that he later became disillusioned. He concluded that the latter didn’t know the Peruvian situation, indeed that he was a poor scholar who was trained in law rather than theology. He

²⁸ Gutierrez noted that in the 1560s there was an “America crisis” in the Indies. There was social unrest, an uprising of *encomenderos*, the overthrow of the viceroy of Peru, and the founding of Huguenot colonies in Brazil and Florida. Rome had also become interested in the issue of the evangelization of the Indigenous, as evidenced in the 1568 bull *Coena Domini* of Pius V. In 1563 Dominican friars in Mexico challenged the crown’s attempt to increase the tribute on the Indigenous. They argued that the king’s rights in the Indies were dependent on the Pope and that the Pope had given the king land only for the spiritual good of the Indigenous. Las Casas had argued that the papal grant of the Indies to the king was invalid because none of the concrete conditions for the validity of the papal grant had been followed. Further, Las Casas argued that the Spanish government had the duty of restitution to the Indigenous and that this would include the restoration of the Incan empire. For Viceroy Toledo it was Las Casas and not the historical events that was the source of the problems in Peru. Toledo implemented several strategies to undercut the influence of Las Casas. He tried to recall all of Las Casas’ books. He commissioned his councilor Sarmiento de Gamboa to write an alternative history of the Indies which discredited the Incas and argued that both the war and the colonization of the Indigenous were justified. See Gutierrez, *Las Casas*, 404-19.
admitted that there were some abuses in the first years of the Spanish presence, but insisted that these were committed by subordinates and were a thing of the past. In his view, the real tyrants were the Incas, who through their brutality forfeited their sovereignty over the land. He argued the real issue was idolatry: the Indigenous of Peru were unbelievers who practised human sacrifice, cannibalism, and bestial living. And he warned that if the king of Spain were to withdraw from the Indies, the Indigenous would certainly return to their idolatrous customs.

From Gutierrez’ perspective, the author of the Yucay Opinion had presented a soteriology portraying the encomenderos as missionaries to whom the Indigenous owed their eternal salvation. Indigenous labour and lives were merely partial payments to their colonial saviours. The Yucay Opinion was set within the framework of a providential view of history in which God gave the Indies to the kings of Spain in exchange for expelling the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula and restoring the Christian faith to the land. The theological centre of the document was the mediating role that gold played in the defense and propagation of the Christian faith.

The author supported his argument with a parable about a father with two daughters:

One was very pale and fair, and modest, graceful, and charming, while the other was altogether hideous – bleary-eyed, stupid, and crude. When it came time to marry them off, there was no need of so much as giving the first girl a dowry. She only needed to be seated in a palace, where all the lords vied with one another over who would marry her. With the ugly, lazy foolish, clumsy one, there was nothing to do but give her a great dowry – many jewels, rich, sumptuous, and expensive clothing – and leave her to heaven.\(^{29}\)

In the author’s view this insight applied to the whole history of Christianity. At one time, the Europeans and the inhabitants of Asia Minor were infidels, but they were worthy and intelligent, and attractive to the apostles and evangelizers. The inhabitants of the Indies lacked these qualities. They were ugly, stupid, inept, dull and unattractive. Thus, it was necessary for God to

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 424.
provide an incentive for missionaries to come to convert the Indigenous—gold.\(^{30}\) It was the mines and their treasures which mediated salvation to the Indigenous. The equation was simple: God was present because of the king; the king was in the Indies because of the mines; without the dowry of gold there would be no soldiers or missionaries to present the gospel; were the king to leave Peru the Indigenous would be condemned to eternal damnation.

For Gutierrez, the Yucay Opinion was Eurocentric and racist, and a radical distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

One might look in vain for a more openly racist and Eurocentric affirmation. We declare the superiority of the white race and Western culture (‘we’), and our contempt for the native (these ‘others’) . . . But his idea of the gospel is even worse. Shamelessness knows no limits. Wealth attracts the gospel (which ‘spreads by leaps and bounds’). Poverty resists it and is a sign of reprobation. After all, who would want to preach the gospel to the poor? Here we have a genuine rereading of Scripture from the viewpoint of the historical and religious meaning of gold and power. The result is a crying inversion of the teaching of Jesus Christ.\(^{31}\)

Gutierrez judged that the Yucay Opinion outlined an entire political theology which stood the gospel on its head. It presented a reverse christology where gold, not Jesus Christ became the authentic mediator of God’s love. The cornerstone of its spirituality—wealth attracts the gospel; poverty repels it—was diametrically opposed to Las Casas’ assertion that Christ was present in the poor, the scourged Christs of the Indies, which was much more faithful to biblical accounts of Jesus.

Gutierrez insisted that the Yucay text “at least deserves credit” for being transparent about preaching what many in Latin America of the late 20\(^{th}\) century still practiced: gold, along with power and prestige, continued to be idols;\(^{32}\) the dominant groups persisted in manipulating and

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 425.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 425-6.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 429.
re-writing the history of the continent;\textsuperscript{33} the values of “Western Christian civilization” were defended through repression, murder, torture and imprisonment;\textsuperscript{34} and the lifestyles, values, customs, life, and liberty of the poor in Latin America continued to be destroyed.\textsuperscript{35}

Contemporary colonial theology continued to justify greed, tyranny, and the exploitation of the poor: \textsuperscript{36} the gospel was spiritualized; wars against the Indigenous population were still being baptized; \textsuperscript{37} “institutionalized violence” proceeded unchallenged;\textsuperscript{38} and the connection between salvation and justice was severed.\textsuperscript{39}

\section*{2.4 Gutierrez' Soteriological Challenges to Developmentalism and Colonialism}

My focus in this section will be to show how Gutierrez' soteriology challenges key Eurocentric biases vis-à-vis the option for privilege, Eurocentric universality, and linear understandings of history as progress. I begin by highlighting two of Gutierrez' original contributions to theology: the reconnection of theology and history, and the establishment of a new epistemological framework.

\subsection*{2.4.1 Two Necessary Soteriological Departures}

\subsubsection*{2.4.1.1 Reconnecting History and Salvation}

In challenging the linear view of history as progress, Gutierrez rejected two classical theological understandings in the Western tradition of history and salvation. The first was that of Eusebius of Caesarea. In the fourth century Eusebius, “the father of church history” and “Constantine’s court

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Ibid.} Ibid., 415.
\bibitem{Ibid.} Ibid., 105.
\bibitem{Ibid.} Ibid., 104.
\bibitem{Ibid.} Ibid., 286.
\bibitem{Ibid.} Ibid., 408.
\end{thebibliography}
bishop,” argued a Christianized version of the doctrine of material progress and set the direction for much of future historiography in the church. He laid the foundation for what was to be called the “Christendom” model, where the church joined with the empire to provide a religiously legitimated social and political order. Eusebius placed the church at the centre of power and prestige: the culmination of history was the church itself and the support it enjoyed from the Roman Empire.

Critics have pointed to several important consequences of Eusebius’ vision. The first was that it was ecclesiocentric. The church and its prestige came to be the final measure for every historical judgment. Secular history had value only in function of sacred history. Second, in Eusebius’ Platonic framework, the church was framed as a celestial, suprahistorical, immutable and spiritual reality detached from secular history. The third consequence was that the countercultural and subversive nature of early Christianity was lost. With respect to the legacy of Eusebius, Gutierrez criticized the shift resulting from the Edit of Milan in 313 CE which aligned the church with state power and gave the latter the authority in religious matters. He affirmed that this vision of history had been operative in Latin America from the time of the Conquest.

The second theological view of history that Gutierrez rejected was a dualistic understanding which saw two separate histories, the religious and the secular, moving in parallel through time.

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42 A corollary for the church was the doctrinalization of Christianity. Like the suprahistorical church, doctrines have to be immutable and unchangeable. See Gonzalez, The Changing Shape of Church History, 113.
43 Gonzalez argues against Eusebius that the real reason the church was persecuted by the Empire, was not a misunderstanding, but that the latter saw in the Christian faith much that was incompatible with the values and interests of the Empire. Ibid., 114.
44 Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 256-7.
The key proponent of this version of history was Augustine. In books XV to XVIII of *The City of God*, Augustine showed how human history could be understood as the progress of the two cities, the City of God and the earthly city, intermixed throughout history.\(^{45}\) The church was founded by Christ and was the centre of the City of God on earth. At the Last Judgment the two cities would see their final separation. The strength of Augustine’s view of history was that it safeguarded the doctrine of grace and preserved the gratuitous character of salvation through Jesus Christ. What was problematic was Augustine’s dualism: the history of the human city was separate from the history of the City of God.\(^{46}\) As a consequence, Augustine understood history to be a divine production that ended with its highpoint, the incarnation;\(^{47}\) the church was a suprahistorical reality; and there was no salvation outside the church.\(^{48}\)


\(^{46}\) For example, Justo Gonzalez concludes his discussion of *The City of God* with the following comment: “Eventually, according to Augustine, this distinction between the two cities and two loves diminishes the importance of what takes place in the earthly city, or the entire field of the temporal, for in the last analysis all that is really important is to belong to the city of God and eventually live in it.” *The Changing Shape of Church History*, 126. Ultimately for Augustine secular history was not important.

\(^{47}\) This is a debatable point in Augustinian studies. For example, Vernon Bourke explains:

> Human events become significant when we view them in the light of divine Providence. God becomes the focal point of an ultimate explanation of the human societies through time. This explanation admits of various interpretations, even within Augustinism. To some interpreters, the high point of history is the incarnation. When God became man, humanity reached its peak. All later human events are anti-climatic. A second way of interpreting the Christian view of history is the eschatological. This shifts the emphasis to the End of Time and sees humanity as in the process toward a not yet attained but ultimate condition of mankind. Such a view would see in temporal history a continuing and increasing fulfillment of the Redemption.


Against the eschatological interpretation of Augustine, I would argue the following. Out of the last twelve books of the *City of God*, where Augustine developed his understanding of history, only one book, XVIII, dealt with secular history. Augustine ended his account of the history of the *City of God* with the incarnation; he spoke of the ages of history and compared these to the stages of human development. We are in the sixth and last age which corresponds to old age and senility. In addition, there is no sense in Augustine that salvation could happen in this life. Because of his Platonism, the Jewishness of Jesus was ignored. His understanding of history did not allow him to admit the possibility of inaugurating the reign of God in human history. He would not accept the possibility that Christ’s grace might be operative in “pagans.” Pagan or natural virtues were vices.

\(^{48}\) Augustine’s exclusivist claim regarding salvation through Christ and the church was not the only view held in the early church. J. Patout Burns has shown that there was an alternative tradition to that of Augustine in the early church: the Greek Patristic Tradition which gave more emphasis to creation and the activity of the *Logos*. Burns explained:

> the Greek tradition grounds its theology in creation, respects the integrity and continuity of natural processes, and tends to be developmental in describing the economy of salvation. In the Latin tradition, however, the redemptive intervention of Christ is foundational, nature and grace are described as discontinuous, and the process of salvation is explained as interventionist but continuous.
Against Augustine, Gutierrez argued there were many destructive consequences of theological dualism. Salvation and creation were separated. The political realm was relegated to a lower plane. Sin was understood in strictly personal terms. New Testament texts were spiritualized. Jesus was placed outside of history. Faith became privatized and domesticated. Spirituality became “disincarnate,” a “flight from the world” and a form of “escapism.” Prayer life was reduced to “childish attitudes, routine, and escapes.” The Eucharist degenerated into “an experience in make-believe.” Vocation became a “very safe religious life.” The fissure between ‘love for God’ and ‘love for neighbour’ created attitudes which impoverished both. Augustine’s version of the two histories challenged Gutierrez to overcome the fissure between history and salvation, while at the same time preserving the gratuity of grace.

In *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutierrez defined salvation as “the communion of human beings with God and among themselves.” He asserted that in the incarnation the Divine became history: “In Jesus God not only reveals himself in history, he becomes history. He ‘pitches his

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49 Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 150.  
50 Ibid., 48, 49.  
51 Ibid., 225.  
52 Ibid., 48, 49 and 202, 203.  
53 Ibid., 166.  
54 Ibid., 150.  
55 Ibid., 174.  
56 Ibid., 136.  
57 Ibid., 137.  
58 Ibid., 135.  
59 Gutierrez, *Power*, 50. Gutierrez criticized Jacques Maritain’s “New Christendom” model which advocated the “distinction of planes,” where theoretically, the church and the world, each in its own way, contributed to the edification of the kingdom. The church and its clergy had two missions: “evangelization and the inspiration of the temporal sphere.” The second plane was the realm of economic and political activity where lay Catholics would work for the common good. In addition to its theological dualism, Gutierrez argued that in the Latin American context, the distinction of planes model masked oppression and was applied selectively: it was used to restrain Christians who were considered subversive to the established order and suspended to support the legitimacy of dictatorial and oppressive governments. The gospel was turned into “a harmless lapdog.” Gutierrez concluded that the distinction of planes was in reality “a burnt-out model with nothing to say to the advances in theological thinking.” *Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation*, 69-72.  
60 Ibid., 151.
tent’ in the midst of history (John 1:14).” History and salvation are not two separate realities. They are different dimensions of a single process.

Salvation in Christ gives human history as a whole its ultimate meaning and elevates it beyond itself. But for that very reason this salvation is already present in history; God’s saving action is working upon history from within.

Liberation theology had recovered the idea that salvation is “an intrahistorical reality.” The shift was from an abstract, essentialist approach to an existential, historical and concrete view of salvation. Through a scriptural reflection on the growing awareness of God’s presence—the mountain at Sinai, the Ark of the Covenant, Solomon’s Temple, Yahweh’s presence in the heavens, the Incarnation, the Spirit’s presence in the New Temple: the heart of every human being—Gutierrez affirmed both the universalization of God’s presence in the human race and the integration of this presence from dwelling places of worship to “the heart of human history.”

The profane, defined as all that exists outside the temple, no longer existed: “Since the Incarnation, humanity, every human being, history, is the living temple of God. The ‘pro-fane,’ that which is located outside the temple, no longer exists.” The implication was that history is one. Far from being an otherworldly reality, salvation embraced all aspects of existence. This was not all: Gutierrez held that salvation orients, transforms and guides history to its final fulfillment:

The reader should be clear, then, that when I reject the existence of two histories, I am saying only that in the actual order of the economy of salvation there is not a history of nature and another history of grace, a history of fellowship and another of sonship and daughterhood. Rather, the connection between grace and nature, between God’s call and the free response of human beings, is located within a single Christo-finalized history.

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61 Gutierrez, Power, 13.
62 Gutierrez, Truth, 117.
63 Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 152.
64 Ibid., 193.
65 Ibid., 194.
66 Gutierrez, Truth, 126.
History was Christo-finalized.\(^{67}\)

The story of the Exodus was paradigmatic for Gutierrez. Theologies which operated from a dualist perspective understood human work in temporal matters to be a stage prior to and separate from salvation history. Following Von Rad, Gutierrez argued that the Exodus showed that human self-creation in history was not incompatible with God’s gracious action in history. To work to transform the world placed one at the heart of the salvific process. The God of the Exodus was the God of history and political liberation. The Exodus was a re-creation where God led the Israelites from the chaos of alienation to liberation.\(^{68}\) It was open to the future. The redemptive work of Christ continued this liberating deed of Yahweh and brought it to fulfillment. The vocation of humanity was to continue Christ’s work of salvation. To work, to build human community and to transform the world were not peripheral, but central to salvation.\(^{69}\)

For Gutierrez the full significance of God’s action in history could only be understood when put within an eschatological perspective. He reinterpreted the eschatological from a focus on the “last things” divorced from history, to the driving force of a future oriented history. It was in Jesus Christ that the ultimate meaning of history was revealed: “In Jesus Christ, who is the full and unexpected fulfillment of the Father’s promise, history and eschatology are tied together, the present and the ultimate meaning of time.”\(^{70}\) There was a dialectical relationship between God’s eschatological Promise which Gutierrez believed was fulfilled in Christ and partial fulfillment of

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\(^{67}\) Gutierrez did not dwell at length on what happens at the end of history. He spoke of the ultimate end of the Kingdom, the “Lord’s parousia and that the fullness of life will not be fully realized except ‘beyond history.’” See Gustavo Gutierrez, “The Irruption of the Poor in Latin America and the Christian Communities of the Common People,” in The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities. Papers from the International Ecumenical Congress of Theology, February 20 – March 2, 1980, San Paolo, Brazil, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson 107-123. Translated by John Drury (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1981): 122; Gutierrez, Truth, 105, 145, 156.

\(^{68}\) Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 173.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 159, 60.

\(^{70}\) Gutierrez, Truth, 97.
the promises made by God throughout history. History did not end with Christ’s resurrection:

The resurrection itself is the fulfillment of something promised and likewise the anticipation of a future (cf. Acts 13:23); with it the work of Christ is ‘not yet completed, not yet concluded’; the resurrected Christ ‘is still future to himself.’ The Promise is gradually revealed in all its universality and concrete expression: it is already fulfilled in historical events, but not yet completely; it incessantly projects itself into the future, creating a permanent historical mobility.”

Christ’s coming opened history: “But far from closing history, this fact opens it to unsuspected thoroughfares. Christ is not only come, he is the one who is to come. He is the future of our history.” To be a Christian was to accept the fact that the promise “begins to be fulfilled and actualized in a historical context.” Gutierrez’ eschatology universalized and deepened the connection between God and neighbour. To love God was to do justice.

Central to Gutierrez’ understanding of history was the Kingdom of God. The in-breaking of the Kingdom was the final meaning of history and this revelation had implications for the present. Through the Spirit, Christ invited humanity into communion with God and other persons. Historical and political liberatory events enabled the growth of the Kingdom and were salvific, but it was Christ’s gift of the Kingdom which formed the condition of the possibility of history being liberating. For Gutierrez, the growth of the Kingdom was the ultimate precondition for a just society. The fundamental obstacle to the growth of the Kingdom was sin. Any effort to struggle against alienation and dehumanization was an attempt to conquer sin. Salvation included both God’s gratuitous invitation and the human beings’ free response to building the Kingdom.

For Gutierrez the openness of history grounded hope. He asserted that hope was emerging as a

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73 Ibid., 59, 60.
74 Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 177.
“new primacy.”

Earlier theology had relegated it to a short treatise in a compendium of virtues. It was the Marxist thinker, Ernest Bloch who laid the ground for a new approach to hope. Bloch maintained that hope functioned in a utopian way to mobilize human action in history. From a theological perspective, hope “liberates history because of its openness to the God who is to come.” As the new primacy, hope reinterpreted and reevaluated faith and love. Although hope was aimed at an open-ended future, it was rooted in the present, in historical praxis. Gutierrez warned against replacing “a Christianity of the Beyond with a Christianity of the Future.”

In response to Augustinian dualism, Gutierrez has reconnected history and salvation. He argued that human history was the living temple of God. Gutierrez’ eschatological perspective allowed him to hold that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of God’s promises, but that history did not end with the resurrection. History was open. Hope looked to the future, but was grounded in the present. Gutierrez preserved the gratuity of grace by affirming that salvation included both gift and task:

The grace of God is a gift, but it also sets up a task. The process by which we are saved includes both the gratuitous initiative of God and the free response of human beings. Our acceptance of the gift of adoptive filiation must find expression in the building of authentic brotherhood and sisterhood in history. Nothing is more demanding than gratuitousness, nothing calls for greater commitment.

Humans are called to respond to God’s gracious invitation by working with others to overcome sin and promote the Kingdom.

2.4.1.2 A Revolutionary Epistemological Break

A second significant achievement of Gutierrez’ theology was that he embraced a new epistemological framework which revolutionized theological methodology. Gutierrez defined
theology “a critical reflection on praxis in light of the Word.” Faith is not an intellectual ascent to propositional truth, but an existential stance that committed itself to the poor in the present historical moment. The first moment in theology is not an academic reflection on revelation, but praxis, that is, commitment to finding God in the present historical struggles. Liberating praxis “involves transformative activity that is influenced and illumined by Christian love.” It derives its meaning from following the practice of Jesus. The second moment was theological reflection. When Gutierrez said that in Latin American liberation theology, “our method is our spirituality,” he was framing theology within the broader context of Christian life and love: “contemplation and practice together constitute the first act; theologizing is the second act. First comes the mystical life and practice; only then can we have any authentic, respectful reflection about God.” Praxis implied an “epistemological break” with traditional theology. Gutierrez’ perspective rejected academic theology that was dissociated from “grassroots work.”

In *The Truth Shall Make You Free* Gutierrez clarified his theological methodology. He argued that his epistemology operated around two poles: fidelity to revelation and fidelity to the experience of the majority of the peoples in Latin America. Both the Word of God and history represented the sources of truth for Gutierrez. Like progressive European and North American theologians such as Rahner and Lonergan, Gutierrez maintained that revelation was mediated by historical experience. However, the theologies of Rahner and Lonergan were focused on the individual, as these theologians were influenced by Descartes’ and Kant’s emphasis on the ‘turn to the subject.’ From the liberation perspective, the theologies of these North Atlantic thinkers

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82 Ibid. 226.  
83 Ibid. 225.  
84 Ibid.224.  
85 Gutierrez, *Truth*, 89.
had not addressed human suffering on a massive geopolitical scale. What was missing was that this subject was connected to and implicated in a larger global reality which was constituted by poverty and human suffering. Hermeneutically central for Gutierrez was that the theologian must begin from the perspective of the nonpersons of history. In Gutierrez’ soteriology the turn to the poor replaced the turn to the subject. Christ was identified with the poor. This was a major epistemological break and it rested on theological grounds: in willing a Kingdom of life for all, God had chosen the poor as object of special favour.

Gutierrez argued that in the West today knowledge is understood as increasingly related to action. With references to Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Machiavelli, Kant, Hegel and Marx, Gutierrez affirmed that the idea of praxis had a long history in Western philosophy and that today contemporary consciousness looked for practical verification that was connected with human life. He noted that biblical knowing was more than an intellectual act. The prophetic “word” (dabar) is always an event. He gave the example of the logos of John’s Prologue: the Word became history. When the early church appropriated Greek philosophy, the complex dabar (word and event) meaning was lost and replaced with the Greek concept of universal and human reason. For Gutierrez “True orthodoxy is orthopraxis.” Citing John’s gospel, Gutierrez said that what Jesus proclaimed was a truth that must be put into practice.

This epistemological stance, beginning with the poor, taking their experiences seriously, dialoguing with their traditions and ways of thinking, and entering into solidarity, has profound theological implications. It opens insights into theology that are not possible for those

86 Gutierrez, “Theological Language: Fullness of Silence,” in The Density of the Present, 202-203
87 Gutierrez, Power, 60.
88 In Gutierrez’ epistemology the Word of God was the ultimate norm. It shaped and informed praxis. However, praxis was a critical norm. Gutierrez has said that “without action the word is susceptible to many interpretations.” See Gutierrez, Liberation and Change, 89. It was through the people of God living out their faith and hope in history that the church guarded against the misreading of scripture.
theologians operating from a Eurocentric liberal or conservative position.

2.4.2 Challenging the Option for Privilege

The first facet of my thesis is that Gutierrez and Pieris challenge the option for privilege and promote a vision of encounter and communion which expands theological discussion to embrace the voices of others. In this Chapter, I have shown that Gutierrez challenged the “institutionalized violence” integral to developmentalism, and the various colonialisms operative in Latin America since the 16th century. He argued that these hegemonic systems were theologically problematic. Developmentalists viewed the world from the perspective of the centre and ignored the deeper dimensions of oppression and the need for liberation. Gutierrez observed the colonial theology represented by the Yucay Opinion as Eurocentric, racist and idolatrous. He asserted that the official Latin American church for most of its five hundred year history sanctioned unjust political orders, and he indicted modern theologies for being inadequate in responding to the realities of Latin America. My focus in this section is how Gutierrez’ soteriology challenges the option for privilege.

It was the option for the poor which allowed Gutierrez to deconstruct privilege promoted by colonialists and developmentalists. The option has remained central throughout his writings. For example, in the early Power of the Poor in History he stated:

One must keep in mind that the God of the bible is a God who not only governs history, but who orientates it in the direction of establishment of justice and right. He is more than a provident God. He is the God who takes sides with the poor and liberates them from slavery and oppression.  

In later writings Gutierrez maintained that the option for the poor “goes to the marrow of

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89 Gustavo Gutierrez, Power, 7.
Christian life, and was a “fundamental axis” in the proclamation of the gospel, in spirituality and in theology. While many North Atlantic theologians initiated their theological reflections either by applying doctrinal principles or through the ‘turn to the subject,’ the theological centre for Gutierrez was the turn to the poor. The option marked “the dividing line between two experiences – two eras, two worlds, two languages.” The real duality was between the bourgeoisie and the bible. The option for the poor reconfigured theology from a ‘faith-reason’ to an ‘oppression-liberation’ axis and committed the church to the project of liberation. It carried an imperative to listen to new voices and dialogue across difference. It exposed the person who does not practice justice to the poor as an atheist.

Gutierrez held up Bartolomé de Las Casas as the embodiment of one who stood up to privilege and made an option for the poor. Solidarity with the poor enabled Las Casas to see reality from below, to see “as if we were Indians.”

Seeing things ‘as if we were Indians’ – that is, from the viewpoint of the race, customs, cultures, and religious practices of the Indians – makes us more sensitive to the injustice of the treatment being inflicted on the autochthonous population, as well as to the rejection of evangelical values that this violation of their rights implies.

Las Casas listened to the Indigenous and endeavoured to understand how they perceived reality. He recognized and respected that the Indigenous world was different from that of the European.

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91 Gutierrez, “The Situation and Tasks of Liberation Theology Today,” 95.
93 Gutierrez, Power, 70.
94 Ibid., 203.
95 For example, as a result of his participation in the discussions organized by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), Gutierrez told us he had come to appreciate the complexity and extent of poverty, had learned that analysis must go beyond the strictly economic to include the cultural, racial, feminist, religious, planetary and ecological dimensions, and realized that with the advent of modernity oppression has taken on a “new modality.” Gutierrez, Truth, 24.
96 Ibid., 140.
97 Gutierrez uses the term “Indian.” Living in Canada, I have chosen to use either “Indigenous” or “First Nations Peoples.”
98 Gutierrez, Las Casas, 456.
The option also allowed him to attribute value to Indigenous behaviours which from the perspective of sixteenth century European colonial theology, provoked scandal. Embracing the option led to identifying the Indigenous with the crucified Christ:

Bartolomé had another penetrating intuition. He saw in the Indian, in this ‘other,’ this one-different-from-the Westerner, the poor one of the gospel, and ultimately Christ himself. This is without doubt the very key to Lascasian spirituality and theology.

To garner privilege at the expense of the Indigenous was to oppress Christ himself.

For Gutierrez the biblically based option for the poor necessitated a political break. He maintained that it “comport[ed] a whole new political outlook” and turned “an entire social and religious order . . . upside down.” It rearranged the relation between the centre and the peripheries. It demanded that one take sides and confront theologies used by capitalist ideologies. It meant avoiding the categories and language of the oppressors. It meant condemning the suffocating theology, represented by Job’s friends, who argued the poor deserved punishment. The option allowed Gutierrez to challenge the ecclesiocentrism of theologians who supported political and ecclesiastical privilege. It empowered Gutierrez to challenge exegetes who used scientific exegesis to place the gospel at the service of the mighty. It enabled him to denounce those who spiritualized the gospel to preserve the status quo. It challenged those who attacked liberation theology by “holding aloft the banner of orthodoxy or fidelity to the magisterium.” In short, the option for the poor challenged political

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99 Ibid., 214.
100 Ibid., 456.
101 Gutierrez, Liberation and Change, 75.
102 Gutierrez, Power, 50
103 Gutierrez, Job, xiii.
104 Ibid., 22, 23.
105 Pieris comments on this. See Aloysius Pieris, “Human Rights Language and Liberation Theology,” Fire and Water, 120.
106 Gutierrez, Job, 88.
107 Gutierrez, Power, 4, 18, 69.
108 Ibid., 144.
109 Ibid., 170.
systems which exploited the poor and every theology which was used to legitimate oppression.

The option for the poor challenged privilege to reconfigure the ecclesial community:

This commitment, this involvement, constitutes the greatest single factor in the life of the Latin American Christian community today. It is giving rise to a new way of being a person and a believer, a new way of living and thinking the faith, a new way of being called together, and calling others together, in an ek-klesia, a church—the assembly of those called apart for a task.\textsuperscript{110}

It calls each member to personal conversion. For example, Gutierrez insisted that seeing from the perspective of the Indigenous opened Las Casas’ eyes to the evils of being an encomendero. Gutierrez has characterized this transformation as a “Pentecost,” a journey from “blindness to sight.”\textsuperscript{111} The option for the poor helps the community speak about God. In his book \textit{On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent}, Gutierrez showed that it was by going beyond the personal, and asking why suffering and injustice were the lot of the poor, that Job learned how to speak about God, in a language that embraced both the prophetic and mystical. Living the option for the poor demands the conversion of the institutional church. It calls for the “uncentering of the church”\textsuperscript{112} and for the church to reorganize itself on the peripheries in radical service to the people.

\textbf{2.4.3 Challenging Eurocentric Universality}

The second facet of my thesis is that Gutierrez and Pieris expose the hegemonic dimensions of unitary allegedly universal perspectives, and reconfigure epistemic justice at the centre of theology. I have argued that certain major strands of modern Western thought have severed the link between the subject and epistemic location, and generated the myth of disembodied objectivity and universal knowledge. Western values are identified as human values which ought

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 190.
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Gutierrez, \textit{Las Casas}, 48-53
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Gutierrez, \textit{A Theology of Liberation}, 256.
\end{itemize}
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to be imposed. I have shown that Gutierrez gave serious attention to the place of knowledge in theology and has provided a new epistemic beginning. In his words: “there is another way of knowing and speaking about God.”

The story of “Babel” is the paradigmatic biblical story of the totalitarian attempt to dominate people and impose on them a single universal language. I have noted that Gutierrez rejected the grand theories used by the author of the *Yucay Opinion* to justify the colonial enterprise. He criticized the “high intellectual flight” of Francisco de Vitoria whose focus was Europe, who remained on the level of philosophic principles, who adopted “a universal language,” and who had no direct knowledge of the realities of the Indigenous under colonialism. For Gutierrez, de Vitoria represented those who tried to apply human rights from a “laissez-faire, liberal, merely formally egalitarian perspective,” and ignored the real causes of poverty. He criticized the point of departure of much of modern European theology that abandoned “dabar” theology, left the narrative world of Jesus the “storyteller,” and embraced the philosophical metaphysics of Greco-Roman culture. “Doctrinal boundary setting” had replaced life-giving stories and memories.

The epistemological break taken by Gutierrez turned on the option for the poor and praxis. The lived Christian experience was an ecclesial reality and at the centre of theological reflection. Gutierrez asserted that “Christian truths need to be lived if they are to be stated correctly.”

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113 Gutierrez, *Job*, 85.
114 Gutierrez, *Las Casas*, 352.
115 Ibid., 353.
116 Ibid., 44.
118 Ibid., 202-203. He continues that one of the essential characteristics of theology in Latin America today is the retrieval of the narrative dimension of Christianity. Ibid., 205.
Living witness had priority over theological speculation.\textsuperscript{120} Acting in solidarity with the poor “always withdraws us from the world of abstract principles.”\textsuperscript{121} What he rejected was an approach to theology which derived abstract ahistorical principles and then applied these to the individual moral life or the social sphere:

No meaningful theology can be elucubrated in disconnection from concrete history, by stringing together a set of abstract ideas enjoying some manner of interior logical connections.\textsuperscript{122}

There was dialectic between practice and theological reflection. It was a dialectic which moves from the world to the word and back again:

This, then, is the fundamental hermeneutical circle: from humanity to God and from God to humanity, from history to faith and from faith to history, from human word to the word of the Lord and from the word of the Lord to the human word, from the love of one’s brothers and sisters to the love of the Father and from the love of the Father to love of one’s brothers and sisters, from human justice to God’s holiness and from God’s holiness to human justice.\textsuperscript{123}

Again, Gutierrez gave the example of Bartolomé de Las Casas as someone who made this epistemological break: “A continuous interaction takes place, in Las Casas work, between reflection and concrete commitment – theory and practice. His is a thinking that not only refers to practice, but is developed by someone engaged in practice.”\textsuperscript{124} I underscore here that Gutierrez’ epistemological break that integrates theory and practice, and makes theological reflection dependent on the fruit of praxis, is a major challenge to the centre’s claims to authority, and to theologies coming from the centre that are based solely on theory. It validates local church communities reclaiming their own authority to engage revelation and make concrete decisions regarding living out the faith.

\textsuperscript{120} Gutierrez, \textit{A Theology of Liberation}, 208.
\textsuperscript{121} Gutierrez, \textit{Las Casas}, 41.
\textsuperscript{122} Gutierrez, \textit{Power}, 91.
\textsuperscript{123} Gutierrez, \textit{Power}, 61; see also, \textit{Truth}, 105.
\textsuperscript{124} Gutierrez, \textit{Las Casas}, 6.
Gutierrez criticized the Eurocentric universalizing biases in modern conservative and liberal theologies. Modern Euro-American theologians assumed that the place from which they spoke was normative. They failed to recognize their theologies as “situated theologies.”

For example, Gutierrez maintained that the Vatican’s Preparatory Document for the CELAM meeting at Puebla represented a conservative version of non-situated Eurocentric theology. The document skipped “along the mountaintops with broad generalizations,” and superimposed the concerns of Western theology on Latin America. It ignored diverse social formations structured around class, race, gender, religion, and language. It remained silent on the persecution of the Latin American church during the 1960s and 70s. Its theology functioned hegemonically to ignore and conceal poverty, conflict, exploitation and injustice.

The work of Antonio Sousa Ribeiro is helpful to our understanding here. Speaking of “translation” in the context of contemporary neo-liberal globalization, he says:

As can easily be observed in postcolonial contexts, offering to engage in dialogue, if it is not accompanied by the willingness to put into question the dominant frames of reference, often amounts to just one more act of power – no wonder the colonized or subaltern are often not prepared to accept such a gift as dialogue.

The Vatican document refused to allow the Latin American Christian community the opportunity to translate the Gospel into the idioms, languages and context of the South American peoples.

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125 Gutierrez also criticized the construction of grand theories in certain currents of Marxism. He cited Franz Hinkelammert to criticize Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, and Bukharin, for formulating theories of imperialism and colonialism, but ignoring the particularity of what happens in individual countries in the Global South. See Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 85, 86.

126 Cf. “And yet this theology is a situated theology. What structure of thought is not? Thus, to divorce it from the historical process of its social and cultural world would be to render it incomprehensible. But that social and cultural world is modern society, and middle-class, or bourgeois, ideology.” Gutierrez, Power, 93. Cf. “Theological reasoning is an effort on the part of concrete persons to form and think their faith in determinate circumstances, to plan activities and make interpretations that play a role in the real-life occurrences and confrontations of a given society. The theologian does not work in some kind of ahistorical limbo. His or her reflection has a milieu, starts out from material bases, addresses us from a precise location, speaks the word of the Lord to us in the vernacular.” Gutierrez, Ibid., 212.

127 Ibid.

The document promoted a false universalism where there was no attempt to relate meaningfully to difference and to enter into dialogical encounter that preserves mutual intelligibility and identity. What Gutierrez had hoped for was a dialogical encounter which included sincere listening: “What we do ask in the name of openness to the Spirit that breathes where it will and in the name of respect for our people, is that others acknowledge the viewpoint we adopt and the questions we are trying to answer.”

Gutierrez concluded that the Eurocentric and universalizing analysis of the Preparatory Document was “not an innocent one.

Gutierrez has also criticized certain liberal church documents for universalizing biases. As I have noted, he argued that Gaudium et Spes assumed “an optimistic view of the world, of its progress, of contemporary science and technology, of the person as agent of history, or liberty.” By accepting the European experience as normative, the document failed to take seriously the conflictual nature of history and the reality of those on the peripheries.

For Gutierrez, the church and its theologians had to take a different course, that is, to be faithful to Jesus Christ the church must “descend into the hell of this world,” see Jesus Christ in the oppressed Other, and enter into solidarity.

From a postcolonial perspective, Robert Young has argued that it would be a mistake to understand “translation” as a one way process generated by the elites. The peoples on the peripheries “write back” to the centre. From the theological perspective, Gutierrez’ understanding of “two way evangelization,” resonates with Young’s thesis. Gutierrez has insisted that “to bring the good news to the poor, one has a real experience of being evangelized

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129 Gutierrez, Truth, 114.
130 Gutierrez, Power, 119.
131 Ibid., 210. See also A Theology of Liberation, 33-36.
132 Gutierrez, Power, 211 and 182.
133 Ibid., 211.
134 The phrase was coined by Salman Rushdie.
by the poor themselves.”\textsuperscript{135} He affirmed that the “poor person, the other, becomes the revealer of the Utterly Other.”\textsuperscript{136} Gutierrez’ understanding of knowledge cautions against universalizing translations and invites us to relocate to the underside of the epistemological divide and experience the Spirit of God alive in the diversity of languages and experiences of poor peoples.\textsuperscript{137}

### 2.4.4 Challenging Linear Evolutionary History

The third facet of my thesis is that Gutierrez and Pieris confront Eurocentric linear evolutionary understandings of history as progress, and expand the past to include multiple diverse histories and open the future to alternative hope-filled possibilities. I have shown that Gutierrez rejected conservative understandings of history that drew their inspiration from Eusebius or Augustine. The versions of history assumed by the author of the \textit{Yucay Opinion} and the developmentalists shared a Eurocentric bias, but these perspectives operated from two different understandings of history: providential versus linear progress. My focus in this thesis is Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ treatment of history as linear progress. I have identified determinism as one central problem with this view of history. Thinkers like Fukuyama argue the inevitable historical endpoint of all global cultures will be a version of Euro-American society. As I have noted, this interpretation of history ignores the radical interruptions in history, and contracts the past to obliterate the histories and knowledges of other societies and cultures.

I have also shown that Gutierrez criticized modern liberal theologies which assumed a linear

\begin{footnotes}
\item[135] Gutierrez, \textit{Power}, 105. See also \textit{Truth}, 151, and “The Irruption of the Poor in Latin America and the Christian Communities of the Common People,” 120. Robert McAfee Brown said that after reading the galley sheets of \textit{A Theology of Liberation} he thought, “If this is right, I have to start my theological life all over again.” Robert McAfee Brown, \textit{Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology}, xix.

\item[136] Gutierrez, \textit{Power}, 52. Cf. “In Bartolomé de Las Casas’ theology we touch this base: Christ questions from the oppressed, he denounces a regime of exploitation imposed by those who call themselves Christians; he calls for a greater fidelity to his gospel.” \textit{Las Casas}, 69.

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version of history which promised unending development and progress. These were too optimistic, ignored conflict, and failed to see that the social, political and economic gains of the bourgeois had come at the expense of Third World peoples.

My argument vis-à-vis history as linear progress is that Gutierrez is helpful in challenging this version of history, but that he does not draw out the full implications of his thought, and leaves elements of the Eurocentric power matrix unchallenged. Here I will note how the option for the poor reconfigures the understanding of history. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the limitations of Gutierrez’ position, as well as dimensions of his soteriology that point us in directions away from history as linear progress and open possibilities for dismantling Eurocentric hegemony.

Proponents of developmentalism and neoliberalism assume versions of historical determinism. Gutierrez asserted that G. W. Hegel erected the system that has become “the obligatory point of reference for all subsequent efforts.” Developmentalists adopted many of Hegel’s idealist assumptions: rational necessity, evolutionary progress, linearity, and history culminating in the modern Western state. The theology of progress endeavoured to “pigeonhole the divine action in history and give the illusory impression of knowing it in advance.” In The Density of the Present, Gutierrez argued that the “end of history” thesis separated peoples from their pasts:

Neoliberal ideology (one of whose slogans with unintended irony, proclaims ‘the end of history’) has its own way of reading the historical future of humanity; it dispossesses the poor nations of their past and disguises an economic and social process that is increasing the imbalance.

He concluded that the “end of history” thesis was a mechanistic ideology that placed “blind faith in the laws of history” and that this led to “the irreversible and omnipotent reign of capitalist

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138 Gutierrez, Power, 173.
139 Gutierrez, Job, 72.
Neoliberal ideology rejected the possibility of alternative futures, denied opportunities for true liberation, and subverted hope.

It was the option for the poor that enabled Gutierrez to deconstruct history understood as linear progress. The poor are “the force that transforms history.” They are asking new questions and recovering alternative narratives of history. The option allowed Gutierrez “to read history in a different way” and to understand the events since the Conquest from the other side of that history. This had important implications:

. . . rereading history means remaking history. It means repairing it from the bottom up. And so it will be a subversive history. History must be turned upside-down from the bottom, not from the top. What is criminal is not to be subversive, struggling against the capitalist system, but to continue being “supversive” –bolstering and supporting the prevailing domination. It is in this subversive history that we can have a new faith experience, a new spirituality—a new proclamation of the gospel.

History is not monolithic. History includes processes, practices and struggles to do with power. It is constantly changing, being challenged, and being reformulated. To read history subversively means to expand the past and see it differently:

The great milestones on this long journey have to be studied – the primitive Christian community, the great pastors and theologians of the first centuries, the Franciscan movement and Joachim da Fiore in the Middle Ages, the Hussite movement in the fifteenth century, the peasant wars in Germany and Thomas Munzer in the sixteenth, the defense of the Indian and Bartolomé de Las Casas, Bishop Juan del Valle, and so many others of the same era in Latin America, Juan Santos Atahualpa in the eighteenth century in Peru and the peasant struggles and popular piety in the more recent times in Latin America.

Gutierrez has enlarged the past to include traditions which the institutional church has neglected or suppressed. He has encouraged the nurture of a “subversive memory” to recover

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142 Gutierrez, Power, 35. See also “The Irruption of the Poor in Latin America and the Christian Communities of the Common People.” 120.
143 Gutierrez, Las Casas, 455.
144 Gutierrez, Power, 21.
145 Ibid., 202.
146 Ibid., 80.
experiences and stories that the oppressors have tried to erase. By expanding the past, Gutierrez opens history to the future. Multiple histories allow for multiple possible futures. As I have noted, Gutierrez has also affirmed the openness of history in his christology: with the coming of Jesus Christ, history and eschatology are tied together, and the future opens. Salvation includes both God’s gratuitous invitation and the human beings’ free response to building the Kingdom. Humanity has the freedom to accept or reject God’s offer to continue Christ’s work in humanity’s struggle for justice. Hope emerges as the new primary.

2.5 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I examined central dimensions of Gutierrez’ soteriology against the backdrop of colonialism and developmentalism. I have shown that Gutierrez repudiated versions of history inspired by Eusebius, Augustine and Hegel. He argued that modern conservative and liberal theologies were limited in addressing Latin American realities. He anchored his soteriology epistemologically by arguing a twofold fidelity: divine revelation and the reality of the Latin American poor. Fidelity to the latter involved solidarity and praxis. This revolutionary epistemological break allowed Gutierrez to challenge privilege, Eurocentric universality, and history as linear progress. I noted one limitation at this early stage of Gutierrez’ ‘rethinking’ theology, namely, that in challenging history as linear progress he reinscribed dimensions of the Eurocentric power matrix. I will take up this issue in Chapter 4. In the next Chapter, I turn to the soteriology of Aloysius Pieris to show how he challenged the option for privilege by embracing the option for the poor and situating interreligious dialogue at the centre of liberation theology.

147 Ibid., 20
CHAPTER 3

Aloysius Pieris’ Theological Challenge to Privilege:
Reconfiguring Dialogue and Communion at the Centre of the Liberation Theology

3.1 Introduction

In the theology of Aloysius Pieris, many of the familiar themes of Latin American liberation theology take on a different look. Theology is contextual, begins with praxis, uses social analysis, privileges the preferential option for the poor, embraces voluntary poverty, and understands Jesus in soteriological terms. However, for Pieris, praxis includes not only solidarity with the poor, but interreligious dialogue; analysis makes use not only of Marxism, dependency theory, and postcolonial critique, but also includes Asian Religiosity; the preferential option for the poor is practiced not only by Christians, but by Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and non-believers; the Base Christian Communities become Basic Human Communities (BHCs); Jesus is not only the Liberator, but the Asian Christ sacramentally present in the poor of Asia. Pieris has said that the Asian church had no theology of its own.1 It was caught between two understandings of liberation, that of Christian Rome and that of Biblical faith.2 It was the Latin American Liberation theologians who, in calling for a return to biblical sources, had discovered that the God of the bible had aligned Godself with the poor against the agents of mammon, so that the poor’s struggle to end oppression and God’s vision of liberation coincided.3 My focus in this Chapter is one dimension of Pieris’ work: the option for the poor in the context of Asian

2 Ibid., 111-26.
3 Ibid., 123-4.
religiosity, and how this challenges privilege. I will take up Pieris’ reflections on Eurocentric
universality and history as linear progress in Chapter 4.

One of Pieris’ great contributions to theology is that he reconfigures interreligious dialogue at the
centre of the liberation theological project. He knows Gutierrez’ work, and was able to expand
the meaning of the option for the poor to address the realities of the Asian context. After Pieris,
liberation theology and interreligious dialogue can no longer pursue separate tracks. Each is
mutually constitutive of the other. Further, as I will argue in Chapter 5, Pieris’ work
theologically grounds the initiatives of Christians today who partner with both religious and non-
religious others in Social Movements to pursue justice. In situating interreligious dialogue at the
centre of the liberation project, Pieris challenged social and economic privilege that was the
consequence of various colonialisms, ecclesial privilege which resulted from the institutional
church’s alliances with the powerful, the privilege of various hegemonic theologies imported
from Europe, and elitist approaches to interreligious dialogue. I begin Chapter 3 by studying key
elements of Pieris’ understanding of the Asian context and some of his reflections on the
institutional church. I will survey several imported theologies and show how Pieris exposed them
to be hegemonic and deficient. Next, I will examine Pieris’ theological methodology. I will then
study Pieris’ covenant christology because of its important implications for mission and
dialogue. Lastly, I will outline Pieris’ understanding of interreligious dialogue and its necessary
connection with liberation theology.

4 Since the early 1970s the option for the poor has been constitutive of the theology of the institutional Asian church.
Two years after the Latin American Bishops’ Conference at Medellin, the Asian bishops met in Manila to chart a
course for a post-Vatican II, post-European church. The formed the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference
(FABC). Central to their vision was the triple dialogue: dialogue with culture, dialogue with the great Asian
religious traditions, and dialogue with the poor. Peter Phan has argued that drawing on Lumen Gentium, Ad Gentes,
and Gaudium et Spes, the Asian church reversed the pre-Vatican II priorities of church, proclamation, mission and
Reign of God. Instead, mission priorities became: working for a more just world, witnessing to the Gospels,
proclaiming through this witness Christianity’s salvific role, and finally building new churches, i.e., the Reign,
immission, proclamation and church. See Peter Phan, “Proclamation of the Reign of God as Mission of the Church:
3.2 Pieris’ Understanding of the Asian Context

3.2.1 Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, formerly Ceylon, is one of Asia’s largest islands, lying twenty miles Southeast of India. It has always been a multi-ethnic society with Sinhala and Tamil Kingdoms. Western colonialism invaded Ceylon with the arrival of the Portuguese (1505-68), the Dutch (1658-1796) and the British (1796-1948). On February 4, 1948, Ceylon obtained independence from the British and in 1972 adopted a new constitution. Ceylon officially became a Republic in 1978 and its name was changed to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is home to four major World Religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The Sinhalese comprise 74 percent of the population and are mainly Buddhist; the Tamils number 18.2 percent of the population and the majority is Hindu. Christians are equally divided between the two ethnic groups.5

Politically, Sri Lanka has been torn apart by internal strife since the middle of the twentieth century. Conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil peoples centres on political rights and independence for Tamils. The year 1976 saw the emergence of the insurgent Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who demanded a separate Tamil state. In July 1983, there were ethnic clashes between the Sinhalese and Tamils which precipitated civil war.6 On May 18, 2009 the Sri Lankan government declared total victory over the LTTE, thus ending the military’s 26 year campaign. The government now controls all remaining LTTE territories. During this final phase of the conflict, many human rights organizations have criticized both government and LTTE

5 Religious affiliation includes: Buddhist, 69%; Hindu, 15%; Muslim, 8%; Christian, 7.5%, including 6.6% Catholic; Other, 0.5%. Eighty percent of the Sinhalese Christians are Roman Catholic. See Thomas Fox, Pentecost in Asia (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 219, 220.
Theravada Buddhism is regarded as the original orthodox form of Buddhism and is followed in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka from India in the third century BCE by Mahinda, the son of the Indian king Asoka. Sri Lanka is where the sacred scriptures of the Tripitaka were written down in Pali. In the “Preface” to Love Meets Wisdom, Pieris stated: “the academic quest for the original message of the Buddha is as alive in me as in many students of Buddhism, particularly in Sri Lanka.”

Pieris’ dialogue with Buddhism is mostly with the Theravada tradition.

3.2.2 Religiosity and Poverty

For Pieris, Asian religiosity and Asian Poverty define the distinctive features of the Asian context. In exploring Asian religiosity, Pieris identified three key dimensions. First, Asia was characterized by linguistic heterogeneity. There were at least seven major linguistic zones. Unlike European theologians who communicated in the same Indo-Germanic languages, or the Latin Americans who worked in Spanish or Portuguese, Asian theologians had to operate in a non-Asian idiom. Linguistic heterogeneity was a major obstacle to constructing authentic Asian theologies. Second, in analyzing the religious phenomena in the Third World, Pieris preferred to speak of cosmic and metacosmic religions, rather than scriptural and non-scriptural religions.

Cosmic religion revolved around cosmic powers: gods, deities or spirits. It had an “ecological and creation-conscious spirituality” which focused on this world. Implicit was the idea that the

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7 Tripitaka literally means three baskets: these include the Sutta Pitaka which are discourses by the Buddha and his disciples, the Vinaya Pitaka or Monastic Rule, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka or philosophical discourses by early monks.
world was sacred.¹¹ The poor depended totally on God, not mammon. Women often found space to articulate their experiences of oppression. The most powerful medium of communication was the story.¹² Metacosmic religion defined its soteriology in terms of “a metacosmic ‘beyond’ capable of being internalized as the salvific ‘within’ of the human person”.¹³ Metacosmic religions never appeared in an abstract form, but were contextualized within the worldview of a particular cosmic religion. In most of Asia, the cosmic religions had been domesticated by the gnostic soteriologies of Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism. This was the reason that both Islam and Christianity had been unsuccessful in converting Sri Lanka, India, Burma and many other Asian countries.¹⁴ Pieris held that no Asian theology could be developed, without consulting the dominant metacosmic religions. In the case of Sri Lanka, this meant a relationship with Buddhism.¹⁵ The third dimension of Asian religiosity was the overwhelming presence of non-Christian soteriologies. Pieris stated: “the irruption of the Third World is also the irruption of the non-Christian world. The vast majority of God’s poor perceive their ultimate concern and symbolize their struggle in the idiom of non-Christian religions and cultures”¹⁶ The consequence was that it was no longer possible for the church to produce a Western theology for export to Asia. Further, the religiousness of the Asian poor had the potential to be a new source of revelation for the Asian church.¹⁷ Thus, the current religious context provided the Asian church with the possibility of developing its own theology which would be radically different from

¹¹ Pieris differentiated the cosmic worldview from the secularist worldview: “the two paradigms are diametrically opposed. What is perceived as symbolic and sacramental in the one is often dismissed as magical or superstitious in the other.” Pieris, “The Cosmic in Feminism,” Fire and Water, 16.
¹⁴ Whereas, in the Philippines and in Indonesia respectively, Christianity and Islam were successful because in these cultures cosmic religiosity existed in an undomesticated or relatively undomesticated form. See Pieris, “Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation,” An Asian Theology of Liberation, 72.
¹⁵ Ibid., 72,73.
¹⁷ Pieris, “A Theology of Liberation in Asian Churches?” 125.
European and North American theologies, and from Third World theologies coming from Latin America and Africa.

Regarding the second distinctive feature of the Asian context, overwhelming poverty, Pieris insisted the primary issue was the struggle against mammon. Mammon was “that undefinable force that organizes itself within every person and among persons to make material wealth antihuman, antireligious, and oppressive.”\textsuperscript{18} It operated on both the personal and social levels. Key today was that mammon used capitalism and technocracy to transform authentic religion, fostering “a right-wing fundamentalist version of it to the detriment of its liberative thrusts.”\textsuperscript{19} In fact, one of the reasons for the Christian failure in Asia was its association with mammon in its alliance with economic and colonial exploitation.

Pieris distinguished between two different types of poverty: forced poverty which was the result of sin and voluntary poverty which offered the possibility of liberation.\textsuperscript{20} Those poor by birth were the “proxies of Christ” and those who were poor by choice were “the followers of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{21} Pieris asserted that poverty in the sense of a spirituality of struggle “is by far the most comprehensive term to describe the ethos of the Jesus event.”\textsuperscript{22} Christian spirituality was not just a struggle to be poor, to reject wealth, but rather was a struggle \textit{for} the poor.\textsuperscript{23} It was

\textsuperscript{18} Pieris, “Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation,” 75.
\textsuperscript{19} Pieris, “Three Inadequacies of the Social Encyclicals,” 89.
\textsuperscript{20} Aloysius Pieris, “To Be Poor as Jesus Was Poor,” \textit{An Asian Theology of Liberation}, 20. Pieris said that when the bible spoke of the Poor, it included the following: the socially excluded, religiously ostracized, culturally subjugated, socially dependent, physically handicapped, psychologically tormented and spiritually humble. See Aloysius Pieris, “Christ Beyond Dogma: Christology in the Context of the Religions and the Poor,” \textit{Louvain Studies} 25 (2000), 198. Hereafter cited as “Christ Beyond Dogma.” For Pieris, “Mahatma Gandhi is the most outstanding Asian example of voluntary poverty with both its psychological and sociological implications.” See Pieris, “Asia’s Non-Semitic Religions and the Mission of the Local Churches,” \textit{An Asian Theology of Liberation}, 37.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. 15.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 20. He also argued that mammon was more than just money: it was an “acquisitive instinct” or “what I do with money and what it does to me.” Ibid., 16. Pieris argued that the God-mammon antagonism must be put in the context of God’s pact with the Poor. Failure to do this left voluntary poverty at the micro-ethical level. Mammon was seen only as a psychological force operating within the individual human being. Pieris said that this had been a
inspired by two motives: “to follow Jesus who was poor then, and to serve Christ who is in the poor now.”\textsuperscript{24} For Pieris the major focus of theology must be the Third World’s irruption of the poor as they form a new people announcing the liberating presence of God in a dehumanized world.\textsuperscript{25} Since the majority of the world’s poor belonged to other religious and cultural traditions, there was a need for a new Christian theology of religions that expanded the boundaries of orthodoxy as Christianity entered into dialogue with the liberative streams of other religions and cultures.\textsuperscript{26}

### 3.3 The Church’s Journey

#### 3.3.1 From Colonialism to Dialogue to Distrust

Pieris’ Buddhist mentor and friend, Walpola Rahula has said that the missionaries taught “Sinhalese children to look down upon and despise Sinhala Buddhist culture as low and base – a thing inferior.”\textsuperscript{27} Pieris has maintained that in Asia there is a deeply ingrained conviction that colonialism, Christianity and the West form an inseparable trio. Capitalism has turned money into a God, while colonial Christianity has made God dependent on money.\textsuperscript{28} Many Asians perceive the Catholic church to be a privileged institution that has benefited enormously from colonialism and commercial exploitation. Pieris has criticized the support given by the Asian churches to various “development” programs, whereby they “consolidate themselves into Western oases”\textsuperscript{29} controlling educational, medical, technological and agricultural establishments.

\textsuperscript{24} Pieris, “To Be Poor as Jesus Was Poor,” 21.
\textsuperscript{25} Pieris, “The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology,” 87. For Pieris, the Third World exists “wherever and whenever socio-economic dependence in terms of race, class or sex, generates political and cultural slavery.” Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Pieris, “Monastic Poverty in the Asian Context,” 96.
\textsuperscript{29} Pieris, “Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation,” 75.
with foreign aid money, and thus forcing the non-Christian majority into dependency on the Christian minority. The implementation of the neoliberal project has deepened suspicion vis-à-vis the Asian churches:

Lurking behind all these perceptions and actions is the explicit charge that Christianity exploits both the global power of the West and the growing poverty of the East to bring about a Euro-ecclesiastical invasion of the homelands and the backyards of these traditional religions and cultures. Christianity is perceived as an integral part of ‘globalization,’ the newest species of colonization that erases Asian identities and effaces Asia’s diversity – a colonization engendered by money-power, which is more ruthless than the military power of the former era.  

Pieris was clear that the Vatican’s social teaching had yet to respond theologically to the neoliberal vision.

The roots of Asian distrust go back to the sixteenth century, the period of great missionary expansion in Asia. Though Jesus was Asian, Pieris judged that Christianity had taken on a European template before returning to Asia. Christianity became Western when it severed its links with Judaism and strengthened its connection with Greco-Roman culture. When Jesus returned to Asia in the sixteenth century he “reentered the continent of his birth as the white colonizers’ tribal God seeking ascendancy in the Asian pantheon.” Colonialism was not limited to Western political power, but was inherent in the European policy of missions in the East which saw the Eastern churches in Asia as extensions of Europe’s local churches. In an early article, Pieris argued that surveying the last four hundred years, it was possible to recognize four distinct missiological approaches in succession: the Conquest Theory, the Adaptation Theory, the Fulfilment Theory and the Sacramental Theory. The so-called “pagans” who were termed “anti-Christian” during the Conquest phase were transformed into “non-Christians” by the

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33 Aloysius Pieris, “The Church, the Kingdom and Other Religions,” Dialogue (June 11, 1969): 3-7.
Adaptationists, became the “pre-Christians” according to the Theory of Fulfillment, and were now being recognized as “anonymous Christians” with the acceptance of the Sacramental Theory.34

Pieris argued that Vatican II inaugurated an era where many Sri Lankan Catholics entered into dialogue and cooperation with people of other faiths.35 He maintained that the council was the first since the Council of Jerusalem to make crisigenic decisions which brought a long overdue caesura or break from Euro-ecclesial domination, and initiated a chain of new beginnings in theology, spirituality, sacramental life and social praxis. He agreed with Rahner that Vatican II was the first ever council of the World church. Dei Verbum placed the Bible at the centre of church life.36 Nostra Aetate was the first official church document that made a positive evaluation of the world’s non-Christian religions and was the best missiological analysis ever made by the Magisterium.37 The most outstanding contribution of the council was “its clear teaching that the Reign of God is not restricted to the Catholic Church, leave alone

34 Pieris argued that the Conquest Theory was associated with the policy of the church during the great Missionary Era, the sixteenth century onwards. The Kingdom of God was understood to be synonymous with the church and extra ecclesiam nulla sanctus. Coercion was the missiological methodology. While acknowledging the brutality of some colonial rulers, Pieris held that many missionaries were motivated by a “mistaken love” believing that those who died without knowing Christ were condemned to eternal damnation. The Adaptation Theory was associated with the Italian Jesuits, DeNobili, Beshi, and Ricci, who defended the socio-cultural values of the East against the cultural colonialism of the European church and used the intellectual categories and religious motifs within the socio-cultural patterns to evangelize. Pieris understood this theory as a breakthrough, but argued that it had no intrinsic theological value today. It was based on deception and robbed a culture of its religions content. The Fulfilment Theory was that adopted by Vatican II. The other religions had their salvific value insofar as they were a “preparation for the gospel” and “need to be enlightened and purified” (Ad Gentes 3). For Pieris this theory left unanswered two questions: first, what was the difference between the pre-Christian character of the Old Testament and that of other religions? second, how did the church serve other religions as the locus of fulfilment in Christ? In the Sacramental Theory, the church as a Sacrament of Universal Salvation, participated in the sacramentality of Christ and was considered to manifest the Reign of God as well as execute God’s salvific will. Pieris associated this last theory with Rahner’s ‘anonymous Christianity.” See Pieris, “The Church, the Kingdom and Other Religions,” 3-7.


37 Pieris, “The Church, the Kingdom and the Other Religions,” 4.
Christianity.” Vatican II relativized the church vis-à-vis the Reign of God. Salvation has been available to the world from the beginning. Vatican II called the church “to move towards its own periphery and enter into a critical partnership with the non-Christian agents of radical social renewal.”

Pieris has argued that since the 1980s the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity in Sri Lanka has deteriorated.

. . . the Catholic church, specially in Sri Lanka, has gradually gone backwards to a mentality that existed before the time of Vatican II in almost everything and had fallen back into a mood of polemical confrontation after a decade and a half (from the early sixties to late seventies) of polite conversation with the Buddhists. The ‘open economy’ begun in the late seventies had boosted the Catholic Church’s social power which recalls the one it had during a colonial period. Those in power do not usually dialogue. The church had by the eighties, slipped back into a relative position of power. By the nineties, the church was more disposed to a polemical mood . . .

Pieris noted that there were three major events which contributed to the present climate of tension between Christians and members of other religious traditions. The first had to do with the Open Economy policy implemented by the Jayawardana government in 1977. This technocratic, market-oriented economic policy had the effect of restoring church power; it undermined traditional Asian religious values; and it allowed for the entry of fundamentalist Christian groups with economic backing from the West. Pieris connected colonialism and

39 Pieris, “The Reverend Father Michael Rodrigo: A Pioneer in Buddhist Christian Dialogue,” Dialogue n.s., 15 (1988): 2. Beginning in the 1970s, FABC took the move to the peripheries seriously. Between 1974 and 1987 there were a series of exposure trips called the “Bishops Institutes for Social Action” or BISA. These gave the Bishops the opportunity to experience and reflect upon the realities of Asian poverty. Pieris was the co-coordinator for the exposure program for the Catholic Bishops in preparation for BISA VII in Hua Hin Thailand. The theme was “Asia’s Religio-Cultural Heritage and Human Development.” See Pieris, “The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka During the First Fifty Years of the Country’s Independence,” 276. Beginning in 1979, the FABC’s Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs organized a series of seminars called the “Bishops’ Institute for Interreligious Affairs” or BIRA to educate the Bishops around the issues of interreligious dialogue. See T. Fox, Pentecost in Asia, 66-68.
40 Aloysius Pieris, “The Christian and Buddhist Responses to the Pope’s Chapter on Buddhism: An Analytical Report,” Dialogue, n.s., 22 (1995): 64. It is important to note that Pieris was speaking of the relationship between the organized religions: the Buddha Sasana and the institution of the Catholic church. Among the poorer people and the student population of both religions, the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation continued to flourish.
neoliberal globalization to the new imperialized Christianity:

In these circumstances, a Christianized empire could not avoid being a social embodiment of an imperialized Christianity. Yesterday’s colonization and today’s globalization, in which this species of Christianity serves rather than challenges the empire of mammon, is a monumental witness to a loss of Christian Identity.41

For many Buddhists, this confirmed the collusion between the Christian churches and Western powers. The second was the deterioration of the relations between the Sinhalese and Tamils. This conflict presented a challenge to the church. The unavoidable involvement of Tamil Christians, especially priests in the struggle of the Tamils, contributed to the Buddhist perception of the church’s anti-Buddhist position. The third event, which Pieris understood as triumphalistic and aggressive, was the “Decade of (New) Evangelization” project that was launched by the Catholic church in Asia in preparations for the celebration of the millennium.42

3.3.2 Hegemonic Theologies

As noted earlier, Pieris has characterized the theology from the 1500s until the advent of liberation theology as a “theology of domination.” Since the 1960s, there have been four major theologies imported into Asia which Pieris judged to be hegemonic and not representative of a truly Asian theology: the Christ-against-religions theology, a Christ-of–religions theology, the liberal theology of the human rights tradition found in official CST, and the Vatican theology supporting the New Evangelization. Through the lenses of the irruption of the Asian poor and the liberative streams of Asian religiosity, Pieris challenged these hegemonic theologies.

In the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, there were two opposed proposals on the part of

42 One event which provoked anger among Sri Lankan Buddhists was the Chapter on Buddhism in Pope John Paul II’s On the Threshold of Hope. The Pope claimed that Buddhism had a negative view of the world and that the West’s superiority in scientific achievements was due to Greek thought and Judeo-Christian inspiration. Pieris argued that these claims were false and arose from an Orientalist vision within the church itself. For the spectrum of Buddhist responses to the Pope’s Chapter see Pieris, “The Christian and Buddhist Responses to the Pope’s Chapter on Buddhism: An Analytical Report,” 88-93.
Christian theologians vis-à-vis the relation between Christianity and the non-Christian Religions. Both centered on Jesus Christ: the Christ-against-religions theology and a Christ-of-religions theology. In his 1981 address, “The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology,” to EATWOT in New Delhi, Pieris argued that each was problematic. The first approach was the importation by some Asians into Afro-Asian cultures, of a Latin American liberation theology that was in continuity with Western Marxist methodology and European theological culture. Pieris was concerned that these Asian activists had also implicitly accepted biases which ignored the liberating and revolutionary potential of non-Christian religions. Pieris identified two key biases. The first was the Marxist prejudice against religion. The second bias was the anti-religious bias in certain strands of Western theology. This can be found in Classical Latin apologists, Western missionaries and in Karl Barth’s dialectical theology. Asian liberationists using the biases of Western Biblicism and Marxist Occidentalism constructed a “crypto-colonial Christ” which linked structural poverty to non-Christian religions. This construction was a “Christ-against-Religions.” Pieris argued that a theological paradigm proper to Asia must acknowledge the liberational thrust that defines an Asian theology of religions. This necessitated shifting dialogue away from metacosmic to the more liberative cosmic spirituality. By missing the liberating and revolutionary potential of

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44 In addition, Pieris insisted, Marx shared the Eurocentric vision that progress and civilization were equated with the Westernization of the East. Ibid., 91-3.
45 Classical Latin apologists spoke of vera religio and falsa religio. From the 16th century onward, the Western missionaries pitted Christ against non-Christian religions which they associated with moral poverty. In the late 1960s, the Neo-Colonial Christ was used by the developmentalists who linked the material poverty of the “developing” nations to other religious traditions. Barth’s dialectical theology contrasted biblical revelation with religion which he argued was the blasphemous human attempt to manipulate God. Ibid., 89-93.
46 Pieris offered two correctives for Latin American Liberation Theology. The first had to do with the liberating power of religion. Pieris’ demonstration of the liberative dimension to religion stood in stark contrast to the positivism of Western social sciences and the secularization of First World culture. Pieris did not criticize Gutierrez for underestimating the liberating power of religion, but he did characterize both Jose Miranda and Jon Sobrino as two Latin American liberation theologians who dismissed religion. The second corrective concerned the imperative for Latin American theologians to enter into interreligious dialogue with their own Indigenous populations. Pieris
non-Christian religions, and dismissing them as “world denying,” this Christ-Against-Religions approach failed to see that “a religion’s micro-ethical concern for self-purification of individuals is often projected onto the macro-ethical level of socio-political catharsis.” It missed the revolutionary power of dance, drama, song, ritual, parable, and poetry. For Pieris true liberation was not possible unless people were religiously motivated toward it.

The second position that Pieris criticized was an inculturalist “Christ-of-Religions” approach. This theology anticipated Vatican II’s Fulfillment Theory: Christ works in all religions as their final fulfillment. Pieris had four objections to the inculturalist Christ-of-Religions approach. First, the word inculturation presupposed a theory of Asian culture which many Asians rejected as a misconception of Asian reality. Second, this approach assumed that Christianity could exist in a pure non-inculturated form waiting to be infused into a particular culture. Third, inculturalists, especially the early initiators, have been accused of “Euro-ecclesiastical imperialism,” that is, they assumed that Western theology, ecclesiology, christology, and liturgy, were normative for all Christians. Finally, the inculturalist approach ignored the poor.

said that the Amerindians, the Blacks and the Asiatics, almost one fifth of the South American population, should have had an impact on the Base Christian Communities as well as theology. See Pieris, “The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology,” 93ff. There are commentators who suggest that Pieris is incorrect in his assertion that Latin American Liberation theology overlooked the liberative potential of religion. They maintain that from the beginnings of Latin American Liberation Theology, there were significant voices studying Latin American religiosity. However, this proceeded in terms of interest in popular religiosity, rather than the framework of interreligious dialogue or inculturation as was customary in Asia. See Lee Cormie, “Forward” to Jose Maria Vigil, “The Challenges of a Theology of a Religious Pluralism for Traditional Fundamentalist Faith.” Toronto Journal of Theology 23/1 (2007): 5-7. For example, three years before the 1976 EATWOT meeting at Dar es Salaam, the Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas had initiated a study on “popular religiosity and liberative evangelization.” In light of their research, Gutierrez said that they refused to accept without question the validity of the secularization of Latin America, even though it was intellectually fashionable at the time. See “Two Theological Perspectives: Liberation Theology and Progressivist Theology,” The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underside of History, 249. In his paper, “The Historical Power of the Poor,” Gutierrez rejected “the reductionism of a political-action approach that ignores the reality of the people’s faith.” Gutierrez, Power, 98.

48 Ibid., 100
51 Pieris, “The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology,” 120.
In addition to these objections, those on the receiving end were suspicious of the inculturalist approach. Pieris cited the following as a typical Buddhist response:

The so-called indigenization . . . appears to be a matter of tactics rather than one of appreciation and admiration of things indigenous. In other words it appears to be a camouflage resorted to with a view to breaking down of the apperceptive mass of Buddhists and to proselytizing them by using the vast financial resources of the church. It can be likened to the tactics of a chameleon which takes on the colour of the environment in order to deceive its prey.52

Pieris described true inculturation as a new Pentecost. It was a call for the church to relive the primordial mission out of which it was born.53 Pieris’ definition was the following:

Inculturation is the costly faith-response by which the church – as a community that claims to be the voice of the Spirit – recognizes this voice in the Asian (body of) Christ, the vast suffering peoples of Asia, wherever it is heard today, and responds to it in obedience, so that the church may become Good News to them as Jesus was, in the freedom of the Spirit.54

Pieris claimed that true inculturation would be difficult for the church because it took seriously the cross of Jesus Christ. It meant abandoning privilege and involving the church in the struggles of the people.55

The third type of theology Pieris criticized was the Catholic theology of human rights as found in papal encyclicals. Pieris wrote three major articles between 1989 and 2003 on the theme of ecclesiastical hegemony in CST.56 Pieris argued that the church in its social encyclicals had

55 In the past two centuries, the inculturalist approach to Jesus Christ has gone through several incarnations, each of which Pieris has argued can be criticized from a liberationist perspective: the 19th century Gnostic Christ; the Ashramic Christ of the late 50s; and the Universal Christ of the late 70s. Pieris, “The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology,” 89, 93–96.
absorbed the West’s human rights language and “confirmed” it biblically. Theologies which drew on the human rights tradition risked incorporating elements which made no sense in Asia’s economic and cultural context. For example, these writings reduced the meaning of Third World to a geographic area which was underdeveloped economically;\(^57\) they promoted a developmentalist ideology; they rejected socialist models as alternatives to Western capitalism and instead promoted a “re-Christianized version of the First World as the safest model;”\(^58\) the Roman church had developed an imperial feudal structure; and Papal teaching had no self-critical dimension. Pieris admitted the human rights movement was the West’s specific contribution to the understanding of human liberation. The problem occurred when the church appropriated the Western ideological framework, gave it biblical blessing, and then absolutized and universalized the human rights paradigm for application without reference to praxis in the local churches of the Third World. CST then was frequently used to censure Third World theologians who exercised the right of the local churches to develop their own liberating theological frames. As such, it became a form of ecclesiastical imperialism.

The most recent hegemonic theology that Pieris identified was the theology behind the Vatican’s New Evangelization project that was launched in preparation for the celebration of the new millennium. One of the consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was that the Vatican had more time to turn its attention to Asia. In *Pentecost in Asia*, Thomas Fox has detailed key events from the publication in 1990 of Pope John Paul II’s *Redemptoris Missio* to the 1998 Synod in Asia which focused on the New Evangelization. In *Redemptoris Missio* the pope called for a return to ‘basics.’ Dialogue was fine, but should be understood as a means to a more important end: proclaiming Jesus as the One and unique savior of the world. In 1990 at FABC V

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\(^58\) Pieris, “Three Inadequacies of Social Encyclicals,” 84.
at Bandung, Vatican Cardinal Joseph Tomko cited FABC’s Triple Dialogue for the perceived refusal to pursue conversions and for the slowdown in church growth.\(^{59}\) Cardinal Ratzinger in 1993 in a speech in Hong Kong criticized those involved in interreligious dialogue who emphasized the Reign of God rather than the church. In May 1996, he stated that the theology of religious pluralism had come to be the gravest threat facing the church and compared it to the “threat” of liberation theology in the 1980s. The month long Asia Synod (April 19-May 14, 1998) culminated with the release of the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia* during the Pope’s pastoral visit to India (November 5-8, 1999).\(^{60}\) *Ecclesia in Asia* ignored theological work of the FABC and other prominent Asian theologians.

Pieris attacked the theology of the New Evangelization for replacing FABC’s Reign of God theology with a church-centered theology of mission which sought an increase in church territory and membership.\(^{61}\) He charged that advocates for the New Evangelization were “hell-bent on liquidating the two things we consider absolutely essential for integral evangelization: interreligious dialogue and liberation theology.”\(^{62}\) He called *Redemptoris Missio* “dangerous reading” and asserted that a “hidden agenda” could be seen in the introductory paragraphs. For Pieris the clear goal was “Euro-ecclesiastical control of the people of the Third World.”\(^{63}\) He concluded that what one really sees is “the ghost of a church that has lost its grip on the West precisely because it has failed to practice and preach the spirituality of God’s Reign.”\(^{64}\)

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\(^{59}\) At FABC Plenary in Bangkok in 2000, Tomko spoke again and warned against a “weak christology” in Asia. See Fox, *Pentecost in Asia*, 129.

\(^{60}\) Pieris cited other “warning signals” during the decade leading to the millennium, including the attacks by the CDF against Tissa Balasuriya, Tony de Mello, Jacques Dupuis, and Roger Haight, as well as Cardinal Ratzinger’s comments in 1997 to a French journalist describing Buddhism as a kind of “spiritual auto-eroticism.” See Pieris, “The Roman Catholic Perception of other Churches and Other Religions after the Vatican’s *Dominus Jesus,*” 212.


\(^{62}\) Pieris, “Whither the New Evangelism?” *Fire and Water*, 151, 152.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) Ibid.
asked: “is there a covenant with Mammon here?”

3.4 The Journey from the Jordan to Calvary: Soteriology as the Foundation of Asian Theology

3.4.1 Methodological Commitments: Dabar Theology

Pieris argued that the common thrust of religion was not “God-talk” but liberation, not speculation but soteriology. He defined theology as *fides sperans salutem*, that is, hope seeking salvation. Central to Pieris’ project was a methodological shift from *logos* to *dabar* theology. He challenged the *logos* approach of the Western Patriarchy. *Logos* theology emphasized reason and rationality, and understood salvation as knowledge of God. It defined God philosophically as the “Self-existent Being, the Unchanging Absolute, the Impassable Power, the Immovable Mover.” Pieris argued that the *logos* theology of the Western Patriarchy reduced the “flesh” of John’s “the (Pre-existent) Word became flesh” to a philosophical principle, rather than the broken body of Jesus who was executed as a criminal. It ignored the social location of the cross where the conflict between God and mammon was revealed most clearly. It preached a “Christ of contemplation” rather than a “Christ with flesh and blood.” Pieris asserted that the *logos* model had been adopted by the church’s mainstream theologians, i.e., the scholastics of the past, the present-day Curialists and the Liberals. Theology simply explained revelation. Pieris said that in its decadent form the *logos* model degenerated into authoritarianism and “dogma–heresy dialectics.”

In contrast, *dabar* theology emphasized the creative and liberative stream of theology. Divinity here was “the one true God who has bound Herself to a defense pact with the poor against the

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65 Ibid.
68 Pieris, “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 192, 93.
69 Pieris, “The Problem of Universality and Inculturation with Regard to Patterns of Theological Thinking,” 141.
principalities and powers of Mammon.” Dabar theology had restored the theology of the cross to the post-Vatican II church. Dabar theology overcame the “trichotomy” that persisted between liturgy, spirituality and secular (i.e., socio-political) commitment:

... the Roman church has, somewhere in the course of its history, devalued the most crucial dimension of spirituality – the liturgy of life, which is the matrix of all sacramental expressions, for it is the context of a living encounter with God in Christ. Sacramental life and mysticism cannot be artificially reconciled if they are both uprooted from their natural environment, which is the paschal mystery of Christ continued in the (secular) lives and struggles, in the deaths and triumphs of his members – for Christ dies, not in the temple, the place of traditional liturgies, but outside it, and ubi Christus ibi ecclesia (where Christ is, there is the church) – not necessarily the other way about. Wherever the paschal mystery is enacted today, there Christ is united to his loyal members; it is there that the real church is gathered; there the true liturgy takes place; there authentic spirituality is lived – for in victimhood lies the exercise of the priesthood of Christ.

The liturgy of life was the praxis of self-sacrificial love and social solidarity lived according to the Gospel. For Pieris the liturgy of life was the fons et culmen of the liturgy of the heart (internal worship) and the liturgy of the church (ecclesial worship). There was no worship of God without liberative service to the poor. Praxis was the first moment of this theology. It was an existential stance that committed itself to solidarity with the poor in the present historical moment and looked for God in the historical struggle against mammon. Doing the truth led to discerning the truth:

A kerygma is always a metalogical proclamation that cannot be demonstrated rationally. The only convincing proof it adduces is martyrion (witness), for we are dealing with soteriology, not philosophy or mathematics. That is to say, liberation is the only proof of liberation! To say Jesus is the medium of salvation is to show the fruits of such liberation.

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71 Pieris said that in certain conservative circles in the official church, there was a tendency to identify contemplation as spirituality par excellence, to understand both liturgy and spiritually in personal apolitical terms, and identify commitment to the paschal transformation of the world as unspiritual. See Pieris, “Spirituality in a Liberative Perspective,” 3. In his more recent works Pieris argues that the “faith-justice” paradigm of the 1971 Synod of bishops was a newer version of the “contemplative-active” paradigm which he says understood redemption and liberation in dualistic terms. Pieris, God’s Reign for God’s Poor: A Return to the Jesus Formula. (Kelaniya, Sri Lanka: Tulana Research Centre, 1999), 7-24. Hereafter cited as God’s Reign for God’s Poor. See also, Pieris, “Three Inadequacies of Social Encyclicals,” 83.
73 Pieris, God’s Reign for God’s Poor, 31.
74 Ibid., 33.
in the person who says it. A christology that remains a speculative hermeneusis fails to be a soteriological proclamation about Jesus. A christology receives its authenticity from a transforming praxis that proves that in the story of Jesus that continues in his followers, the medium of salvation is operative . . . 75

It was only through conversion and commitment to the Reign of God, that we have access to the God of Jesus Christ.

There were two other elements to Pieris’ dabar methodology which were important for understanding his soteriology. The first had to do with the reading of the scriptures. Pieris noted that while the Greek Fathers, and Latin Fathers, such as Augustine and those he influenced, gave emphasis to Christ as the divine Logos, it was in the medieval monastic settings that the humanity of Jesus emerged for the first time through the lectio divina, where the monastics meditated on the life of Jesus in order to imitate him. He argued that the scriptures were “faith documents” based on what the poor who encountered the “Word as an Event” had to say. The medium included narrative, drama, parable, allegory, metaphor, simile, hymns, poetry, paraleipsis, and hyperbole. Pieris rejected any approach which tried to demythologize or extract the “real truth” out of the scriptures by ignoring this evocative medium of communication. In addition, the scriptures themselves showed “a periodic revision and re-edition” of various faith communities in light of challenges. They did not permit fossilization into irreformable doctrinal pronouncements. Periodic revision was the ideal for the church to follow today. 76

The second element of Pieris’ dabar theology which was specific to Pieris’ context and an important hermeneutical principle for reading Pieris, was that in his use of language he was sensitive to Buddhist concerns. For example, in a formula that respects the Asian preference for

76 Pieris, “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 206.
harmony between word and silence, Pieris endeavoured to speak of God in non-theistic language. He described the Christian trinity as follows: “the truth-goal is identified as the Unspeakable One (theos/God) who becomes speakable only as speech (logos) uttered by the Unspoken speaker (pneuma/Spirit).” Without being sensitive to Pieris’ other (Buddhist) audience, it is possible to misinterpret him.

### 3.4.2 Chalcedonian Christology in Asia

Christology forms the heart of Pieris’ soteriology and his understanding of dialogue flows from his interpretation of Jesus Christ. He argued that Chalcedon’s logos model of theology was incapable of communicating the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Asian context. Chalcedon represented an epistemological crisis. It tried to explain the divine Mystery in rationalistic quasi-mathematical terms and fostered abstractions rather than commitment. He cited two main problems. The first was that the questions raised by Chalcedon were far removed from the central teaching of Jesus: “Love your God and your neighbour (Mt. 22:27-40) or love (God in) your neighbour.” (Rom. 13:18-14) (sic). It was not possible to speak of Christ’s uniqueness without reference to his mission:

Any christology that has failed to express this eternal bond (or should I say identity?) between Jesus the Word and the Two-fold Word eliciting Love (of God and neighbour) . . . is a futile exercise that has nothing to do with the mission of Christ which is the

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77 Pieris, “The Problem of Universality and Inculturation with Regard to Patterns of Theological Thinking,” 139.
78 Philip Gibbs has argued that Pieris’ christology developed through five stages: Christ as sacrament, the human Christ, the cosmic dimension of Christ, the Asian Christ, and Christ and the Word. Gibbs, *The Word in the Third World*, 184-191.
79 In his article “Is the Church Too Asian? A Review of Norman Tanner’s Article,” Pieris said “the Hellenistic framework of the early Councils specifically that of Chalcedon, has not captured fully the core message of the gospels, namely, the salvific activity of Christ.” He cited Alois Grillmeier to support his claim: “In the word of no less a person than His Eminence Alois Cardinal Grillmeier, ‘a development was at hand which is still a burden to Christology: the divorce between the person and the work of Jesus, between ‘Christology’ and soteriology’.” See Pieris, “Is the Church Too Asian? A Review of Norman Tanner’s Article,” *Dialogue, n.s.*, 29 (2002): 790. Karl Rahner too, in his famous essay written on the 1500 anniversary of Chalcedon, argued that the Chalcedonian formula was not an end but a beginning. See Karl Rahner, “Current Problems in Christology,” *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 1 Translated Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 150, 151.
81 Pieris, “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 193. The citation from Romans should be 13:8-14.
Chalcedon missed the soteriology of the covenant. Because the Council did not focus on the basic issues which made Jesus unique, Pieris said it could not be invoked as a criterion of orthodoxy. What was needed was a fresh search for Christ which involved a paradigm shift across the entire church. The second problem had to do with the particularity and narrowness of Chalcedon’s historical and cultural context. The result was that in Asia, to speak of Christ in terms of nature, substance, divinity and humanity, rendered Jesus as one manifestation of many cosmic powers (deva) or one incarnation (avatar) among many others. Pieris said this was not the intent of Chalcedon.

Pieris delineated and challenged several anti-liberationist Christs claiming Asia’s allegiance which have followed Chalcedon and ignored the mission of Jesus. Each separated Christ from the Cross. There was Euro-ecclesiastical Christ of the Curialists of the official church who theologized from the distant perspective of a colonial management framework. This christology viewed the poor as a cross without Christ and it was the church’s task to engage in direct evangelization. This Christ could only be found in personal devotion and ecclesiastical sacraments. Service to the poor was considered secondary or understood to be the product of introducing Marxism into theology. The Curialists failed to recognize that where there was a cross, Christ was already present. This was a christology swallowed up by ecclesiology. Next, there was the Christ of the Western liberals. They understood history as unending progress and had opted for a Christ without a cross. They have ignored what makes Jesus unique and they did not see the salvific role that the poor played in the liberation of the rich. Finally, there was the non-Western Christ of the Asian intellectuals who dialogued exclusively with the metacosmic

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82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., 224.
84 Ibid., 221.
soteriologies of Asia. They were disdainful of cosmic religiosity and dismissed the poor. Theirs was a christology without an ecclesiology. Pieris said theirs was a gnostic Christ, a head without a body. They failed to recognize that the Asian poor constituted the true body of Christ.

3.4.3 Covenant Christology

Using the *dabar* understanding of theology, Pieris constructed a “Covenant Christology” which ultimately located the uniqueness of Jesus in God’s preferential option for the poor within the framework of Promise and Fulfillment:

> Incarnation cannot merely be the hypostatic union between divine and human natures, but the covenantal identification of God with the slaves of the earth. Jesus as the God of slaves and the slave of God is a proclamation that the Greeks never thought of.\(^{85}\)

In his recent article “Christ beyond Dogma: Doing Christology in the Context of the Religions and the Poor,” Pieris’ christology unfolds with a series of formulae or Sutras:\(^{86}\)

1. Love is God’s own Self as well as God’s own Word to us.\(^{87}\)

2. God’s Word to us is Jesus both eliciting and embodying our love for God and neighbour.\(^{88}\)

3. a) Jesus is God’s Two-edged Word in Conflict with mammon;

   b) Jesus is God’s covenantal Word of Promise to the poor.\(^{89}\)

In the first formula, Pieris draws not on Greek philosophy but on scripture, specifically the Johanine formulation that “God is Love” and that love is the pervasive mission of God in Christ. The second half of the first formula is explained in the second: God’s Word is a covenant.

Whereas the *logos* model used at Chalcedon understood the Word as the Spiritless “*logos*” of the Stoic philosophers, for Pieris Jesus is God’s Word of Promise to us and the Word has the power

\(^{85}\) Pieris, “Whither the New Evangelism?” 152, 153.
\(^{86}\) Sutra literature originated in Indic society to help ordinary people remember ordinary truths and be able to reflect on them. Pieris, “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 190.
\(^{87}\) Ibid., 192
\(^{88}\) Ibid., 193.
\(^{89}\) Ibid., 217
to fulfill God’s promise. This is the *fons and culmen* of an authentic christology.\(^{90}\)

The uniqueness of Jesus is explained by the two biblical axioms in the third formula. The first points to “love of God as an end-time battle.”\(^{91}\) For Pieris, Jesus is “the discord between God (friend of the poor) and Absolutized Capital (the enemy of the poor).”\(^{92}\) The conflict is not with atheism, but against idolatry.\(^{93}\) Mammon worshippers are idolaters. Pieris maintains that historically, idolatry has shown itself in pyramidal societies where a small leisure class lives off the toil of a large slave class. In today’s context, mammon has manifested itself as “Divinized Money” or “Absolutized Capital.”\(^{94}\) The worship of mammon has rendered the majority of humankind poor. The spirituality of the Reign of God permits no idols. The second axiom situates love of one’s neighbour within the framework of the option for the poor. A society where Yahweh reigns is characterized by the absence of forced poverty. The second axiom shows that the divine Word of Promise has made a “class option” and was executed on the cross. The cross is the highpoint in the conflict with mammon. The cross reveals the truth that oppressive poverty is the result of idolatry and is blasphemy. The true scandal was not that God became a human person, but rather that God lowered Godself to the social condition of a slave and died a criminal’s death. What was shocking about councils like Nicaea and Chalcedon was that they made no reference to the poor during the Christological debates, even though the majority of believers at the time lived in poverty.\(^{95}\) As well, at Chalcedon there was a need to

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\(^{90}\) Ibid., 197.

\(^{91}\) Ibid., 217.

\(^{92}\) Pieris, *God’s Reign for God’s Poor*, 58.

\(^{93}\) Cf. “It is *deicide* born of idolatry, and *not atheism* as such that this crucified God censures.” Pieris, “The Asian Reality and the Christian Option: A Plea for a Paradigm Shift in Christian Education in Asia,” 167.

\(^{94}\) Pieris, *God’s Reign for God’s Poor*, 44.

\(^{95}\) Pieris speaks of “the pathetic state of poverty in which the vast majority of the believers were entrenched during the time of the Christological debates.” See “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 209. Naming the “social location” of Jesus’ ministry is important for Pieris. For example, he argues that “Galilee” is more than a “geographical category,” it is a “theological category.” The people of Galilee were socially inferior, economically poor, caught between the brutal Roman army and violent revolutionaries. For Pieris Galilee is a symbol for today’s Third World. See Pieris, *God’s Reign for God’s Poor*, 63.
show the harmony between the two natures in one person, whereas theology needs to be concerned with dealing with the disharmony between mammon and the Reign of God. Quoting Ernst Kasemann, Pieris says that “God and idols now constitute the main theme of world history and no one can remain neutral.” A disciple of Jesus must choose sides and engage in the struggle.

Pieris says that no liberation theology can be rooted in the word of God if it does not hold together the two biblical axioms of the third formula: (1) the irreconcilable antagonism between God and mammon, and (2) the irrevocable covenant between God and the poor. The first axiom is a “universal spiritual dogma” which is found at the core of practically all Asia religions, both theistic and non-theistic. The Beatitudes in Christianity give Christian expression to this universal dogma. Pieris maintains that it is the second axiom that is specific to the Christian faith and absent in all non-Semitic religions. What defines us as part of the Christian communion is not dogma, but our fundamental option to be in solidarity with the poor who form Christ’s body on earth. What distinguishes liberation theology is that it “does not speak of a ‘transcendental principle’ extracted from the Bible and then ‘applied’ to concrete situations.” Rather, the basis of liberation theology is the very foundational experience that gave birth to the bible itself: “the election of the oppressed class as God’s equal partners in the common mission of creating a new order of love, a mission that can be shared by anyone who becomes one with God by being one with the oppressed class.” The first axiom implies the principle “no salvation outside the Reign of God;” the second refines to: “no salvation outside God’s covenant

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98 Ibid.
99 Ibid., 124, 25.
100 Ibid., 125.
For Pieris, Jesus is totally Christ (*totus Jesus est Christus*), but he is not the totality of Christ (*totus Christus non est Jesus*). Jesus is fully Christ, but Christ is more than Jesus. Jesus is to be understood as a corporate, rather than an individual person. Christogenesis is the term Pieris uses to describe the process whereby Jesus is in the process of revealing total Christhood by gathering covenant partners. Christhood refers to “the fullness of the realized Reign of God.” Jesus will become fully Christ when “what he had embodied in his own person (the Reign of God) will be realized by all.” In the process of Christogenesis, the poor constitute the body of Christ.

Pieris rejects the traditional dualist distinction between “our service to Christ” in the corporal works of mercy and “Christ’s service to us” through the spiritual works of mercy, or sacraments and preaching. In this christology both Bread and the Poor are sacraments of salvation.

It is important to clarify that Pieris understands the word Christ as title like other scriptural titles, such as, Son of God or Lord. In his earlier paper, “Speaking of the Son of God in Non-Christian

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101 In light these two fundamental axioms, Pieris reformulates the Two Commandments from Mathew’s gospel as two mutually inclusive principles:
   
   “a) wherever God is loved and served, it is the Poor that rule, not poverty; and
   
   b) wherever the poor are loved and served, it is God that rules and not Mammon.” Pieris, “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 220.

102 Pieris, “The Roman Catholic Perception of Other Churches and Other Religions After the Vatican’s *Dominus Jesus,”* 224.


104 Christogenesis was the term used by Teilhard de Chardin to describe the “mystical Christ:”
   
   The Incarnation is a renewal and a restoration of all the forces and powers of the universe; Christ is the instrument, the centre, the end of all animate and material Creation; by Him all things are created, sanctified, made alive. This is the constant and customary teaching of St. John and St. Paul (the most ‘cosmic’ of the sacred writers) . . . . And since the time when Jesus was born, when He finished growing and died and rose again, *everything has continued to move because Christ has not yet completed His own forming*. He has not yet gathered in to Himself the last folds of the Garment of flesh and love which His disciples are making for him. *The mystical Christ has not yet attained His full growth*. In the pursuance of this engendering is situated the ultimate spring of all created activity . . . . Christ is the Fulfillment even of the natural evolution of all beings.


Cultures,” Pieris argued that religious titles, such as Christ, were human formulations and by themselves did not save. Rather, titles attempted to articulate the Mystery of salvation at the heart of each theistic and non-theistic religious tradition. Further he affirmed that the Mystery of salvation manifested itself tridimensionally as Source, Medium and Force. The Source was the “salvific beyond becoming the human person’s salvific within.” The source has been titled Yahweh, Allah, Tao, Nirvana, Tathata, and Brahman-Atman. The Medium was “a salvific mediation, which is also revelatory.” It has been called tao, marga, dharma, dabar, and image. The Force was “a (given) human capacity for salvation or a saving power” which was inherent in the human person and yearned for redemption. It has gone by the names such as purusa, citta and atman. The Christian tradition named this trinity Theos-Logos-Pneuma or Father-Son-Spirit. The Medium of salvation could be further delineated as the “word-medium-path.” It was the word-medium-path that mediated salvation, not the title or linguistic idiom in which it was experienced and expressed. Moreover, it was available to all people at all times and places in history. For example, in Buddhism, the word-medium-path was the dharma; in Christianity it was the logos. Pieris affirmed that “Jesus of Nazareth is the enfleshed historical manifestation of the word-medium-path.” But the historical Jesus was not the whole of the Logos. Christ was a title that Christian theologians gave to this reality, but the Logos or word-medium-path operated among those who did not recognize it by the name of Christ.

108 Pieris cautioned against an identification of these titles. More properly, they were “homologues,” not equivalents, but corresponding features. He gave the example of Nirvana in Buddhism being a homologue with the Reign of God in Christianity. See Pieris, “Comparative Study of Religions: Lecture Notes for Buddhist Students studying Christianity,” Dialogue n.s., Vol. 27 (2000): 135.
110 Ibid.
111 Pieris, “The Problem of Universality and Inculturation with Regard to Patterns of theological Thinking,” 139, 140.
112 Ibid., 140.
113 Jacques Dupuis has criticized Pieris for separating the saving Word of God and Jesus the Christ. Dupuis’ interpretation of Pieris is that it is the “Word of God who saves, not precisely the Word-of-God made-flesh, that is,
It is on the cross that the plenitude of Christ is revealed most clearly. For Pieris, Easter (or Jesus’ exaltation as Sovereign by the Father) and Pentecost (the exhalation of the Spirit) are inseparable from the crucifixion. Though spread out in Scripture, in reality they are all one event. It is this one Death-Easter-Pentecost event that articulates the essence of Jesus’ Christhood:

the Death-Easter-Pentecost event constitutes the supreme expression and the concentrated moment of the twofold word-Command to love God and Neighbor lived out to the full by Jesus on the Cross, as the essence of his Christhood. What makes this paschal event salvific (i.e., what makes it the fulfillment of the divine promise), is that Jesus embraced this manner of dying (a manner that necessarily implied resurrection and out-pouring of the Spirit) in loving obedience to the Father (Phil 2:8) as required by the First Love-Command, and equally out of his abundant love for humankind (Eph 5:2) in conformity with the Second-Love Command. This supreme act of Jesus embodying the two-fold word of promise in his Passover (life-death-life) is what reconciled humankind with God.114

In Jesus one finds the fullest expression of the fulfillment of the twofold command to love God and love one’s neighbour. The cross proclaims both Christ as God’s “Word of Promise” to the Poor and Christ as the Poor’s “Word of Protest” to God. Jesus is the divine word eliciting the twofold command to love God and love neighbour, but is also the human word of compliance to God’s twofold command.115 Wherever a cross is carried on earth, regardless of the religion of the one carrying the cross, Christ is present. It is the cross that makes us a covenanted people. As God died and rose in Christ, so too the poor die and are raised with God in Christ. Thus Pieris

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115 Ibid., 226.
can speak of an Asian Christ. Christ is in Asia, not because he was born in Asia, but rather, because his visible Body in which he reveals the covenant is the Poor. In Asia, the majority of the Poor are non-Christian. Pieris concludes that God does not ask the poor to change their religion. Rather, God invites the poor to join others and engage in the battle with mammon.

Such conversion is the very opposite of proselytism:

To evangelize, to baptize, to make disciples of nations does not consist in converting a nation to the Christian religion (proselytism condemned by Jesus in Mat. 23:15) but to engage in the battle to demolish national idols who thrive on human slavery. Evangelization is the common struggle of the adherents of all religions and of no religion.

Pieris rejected triumphalistic cries such as “Asia, open your doors to Christ.” A more Gospel-based response would be “Church, open your heart and your possessions to the poor, for what you do to them you do to me. I AM THEY.” Christ cannot be separated from both the poor and the cross.

In making these claims Pieris is reinterpreting the traditional ideas of what the church means by baptism and mission. Following Paul, he asserts that baptism is not merely a ritual, but our partaking in the paschal mystery. Baptism is “cross-bearing discipleship.” This baptism is the common (beatitudinal) spirituality required by all religions. What is absolutely necessary for our salvation is not Baptism as a sacrament, but rather our following the baptism of Jesus on the cross at Calvary through our ongoing commitment to the Reign of God. Pieris speaks of Jesus’ double baptism: first, at the Jordan of Asian religiosity and second, at the Calvary of Asian poverty. For true Christian mission in Asia, Pieris says that the church does not need to

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116 Pieris highlights four categories of the Asian Christ: the Dalit Christ of India; the Han Ridden Korean Christ; the Christa of Asian women; and the Third World Christ of Asia. Pieris, “Does Christ Have a Place in Asia?” Fire and Water, 69-74, and “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 197, 8.
117 Pieris, God’s Reign for God’s Poor 39.
118 Pieris, “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 223.
119 Ibid., 226.
proselytize, but must travel the same double baptismal journey as Jesus.\textsuperscript{120}

In summary, Pieris has challenged the logos of christology of the present-day Curialists and Liberals. He asserted that in formulating his christology he had gone through the same process as the Gospel writers and those who developed the Nicene and Chalcedon formulae. These latter tried to articulate an understanding of Jesus Christ which spoke to and respected the contexts of their particular audiences. Likewise, Pieris was creating a christology which spoke to people living in the Asian context. Covenant christology situated the uniqueness of Jesus within the covenant framework of promise-fulfillment. Jesus was unique because he was God’s Word in conflict with mammon and God’s covenantal Word of promise to the poor. It was on the cross that the uniqueness of Jesus was revealed most fully. The cross proclaimed Jesus both as God’s Word of promise to the poor and the poor’s protest to God. Pieris reconfigured Teilhard’s idea of Christogenesis to understand Jesus in corporate terms. Jesus was fully Christ, but Christ was more than Jesus. Jesus was in the process of revealing total Christhood by gathering covenant partners. Wherever there was a cross on earth, Christ was present. The poor constituted Christ’s body on earth. Christogenesis was the historical movement of the poor in fulfillment of God’s promise. Thus Pieris could speak of an Asian Christ. Since the majority of the Asian Poor belonged to other religions and non-religious traditions, Pieris maintained that God did not ask the poor to change their religious allegiance. Baptism was cross-bearing discipleship. It meant following Jesus on his journey from the Jordan to Calvary. Living in the Asian context, this implied making an option for Asian soteriologies and the Asian Christ. As Christians, what throws us out of communion is not the denial of any dogma, but our ‘fundamental option’ by

\textsuperscript{120} Cf. “sacramental baptism is the covenant-promise binding us to a martyrional (witness-backed) commitment to baptize and make disciples of nations (Mat. 28:19), not certainly through proselytism which was ridiculed by Jesus (Mat. 23:15), but by collaborating with all people of good will in the crucial (=cross-bearing) and self-risking task of breaking down national idols which represent our bloated Ego.” Ibid., 227.
which we self-righteously exclude God and our neighbour from our life.

3.5 Mission and Dialogue

Pieris’ understanding of mission and dialogue follows from his covenant christology and it challenges ecclesiocentrism and Eurocentrism in the church. He derived his missiological principles for the local church from the two baptisms of Jesus. At the Jordan, Jesus discerned among the various religious and political groups in first century Palestine. So too, the Christian church in Asia had to discern between a variety of ideological and religious trends. As Jesus identified with the religious poor of the countryside, so the church in Asia had a mission to be the locale where the authentic metacosmic spirituality of monastic religions and the liberative forces of the cosmic intersected. As Jesus’ twofold baptism implied a ‘loss of authority;’ so too the church had to become an *ecclesia discens* rather than and *ecclesia docens*. As Jesus discovered his identity by losing it, so too the church, through its full participation in the life and aspirations of the religious poor in Asia, had to become the local church of Asia, rather than the local church in Asia with a Western identity. For Jesus the journey begun at Jordan ended on the cross. To become truly inculturated in Asia, the church had to become liberated from mammon, reject new versions of colonialism, and by necessity become a church of the poor: poor by choice and poor by circumstances. Any form of evangelism which ignored the two biblical axioms distorted the image and message of Jesus Christ. In Asia, evangelization and liberation were not two separate things anymore.

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122 “Western Models of Inculturation: Applicable in Asia?” 57.
123 Pieris, “Whither the New Evangelism,” 149. Pieris speaks of “integral evangelism.” and concretely today it consists of two inseparable processes: “the first is the evangelization of the church by the poor; the aim would be to reconvert the church to discipleship so that she may have the authority to undertake the second task in the evangelizing process, namely, the evangelization of the poor by the church; this consists of awakening the poor to their evangelical vocation vis-à-vis the Reign of God.” Ibid 153.
124 Pieris, “Western Models of Inculturation: Applicable in Asia?” 57, 58. Pieris has said that this ecclesiological revolution was being initiated in the basic human communities. He gave several examples of experiments in this
With respect to interreligious dialogue, Pieris challenged the Western academy’s categories: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. A paradigm proper to Asia must acknowledge three dimensions: (a) a Third Magisterium,\(^{125}\) (b) the liberational thrust that defined an Asian theology of religions, and (c) the social location of this theology in the Basic Human Communities (BHCs). For Pieris, the poor constituted a Third Magisterium and formed “a school where many Christian activists reeducate themselves in the art of speaking the language of God’s reign”.\(^{126}\) The second dimension involved transposing dialogue from a metacosmic to the more liberative cosmic spirituality.\(^{127}\) Third, it was the BHCs that provided an alternative vision which took seriously both the Magisterium of the Poor and the liberative potential of cosmic religion. BHCs included Christians, as well as people from other religious and non-religious traditions.

Pieris insisted that if we need categories for interreligious dialogue, his suggestion was syncretism, synthesis and symbiosis.\(^{128}\) Symbiosis was the process that occurred in BHCs. Each religion was challenged by the uniqueness of the liberative approaches the other religious traditions. Symbiosis “indicates one’s conversion to the common heritage of all religions (beatitudinal spirituality) and also a conversion to the specificity of one’s own religion as a new vision: Devasarana, a monastery of the Anglican monk Yohan Devananda where the monastic presence in a Buddhist culture coincides with his socialist involvement with peasant communities; the Satyodaya group, lead by Jesuit Paul Caspersz in Kandy which is a multiracial, multilingual and multireligious community trying to construct a classless society in light of ethnic conflicts; the Christ workers’ Fellowship which includes Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, and Marxist, membership of both Sinhalese and Tamils and operates through basic human communities; Father Michael Rodrigo who established a similar community at Buttala in the rural interior of Sri Lanka. See Pieris, “The Reverend Father Michael Rodrigo: a Pioneer in Buddh-Christian Dialogue,” 1-6.\(^{125}\)

For Pieris, there are three Magisteria: the pastoral Magisterium, the academic Magisterium, and the Magisterium of the poor. In his soteriology it is the Magisterium of the Poor who must guide the other two Magisteria.\(^{126}\)

Pieris’ liberation understanding of dialogue, which identifies Jesus with the poor represents a different approach from the ‘Global Ethic’ associated with Hans Kung. The latter has been developed by political and religious elites, and seeks to find universal principles upon which people can agree. See Han Kung, “The History, Significance and Method of the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic,” in A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of World’s Religions, ed. Hans Kung and Karl-Josef Kuschel (London: SCM Press, 1993), 43-76. Pieris notes that Jesus did not dialogue with the religious elites. In fact, he frequently clashed with them. As a consequence, he says “I have, personally, avoided such religious hierarchs as utterly unqualified, for that kind of interreligious dialogue which has the poor as the beneficiaries.” See Pieris, God’s Reign for God’s Poor, 76.\(^{127}\)

Pieris defined syncretism as a haphazard mixing of religions. Synthesis is the creation of a third ‘something’ out of two or more religions.
Symbiosis was Pieris’ approach to what he called “core-to-core” dialogue with Buddhism. He distinguished three related levels on which interreligious dialogue took place: core-experience, collective memory, and interpretation. The core of any religious tradition was defined as “the liberative experience that gave birth to it and continues to be available to successive generations of humankind by developing its own peculiar medium of communication.” The collective memory was the medium through which the core experience was made available to successive generations. It included religious beliefs, practices, traditions and institutions. To be remembered a religion had to be framed in historical and cultural categories which evoked in adherents the distinctive salvific experience which was at the essence of the religion. This was interpretation. In the case of most religious traditions, there were diverse interpretations which led to different philosophical, theological and exegetical schools. Most often, especially in the Euro-American academic world, interreligious dialogue took place on the third level, that of interpretation. Pieris insisted that if an authentic dialogue was to take place it must be a core-to-core dialogue which necessarily involved a communicatio in sacris (communication in ritual). Communicatio in sacris was the entry into the collective memory which mediated access to the core experience. A Christian who wanted to participate in a core-

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130 Pieris, “Christianity in a Core-to-Core Dialogue with Buddhism,” Love Meets Wisdom, 110. Some would criticize Pieris for his claim that each religion has a liberative “core.” Is he not guilty of essentializing each of the religious traditions? In Pieris’ defense, it is clear that he appreciates the diversity and dynamism of religious traditions. For example, he criticized the Buddhist scholar Dr. Gunapala Dharmasiri for his speculative and theoretical approach to Buddhism and Marxism, which Pieris argued needed to be “complemented by an empirico-historical methodology.” For Pieris Dr. Dharmasiri’s method failed to consider the actual historical situation of Buddhist societies under Marxist rule. Pieris stressed that any discussion about the relationship between Buddhism and Marxism must take into account the “living religion of the people rather than purely the theoretical constructs culled from scriptural texts.” See Pieris, “Buddhism and Marxism in Dialogue: A Comment on Dr. Dharmasiri’s Paper,” Dialogue n.s., 12 (1985): 68-86. Pieris’ critique here is consistent with his emphasis on the cosmic dimension of religious traditions which highlight the liberative and historical importance of popular religions, and give expression to a diversity of perspectives and voices. My own perspective is that the choice of the word “core” is open to misunderstanding. It is important to remember that “core” for Pieris refers to the historical “primordial experience” which gave birth to a particular religious tradition and which is open to multiple interpretations that can be articulated in symbiotic dialogues among members of different traditions.
131 Pieris, “The Buddha and the Christ,” 162, 163.
to-core dialogue with Buddhists had to have an empathetic understanding of the core of Buddhism and be willing to “cross over” and enter the dialogue at the level of Buddhism’s collective memory to experience the living reality of Buddhism as it was experienced by Buddhists themselves.

For Buddhism, the core experience is *gnosis* or liberative knowledge, whereas for Christianity, it is *agape* or redemptive love. Pieris argued that each, *gnosis* and *agape*, was a legitimate language of the human spirit, yet by itself, each was incomplete. Rather than being mutually exclusive, *gnosis* and *agape* each needed the other to complement itself. In fact, in reviewing the two traditions, Pieris argued that each had roots in the other tradition, that is, there was a Christian *gnosis* which was *agapeic* and a Buddhist *agape* which was *gnostic*. This allowed for a core-to-core dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism. Pieris argued that in the BHCs, christology did not compete with buddhology. On the path of liberation Christians joined Buddhists in their “gnostic detachment” and Buddhists joined Christians in their “agapeic involvement.” The task of interreligious dialogue today was for the followers of all religious traditions to encourage one another to be faithful to the fundamental vision of their own tradition and confront mammon in its current incarnation:

> Such conversion is a common commitment expected of all religionists by the basic imperatives of each religion’s beatitudinal spirituality. Inter-religious dialogue is a collaborative effort of the followers of all religions at encouraging one another to be faithful to this fundamental religiousness. In fact, this is the greatest need of the hour in the wake of the current globalization of institutional greed.

Pieris asked pointedly: “Of what use is inter-religious dialogue in Asia, if it is not done in the context of our refusal to cooperate with the Dominant system?” In Pieris’ mind, the “pioneer”

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132 Pieris, “Christianity in a Core-to-Core Dialogue with Buddhism,” 111.
133 Ibid., 113.
in the Buddhist-Christian dialogue was Fr. Michael Rodrigo. It was Fr. Rodrigo who incarnated Pieris vision of discipleship and rooted dialogue at the heart of the liberation project. Fr. Rodrigo was a seminary professor and had become “a periphery at the centre.” It was on the periphery that Fr. Rodrigo practised “the dialogue of life,” where the needs of the poor took precedence. He encouraged a profound dialogue at the religious level. Pieris maintained that he was a faithful disciple of Jesus and emulator of the Buddha:

His own strategy was two-pronged. Michael, the Recluse renounced Mammon, pursuing the eight-fold path of Gotama the Buddha, while, Michael, the Prophet denounced Mammon, risking crucifixion like Jesus the Christ.

Fr. Rodrigo was murdered on November 10, 1987 by “a liberal democratic government” because he resisted the taking of land from the poor in the name of development.

3.6 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have explored Pieris’ soteriology within the context of Asian religiosity and Asian poverty, specifically, Theravada Buddhism and Sri Lanka’s experience of various forms of colonialism. Embracing the option for the poor is the constitutive dimension of being a follower of Jesus. I have argued that Pieris reconfigured the option for the poor within the context of Asian religiosity to situate interreligious dialogue at the centre of the liberation project. In doing this he challenged the option for privilege. The irruption of the poor in Asia means the irruption of the non-Christian poor. Discipleship rejects the colonizers’ tribal God and has to do with being evangelized by the Asian Christ. It commits itself to the present historical moment and travels the same double baptismal journey of Jesus from Jordan to Calvary. I have shown that

Pieris challenged the church to sever its ties with all versions of colonial power. He challenged any attempt to make European theology, whether in its Curial or Liberal forms, normative for Asia. He identified the imported Christ-against-religions theology, Christ-of-religions theology, the liberal theology of the human rights tradition, and the triumphalistic Vatican theology supporting the New Evangelization, as hegemonic. He challenged Chalcedon as a norm for orthodoxy. He confronted elitist approaches to interreligious dialogue that focused on the metacosmic rather than the cosmic. He recovered the meaning of baptism as cross bearing discipleship. He encouraged Christians and adherents of other religious and non-religious traditions to commit to the liberative core of their own traditions and engage in the common struggle against mammon. He declared that the Magisterium of the Poor must guide the academic and pastoral Magisteria.

The following quotation offers an excellent expression of Pieris’ commitment to the Asian Christ and symbiosis, and of his challenge to the ecclesial centre. It was written in response to *Dominus Jesus*:

> While we appreciate the fears and anxieties of the Curial theologians who are not in the field with us and cannot perceive things from afar, we wish to assure our brother Ratzinger and his concerned collaborators that our mission, here, is both worship of and witness to a frontierless Christ whom we recognize and proclaim in the lives of millions of people who receive guidance from “clearly soteriological” beliefs and practices of their ancestors. Being co-pilgrims, what we offer one another is not salvation (which is available to all) but mutual encouragement amidst sin and failure. This is the aim of inter-religious dialogue. The Lord Jesus (*Dominus Jesus*) whom we adore as our Lord, love as our Savior and follow as our brother, cannot be talked about exclusively in terms of human-made doctrinal formulae except at the risk of blasphemy. We have taken Him much more seriously than we have been given credit for.”  

139 (bold and italics in the original)

For Pieris the *Lord Jesus* is not the truncated Christ of *Dominus Jesus*, but the “frontierless Christ” salvifically present in the BHCs and in all those working for justice.

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139 Pieris, “The Roman Catholic Perception of Other Churches and Other Religions after the Vatican’s *Dominus Jesus*,” 229.
Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 have set the stage for a conversation between Pieris and Gutierrez about their readings of privilege, Eurocentric universality, and history as linear progress.
CHAPTER 4

Soteriology without Borders: Pieris and Gutierrez in Conversation

4.1 Introduction

The argument of this study is that the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris provide important resources for the development of North Atlantic theologies which challenge the neoliberal project. Chapter 1 described neoliberalism, outlined some North American expressions, and noted examples of resistance. It explored certain theological problematics of three facets of the neoliberal project. Chapter 2 situated Gutierrez’ soteriology against the background of the Conquest and developmentalism, studied his original contributions to the theology of history and theological method, and demonstrated how he challenged privilege, Eurocentric universality, and history as linear progress. Chapter 3 examined Pieris’ use of the option for the poor in the context of Asian religiosity to situate interreligious dialogue at the centre of the liberation project, and how this challenged colonial and neocolonial, ecclesial, and theological privilege. Chapter 4 brings Gutierrez and Pieris into conversation, and explores some of the convergences, differences, unaddressed questions and challenges vis-à-vis their soteriologies in the areas of privilege, universality and history. As I will show, Gutierrez makes important contributions in the area of dialogue that challenge privilege, and Pieris contributes to the discussions on knowledge and history in ways that challenge Eurocentric universality and history as linear progress. I caution the reader that I am not treating all dimensions of the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris, that my purpose is modest: I am studying how Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ shared commitment to the option for the poor and the renewal of the church in the world,
challenge the option for privilege, unitary allegedly universal perspectives emanating from the imperial centre, and history as linear progress. As I noted in my Introduction, the inspiration for my methodology is Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s *Feminism without Borders*. My discussion acknowledges the limits and diversity of Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ contexts, but at the same time looks at the emancipatory possibilities of pushing beyond these particular borders. There are important differences in the soteriologies of each theologian. Some of these are due to context; others are due to personal interests. At the same time, there are remarkable similarities. Both differences and similarities are significant. The Chapter begins by outlining what Gutierrez and Pieris have said about each other’s theology and then proceeds to conversations about privilege, universality, and history. I will also address three questions regarding Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ soteriologies. Chapter 5 will take up the implications of these conversations for theology and for challenging the project of neoliberal globalization in Canada.

### 4.2 Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ Readings of Each Other’s Theology

There are a few passages where Gutierrez and Pieris refer explicitly to each other’s work. The earliest references are found in the texts of the discussions of EATWOT. In his addresses at EATWOT in 1979 in Sri Lanka and New Delhi in 1981, Pieris argued that Latin American theology was a real breakthrough and “the *only* valid model of theology for the Third World today.”¹ What he admired about Latin American liberation theology was the return to biblical roots, the shift from *logos* to *dabar* theology, the primacy of orthopraxis over theory, theological method as a spirituality, the Base Christian Communities as an ecclesiological revolution, the restoration of the theology of the cross, the rejection of “development theology,” and the emphasis on salvation in history. However, as I have noted, Pieris criticized the works of Jose Miranda and Jon Sobrino for failing to appreciate the liberating potential of popular religiosity.

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¹ Pieris, “Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation,” 80.
He did not include Gutierrez in this critique. Rather, he called Gutierrez one of the “perceptive pioneers” who had always viewed religion as either enslaving or liberating.2

As the EATWOT discussions proceeded there were major debates over analysis: what were the root causes of oppression and dehumanization?3 In the Introduction to the second edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutierrez said that from these discussions he learned about the suffering of other peoples in the Global South and that he had grown in hope.4 He specifically referred to Pieris’ 1979 presentation:

Those working at a theology of liberation in the Asian context have likewise tried to bring out the deeply contemplative side of that continent on which ancient and magnificent religions of the human race have left such a profound imprint. Aloysius Pieris, theologian of Sri Lanka, describes the Asian peoples as both poor and religious. Both of these conditions point the way to a radical and complete liberation.5

Fifteen years later, speaking of the challenge of religious pluralism, Gutierrez drew on Pieris’ work to insist those working in areas of justice “must not separate religious matters from the situation of poverty.”6

In a 1990 paper, Pieris explained that he was intrigued to find that in the index of Gutierrez’ “classic” *A Theology of Liberation*, there were no entries on human dignity or human rights. What Pieris admired was that Gutierrez distinguished progressive Eurocentric theologies

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2 See Pieris, “The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology,” 90. Pieris cited Gutierrez’ address at the 1980 San Paulo EATWOT Conference where Gutierrez contrasted religious populism that can be used by the oppressor to justify the existing order and a religiosity that holds the possibility of a liberative faith. See Gutierrez, “The Irruption of the Poor in Latin American and the Christian Communities of the Common People,” 113-115.

3 For one account, see James Cone, “Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians,” *Ecumenical Trends* (September, 1985): 120.

4 Gutierrez, “Expanding the View,” xxiii.


concerned with human rights, from the biblically based Third World liberation theologies which subjected CST and human rights theology to the foundational liberating experience that formed the axis of biblical revelation. Pieris’ esteem for Gutierrez is highlighted in a 2004 paper “Political Theologies in Asia,” where he holds that A Theology of Liberation was “an epoch-making book” that had “a widespread influence on the thinking of Third World theologians, culminating in the formation of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians.”

These references indicate that there is a mutual respect for each other’s theology and that each has influenced the other. While each works within his own particular context to construct a soteriology to meet the challenges of the moment, their respective readings of each other’s work enabled them to reach beyond these borders and engage in dialogue and solidarity. As I have noted, Pieris said that Latin American Liberation theology liberated the church in Asia from five hundred years of a “theology of domination.” Gutierrez’ new way of doing theology has opened paths forward that are only becoming clear in light of more than forty years of struggles and debates. For Gutierrez, the encounter with Pieris confirmed the liberating potential of popular religiosity. He agreed that liberation theology must take into account both overwhelming poverty and multifaceted religiosity. He affirmed that in the struggle against the new forms of colonialism, interreligious dialogue must move to the centre of the theological agenda.

4.3 Conversation 1: Challenging Privilege-Embracing Solidarity

I have shown that both Gutierrez and Pieris embraced the option for the poor to challenge many dimensions of privilege: political and economic privilege vis-a-vis colonialism, developmentalism, and neoliberal globalization; ecclesial privilege that was the result of the

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partnerships with the powerful; and hegemonic theologies which rendered the poor in the Global South without a voice. In Chapter 3, I investigated Pieris’ unique approach to interreligious dialogue. Religious pluralism has not been as central to Gutierrez’ writings as to Pieris’. However, a close examination of Gutierrez’ later work *Las Casas* reveals many resonances between Gutierrez’ articulation of Lascasian theology and Pieris’ approach to the Other. In defending the Indigenous of the Indies and challenging the Spanish political and religious elites, Las Casas developed a theology of dialogue and encounter that also embraced solidarity with the Other. In this section I will examine some key elements of Gutierrez’ interpretation of Las Casas’ challenge to political and ecclesiastical privilege, in order to identify some of the convergences in Pieris’ and Gutierrez’ theological approaches to dialogue with the Other that will be important for resisting the contemporary neoliberal project.

Both Las Casas and Pieris belonged to an institutional church which had become enmeshed in the colonial processes. In the Americas of the 16th century, the wars against the Indigenous were waged under the pretext of evangelization. The conquistadors had their own ‘theology’ of dialogue: the “hecho and derecho” of the wars was justified as a means of announcing the Reign of God and the systematic oppression of the Indigenous was sustained by the Eurocentric theologies of privileged theologians living in Spain. The driving force behind the Spanish model

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9 In a recent paper, Gutierrez identifies religious pluralism as one of three key tasks that liberation theology must attend to today. He says that the relatively recent awareness of the presence of other religious traditions raises many difficult questions for theology, but it also offers the opportunity for theology to re-examine itself, especially in the area of christology. Following Pieris, he emphasizes that those who are raising the questions in this area today come from the poorest areas of the world, and he insists that questions of religious pluralism cannot be separated from the situation of poverty. Gutierrez, “The Situation and Tasks of Liberation Theology Today,” 90-93.

10 It may be objected that my focus is Gutierrez, not Las Casas. There is truth here, but I contend that through a close reading of *Las Casas* it is possible to glean some of the contours of Gutierrez’ theology in the area of encounter and dialogue with the Other. There are many places in the text where Gutierrez expresses his agreement with, or his understanding of the limitations of Las Casas’ theology. There are passages where Gutierrez compares Las Casas’ thought to current theological discussions and church teachings, and makes it clear where he positions himself. Finally, though Las Casas’ context and conceptual tools are different, there are many areas where there are strong resonances between Las Casas’ theological approach to the Other and key areas of Gutierrez’ soteriology.

11 Gutierrez, *Las Casas*, 104.
of evangelization was greed, where gold had been transformed into idol. As I have noted, Pieris too indicted the institutional church in Asia for its association with colonialism and its hegemonic imported theologies. He insisted that mammon was at the heart of the colonial endeavour.

Both Las Casas and Pieris were influenced by their respective theological contexts. Las Casas held a providential view of history. He was well versed in medieval theology, especially St. Thomas. He lived in a theological environment which had accepted Aristotle’s categorization that some were “slaves by nature,”12 and preached *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Pieris’ theological context was shaped by Vatican II, especially *Nostra Aetate*’s Fulfillment Theory, and his experience of Asian poverty and the diversity of Asia’s religious traditions. What is unique about both Las Casas and Pieris is that each had the creative capacity to go beyond the prevailing theologies of the time. With a shift in method, the creative use of biblical sources, and an intelligent reading of church traditions, both managed to transcend their particular theological contexts.

Gutierrez maintained that today we would call Las Casas’ approach to the Indigenous “liberating evangelization.”13 He argued that Las Casas journeyed theologically from the question of evangelization, to respect for the religious convictions of non-Christians, to the question of the possibility of salvation beyond the visible frontiers of the church.14 I have identified four theological foundations of Las Casas’ position; each which I argue finds resonance in Pieris. The first had to do with the universality of God’s grace. Gutierrez said that one of Las Casas’ great

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12 Ibid., 291-301.
13 Ibid., 271.
14 Ibid., 270.
theological intuitions was “*The God of Jesus Christ is the God who gives life.*” Las Casas referenced 1Timothy 2:4 to argue that all people are capable of receiving salvation. While the colonizers insisted that the Indigenous were damned, Las Casas held that no one could know who constituted the elect. This was up to God and no one could impose terms on the divine. He argued that the salvific grace of God had never been wanting in the Indies, even before the time of the conversion of the Indigenous. Las Casas later surmised that the number of Indigenous saved might outnumber that of the “faithful.”

Las Casas’ second theological foundation was a “solid Christology.” He insisted that the grace of Christ was invisibly present in the Indigenous: “The hidden truth, hidden deeper than the mines worked by the Indians, is this: in these abused and despised beings, Christ is present. To oppress and bury the dwellers of the Indies is to oppress and bury Christ himself.” Las Casas deduced three consequences from this insight: the Indigenous were “*in habitu or in potentia*” members of the body of Christ; to oppress the Indigenous was to oppress Christ; and Christians needed to develop a profound respect for the religious customs of the Indigenous. As I have noted, Las Casas indicted the Yucay Opinion on christological grounds: gold, not Jesus Christ had become the mediator of God’s love. The conquerors’ employment of coercion and murder provided a counter testimony to Jesus’ claim that he had come to bring life. Freedom was the indispensable condition for the acceptance of the faith. Las Casas cited Luke 4:16-20 to assert

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15 Ibid., 197.
16 Ibid. 218.
17 Ibid., 258. Gutierrez noted there was a tension in Las Casas’ work between God’s universal salvific will and the necessity for the church. In his defense of the Indigenous, Las Casas tried to hold both poles together. He argued that if every human being was called to salvation, then every person had the capacity to receive it, even those outside the institutional church. For Las Casas this included not only the Indigenous, but also the Blacks, Arabs and the Moors. Ibid., 327. On the other side, Las Casas insisted that the church was necessary for baptism and the other sacraments, as well as for imparting the knowledge of certain truths. With reference to the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, Las Casas asserted that Christ was calling the Indigenous to salvation at this “eleventh hour” Ibid., 222-3.
18 Ibid., 162.
19 Ibid., 66.
20 Ibid., 262.
that the Spanish must bring to the Indigenous “the year of Jubilee.”

Las Casas’ third theological move was to adopt the perspective of the Indigenous. As I have shown, Gutierrez maintained that Las Casas transcended the narrow confines of his age by abandoning the Eurocentric perspective of power and perceiving reality as “if he were an Indian.” This epistemological shift enabled Las Casas to understand the response against the Notification by those Indigenous who insisted that God, not the Pope was Lord of the universe, and the Pope had no power to bestow the land to the King. It allowed Las Casas to appreciate the Indigenous’ claim that gold was the God of Christians. To see as “if he were an Indian” let him understand that the Indigenous saw human sacrifice as a “moral obligation” and an attempt to offer to God the best that they had, namely, human life. To see the Indigenous as the “poor” of the Gospel, gave Las Casas a new awareness of both the Gospel and the historical context. He could confidently claim against Victoria that he had insights that could only be obtained by having a direct knowledge of that reality which the Gospel illuminated, and that this perspective enabled him to defend religious freedom, the right to worship, and raise the question of the possibility of salvation beyond the confines of the institutional church.

The fourth foundational move was to connect salvation and justice. I have noted that for Las Casas evangelization included the Jubilee vision. Las Casas rejected the Burgos Laws for

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21 Ibid., 161.
22 Ibid., 85-95.
23 Ibid., 122. The Notification of 1513 or Requerimiento was an attempt to legalize Europe’s actions against the Indigenous and absolve the former of any responsibility for plunder and exploitation of the Indigenous. It was a document read to the Indigenous demanding that they recognize the authority of the church, Pope and the King. The public reading of the document was often done without translation into the local languages. See Gutierrez, Las Casas 109-125.
24 Ibid., 442
25 Ibid. 181. See also 204.
26 Ibid., 166-89.
27 Ibid., 270.
perpetuating racism and the tyranny of the colonial system.\textsuperscript{28} He sent the king his treatises \textit{De Thesauris} and the \textit{Doce Dudas} to warn the Spanish monarch that the king had been entrusted to care for the inhabitants of the Indies and that his eternal salvation depended on how he undertook this responsibility.\textsuperscript{29} He maintained that the Spanish sovereigns were responsible for restitution to the Indigenous.\textsuperscript{30} Gutierrez argued that by connecting salvation and justice, Las Casas overcame the traditional dualism between the mystical and prophetic. In the Indies, to pray without justice condemned the Indigenous to slavery and death. Moreover, the bringing together of salvation and justice raised the question of the salvation of the Europeans:

> Oppression of the Indians, the profound injustice of the system of the \textit{encomienda}, based on slavery and dispossession, sows death in the footsteps of the quest for gold. It makes a laughingstock of the name of Christian and transforms the profession of faith into a lie and a sacrilege. Those responsible for these things will be most strictly judged by God.\textsuperscript{31}

For Las Casas the salvation of the European “believers” was intrinsically connected with the salvation of the Indigenous “unbelievers.”

These theological moves have also been made by Pieris. Symbiosis assumed the universality of divine grace. Pieris’ theological enterprise was also grounded in christology. His covenant christology maintained that the crowning point of Jesus’ mission manifesto was the proclamation of the Jubilee Year.\textsuperscript{32} Where Las Casas saw Christ in the Indigenous, Pieris spoke of the Asian Christ. While Las Casas endeavoured to see reality from the perspective of the Indigenous, Pieris told us “the first condition of any dialogue is the willingness to cross over to the other side and

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 287. The Burgos Laws were formulated at the end of 1512. They were first systematic code to govern the relations between the new conquerors and the Indigenous. Las Casas bitterly opposed the Burgos Laws because they continued the \textit{encomienda} system; they perpetuated the propaganda that the encomenderos had spread regarding the Indigenous; they legitimated forced conversions; and they were passed without any consultation with the Indigenous. Ibid., 284, 285.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 238
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 366.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 261.
see things as the other sees.” Finally, Pieris too, connected salvation and justice: cross-bearing discipleship committed itself to the present historical moment and looked for God in the historical struggle against mammon. It was only through conversion and commitment to the Reign of God, that rich and poor, Christian and non-Christian had access to the God of Jesus Christ.

Gutierrez endorsed and moved beyond Las Casas’ theological shifts. He asserted that on the eve of the fifth centenary of the Conquest, the Latin American church needed to retrieve Las Casas’ vision of liberating evangelization. He celebrated Vatican II’s Declaration on Religious Freedom that every human person had the right to religious freedom, and Lumen Gentium that God’s grace was offered to those who were not members of the church. He insisted that the gospel could not be linked to any one culture, that without an authentic inculturation, evangelization became another way of subjugating the people. Like Pieris, he distanced himself from dialogue among intellectual elites from various religious traditions. Dialogue begins as praxis or a dialogue of life. He insisted that the church would discover its true identity by losing itself in the life of the poor.

34 Gutierrez, Las Casas, 187.
35 Ibid., 252.
36 Ibid., 455.
37 Gutierrez, “Expanding the View,” xlii. It is difficult to name differences between Gutierrez and Pieris in the area of dialogue. We don’t know Gutierrez’ judgment about Pieris’ assertion that “Jesus is totally Christ, but he is not the totality of Christ.” Nor do we have Gutierrez’ comments on Pieris’ ‘core-to-core’ dialogue or symbiosis. There is one area where there is an obvious disagreement, namely, how each interprets John Paul II’s call for a New Evangelization. Las Casas was written two years after Redemptoris Missio. Gutierrez understood the Pope’s call as being consistent with Puebla’s assertion that the poor evangelize. As I have noted, Pieris criticized Redemptoris Missio and the theology of the New Evangelization.
4.4 Conversation 2: Challenging Eurocentric Universality-Celebrating Diversity

In Chapter 2, I showed that Gutierrez used the option for the poor to confront hegemonic unitary allegedly universalist biases in colonial, and modern conservative and liberal theologies. These theologies transplanted European versions of Christianity into Latin America, Asia and Africa, and imposed uniformity in theology, liturgy and ecclesial structures. For Gutierrez, starting with the experiences and knowledges of the poor gave theology and the Christian community access to a diversity of perspectives and insights. This implied a sharp break with past practice and required an openness to unexpected possibilities:

From a starting point in the poor, from the underside of history in which the powerful dominate and repress and then falsify the account, it is possible to discover certain aspects of the demands of the God who delivers. We also discover that, in order to proclaim the gospel and practice theology, we are sometimes obliged to abandon the terrain to which we are accustomed, break with the familiar, the comfortable, and the secure, and walk–like Abraham–toward an unknown land, along a desert trail where the only solid footing is faith in God and hope in the Reign of life.  

One central implication of this epistemic beginning is that theology abandons singular universal perspectives and embraces catholicity.

Pieris has also used the option for the poor in the context of the many faiths of Asia to challenge Eurocentric universality. In a 1983 article Pieris responded to criticisms of his christology by Felipe Gomez, a Spanish theologian working in the Philippines, whom Pieris characterized as an “eloquent” spokesperson for traditional Western theology. Gomez had argued that certain Asian theologians, including Pieris, in their commitments to interreligious dialogue were willing to sacrifice the unicity of Jesus Christ and abandon the church’s mission to pursue converts. He characterized the temper of these Asian Christians in pejorative terms: “Dialogue is the thing now where, in egalitarian humility, the gods cancel their differences and the worshippers utter a

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38 Las Casas, 263.
polyphonic ‘om’ of mutual recognition.” Gömez reduced sophisticated epistemological arguments to academic slogans:

. . . there emerges a certain tendency to overkill by criticism of alleged ‘western’ absolutism, spiritual imperialism, aggressive intolerance and other similar slogans, criticism which begins from a sincere will to dialogue but ends in a relativistic Christology and a ‘demissioning’ Christianity.

Further, Gömez claimed that in approaching the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the issue of context was irrelevant: “The question of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with East-West or North-South polarities; it affects Christianity as a whole, or perhaps we must say the totality of modern culture, . . .” For Gömez, Chalcedon was the essential and universal norm of christology.

Pieris responded with a vigorous and insightful critique. He insisted that Gömez had taken his remarks out of context. He showed where Gömez had blatantly misrepresented important exegetes and theologians. For Pieris, the option for the poor demanded that theologians take context into account:

If the story of Jesus is the story of God among and for the Poor and has, as its context, the polarization of ‘haves’ and have-nots’, I cannot understand how the East-West and North-South polarities can become so inconsequential for any Christ-talk.” (bold in the original)

Pieris charged that for Gömez, one culture had become the totality of all cultures today, and this alone was to be associated with Christianity as a whole. He protested that this did in fact, represent both a “cultural colonialism” and a “spiritual imperialism:”

It is tantamount to saying: ‘My language is the universal language, my culture is the universal culture’ which is another version of the old slogan, ‘My church is the universal church.’

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41 Ibid., 4.
42 Ibid.
43 Pieris, “Christology in Asia: a Reply to Felipe Gömez,” 171.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
Pieris insisted that for most Asians, dialogue respected rather than cancelled differences. While Gomez seemed uneasy about interreligious dialogue undermining the uniqueness of Jesus, Asians took the opposite perspective: they “wish to discover His uniqueness in the light of this dialogue.”

This conversation with Felipe Gomez enables readers to consider a key dimension of Pieris’ soteriology through an epistemological lens. In his reply, Pieris clarified that at the heart of his theology of interreligious dialogue, he was challenging the validity of singular universal theological truth claims. In discussing the Asian approach to inter-religious dialogue, he spoke of “the idiomatic pluralism in the transmission of experienced Truth . . .” (author’s bold).

As I have shown in Chapter 3, in the context of Sri Lanka, Pieris distinguished core idioms in Buddhism and Christianity, gnosis and agape respectively. Each idiom was a legitimate language of the spirit. Each represented an articulation of the truth of reality. In Pieris’ mind, each idiom was partial and incomplete. Each was open to multiple interpretations and expressions. And, each needed the other to allow for a fuller understanding of reality. Neither idiom, either in its core or its various interpretations, could be applied universally. Against Gomez, Pieris said that most Asians recognized the plural nature of peoples’ articulations of reality, and thus when they engaged in inter-religious and inter-ecclesial dialogue, they endeavoured to “study, experience and master each other’s religious language and theological idiom.”

In the end, Pieris said Gomez’s Eurocentric approach contradicted the work of the

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46 Ibid., 169.
47 Ibid., 169. In a similar way, as I noted in his discussions of the Trinity and Jesus Christ, Pieris affirmed the plurality of articulations of the experiences of the tridimensional Mystery: Source, Medium and Force; and of the experience of the Medium of salvation: the word-medium-path. See above, Chapter 3, Section 3.4.3. As well, in his reply to Gomez, Pieris also acknowledged another position which he maintained was held by a fewer number of religious thinkers, namely, “pluralism in the very experiencing of Truth.” Pieris, “Christology in Asia: a Reply to Felipe Gomez,” 169.
48 Ibid., 170.
Another similarity between Pieris’ and Gutierrez’ epistemologies was their re-reading of the development of early Christian theology. Like Gutierrez, Pieris lamented the abandonment of the Jewish idiom in early Christian theology. This led to the increasing Westernization of the church. He maintained that within the New Testament period itself, Christianity suffered a loss of identity by departing from the biblical idiom and entering the Greco-Roman world. The Jesus community’s ideal of equality in class, race and gender disappeared, leading eventually to Christianity’s respectability. Constantine’s Edict did not create this respectability, it merely recognized it. In short, Pieris said, institutional Christianity “made an option for Europe in its first formative centuries.” Like Gutierrez, Pieris maintained that a related factor which contributed to the Europeanization of Christianity and the universalizing tendencies in theology was the assimilation of Greek philosophical thought. Greek philosophy was pulled out of its religious context and made to serve Christianity as a tool of doctrinal expression. This separation gave birth to a universalizing theological rationalism which precipitated an epistemological crisis in theology:

The rationalistic urge to invent precision instruments in the form of dogmatic formulae to express the divine mystery along a quasi-mathematical model of neat equations must be counter-balanced by an effort to develop an epistemology of affective knowledge . . . It is a tragedy that we have lost the art of expressing the mystery in an oblique language which alone resonates with a lived mystery. There is, here, a serious epistemological crisis.

For Pieris, the instrumentalization of a non-Christian culture in the service of Christianity was a form of theological vandalism and a disguised form of imperialism. To separate philosophy

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52 Pieris, *God’s Reign for God’s Poor*, 53.
from its soteriological context was to deprive it of life.

I argued in Chapter 2 that Gutierrez’ epistemology operated around two poles: fidelity to revelation and fidelity to the experience of the majority of the peoples in Latin America. Living in the context of Asian religiosity, Pieris embraced a third epistemological fidelity. Like Gutierrez, he argued that discipleship or praxis was a central theological category which made access to Jesus epistemologically possible: “we know Jesus the truth by following Jesus the way.”

The second pole was the Word. Pieris emphasized that the Word was more than the Christian bible. The bible was a sacrament of the Word of God: “It is only a sacrament which points beyond itself to what God is doing and speaking outside Israel and outside the church.

The bible is a school which trains our ears to recognize God’s voice outside the bible and obey it.” The revelatory Word included both scriptural history and the liturgy of life. Pieris’ third epistemological fidelity was to God’s revelation found in Asia’s non-Christian soteriologies.

He encouraged Christians to recognize and be faithful to where God was revealing Godself outside biblical revelation and the church. Living in the Asian context, this meant making an option for Asian soteriologies and the Asian Christ. The concrete sign of Pieris’ threefold fidelity

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54 Pieris, “Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation,” 82. In Chapter 2, I noted that Gutierrez’ epistemological break challenged the authority of the ecclesial centre. Likewise, Pieris’ embrace of praxis recognizes and legitimates the authority of those in local church communities who are creating their own theologies and making their own decisions regarding the meaning of discipleship within their own particular contexts.

55 Gutierrez would agree with Pieris here. As I have noted, in “Theological Language: Fullness of Silence,” like Pieris, he speaks of dabar in relation to the Prologue in John’s Gospel. Dabar includes both World and Event.


57 For example, Pieris says that the terms voluntary poverty and forced poverty were borrowed from the Buddhist tradition: alpecchata (contentment with the minimum necessaries of life) and daridrata (misery that ‘disintegrates’ persons). See Pieris, “Self-Portrait: Religiousness and Poverty – the Collective Effort of Asian Theology: Interview with Aloysius Pieris,” 28. His distinction between cosmic and metacosmic religions was taken from the Buddhist understanding of religious experience, comprised of lokiya (mundane) and lokattara (supramundane). His use of silence to describe the Godhead was inspired by Buddhism. For a more detailed discussion, see Kenneth Fleming, Asian Christian Theologians in Dialogue with Buddhism, 261-2. In his recent work, he uses Buddhist exegetical traditions to interpret passages from the Hebrew-Christian Bible. See Aloysius Pieris, “Liberational Hermeneutics Derived from Asian Sources: An Introductory Essay,” in Reaping a Harvest from the Asian Soil: Towards an Asian Theology, ed. Vimal Tirimanna (Bangalore, India: Asian Trading Corporation, 2011), 39-52.
was found in the Basic Human Communities where Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and non-believers together entered into symbiotic dialogue around the option for the poor.

Deconstructing Eurocentric universality implies that the new liberation theologies need to be self-consciously aware in two areas: theological starting points and the expanding horizons of knowledges, especially theological knowledges emerging from below. Regarding starting points, a significant convergence between Gutierrez and Pieris is that each recognizes that God is revealing Godself in areas outside the institutional ecclesial centre. Both theologians have emphasized that the authentic church lives on the periphery. Pieris was most emphatic about this when speaking of the assassination of Fr. Rodrigo:

Only fake crosses have . . . adorned the altars and steeples of churches and rested on the heads and breasts of clerics. The true cross on which Christ continues to be tortured and murdered is still standing in the periphery where religious bigotry and political opportunism conspire against the Just.  

A constitutive dimension of being on the peripheries is to be epistemically located on the side of the poor. A comparison with the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group is helpful in explaining epistemic location. Grosfoguel tells us that the clash over different starting points led to the split in the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group. One group read subalternity from a postmodern perspective. They gave epistemic privilege to Foucault, Derrida, and Gramsci. For Grosfoguel, these scholars reproduced a colonial epistemology by producing studies about the subaltern, rather than studies from a subaltern viewpoint. The other side read subalternity as a decolonial critique. This latter Latin American perspective criticized Eurocentrism both in its Right and Left wing versions, and called for the decolonization of both subaltern studies and postcolonial studies. The split highlighted the difference between epistemic location and social location. It is possible to be located on the subaltern side of the power relations and still think from a Eurocentric perspective. Epistemic location refers to epistemic perspectives coming from

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below, from the perspective of the subaltern. Both Las Casas and Fr. Rodrigo challenged Eurocentric universality, not only by moving to the peripheries, but also by being epistemically located on the side of the oppressed.

A second major consequence of dismantling Eurocentric universality is that Gutierrez and Pieris have opened theology to new knowledges. It is on the peripheries that they discover new sources for theology. Gutierrez discovers Christ in the Indigenous poor, and Pieris encounters the Asian Christ in the Asian poor. For Pieris, it is in the areas of cosmic religiosity and symbiotic dialogues that the Divine provides opportunities to learn a Christian understanding of the non-Christian interpretation of the Word of God as It reveals itself in those who join together to struggle for global justice. As Gutierrez and Pieris expand our understanding of the loci of God’s presence, they encourage theologians to embrace a variety of new resources that make use of the histories, cultures and religious practices of particular peoples. These theologies will retrieve traditions and spiritualities both inside and outside Christianity, that have been ignored by the centre. They will embrace a diversity of actors and partners. Listening to a diversity of voices from below will help theologians see the contextual nature of their initiatives, learn to be more modest in their claims, and abandon all forms of sectarianism.

4.5 Conversation 3: Challenging History as Linear Progress-Creating Other Possible Futures

In Chapter 2, I discussed Gutierrez’ use of the option for the poor to challenge certain aspects of the liberal ideal of history as linear progress. In this section, I will study how Pieris also uses the option for the poor to challenge this perspective. Pieris lives in a context where there are approaches to the past that are radically different from the prevailing Western view of progress.

59 Rámon Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Political-Economy and Post-Colonial Studies: Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality.”
These include the Buddhist understanding of *paticcasamuppanna*, and cyclical views of history.\footnote{In the context of Theravada Buddhism, the Aristotelian concept of time as movement, and history as unilinear movement in time, makes no sense. The Buddhist view is *paticcasamuppanna* or continuous co-origination. Reality is in a state of constant becoming. Whereas orthodox Christianity maintains that all things are dependent on God for their being, in Buddhism time bound events are interdependent and “speak beyond time.” Pieris maintains: But the Buddhist concept is *paticcasamuppanna* - continuous co-creation of things. It is not unilinear. It is things happening together. It is more complex. Therefore with that perception, reality is seen as rising, becoming constantly, time bound things (events) which suddenly speak beyond time.


In an interview in 1992, Pieris was asked why history did not figure prominently in his writings, especially when compared with the Latin Americans.\footnote{See Gibbs, *The Word in the Third World*, 360.} While it is true that Pieris does not use the word ‘history’ as much as Gutierrez, history plays a central role in Pieris’ theology. He celebrated *Dei Verbum* for rejecting the earlier Roman theology which separated the Word from history. History is not just a setting where God can speak. History itself is revelatory:

*Dei Verbum* . . . boldly insisted that revelation is both Word and Event, both speech and deed. For God, to do is to speak and to speak is to do. History is not just a setting for God’s word to be expressed (as in scholastic theology); rather history is itself revelatory. God’s Word is heard even today in history. He still speaks. Those who have ears let them hear!\footnote{Pieris, “Inculturation: Some Critical Reflections,” *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, 57, no. 11 (1993): 649.}

Pieris re-reads the Christian tradition from the perspective of his own context, namely, through a Sino-Indian lens. The processes and practices that become history for Gutierrez are reconfigured and reconceptualized into different frames and reference points such as the liturgy of life, cosmic
spiritualities, and the histories of other religious traditions as other loci of God’s ongoing revelation.

Like Gutierrez, Pieris rejected dualistic theologies which maintained there were two histories, the sacred and the profane. As noted, he criticized the “trichotomy” that still persisted between the sacramental, contemplative and active dimensions of Christian spirituality. There are resonances between Gutierrez’ assertion that in Jesus Christ “God becomes history” and Pieris understanding of Jesus as an unmajjana. In defending his claim that it is the second axiom which defines the uniqueness of Christianity, Pieris maintained, in response to Amaladoss, that the incarnation of Jesus cannot be understood solely as a Christian version of a Hindu avatar, a God who descends to the poor. Rather, within the context of covenant and history, Pieris understands Jesus as an unmajjana, the emergence of God from among the poor.

There are convergences in the ways that Gutierrez and Pieris understand what constitutes history.

64 Pieris, God’s Reign for God’s Poor, 83, 4. Michael Amaladoss has questioned Pieris’ claim that what makes Christianity unique is articulated in the second axiom: Jesus is God’s covenantal Word of Promise to the poor. Amaladoss argued that there is an ‘option for the poor’ in the Hindu concept of avatar where God ‘descends’ to the earth in oppressive situations to liberate the oppressed. See Michael Amaladoss, Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies from Asia (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 95, 96. Pieris responded by arguing that the ‘above and below’ language of scripture are part of an obsolete model of the universe. He asserted that this worldview had infiltrated christology in the debates about ‘ascending christology’ and ‘descending christology’ where the above was associated with the pre-existent Word and the below with the human Jesus. Pieris admitted that it was difficult to avoid this type of language, but he wanted to centre christology within another biblical paradigm: the Promise-fulfillment perspective of salvation history. For Pieris the appearance of Jesus was a cosmic occurrence that bursts into history from within creation:

According to Covenant Christology, I propose here, the Covenantal Word or Promise which is already operative within creation and human history from its inception emerges in “flesh and blood” at the fullness of time as Jesus of Nazareth who grows into the all-encompassing Christhood towards which all creation and all history converges as to its ultimate future. Here christology which is soteriology constitutes the movement towards the Future breaking into the present. Pieris, “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 214. Chalcedon understood the Johanne verse “O Logos sarx egeneto” as meaning that the rational principle of intelligibility became a cosmic reality in the historical person of Jesus. For Pieris, the Johanne verse meant that God’s creative word of salvation (dabar) was heard as a constant voice emanating from the “flesh” of the poor and the oppressed. Pieris emphasized that he was not saying that Hindu and Buddhist scriptures were soteriologically wrong, meaningless or inferior, but rather that they were different. They had their own particular uniqueness which Christians should welcome and study. See Pieris, “Christ Beyond Dogma,” 214; God’s Reign for God’s Poor, 83-89, and “Faith Communities and Communalism: The Role of Religions and Ideology,” Fire and Water, 102, 103
First, each takes biblical history seriously. For Gutierrez, biblical faith is based on God’s revelation of Godself in concrete historical events. The religious experience of Israel takes place in history. Pieris says that unlike the worldviews of the two surrounding superpowers, Egypt and Mesopotamia, the Hebrew Scriptures narrate a history “from the underside.” He insists that it is “to the credit of the Hebrew Scriptures that a slave uprising is recorded in writing as a theological paradigm of salvation for all generations to come!” Second, both agree on the centrality of the incarnation of Jesus in human history which they understand within a framework of promise and fulfillment. A third shared understanding refers to the historical events in the past. Fourth, are the historical traditions of the church. Both re-read these traditions to recover strands which have been neglected or deliberately ignored in their respective postcolonial contexts. Fifth are the traditions of other religions. While each recognizes God’s salvific activity in other religions, this dimension is more fully developed by Pieris.

The final and most important area is the historical present. The other dimensions of history are placed in the service of discipleship exercised in the contemporary context. Gutierrez says “. . . here is where theological reflection should spring up, together with the spirituality of a new preaching of the Christian message, in the here and now, incarnate, undiluted.” I have noted that for Gutierrez the fundamental hermeneutical circle is a dialectic which moves from the world to the word and back again. The imperative for discipleship is to make God’s proclamation of love “flesh in history.” The term Pieris uses most frequently to speak of the historical present is “the liturgy of life.” He reconfigures the historical present within a liturgical

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66 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 67
framework and makes it the “source and summit” of Christian life. Pieris’ emphasis on the historical present is also evident in his formulation of the categories cosmic and metacosmic religion, and the importance he attaches to the former. The focus of cosmic religiosity is “this world” as a sacred locus of religious experience. There is an historical immediacy to cosmic religious experience wherein the present, as well as the voices of the poor, women and the earth, are given spaces for expression.

Like Gutierrez, embracing the option for the poor allowed Pieris to understand history to be plural and to re-read these histories from below. He carefully distinguished Anglo-American historical traditions from Asian histories. In his discussions of the Asian Christ, Pieris acknowledged the different histories of the Indian Dalits, the oppressed in Korea, Asian women, and other Asian poor. Re-reading history through the lenses of Asian poverty and religiosity, Pieris argued that the two-tiered spirituality which divided the elite and the commoner began when strands of second century Christianity adopted Stoic ethics. His biblical paradigm for the Third World is the “starving children of Jacob” who turn to the rich country of Egypt in the West, only to become political slaves.

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69 As I have noted in Chapter 3, Pieris is reacting against the traditional dualisms which separate liturgy from spirituality, spirituality from secular involvement, and secular involvement from liturgy. He disagrees with both the pre-Vatican II theology which maintained that the source and summit of Christ life was the contemplative life, and the Vatican II claim that the eucharist is the “source and summit” of Christian life. Rather, it is the liturgy of life which is the beginning and end of Christian spirituality. Both personal prayer and the eucharist are a means to a more important end: living out the paschal mystery in the life and struggles of the poor today. Cf. Pieris, Mysticism of Service, 70.

70 Pieris, “Cosmic/ Metacosmic Religions,” Dictionary of Third World Theologies, 60.

71 Pieris, “Three Inadequacies of Social Encyclicals,” 83. Pieris maintained that the Asian nations have their own contemporary story of the fall. It is about a fisherman who shows his rod to the worms and says “I offer you my technology if you supply the raw material. With my partnership, you can make a great hall.” For Pieris, the God of the bible has made a covenant with the worms of the earth. Not only have the First World anglers turned Asian lives into the raw materials for the developer’s progress, they have inspired their own brand of fundamentalist
enabled Pieris to question Chalcedon’s christology as a norm for orthodoxy. They allowed him to challenge colonialist versions of Christianity including, the missionaries of the 16th century, the developmentalist theology of the 1960s, various forms of Latin American Liberation theologies heavily influenced by Marxist Occidentalism and Western Biblicism, inculturalists who ignored the link between religion and the liberation struggles of the poor, and most recently the “neo-fundamentalism”72 of the “New Evangelization” project promoted by the Vatican. Re-reading from the underside enabled Pieris to see that history was conflictual. One of the remarkable convergences between Gutierrez and Pieris is their respective re-readings and critiques of modern European liberal theology. In his paper “Theology from the Underside of History,” Gutierrez presented a masterful re-reading of the various European theological responses to the Enlightenment in order to distinguish Latin American Liberation Theology from European progressivist theology. Similarly, Pieris’ trilogy of articles written between 1989 and 2003 criticized the Catholic theology of human rights as found in papal encyclicals.

I note two significant differences between Pieris and Gutierrez. The first concerns the relation between history and myth. Pieris says that that Latin Americans73 oppose history and myth, whereas he argues that when history assumes cosmic proportions, history is raised to the power of story or myth:

Cosmic and metacosmic religion in Asia, in the gnostic idiom have a different approach to history and myth . . . When something has happened somewhere, it is history. When what has happened has cosmic proportions, then it is story . . . history and myth have to be redefined. History – historical events – have a way of coming out powerfully as


73 Pieris does not mention Gutierrez specifically. However, there is evidence that Pieris’ comment is true of Gutierrez. In his early paper “God’s Revelation and Proclamation in History,” Gutierrez argued that the faith of the Jewish people as recounted in the Old Testament was based on history and not myth: “Nor does the Old Testament faith arise out of the affirmation of a prehistorical (and therefore ahistorical) mythical occurrence.” See Gutierrez, “God’s Revelation and Proclamation in History,” in Power, 5. In his later discussions of history, Gutierrez does not speak about the relation between myth and history.
myths. It is not *mythos* as opposed to history, but history raised to the power of. The historical event becomes so true, so real, so eventful, that it becomes universal truth. It happens everywhere . . . The Latin Americans oppose history and myth. Myth is where history starts speaking, changing – where it has the capacity to universal appeal, for transforming – then history has become myth.\(^{74}\)

Pieris cites both the story of the Fall and the Incarnation as examples of history being raised to the power of myth.

A second key difference concerns the “end of history” where end means the termination of history. Gutierrez doesn’t address what happens at the end of history. He does assert that history is Christo-finalized, but he does not explain in detail what this means. Pieris does speculate about history’s termination and in the process offers an alternative to history as linear progress. He insists that just as the incarnation inaugurated a new history, so too at the Parousia humanity comes to a new stage in history. Those who argue that history ends are assuming a Greek model of contemplation where *praxis* ends and one has the final *theoria*. Pieris maintains that his understanding, based on awareness and discernment, is more oriental and biblical. He concludes:

\[\ldots\] you are coming to a stage when you are all in God and God in all and that process continues – the continuous discovery of goodness and joy – like a picture you see every day and you never get exhausted, music that you hear but you never get tired, authentic aesthetics which doesn’t exhaust you, rather renews you . . . the new heaven and the new earth is a breakthrough and a new history.\(^{75}\)

Pieris’ understanding of the movement of history is based on his understanding of the person vis-à-vis creation. Humans are constituted from the moment of creation by a coincidence of opposites: creativeness and creatureliness. Humans have both “*God and nothing* as our absolute beginning”\(^{76}\) so that the possibility of death and divinization are constitutive from the beginning.

Pieris rejects theologies based on the God of Aristotle, the Unmoved Mover. He says that

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\(^{75}\) Ibid., 363.

\(^{76}\) Pieris, “The Spiritual Dimension of Change,” *Fire and Water*, 165.
Teilhard did not allow God and change to cancel each other. Rather, change is Christogenesis, that is, “God and dust becoming each other, Creator and creature growing into the other.”

As we move toward the pleroma of Christ, Pieris invites us to be guided by Paul: “Since we live by the spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). The implication is that history is neither a straight line nor a circle. The terminology of opposing cyclic religion and biblical religion is misleading. It is more complex, akin to the Hindu vision of the dance:

There is nothing unilinear. You can never go straight. It is a zig-zag. I believe in tangential energy and the radial energy of Teilhard de Chardin, and St. Paul’s two forces. It’s like surfing, one force drags you and the other force takes you. In a group it is more than zig-zag, we dance. This is the movement. It is not a receding horizon. It is a continuous retasting — going back again cyclically, going deeper into it as you move forward. It is much more complex than the unilinear. To make too much of the linear and the cyclic would be to destroy the whole way that the cosmos/earth has been founded by God. God Himself dances in the universe.

Expressed differently, history is the epiclesis, humanity’s own transubstantiation into the body of Christ by the creative power of the Spirit, or in Pauline language “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” (Gal. 2:20). For Pieris the dance does not end. The new heaven and new earth is history in a new mode.

Pieris’ understanding of history as Christogenesis challenges versions of history promoted by developmentalists and neoliberals that assumed rational necessity, evolutionary progress, linearity, and history culminating in the modern European or Western state. The “zig-zag” dimension takes the cross seriously. It admits conflict, and can account for the massive

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77 Ibid. 168.
79 Cf. we too are transubstantiated gradually into the body of Christ by the creative power of the Spirit invoked upon them and upon us. This is the epiclesis, the ‘Spirit dimension’ of change. The epiclesis is the highest manifestation of our creativeness operating in the depths of our creatureliness. God’s creative word in which the spirit hovered over the primordial waters to bring forth life (Gen. 1:27), breathed life into mud to make it human (Gen. 1:27), descended on Mary to plant and nurture the theandric seed of life (Luke 1:35), and raised the mangled body of Jesus from the limbo of death (Rom. 8:11) . . . indeed that creative word which calls down the spirit can be uttered by the human heart to change all cosmic dust into the body of Christ.

Pieris, “The Spiritual Dimension of Change,” 166.
“interruptions” in history caused by radical evil. The “dance” of God in the universe challenges linearity, the bias of exceptionalism, the Eurocentrism, and idolatry implicit in the teleology of the liberal perspective. Pieris’ vision confronts the determinism and inevitability which has been employed to justify colonialism, imperialism and violence. It breaks the totalizing effect of history as progress. It recovers historical memories, expands the past, and celebrates other ways of organizing societies. It gives a voice to those who form the body of the Asian Christ. It announces that there are many histories and many possible futures. It offers hope.

In Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ decolonization projects there is a profound connection between the deconstruction of the “end of history” frame and hope. Christocentrism and Christogenesis address the stark fact that for many peoples, history has ended. In the neoliberal version of history, hope is intertwined with progress, and built-in inevitability appears to rule out the possibility of the destruction of the planet or the annihilation of wealthy white First World peoples. Proponents proclaim that capitalist techno-science will solve the latest crisis. However, from the perspective of the many poor in the Global South, the reality is that large numbers of races, cultures, languages and species have already come to an end. Speaking of Las Casas’ understanding of the word “destruction” Gutierrez says:

‘Destruction’ here means principally the premature, unjust death of the Indians and the depopulation of entire localities – in a word, the brutal ruin of a people. But it also implies the annihilation of autochthonous cultures and the laying waste of the world for nature. 80

Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ perspectives from Thabor provide a hopeful vision that annihilation is not the last word. When Gutierrez says “the realization that life and not death has the final say about history,” 81 it implies the extraordinary claim that the theologian can see what perhaps the secular historian misses: the inner workings of the God’s gratuitous love in history. Not only is there

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80 Gutierrez, Las Casas, 59.
81 Gutierrez, “Expanding the View,” xxxvi.
salvation in history, but Gutierrez is affirming the hope for the salvation of history itself.

Gutierrez statement about history being “Christo-finalized” is an affirmation of hope. Christo-finalized history offers “total liberation”\(^{82}\) where Christ brings humanity the offer of full communion with God and each other. Similarly, Christogenesis is Pieris’ affirmation that despite the evils, the tragedies and the momentous interruptions, there is hope for final justice for the victims:

> Heaven is not ‘another world’ to which we go after abandoning this one, but ‘a new age’ which awaits this one and only universe! Hence there is an eternal paschal-value attached to the whole of Creation which is groaning to be Christ in his final fullness (Rom 8: 18-25).\(^{83}\)

For both Gutierrez and Pieris there is hope beyond hope.

### 4.6 Some Questions

As I noted in the Introduction to this Chapter, I will address three questions regarding dimensions of Gutierrez and Pieris’ soteriologies that are important in the context of the contemporary neoliberal project: does opposing Eurocentric universality inexorably lead to a postmodern relativism? does Gutierrez reinscribe elements of the Eurocentric power matrix in his theology of history? and, has Pieris substituted an ahistorical Eastern perspective for Western universalism?

Confronting Eurocentric universality leaves theology with a significant challenge which Gutierrez articulates: “In this apology for particularity . . . what space remains for the universal?”\(^{84}\) How does theology move beyond Eurocentric hegemonic universalisms while at the same time avoid the extremes of a relativistic stance where one can argue the equal validity

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82 Ibid. 127.
of every particularism? Gutierrez warns of the dangers of a postmodern relativism which supports the status quo:

Postmodernity sharpens the individualism which characterizes the modern world. The result of all this has been a somewhat apathetic stance toward possibilities for changing what used to be seen as not functioning well in our societies. The same can be said of its distrust of solid convictions in any area of human action or knowledge; thus there arises a skeptical stance which relativizes the knowledge of truth. According to this view, we all have our own truth and thus everything is valid. This stance is without doubt one of the reasons for the lack of interest in social and political reality which we see in our time.85

The challenge is to find theological positions that balance historical particularity with the claims of universality. These would be theologies which abandon hegemonic and false universalisms, while at the same time avoid paralyzing relativisms that make it impossible to speak about justice, peace and freedom. In taking up this problem, I discount from the start the claim that the universal truth declarations from the ecclesial centre deal relativism a death blow. As Joerg

85 Gutierrez, “The Situation and Tasks of Liberation Theology Today,” 91, 92. Like Gutierrez, many who speak from the margins are suspicions of postmodern thought. Justo Gonzalez questions postmodernity’s associations with the power systems of modernity. He argues that it is impossible to speak of justice, peace and freedom without some form of metanarrative:

When postmoderns speak of the demise of the modern metanarratives, there is reason to rejoice, for the modern metanarratives defined peace, progress, freedom, and justice in ways that were clearly beneficial to its own centers of power and detrimental to the rest of humankind. But when the same voices claim that this means the demise of all metanarratives, we have reason to be leery, for without metanarratives it becomes impossible to speak of such issues as justice, peace and freedom.

Gonzalez, The Changing Shape of Church History, 58, 59. A special case concerns the postmodern demise of the subject. Many postmodernist theorists have celebrated the death of the Western subject. However, there are subjugated peoples who are not so willing to concede the loss of an essential self-identity. They see the denial of subjectivity as being detrimental to having a position to claim an alternative worldview. The Hispanic theologian Roberto S. Goizueta writes:

The deconstruction of the subject is similarly suspect. For centuries, the modern Western rational subject has been the axis of history, in relation to whom Third World peoples were simply heathens, barbarians and nonpersons. Now that we heathens, barbarians and nonpersons have finally begun to enter the historical stage as rational subjects in our own right, we are informed that the stage has been dismantled, or deconstructed.

Cited in Kwok Pui-lan “Liberation Theology in the Twenty-First Century,” in Opting for the Margins, 76. Linda Bordo laments the timing of the postmodern critiques of female reality:

It is no accident, I believe, that feminists are questioning the integrity of the notion of ‘female reality’ just as we begin to get a foothold in those professions which could be most radically transformed by our (historically developed) Otherness and which have been historically most shielded from it.

Cited in Mark Lewis Taylor, “Subalternity and Advocacy as Kairos for Theology,” in Opting for the Margins, 26. Some respond by advocating new categories to replace Postmodernity. For example, I have noted Enrique Dussel speaks of “trans”-modernity. Justo Gonzalez speaks of “extramodernity” which includes “those many voices and perspectives that modernity either ignored or patronized and that postmodernity still patronizes and ignores.” See Gonzalez, The Changing Shape of Church History, 59.
Rieger notes, under closer scrutiny, the promotion of a top-down theology from the centre does not overcome relativism, but in fact, reproduces a particular form of relativity, namely, the relativity of the religious and political elites.  

Neither Gutierrez nor Pieris provide a comprehensive solution to this problem. Their focus has been to criticize Eurocentric universality and demonstrate how its incorporation into theology has had destructive consequences for both the church and people in the Global South. However, each provides an orientation for advancing the discussion. In the Introduction to the revised edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutierrez insisted that the emphasis on historical particularity did not mean isolation. Each theology poses questions and challenges for believers living in other contexts:

> Particularity does not mean isolation. It is true, of course, that each type of theological thinking cannot, and ought not, be applied mechanically to situations different from that in which it arose . . . any theology is a discourse about a universal message. For this reason, and to the extent that it springs from an experience that is both deeply human and deeply Christian, every theology also has a universal significance; or, to put it more accurately, every theology is a question and a challenge for believers living other human situations.

The more theologies are in touch with the particularities of the historical present, the more they touch the deepest dimension of the human. The EATWOT discussions, in which both Gutierrez and Pieris participated, provide a practical example of what Gutierrez intends. Despite the differing contexts of the participants, and the deep disagreements during the discussions about the root causes of dehumanization, there were many resonances, points of contact and commonalities. As I have noted, Gutierrez said that through his participation in these dialogues, he had come to appreciate the magnitude and complexities of various oppressions, as well as the

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86 Rieger, *Globalization and Theology*, 58. I agree with Rieger’s conclusion that relativism cannot be solved from the top down. It’s a complex problem with which theology must struggle especially in this era of neoliberal globalization.

87 Gutierrez, “Expanding the View,” xxxvi.
multiple possibilities and strategies for struggle and liberation.

In his paper, “Universality of Christianity,” Pieris sketched his position on universality. He rejected a capitalist species of universality and cultural colonialism which many Asians called “cocacolanization.” The cocacola model of universality promoted uniformity and accumulation, was buttressed by media propaganda, and was symbolic of modernization, development, and technocratization. In Pieris’ mind it was an idol that could not quench the universal thirst for liberation. Pieris said there was an alternative universality which he had discovered in dialogue with Christians and members of other religious traditions, namely, the universal thirst for human liberation. This universal thirst was bidimensional: the thirst for freedom of needs and the thirst for freedom of wants. 88 For Pieris, the universality of Christianity was based on the two biblical axioms. The first axiom showed us that Jesus embodied in himself the spirituality common to all religions, and this was at the root of the thirst for freedom from needs. The second axiom that Jesus is God’s covenant with the poor, was the foundation for the second freedom, freedom from wants. Jesus was the incarnation of God’s promise of these bidimensional freedoms to all poor. To achieve these freedoms meant taking up the cross with the poor of other traditions. For Pieris, universality was not derived from philosophical principles, or by imposing uniformity, but was achieved through commitment to Jesus’ mission as this was understood within the context of the Basic Human Communities

The second question asks whether Gutierrez has reinscribed elements of the Eurocentric power matrix into his theology of history. He clearly criticizes versions of history assumed by developmentalists and neoliberals. He considers these modern understandings to be Eurocentric, determinist, idolatrous, hegemonic, and responsible for impoverishing the Global South. In his

earlier works Gutierrez differentiated his eschatological perspective from the liberal understanding of progress. As I have noted, he said Fukuyama’s thesis would mean the irreversible and omnipotent reign of capitalist liberalism. And, more recently, he has warned that many in institutional church circles are being seduced by an idolatrous “theology of prosperity.” However, in some of Gutierrez’ earlier writings, his assertion of a single Christo-finalized history suggested a linear evolutionary schema. For example, in *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutierrez characterized history as the process of liberation in terms that approximate linear and evolutionary categories:

*History, contrary to essentialist and static thinking, is not the development of potentialities preexistent in human nature; it is rather the conquest of new, qualitatively different ways of being a human person in order to achieve an ever more total and complete fulfillment of the individual in solidarity with all humankind.*

Is Gutierrez merely advocating for a different future to ‘dependent’ development, rather than arguing for multiple alternative futures? Has he simply collapsed Augustine’s two histories into one within the framework of a singular evolving Christian, rather than developmentalist or neoliberal, teleology? My response is that that Gutierrez’ perspective, especially in his earlier writings, is ambiguous: he does challenge history as linear progress, but certain passages leave elements of the Eurocentric power matrix intact. Further, I maintain that there is a development in Gutierrez’ understanding of history from the writing of *A Theology of Liberation* to *Las Casas*, and that his deepening understanding of the option for the poor leads him to begin to repudiate dimensions of history as linear Eurocentric progress. However, even in his later writings, he does not go as far as Pieris in abandoning linear history, and he doesn’t fully pursue

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89 For example, in *The Power of the Poor in History*, he said what distinguished the liberation perspective was that the “thrust toward the future occurs above all when one participates in the building of a just society, qualitatively different from the one which exists today.” Gutierrez, *Power*, 214. In contrast, many in first world liberal democratic societies were attached to a consumer present which they militantly defended. In his later works, he continued to challenge the teleology of liberal progress.


the implications of his insights.

I have said that Gutierrez’ position in the earlier writings is ambiguous, and I have given an example from these writings where he reinscribes elements of linearity. Here I will highlight some areas where these writings do challenge the Eurocentric power matrix. First, it is important for the reader to note the complexity of the contextual realities that Gutierrez is addressing.

While the main focus of *A Theology of Liberation* is developmentalism, when Gutierrez asserts that “history is one,” he is challenging Augustine’s vision of two histories. “History is one” is a judgment about theological dualism, not an affirmation of linearity. Second, Gutierrez certainly acknowledges the difficulties in reconstructing and articulating a liberating, hopeful theology of history. In his discussion of ‘one history’ in *A Theology of Liberation*, he said that “contemporary theology has not yet fashioned the categories which would allow us to think through and express adequately this unified approach to history.”

In dealing with the same issue in the later “Expanding the View,” he made this clarification: “in saying this, I am not forgetting the distinctions also to be found within history.” Third, in some of his earlier writings, Gutierrez does suggest that history is not linear. For example, in his critique of developmentalism in *A Theology of Liberation*, he quoted Theotonio Dos Santos that “Historical time is not unilinear.” The histories of Latin American countries were different, and moved concurrently and in parallel to the history of the industrialized nations. Or, in “Theology from the Underside of History,” Gutierrez maintained that the historical rationality of the poor “makes[s] history flow backward – make[s] it flow not from above but from below.” Fourth, I would maintain that Gutierrez’ understanding of history as Christo-finalized does challenge

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92 Ibid., 153.
93 Gutierrez, “Expanding the View,” xxxix.
94 Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 84.
deterministic elements of linearity. Justo Gonzalez provides insight here. Gonzalez has argued that one’s vision of the future gives form and content to how one understands the historical present.\(^96\) If the Christ in “Christo-finalized” were a domesticated ahistorical and apolitical idol, then Gutierrez’ project would dissolve into another imperial theology. However, the Jesus Christ of Christo-finalized history in Gutierrez’ soteriology is not an idol, but the one who reveals the biblical God who offers total and integral liberation. As I have noted, Gutierrez does not give a detailed explanation of what he means by Christo-finalized. My interpretation is that the term is an affirmation of hope. I read ‘Christo-finalized’ in light of the later work, \textit{Job}. Gutierrez says several times in \textit{Job} that God has a plan of gratuitous love.\(^97\) Despite the ambiguities and tragedies of life, Christo-finalized history means that the incarnation, the resurrection, and the inbreaking of the kingdom, give meaning to and guide history towards its final fulfillment. Christo-finalized history is understood within the framework of ‘gift’ and ‘task.’ Humans are free to accept or reject God’s gift. Gutierrez’ vision of the future is not a form of deterministic linearity. Rather, it calls the church to accept the divine invitation, to travel to the peripheries and enter into solidarity with the poor.

Gutierrez’ deepening understanding of the option for the poor in \textit{Las Casas} and \textit{Job} led him to break more fully with notions of linear progress. He acknowledged the multiple histories of the Indigenous. He criticized the fifth centenary celebrations of the “discovery” of the Americas for disregarding the Indigenous histories. He gave a fuller articulation of the evil inflicted by the colonizers and acknowledged that for some Indigenous history had ended.\(^98\) While he criticized facets of Eurocentrism in his earlier works, in \textit{Las Casas} he explicitly used the term “Eurocentrism” to describe “the arrogance of the modern spirit, which regards itself as the final

\(^{96}\) Gonzales, \textit{The Changing Shape of Church History}, 145-54.

\(^{97}\) Gutierrez, \textit{Job}, 84, 68, 80.

\(^{98}\) Gutierrez, \textit{Las Casas}, 59, 290. See also, 291-95, 418, and 425.
stage of history and which distorts the past accordingly.”¹⁹⁹ As a result, in Las Casas racism figures more prominently in his analysis. In the later Job, Gutierrez declares that Job “flung himself upon the impossible and into an enigmatic future.”¹⁰⁰ There is a resonance here between Rebecca Solnit’s assertion that “the future is dark” and Gutierrez affirmation that the future is an enigma. Solnit says: “...we hope because the future is dark, we hope because it's a more powerful and more joyful way to live. Despair presumes it knows what will happen next.”¹⁰¹ By “dark” Solnit means inscrutable, not terrible. History is open. Likewise, as an enigma, the future is open to multiple possibilities.¹⁰²

The third question has to do with Pieris’ perspective on the relation between history and myth: has he not substituted another ahistorical perspective for Western universalism, and if he has, does this not undermine the entire liberation theological project?¹⁰³ While he does not address

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¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 8
¹⁰⁰ Gutierrez, Job, 92.
¹⁰² Gutierrez does not pursue some of the deeper implications of the option for the poor for approaching history. For example, in Job, he raises a new question: “Is everything that exists in the natural world really meant to be domesticated by human beings and subjected to their service?” Job, 74. However, he does not follow up this probe into anthropocentrism which has important consequences for understanding both creation and history. I am aware that I am studying Gutierrez over forty years after he wrote A Theology of Liberation and that I am asking questions of him that he did not ask. What is clear today is that Gutierrez’ work leads to important insights today that were not apparent forty years ago. There are several writers today who are challenging linear history and expanding the horizons of historical understanding in interesting and important ways. For example, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that in light of climate change we can’t separate human history from natural history, that humans are now a geological force with the power to end life on the planet. One implication, says Chakrabarty, is that any discussion about global capital must include the species history of humans in the conversation. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” Critical Inquiry 35 (2009): 197-222.
Mauro Ceruti and Telmo Pievani challenge the modern views of humanity as racist, patriarchal, embracing ethnic hatred, and totalitarian, by taking seriously transdisciplinary research that expands the remote past by 60,000 to70,000 years. The result is that we can reinterpret the history of the human species and open our vision of the future. Mauro Ceruti and Telmo Pievani, “The Incompleteness of Each Tradition: Toward an Ethic of Complexity,” World Futures, 61 (2005): 291-306. David Christian makes use of the grand narrative to go back 13 billion years to explore the “Big History” of the Universe and ends his study by examining multiple scenarios of possible human futures in the next century and millennium. See David Christian, Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
¹⁰³ Pieris is certainly aware that many Westerners turn to Eastern religions to avoid political involvement:

The Christian obligation to make an open attack on the principalities and powers that build altars to mammon... is carefully replaced by an excessive zeal for intramural sharing of spiritual patrimonies
this issue directly, a careful reading of his writings suggests that the answer is no. As I have shown, Pieris argued that theology was contextual, began with praxis, used social analysis, made the preferential option for the poor central, embraced voluntary poverty, and understood Jesus in soteriological terms. His analyses stressed historical particularity: the idols today include absolutized forms of class, creed, colour, culture, language, gender, race, religion, state, church, power, profit, and the market. He criticized Nicaea and Chalcedon for ignoring history, that is, the massive poverty at the time. He named specific examples of the Asian Christ. He criticized in the strongest terms the universalizing Eurocentric tendencies of the Vatican, even in its human rights theology in the social encyclicals. The cornerstones of his soteriology were Asian poverty and Asian religiosity. The latter did not subsume the former, but rather was a constitutive and concrete dimension of Asian Liberation Theology. Interreligious dialogue within the Basic Human Communities took the particularity of history seriously. Pieris encouraged the reinterpretation of the sacred scriptures of metacosmic religions to incorporate the liberative

among selected groups of religionists . . . so-called Oriental spirituality is endorsed in Christian circles as an apolitical escape from complex human situations, rather than allowed to burst forth as a prophetic movement against the organized sin that keeps Asia poor. See “Asia’s Non-Semitic Religions and the Mission of Local Churches,” 42. The objection raised against Pieris assumes incorrectly that Eastern religious traditions do not have a prophetic or justice dimension. Kosuke Koyama’s experience of being a missionary in Northern Thailand is helpful here. Koyama maintained that Christianity and Buddhism differed in belief, but they were similar in their ethical witness. It was true that the Asian and Semitic views of history were different. He maintained that Asians have a cosmological view which was shaped by a circular understanding of time and preferred to locate the divine in nature. Such a view promoted a spirituality that sought tranquility and harmony with the cosmos. The Semitic understanding was that time was linear and there was a discontinuity between God and creation. Spirituality here sought history’s transformation as it moved towards eschatological fulfillment. The danger with the cosmological orientation was that it could lead to a neglect of the injustices in the world. However, Koyama argued that the evidence of history itself undermined this contrast. From his experience, Asians were able to surpass Christians in the practice of compassion and justice. Moreover, the cosmological view encouraged a respect for nature evident among Asians. Koyama argued that Jesus combined both views. The cross was the symbol of the eschatological, while God’s love was a sign of the cosmological. In his paper “Will the Monsoon Rain Make God Wet,” Koyama argued for a third Asian option: an ascending spiral view” where “circular nature finds its proper place within linear history.” Koyama did admit that ethics in Buddhism was primarily concerned with the personal, that is, overcoming desire and greed; however, this was relevant to social ethics. Moreover, there was a difference between the Theravada tradition with focused on private salvation and the Mahayana traditions where the compassionate bodhisattva was the ideal. See Kosuke Koyama, “‘Will the Monsoon Rain Make God Wet,” Water Buffalo Theology: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 20-31.

elements of cosmic religiosity, thus leading to involvement in popular movements within Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, and other traditions. It is true that Pieris criticized those who opposed history and myth, and that he did not see history in strictly linear or cyclic terms. Yet, he does not subscribe to *paticcasamuppanna*.

The difference in perspective between certain Buddhist traditions and Pieris’ liberation perspective can be seen in the approach of some socially engaged Buddhists who stress the universal over the particular. For example, Christopher Queen argues that engaged Buddhism, like liberation theology, stresses liberation from social, economic, political, racial, sexual, and environmental oppression, but “the cultural particularism of liberation theologies – does not match (despite obvious local elements) the pervasive universalism of engaged Buddhism.”

The engaged Buddhist movements work toward the formation of an ecumenical World Buddhism. Universality is given priority over historical particularity. They understand their methods and insights to be universally applicable and not tied to one particular historical and cultural context. The existence of other religious traditions such as the engaged Buddhist traditions, present a challenge to both Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ theology. From the perspective of Latin American and Asian liberation theologies, it appears that shift to the universal empties religion of its cosmic liberating potential. As well, universalism from above can be hegemonic.

However, the reality is different. Accepting a universalist framework, engaged Buddhists are

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105 There are certainly resonances between Pieris’ and Gutierrez’ rejection of history as being monolithic and having rather to do with processes, practices and struggles about power, and the Buddhist understanding of *paticcasamuppanna*. From their perspectives, history is constantly changing, being challenged, and being renegotiated. *Paticcasamuppanna* or continuous-co-origination suggests this dynamism. However, Pieris’ and Gutierrez’ frameworks differ from the Buddhist categories.


107 For an example of this emphasis on universality, see Jose Cabezon “Buddhist Principles in the Tibetan Liberation Movement,” in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, 295-320. Cabezon outlines six principles of the Dalai Lama’s vision of social transformation arising from his Tibetan Buddhist heritage. The principles speak to the situation of Tibetans living under Chinese oppression, yet Cabezon maintains that they also have a universal character.
involved in historical struggles for justice.

Pieris admitted that more thought had to be given to the question of history and myth, history and cyclical time. New categories were needed. He leaves us with two guides to sort out the issue. The first is to keep in step with the Spirit in the cosmic dance. The second is dialogue, specifically symbiosis, where each religion is challenged by the uniqueness of the other religious traditions’ liberative approaches. Pieris has not substituted an ahistorical Eastern frame for a Western universalism.

4.7 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have argued that Gutierrez and Pieris have been involved in a dialogical encounter for over forty years, and that there has been a willingness to transcend the borders of their own particular contexts. I examined some of the convergences, differences, and unaddressed questions in Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ challenges to privilege, Eurocentric universality, and history as linear progress. I have shown that Gutierrez presented a sophisticated vision of “liberating evangelization” that resonated with facets of Pieris’ approach to dialogue, and also challenged privilege. I have established that in confronting unitary allegedly universal perspectives, Gutierrez and Pieris have epistemically located their soteriologies on the side of the oppressed. They have revolutionized theological method and expanded the understanding of the loci of revelation, thus opening theology to new knowledges both within and outside the Christian tradition. I have demonstrated that both Gutierrez and Pieris embraced the option for the poor to challenge history as linear progress. I have argued that Gutierrez does reinscribe elements of linear history in his critique, but that as his work progresses and the implications of the option for the poor become clearer, his position becomes more fully decolonial. Living in a context where many Asian perspectives on the past challenge modern evolutionary views of
history, Pieris offered a vision of history that diverges sharply from linear progress. What is common is that both Gutierrez and Pieris expand the past by re-reading history from below and offer diverse hopeful alternatives to the neoliberal “end of history” frame.

There are rich resources here for theologians in the Euro-American context who choose to challenge versions of neoliberal hegemony. In Chapter 5, I return to the contemporary Canadian context to show some areas where the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris help us move toward a theology of anti-imperialism and engage the project of neoliberal globalization.
CHAPTER 5

Beyond the Neoliberal Project in Canada

5.1 Introduction

I have argued that in opposing the option for privilege, exposing the hegemonic dimensions of unitary allegedly universal perspectives, and resisting Eurocentric linear evolutionary understandings of history as progress, the soteriologies of Gustavo Gutierrez and Aloysius Pieris provide important resources to challenge neoliberal hegemony. After studying their soteriologies within their Peruvian and Sri Lankan colonial and postcolonial contexts in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively, and exploring some of the convergences, differences, and unresolved issues in their works in Chapter 4, I now return to contemporary North America. My focus in Chapter 5 is to reflect on how the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris inform a theological response to aspects of the neoliberal project, especially particular dimensions of the Harper Agenda in Canada.

I have noted that my aims in this thesis are modest. The theological agendas of Gutierrez and Pieris are wide ranging and my project concentrates on particular facets. I have indicated too, the increasing complexities of the task. The soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris evolved in other socio-political contexts and in other theological universes. As humanity has moved into the new millennium, these worlds have themselves shifted and altered, requiring new theological reflections on God, the meaning of Jesus Christ, the path of the Spirit in history, the sense of church, and the meaning of discipleship, in order to speak to contemporary realities in Latin America and Asia, respectively.¹ I am drawing on particular elements of the writings of

¹ For example, Catalina Romero has pointed out that between 1970 and 1990 in certain countries key segments of the church distanced themselves from the dominant classes (Brazil, Peru, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, among others), while in others key segments of the official church remained in alliance with the elite (Argentina and Colombia).
Gutierrez and Pieris from earlier contexts to apply to another increasingly changing reality: contemporary North America. In this new shifting North American context, the neoliberal project is also being reinvented and is recasting not only economics, but the family, politics, culture and religion. In light of these complexities, the possibility of formulating a systematic universal Catholic theology to deal with the neoliberal project worldwide may seem an attractive program. However, the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris have dealt a death blow to this contingency. Their criticisms of unitary allegedly universal perspectives and their positioning of epistemic justice at the centre of theological formulations, preclude the possibility of producing a universal systematic Catholic theology to counter neoliberal hegemony.

In spite of these complexities, I believe that the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris offer us ways forward. They have unmasked the shifting agendas of hegemonic systems such as colonialism and developmentalism, and shown these to be theologically problematic. They have exposed the part played by the institutional church in these systems. They have demonstrated the

During the 1980s in Peru, many in the Catholic hierarchy moved away from positions on social justice which they had adopted earlier. This was due in part to the appointment of ultraconservative bishops. Gutierrez has been the target of criticism by Cardinal Ratzinger and the latter tried on several occasions to have the Peruvian episcopal conference condemn Gutierrez’ writings. See Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990) 131-56. Romero argues that in the first decade of the new millennium, the spaces within the church for encounter and interaction have begun to close. Along with episcopal appointments, she cites the rise of several conservative ecclesiastical movements, the exercise of control over religious orders within the territorial organization of the church, the training of traditional clergy, and the reduction of the voices that can express themselves about ethical subjects that affect human development. See Catalina Romero, “Religion and Public Spaces: Catholicism and Civil Society in Peru,” in *Religious Pluralism, Democracy, and the Catholic Church in Latin America*, ed. Frances Hagopian (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 365-404. I note that there is resistance to this process. A recent example was the refusal of the administration of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru to allow a hostile takeover of the university by right wing members of the Peruvian church, led by the conservative archbishop of Lima, Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani. See “Catholic Church and University in Peru Fight Over Name,” *New York Times* (August 1, 2012).

Consider a few of the global events since the year 2000: the launch of the World Social Forum; the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States; the usage of Euro coins and banknotes; the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan; the completion of the Human Genome Project; the launch of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and the iPhone; the 2004 Tsunami in Asia; Hurricane Katrina; the election of Stephen Harper; the election of Barack Obama; the U.S. Subprime Mortgage Crisis and the subsequent European Sovereign Debt Crisis; the Arab Spring; the Occupy Movement; the election and resignation of Pope Benedict XVI; and the World population reached seven billion.

inadequacies of both conservative and liberal Euro-American theologies. They have charged that CST has often been used to admonish and silence Third World theologians. They have affirmed the liberating potential of the religious dimension and committed the church to the project of liberation. Their soteriologies demand shifting from a ‘faith-reason’ to a *dabar* theological axis. They have encouraged new ways to rethink and reinterpret classical theological formulations. They have retrieved alternative histories and traditions, and have opened the future to new possibilities. They have widened our understanding of where God is speaking outside traditional sources of revelation. They have affirmed that the frontierless Christ is present wherever people experience the cross. They have restored theological authority to peoples on the peripheries. They have highlighted that our lives are both gifted and tasked, that humanity has the capacity either to destroy itself or be the *epiclesis*. They have encouraged Christians to work with those of other religious and non-religious traditions to offer resistance to the new global dangers. They have commissioned us “to find our own route.”⁴ They have inspired us to contemplate that it is possible to move away from Babel toward Pentecost.

In this Chapter, I will highlight some elements of a theology of resistance to the implementation of the neoliberal project in Canada.⁵

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⁴ Gutierrez, *Job*, 102.
⁵ Again, I am speaking from the perspective of living in central Canada, in rural Ontario. Those living in the West, the North, Quebec and the Maritimes, will bring different sensitivities and realities to the conversation. For example, for an insight into the particular contextual realities of Quebec, see Michel Beaudin, “Theology for ‘Another World’ in the Quebec Context,” *The Ecumenist*, 42, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 15-18.
5.2 From Babel to Pentecost: Some Elements of a Theology of Anti-imperialism

5.2.1 Converting to History and the Cross

The soteriologies of Gutiérrez and Pieris teach us that in the present context a theological challenge to the neoliberal project necessitates conversion to the realities of history, and the accompanying understanding that historical reality is conflictual. Neoliberal spokespersons have announced that history has ended and that for the elect there is no cross. As noted in Chapter 1, their rhetoric claims that neoliberal globalization has either raised the living standards of the majority on the planet, or that with patience, a resplendent future is on the horizon. The reality is otherwise. In Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, the brutal beating of the untouchable Velutha witnessed by the children Esthappen and Rahel, stands in for much of humanity’s experience of history:

> What Esthappen and Rahel witnessed that morning . . . was a clinical demonstration in controlled conditions . . . of human nature’s pursuit of ascendancy. Structure. Order. Complete monopoly. It was human history, masquerading as God’s purpose, revealing herself to an under-age audience. . . . It was not stray mugging or personal settling of scores. This was an era imprinting itself on those who lived it. History in live performance.6

Neoliberal hegemony did not originate racism, patriarchy, class inequalities, and environmental degradation, but it has reconfigured, refined and expanded the multiple dimensions of oppression in the contemporary world. Under Harper, more and more Canadians are experiencing “History in live performance.” As Canadian historian Ian McKay has asserted, the Harper government has initiated a “massive multi-faceted and ominous campaign to change the very definition of Canada; a revolution has been announced; a war is declared.”7 Harper has accelerated the

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neoliberal agenda, vigorously silenced his critics, and, by his own admission, has moved the fight beyond the economic to social, political, and public-policy issues.

I have detailed that history is central to the soteriologies of both Gutierrez and Pieris, and that dabar theology has situated the cross at the centre of history. Both theologians repudiated attempts to lift the church out of history. Both criticized the ahistorical character of logos theology. Pieris maintained that Jesus was the discord between God and Absolutized Capital, and that the cross was the highpoint in the conflict with mammon. The one true God had made a class option and defense pact with the poor against mammon. Integral to our salvation was the struggle to follow the double baptismal journey of Jesus from Jordan to Calvary. At the heart of Gutierrez’ soteriology was the turn to the oppressed Others, seeing the crucified Christ in them and acting in solidarity.

Conservative and liberal theologies which sever Christ from the cross depreciate history, and render invisible conflict, oppression and power imbalances. Ahistorical theological readings reproduce Eurocentrism and imperialism. In the context of the neoliberal project, these ways of theologizing fail to recognize that the neoliberal agenda is “a political doctrine serving certain interests.”8 They mask the strategies and structural logics of neoliberal globalization, and support the assault on the poor by the dominant classes. I am arguing that to challenge this project theologically, a double conversion is necessary: first to history and then to the conflictual nature of history. Following Gutierrez and Pieris, this alternative perspective is possible only if theologians abandon top-down “white-hand” Eurocentric male perspectives and contemplate reality from the underside. Theologians can only begin to respond to global problems if they

choose this different epistemological and hermeneutical frame.

5.2.2 Embracing the option for the Poor

The option for the poor, a consistent theme in the theologies of Gutierrez and Pieris, will remain the spiritual directing principle of any new liberation theology. It inverts the relationship between the centre and the peripheries, and resituates the peripheries at the centre. It inexorably leads away from privilege, hegemonic universalist constructions and history as progress. What is clear after studying Gutierrez and Pieris is that under the various neoliberal regimes there is an expanding diversity of oppressions today and it is the option for the poor which enables us to perceive these. In this section, I offer three probes, each related to a facet of my thesis, showing where the option for the poor makes visible and challenges dimensions of the Harper agenda.

5.2.2.1 Confronting Systemic Poverty

One consequence of embracing the option for the poor is that liberation theologians can rightly demand that economists reconnect economics and history. There is a remarkable parallel between theology and economics with respect to the neglect of history. In The Enigma of Capital, David Harvey recounts that when Queen Elizabeth visited the London School of Economics in November 2008, she asked how no economist had seen the global financial crisis coming. The American journalist Robert Samuelson articulates the problem: “Here we have the most spectacular economic and financial crisis in decades . . . and the one group that spends most of its waking hours analyzing the economy basically missed it.” Agreeing with Samuelson, Harvey insists that “the economic theorists were too interested in sophisticated forms of mathematical model-building to bother with the messiness of history and that this messiness had

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caught them out.”

Harvey concludes that the severing of economics from history has thrown monetarist and neoliberal policies into question.

There is a resonance between Pieris’ criticisms of the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon and Harvey’s analysis. For Pieris these councils removed Jesus from the struggles of history and rendered the poor invisible. Similarly, during the global financial crisis of 2008, contemporary Western governments and their economic “councils” that arranged the bailouts with no strings attached can be criticized for their naïve faith–based economics which ignored the historical realities of the 99 percent. They bestowed atemporal and aspatial transcendent qualities on the market, and promoted a fundamentalist faith and “otherworldly” hope, claiming that the continued reign of the free market would lead to universal economic prosperity. Liberation theologies engaging neoliberalism have to challenge economists to reconnect with history, and pay attention to the inequalities and violence that result from decision-making based solely on market mechanisms.

Reconnecting economics and history makes visible the sophisticated ways that the Harper government is impoverishing many Canadians.

For example, the 2012 Federal budget cut $5.2 billion annually from the public service, closed youth employment centres across Canada,

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid. 273. There are some in the world of economics who are trying to reclaim the discipline and reconnect it with history. One of the better known is the Post-Autistic Economics Movement initiated by the protest of a group of economic students in Paris in 2000 who wrote to their professors stating: “we wish to escape from imaginary worlds!” Because of criticism of the use of the medical term autistic, the group has changed the name of its journal from the Post-Autistic Economics Review to the Real-World Economics Review. See Http://www.paecon.net/ (accessed May 2, 2012).
12 Rieger calls this “the false transcendence of economics.” Joerg Rieger, No Rising Tide, 10-19.
13 Cf. Cormie: “At the heart of these efforts is a rejection of conventional notions of ‘progress’ and ‘development,’ and a redefinition of ‘economics’ in ways which explicitly include religio-cultural, moral, and political concerns, in relation to specific issues and in the development of economic discourse in general.” Cormie, “Spiritualities and Social Movements in the Post-Modern World,” in Light Burdens, Heavy blessings: Challenges of Church and the Culture in the Post Vatican II Era: Essays in Honor of Margaret Brennan, IHM, eds. Mary Heather MacKinnon, Moni McIntyre, Mary Ellen Sheehan (Quincy, Il: Franciscan Press: 2000), 332.
14 Ibid., 331.
eliminated 70,000 real jobs over three years, while at the same time granting $13 billion per year in corporate tax cuts. The list could go on. Following the example of Las Casas, the option for the poor demands that we see reality through a new hermeneutic that includes history: “as if” we were workers who have lost their jobs; “as if” our families had lost their houses through mortgage foreclosure; “as if” we had no health care; and “as if” we went to school hungry. Connecting economics and history challenges our government’s faith in the free market, faith in “trickle down,” faith in progress, faith in austerity, and faith in the fiction of unending planetary resources.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative (CEJI) as an example of church-based resistance to the neoliberal project. I wish to underscore the importance of CEJI as a unique example in Canada of a network of coalitions and church supporters that embraced theological reflection and incarnated the option for the poor to challenge systematic poverty. In 1998, CEJI’s Vision Statement described the moment as an “historic juncture of suffering and possibility” where the “categories of right and left, of capitalism and communism, developed and underdeveloped, fail to clarify the issues and options . . .”. The statement called for a “new beginning.” There are many dimensions that could be explored here, but my focus is the centrality that CEJI placed on theology in its struggles for global social justice and eco-justice. In his paper, “CEJI and Ecumenical Coalitions: Hope for a New Beginning in History,” Cormie argues that CEJI initiated an ongoing process to wrestle with the implications of the biblical

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16 Joerg Rieger uses the option for the poor to challenge neoliberal claims vis-à-vis progress. He calls the option “the logic of downturn” and maintains that “it has tremendous potential because it provides a real alternative to the dominant logic of economic growth that is supposed to lift all boats.” See No Rising Tide, 29-60.
18 Ibid.
vision of Jubilee for both Canada and the Global South. CEJI interpreted “Release from Bondage” to call on the IMF, the World Bank, and the wealthy nations to cancel the debts of the world’s poorest countries, and that SAPS be replaced with equitable and sustainable development. Under “Redistribution of Wealth,” CEJI proposed the development of strong local economies, ethical investing, parish support of social movements, redistribution of work through a shorter work week, the increase in overseas development assistance and the institution of the Tobin tax. “Renewal of the earth” called for conversion, both individually and communally, to reduce pollution, to buy locally, to look at alternative non-polluting energy resources, to pressure governments to support Kyoto, to lobby governments to adopt a Genuine Progress Indicator which would incorporate environmental costs into economic indicators, and to participate in the campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons.\(^19\)

Cormie notes several constructive dimensions to CEJI’s theologically based initiatives. I believe these resonate powerfully with the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris, particularly the approaches of the Basic Christian and Basic Human Communities, and they provide an ideal example of theological resistance to the neoliberal project. CEJI embraced the option for the poor, affirmed the relation between theology and social practice, and demanded ongoing theological reflection. It retrieved a biblical vision which spoke to the diversity of challenges facing Canada and the Global South. It inspired hope. The movement recognized that solidarity with other groups was necessary and it challenged the Christian community to work with people of other denominations and faiths. Participants were encouraged to be open to the larger coalitions of social movements resisting different neoliberal projects. CEJI included both Anglophone and Francophone Canada. It encouraged a multiplicity of initiatives along many fronts. In sum, Cormie affirms: “CEJI reflected a shared experience of the Spirit drawing people

\(^19\) Ibid., Sections 3-5.
together from different contexts and communities in witnessing to the possibility of a different hope in history.”

5.2.2.2 Decentering the Neoliberal Subject

The second facet of my thesis is that Gutierrez and Pieris have exposed the hegemonic dimensions of unitary allegedly universal perspectives, and integrated epistemic justice into their soteriologies. I have noted that thinkers such as, Grosfoguel, Haraway, Castro-Gomez, Mignolo, De Sousa Santos, Brohman, Cormie, Young, and Said, have criticized strands in Western thought that have severed the connection between the subject and epistemic location, and generated the myth of disembodied objectivity. This enabled certain Western thinkers to construct totalizing theories which ignored class, race, gender, religion, and language. One significant consequence is that the grand theories mask conflict and oppression, and function hegemonically to produce dualistic imaginaries such as centre-periphery, East-West, Occident-Orient, or translate the Other into categories such as primitives, savages, cannibals, Orientals, and terrorists.

Certain strands of neoliberal politics in the United States and Canada have produced an identity-blind, difference-blind disembodied formal “equality” subject who is solely responsible for his/her own actions and well-being. Lisa Duggan highlights several examples from gay rights movements in the United States to show how some neoliberals have constructed the idea of a “responsible centre” to wrest constituencies for identity politics away from the progressive left, and instead adopt a “neoliberal brand of identity/equality politics.” She argues that during the

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20 Cormie, “CEJI and Ecumenical Coalitions: Hope for a New Beginning in History,” 305. Cormie also notes some of the challenges and limitations that CEJI encountered. Ibid., 319-23.
21 Duggan, The Twilight of Equality, 50.
22 Ibid., 44. She gives the example of Jonathan Rauch of the National Journal, who at the 1999 “Liberty for All” Log Cabin National Leadership Conference in New York, characterized the new centre as “libertarian radical independent.” The result is that several gay rights groups have embraced neoliberal politics, focused on mainly on
1990s, the rhetoric of official neoliberal politics in the United States shifted to a superficial multiculturalism that dovetailed with the ambitions of business interests, and to a “narrow, formal non redistributive form of ‘equality’ politics.” The creation of this new centre has several functions: it conceals other forms of oppression, and it marginalizes and dismisses those gay activists who are working for radical social change, usually by labeling them as extremists or anachronistic. The construction of the responsible “equality” subject enables neoliberals to claim that those who insist on raising issues of class, race, or gender are being ‘divisive.’

In the Canadian context, John Crookshanks has argued that with “the move toward undifferentiated citizenship and a focus on formal equality, rather than substantive equality, social rights have been eroded, political rights have been hollowed out, and civil rights have been demeaned in an uneven, economically-driven playing field.” One example he notes, is the Harper government’s changes to the Status of Women Canada (SWC). On September 25, 2006 the government announced a $5 million funding cut to and changes to the mandate of the Status of Women Canada (SWC). The cuts represented a loss of 43% of SWC’s operating budget and access to the military and marriage, and abandoned their commitments to the ideals of broad based social movements. Duggan names the Independent Gay Forum emerging in the 1990s as the influential group that marked a decisive break with the “big tent” advocacy of the centrist and radical gay movements. Ibid., 43-66.

Duggan cites the protest by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, a coalition of gay groups, precipitated by an Associated Press photograph showing a bomb being loaded for Afghanistan on the USS Enterprise with the graffiti, “Hijack this Fags.” Duggan notes that the objection was to the homophobia, and neglected the intended use of the bomb. Ibid., 46.

Identity politics has had a lot of bad press lately. On the one hand, the dominant reflex of the Right (as well as significant portions of the Left) is to maintain and police an ideological “identity-blind” standpoint by accusing anyone who speaks of the social hierarchies, segregations, and injuries of identity of having created them. The election of Barack Obama as U.S. president has only reinforced claims that we have entered a ‘postracial’ era.


meant the subsequent closure of 12 of the 16 regional offices across Canada. The government also changed the mandate of SWC’s Women’s Program. In 1976, the SWC was established to "advance equality for women by addressing women's economic, social, political and legal situation."27 The SWC’s Women’s Program worked on issues such as violence against women, pay equity, and democratic participation. These areas required a systemic approach, and involved research and public interest work. The SWC developed gender-responsive policies for federal agencies and departments, and helped to monitor the implementation of the UN Convention on the Eliminations of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Under the Harper government, the new objective was changed to “facilitate women's participation in Canadian society by addressing their economic, social and cultural situation through Canadian organizations.”28 The Women’s Program would support “projects that improve the situation of women in key areas such as women’s economic status and violence against women.”29 The new mandate removed the advancement of women’s equality and political justice as objectives; it barred organizations which did advocacy, lobbying or research from receiving funds; and it allowed for-profit organizations to apply for funding.30

As a consequence of the changes, many organizations have since closed down.31 In addition, the Harper government made two other significant decisions in 2006 which affected Canadian

28 Ibid.
30 When asked at the October 5, 2006, Standing Committee on the Status of Women what “for-profit organizations” meant, the minister at the time, Bev Oda responded that many of these groups have asked for financial support “to hold their awards events, to celebrate, to enable the mentorship programs, the gatherings to hear from entrepreneurs on how they can improve their businesses.” Canada, Evidence of Standing Committee of the Status of Women, (October 5, 2006). Hereafter, cited as “Evidence” (2006). Http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=2388704&Mode=1&Language=E (accessed July 2, 2013).
31 As of April 25, 2011, 35 Women’s organizations have had their funding cut or ended by the Harper government. For a list see Http://www.womensequality.ca/ (accessed July 3, 2013).
women: it cancelled the introduction of a National Child Care Program in favour of the National Child Care Benefit of $100 a month per child, and ended the Court Challenges Program which provided an essential source of financial assistance to women’s and minority groups to challenge court rulings that violated equality rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In her testimony on October 5, 2006, before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, then Minister Bev Oda defended the “reforms” with typical neoliberal rhetoric: the government wanted “greater efficiencies,” “cost-saving measures,” “effective use of their tax dollars,” and “real measurable results.” However, the fundamental appeal in Oda’s argument was to the self-sufficient neoliberal subject:

> Canada's new Government fundamentally believes that women are equal. We believe that women are strong, achievers, leaders in every sector of our society, providers for our families, and role models. Every person, including women in this country, has the freedom and the support of this government to the freedom of speech and freedom of advocating on behalf of any interests. Women equally have access to all of that. They are not vulnerable and weak; they are taxpayers. We are part of a democratic country; we have the Charter of Rights, which says everyone is equal. And it's those words, “to defend one's rights”... I think each one of us does that. We make sure we can stand up for ourselves.

In a later interview, Oda underscored the erasure of gender difference from this subject: "We don't need to separate the men from the women in this country. This government as a whole is responsible to develop policies and programs that address the needs of both men and women.”

To silence Canadian women, the Harper government constructed a rational, economic, able-bodied, male subject that is disembodied from the particular relationships that make people

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32 In 2008 the word “equality” was quietly reintroduced into the new mandate, but no changes were made with respect to funding for advocacy.
34 Ibid.
human. There was no allowance for those who failed because of lack of education, being born into poverty, illness, living in a period of high unemployment, or having experienced violence and abuse. When objections were raised that women earned 68 cents for every dollar a man made, or that women 65 or over were twice as likely as men to be low income, the neoliberal logic could respond that everyone was equal and had the same opportunities and access. The responsibility for poverty did not rest with political systems and economic structures, but with failed citizens.

Gutierrez and Pieris show us that embracing the option for the poor demands journeying to the peripheries to be epistemically located on the side of Canadian women who are struggling against discrimination, poverty and inequality. The option uncovers the “translation” at the centre of this dimension of the Harper project: the government promotes a distorted universal subject which ignores diverse social formations structured around class, race, gender, religion, and language. The option for the poor reveals that the story of Babel is being played out today in the lives of many Canadian women: the imposition of a single universal language is a totalitarian strategy employed to destroy the Canadian women’s movement. There is no attempt to relate meaningfully to difference and to enter into dialogical encounter that preserves mutual intelligibility and identity. The option calls on the Canadian churches to support Canadian women. It demands that theologians work to dismantle epistemic imperialism based on abstract universalist constructions, reflect on what knowledges are being suppressed, reconnect the self and the body, and challenge the hegemony of Harper’s difference-blind neoliberal subject.

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5.2.2.3 Challenging Stephen Harper’s History of Canada

Canadian history has become an important front in the implementation of Stephen Harper’s neoliberal project. In his keynote address to the 15th Annual New Frontiers Graduate History Conference at York University, Ian McKay argues that the Conservative government is reconfiguring Canadian history to marginalize Canada’s peacekeeping tradition and reshape the country into “the Warrior nation.” The implementation of this revolution proceeds on many fronts: yellow ribbon campaigns, highways of heroes, ‘support our troops’ bumper stickers, a yearly quota of media opinion pieces by the National Defense Department, military ads on TV, Coop Placements for high school students in the Canadian Armed Forces, and the use of every battle death to identify as disloyal and unpatriotic those who question the military project. McKay demonstrates that historians play a key role in “militarizing Canadian history to reshape the Canadian future.” He focuses mainly on Jack Granatstein and David Bercuson, and describes the Canadian imaginary they have constructed:

The Canada that shimmers in such warriors’ fevered imaginations is no effeminate welfare state, but a manly and virtuous nation of warriors. It is based upon the blood and soil of Flanders Fields. It is engaged in a perpetual war with the tyranny and chaos created by less evolved barbarians. Only an enlightened elite can rescue this degenerating land from the grip of the do-gooders, who have for the five decades after 1945, turned the goal of confederation into the dross of welfare dependency. We must declare the new warriors, avenge the betrayal of Canada. We must seize the day for a new Canada sanctified by the blood of Vimy Ridge, ready for active service in whatever wars are necessary for Western civilization as undertaken by the Anglo-American alliance wherein

37 A related area which I have not treated in this thesis due to limitations of space is the government’s suppression of knowledges. There are numerous examples: the 2008 firing of Linda Keen, the head of Canada's nuclear safety program; the 2009 smear campaign against foreign service officer Richard Colvin who testified before a Parliamentary Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan where he discussed a signed affidavit alleging that Afghan detainees turned over to Afghanistan prisons by Canadian soldiers were tortured; the abolition in 2010, of the Long Form Census which provided important information about poverty, health, equality, human rights, and religious linguistic and cultural minorities; the numerous attacks on science and on the ability of scientists to communicate the results of their investigations. On the latter, see Carol Linnitt, “Harper’s attack on science: No science, no evidence, no truth, no democracy,” Academic Matters: Journal of Higher Education, OCUFFA (May 2013). Http://www.academickingarts.ca/2013/05/harpers-attack-on-science-no-science-no-evidence-no-truth-no-democracy/ (accessed July 5, 2013).
38 McKay, “The Empire Strikes Back.”
39 Ibid.
all true Canadians can find their country’s true destiny.\textsuperscript{40}

In this imaginary, to be Canadian is to recognize that the Canadian past is constituted by war. The “warrior nation” historians insist that Canada’s dominant cultural pattern is made up of Judeo-Christian values, the progressive spirit of the enlightenment, and the institutions and values of the dominant British political culture. They believe Canada took a wrong turn at the end of the 50s with the adoption of the welfare state, the advent of feminism, the rise of nationalism in Quebec, the promotion of soft power, a trust in the fledgling United Nations, and the inauguration of a distinctive peace-keeping role in the world. In the warrior nation, to hold to a different historical understanding is either ignorant or unpatriotic, and ends (as Stephen Harper has informed us) in moral nihilism. The warriors must destroy the welfare state, dismantle Canada’s peacekeeping apparatus, and seize control.

To provide evidence of his thesis, McKay analyzes the widely circulated and influential 2009 Study Guide for prospective Canadians, \textit{Discover Canada: the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship}. McKay shows that the text gives credence to the new warriors’ vision of Canada. Canada’s golden age took place before the 60s; there is no extensive discussion of mainstream Canadian politics since 1945. Both Canada’s past and present are essentially about war. World War I has shaped the entire Canadian 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The images of war are romantic and sanitized. Canadian peacekeeping merits a half sentence. Warriors are the significant Canadians.\textsuperscript{41} Former heroes like Lester Pearson and Tommy Douglas are not included. No Canadian Prime Minister is given serious attention. The document incorporates Anglo-American imperial heroes who pre-date confederation. Canadian history extends back 400 years to 1600 CE, celebrates the white pioneers, colonizers and settlers who arrived before confederation, and excludes Indigenous

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} In the section on history 20 of 30 photographs depict military events or figures. The Guide promotes the military with specific website information about making this a career choice.
histories. Canada’s crucial heritage is the British imperial heritage. There is a major emphasis on the British monarchy. Canada is defined as a constitutional monarchy, rather than a democracy, and Canadians have become Anglo-American colonials. The representative Canadian statesman is Sir John Buchan, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir of Elsfield and Governor General of Canada from 1935 – 1940, who administered British concentration camps in South Africa, and whom McKay argues was an orientalist, racist, and social imperialist. Missing is any conception of Canadian history as a dynamic process involving complex struggles and movements. McKay concludes that the citizenship manual is an example of the concerted campaign by the new right to rebrand Canada as “a warrior nation and permanently integrate it into an Anglo-American imperial order.”

There are several other recent examples of the Harper government’s attempt to rewrite history. In 2011, the word ‘Royal’ was returned to the Canadian Navy and Air Force. In 2012, there was a major push to celebrate the bicentennial of the War of 1812. In the same year, the Canadian Museum of Civilization was renamed the Canadian Museum of History. On April 29, 2013 the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage announced it would conduct a review of how history is being taught in schools. Victor Rabinovitch, who headed the Museum of Civilization from 2000-2011, gave the following evaluation of the top-down agenda: “... they want to invent a type of muscular history that would link into a form of muscular identity.”

Gutierrez’ warning written 20 years ago in another context resonates powerfully in Canada today:

The manipulation of history has always been a prime resource in the hands of dominant groups for the maintenance of their power. We have always suffered on our continent,

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42 McKay, “The Empire Strikes Back.”
despite recent praiseworthy efforts to correct it, a version of history according to the ruling class. The consequences of this for a discourse on Christian faith are greater than is commonly recognized.\textsuperscript{44}

The biblically based option for the poor dismantles any religious veneer used to bless the Harper project. Re-reading history from below reveals that the Prime Minister has erased many historical struggles from the historical record and that the government is separating Canadians from their pasts by eliminating the memories of a different democratic Canada. It brings to light that the Harper version of the “end of history” is a totalizing vision which functions as an apologetic to justify government oppression at home and Canadian imperialism abroad. The option enables Canadians to expand the past to recover histories outside the dominant Euro-American versions, and reconnect with their cultures, communities and traditions. It calls Canadians to recognize and learn about Indigenous histories. It encourages the exploration of Canadian social histories, e.g., women’s, black, ethnic, labour and working class histories. It challenges us to study the history of our earth. It heightens awareness of evil and sin in our past, including the darker sides of our military history, such as the conscription crises in Quebec during World Wars I and II, the internment of Japanese and Italian Canadians during World War II, and Canada’s failure to admit Jewish refugees during the 1930s. Re-reading from below uncovers the fact that many who are promoting the “warrior nation” are middle aged men with no experience of war. The option grounds hope: it encourages Canadians to envision a different Canadian future.

\footnote{44 Gutierrez, \textit{Las Casas}, 415.}
5.2.3 Liberating Catholic Social Teaching

There is much to celebrate about CST, but the critiques by Gutierrez and Pieris show there is a need to examine and rethink this heritage. I have noted the affinity between Gutierrez’ “Theology from the Underside of History,” and Pieris’ trilogy of articles on the Catholic theology of human rights as found in the papal encyclicals. In Gutierrez’ 1977 paper, he argued that European progressivist theology had reinscribed elements of modernity, which from the perspective of the poor in Latin America functioned hegemonically. For Gutierrez, the church could not receive prophetic inspiration from “adherence to a liberal program.”45 What was required was a re-reading of history from the perspective of the poor. I have observed that Pieris argued that papal CST promoted a developmentalist ideology, rejected socialist models as alternatives and had no self-critical dimension. CST had not responded to the neoliberal project, and many Asians saw a connection between the Vatican teaching and the new forms of capitalism. CST absolutized the Western human rights paradigm for universal application, without reference to the praxis of the local churches of the Third World. As a result it had been used to admonish and silence Third World theologians who claimed the prerogative of the local church to develop their own theologies.

These perspectives, especially Pieris’ assertion that papal CST has been used to censure Third World theologians, resonate strongly with my own experiences as a member of Development and Peace’s (D&P) Theology Committee from March, 2007 until December, 2012. In March 2009, LifeSite News (LSN) publicly accused D&P of funding groups in Mexico that supported reproductive rights and abortion. The accusations precipitated a series of events which

45 Ibid., 212.
significantly changed the relationship between the CCCB and D&P. The CCCB sent a delegation to Mexico to investigate five NGO’s funded by D&P. In its report, the CCCB concluded that the allegations were unfounded. However, this did not end the controversy. Some bishops threatened to withhold funds from the annual Share Lent/Share Life campaigns. In the spring of 2011, the speaking engagements of Fr. Luis Arriaga of the human rights PRODH Centre in Mexico were cancelled in the Ottawa and Cornwall dioceses. The sustained campaign by the religious right in Canada and the United States against D&P led to the cancellation of the 2012 Fall Action postcard campaign by the CCCB president. As I noted in the Introduction to this thesis, this was the first time in D&P’s history that the CCCB had intervened to cancel an action campaign. The CCCB also set up an Ad Hoc committee (later Standing Committee) to collaborate with D&P “to ensure that the implementation of its mandate was in harmony with the identity and mission of the Church.” D&P was to “review the implementation of its mandate in the light of Caritas in Veritate.” I note too, that it was during the course of these events that the Canadian government cut D&P’s funding by 65%, and that, in an unprecedented move, Minister Jason Kenny was invited to address a closed-door session of the CCCB’s annual meeting in

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49 PRODH was one of the groups named by LSN. On May 25, 2011, the three general superiors of the Jesuit order in French Canada, English Canada, and Mexico, issued a letter defending PRODH and its director Fr. Arriaga. See [Communiciqué: Les jésuites du Canada et du Mexique expriment sur le Centre Miguel Pro pour les droits humains (PRODH),](http://mouvement-movement.blogspot.ca/2011/05/les-jesuites-du-canada-et-du.html) (May 25, 2011).


51 Ibid.
September 2012.

There have been many responses to these events from Canadian Catholics committed to justice and peace. The October 30, 2012, letter by Elizabeth Garant, the Director of the Jesuit-founded Centre Justice et Foi in Montreal, to the CCCB articulated the position of many D&P supporters. Garant criticized the CCCB for taking a “serious steps backward with regard to the rich tradition of the Church’s social teaching.” She said there had been no public letters from the CCCB denouncing the neoliberal policies of the current government. She accused the CCCB of putting “the preservation of your ‘good relations’ with the Conservative government above any other consideration.” The letter questioned the meeting with Jason Kenny, given the contradictions between the Harper government’s changes to policies on immigration and Canadian bishops’ statements on the topic.

On November 23, 2011, D&P’s Theology Committee sent a letter to the National Council of D&P unanimously imposing a Moratorium on the Theology Committee’s activities. The letter pointed to a crisis of leadership within D&P. It called for representation of the Theology Committee on D&P committees that were in dialogue with the bishops’ Standing Committee. It criticized the CCCB for not defending D&P against dishonest allegations. It questioned the


54 Ibid.

move by some bishops to position the abortion issue at the centre of D&P’s mandate. Several members of the committee resigned. I recall that on several occasions the Committee was told that it was comprised of “*Populorum Progressio* Catholics in a *Caritas in Veritate* World.” The ultimatum from the Bishops was to demonstrate that *Caritas in Veritate* had been integrated into the institutional life and practices of D&P. Here was an example of the type of interference of which Pieris was speaking: the papal teaching of a social encyclical was being universally applied to censure the justice work of a local Canadian Catholic movement.

There are several Canadian theologians whose works on CST illumine aspects of these events. In a well-known article, Gregory Baum argued that with the start of the first Gulf War on January 15, 1991, the thirty year *kairos* period from the 1960s through to the 1980s had come to an end. Baum said that the metaphor of wilderness best described the global context. He noted that the new neoliberal political and economic trends in the U.S. and Canada had also affected the Christian churches. Retrenchment had become the order of the day. Speaking of the Catholic church, Baum insisted there was a new emphasis on identity, which made the hierarchy more self-involved, lessened ecumenical and inter-faith involvements, and decreased cooperation with social movements. Fear had become the “church’s counselor.”

In his 1991 article, “Revolutions in Catholic Social Teaching,” Lee Cormie identified a backlash to CST. Cormie argued that in the 1970s and 80s, there had been a shift in Canadian CST. He demonstrated that documents such as “Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis,” and “Ethical Reflections on Canada’s Socio-economic Order,” marked a change in content, theological-ethical frameworks, method, and nature of church authority vis-à-vis economic and political issues. Cormie insisted that these documents reflected the collective experiences of many people in the

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57 Ibid.
church, marked a return to the bible, drew attention to fundamental contradictions between capital and labour, emphasized solidarity with the poor, and engaged in a pastoral circle process.\textsuperscript{58} The backlash came from without and from within. Cormie identified the highly influential Business Council on National Issues (now the Canadian Council of Chief Executives) which mobilized against the common good and reasserted its own version of a comprehensive long-term agenda.\textsuperscript{59} From inside, there was opposition from the Vatican to Latin American liberation and feminist theologies, to critics of capitalism, and to those who questioned hierarchical authority. Cormie also noted certain gaps, problems and faultlines within the work of social justice groups including church groups. These included: lack of a comprehensive vision to implement the justice agenda; a tendency to focus on single issues and neglect the interrelations among them; insufficient attention to women’s issues, racism, ecology, and injustices within the church; a tendency to institutionalize social justice activities in the church in the hands of a few, rather than educate and mobilize the peoples in the pews; and little emphasis on theological reflection.\textsuperscript{60} He maintained that the early 90s represented another shift in the social context and that the stage was “set for a new turn in Catholic social teaching, and more importantly, practice.”\textsuperscript{61}

In his 2003 study, \textit{The Canadian Catholic Social Justice Paradigm: Birth, Growth, Decline and Crisis}, Robert McKeon argued that “the dimensions of a new dominant paradigm are still not visible.”\textsuperscript{62} There were many signs of the collapse of the earlier paradigm: the Bishops’ Social


\textsuperscript{60} Cormie, “Revolutions in Catholic Social Teaching,” 82-4.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 84.

Affairs Commission was reduced to relative silence; many local social justice offices were closed; in the late 1980s CCCB restructuring called for reduced presence in the Inter Church Coalitions and greater restriction for participation in popular coalitions; no social justice statements were issued from 1988-1993, a period of significant neoliberal restructuring; the bishops were silent on NAFTA; calls for a new international order disappeared from CCCB statements; there was a shift away from the “People of God” to an ecclesiology which stressed hierarchy and authority; and a new generation of priests and bishops emerged with little interest in social justice. McKeon also insisted that the sex abuse scandals were undermining the credibility of the bishops. In addition, women’s issues, ecology, racism, and gay and lesbian rights were assuming greater importance in Canadian society.  

Ten years after McKeon’s study, a new Catholic social justice paradigm has not appeared. The analyses of Baum, Cormie and McKeon still resonate forcefully. For example, with respect to papal teaching, some Canadian commentators have noted significant deficiencies in *Caritas in Veritate*. In Canada, the executive council of the CCCB refused to join other Christian churches in December 2009 to lobby the Harper government to restore CIDA funding to

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63 In his study, McKeon does point to some signs that may augur the emergence of a new paradigm. For example, he cited projects in Quebec and the Canadian North that expanded the narrow framework of Catholic social teaching to address family violence, and issues of women, children and family life; the CCCB statement, “The Struggle Against Poverty,” examined poverty among women; ecology assumed a greater profile; there was an acknowledgement of the need for ecclesial conversion in the apologies made by church authorities and religious orders to First Nations peoples, women, and victims of sexual abuse; there was the promotion of local community economic development initiatives across Canada; and an emphasis on continuing to promote Catholic social justice initiatives beyond official church designated organization and ministries, including Catholic schools and hospitals, religious orders, university campuses, youth ministries, and RCIA programs. McKeon, *Canadian Catholic Social Justice Paradigm*, 169-182.

64 Michel Beaudin has criticized the encyclical for adhering to a dominant “on high” perspective and abandoning the option for the poor; for a “naïveté and complacency” vis-à-vis neoliberalism; for disqualifying “the efforts of other religions and cultures,” and for dealing mainly with “the darker side of the ‘signs of the times’.” Michel Beaudin, “The prophetic journey of Development and Peace: A flower blossoms in the fertile ground of the Church’s social teaching.” (Nov. 26, 2009), 15-22. Http://soutenonsdept.wordpress.com/2013/05/02/the-prophetic-journey-of-development-and-peace-by-michel-beaudin/ (accessed June 24, 2012).
KAIROS. In December 2012, the executive council of the CCCB eliminated the position of Principal Advisor to the Bishops on Social Justice.

This is the context in which to understand the recent situation of D&P. Supporters of neoliberal capitalism, both inside and outside the church, have used their resources and political power to silence dimensions of D&P’s advocacy. D&P functions in a world of competing ecclesiologies. Partnerships with social movements, especially those working on women’s poverty, are suspect. Theological reflection is largely absent. Many new clergy do not regard D&P’s education and justice activism as a priority. CCCB social statements are infrequent. Dealing with sexual abuse, lack of funds, and closing of parishes, has taken the time and energy of many bishops. Fear continues. This is not the whole story. Since the new millennium there have been some signs of hope. For example, the CCCB has released occasional statements, including three on the environment, a pastoral message on racism, and a pastoral letter on human trafficking. There is the prophetic stand of Bishop Luc Bouchard on the Alberta Tar Sands. On the international level, Pope Francis’ concern for the poor, his “No” to an “economy of exclusion and

inequality,” his humble pastoral approach, and his assertion that the church “cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods,” provide hope for a renewed CST.

In light of my experience on D&P’s Theology Committee and the important critiques of Baum, Cormie and McKeon, I believe that the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris offer important resources to help CST move forward in ways that are more faithful to the spirit of the times and to the Gospel. I am not offering a new comprehensive CST paradigm, but rather identifying elements from the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris which could inform the development of a future paradigm:

- Both Gutierrez and Pieris are committed to a vision of liberation that goes beyond the strictly economic;
- Both have underscored the liberating potential of religion;
- Both work in centres outside the university and institutional church settings;
- Both engage in cross-disciplinary discussions where participants can share stories of diverse forms of oppression, engage in multiple analytical frameworks, foster local and global networks, bring in knowledgeable people from different disciplines and religions, and evaluate the effectiveness of their initiatives;
- They take seriously the necessity for ongoing theological reflection for religiously based social movements. Their soteriologies employ a sophisticated pastoral

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70 In many church circles, the dynamic nature of CST has been neglected. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation noted the need for ongoing theological reflection: “Being essentially orientated toward action, this teaching develops in accordance with the changing circumstances of history . . . Far from constituting a closed system, it remains constantly open to the new questions which continually arise.”
method which moves from the World to the Word and back again, and negates the hegemony of applying universal principles;

- The bible and the option for the poor remain central. Praxis as a methodology relativizes authoritarianism from the centre and privileges the voices of the poor;
- They do not abandon the framework of structural injustice;
- They recognize the shifting contours of hegemony, and understand the necessity for an increasing diversity of analyses and strategies that operate simultaneously on multiple fronts;
- They are open to working with social movements that include people of other denominations and faiths;
- They measure the fidelity of their work against the foundational experiences that gave birth to the bible;
- Their soteriologies are not the “handmaiden of the church,” but serve the world community. 71

These soteriological elements suggest that the new Catholic social justice paradigm will commit to integral liberation; remain faithful to the option for the poor; privilege theological reflection; move beyond the economic; engage in cross-disciplinary conversations; recognize the evolving nature of hegemonies and oppressions; remain attentive to structural injustice; study the interrelationships between diverse dehumanizing structures; employ an ongoing dynamic methodology which continually brings the gospel to bear on the shifting economic, social and political landscapes; recognize new sources of revelation; creatively examine multiple strategic possibilities; and see the presence of the Spirit in movements working for justice. Further, the

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Soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris offer challenging questions for any reframing of CST: How does the church privilege CST and involve all members of the community in working for justice? What criteria should be used to evaluate the successes or failures of Catholic social justice initiatives? What ecclesial and social structures need to be established to support CST? How does the church align its institutional practice with the imperatives of CST? What changes does the institutional church need to make to recover its credibility and its voice to speak authoritatively? What position should CST take vis-à-vis neoliberal capitalism – revolution? reform? or some other approach? What role will the new loci of revelation play in the church’s social practice? How does the church work with partners for justice, when it disagrees with elements of their programs? In light of Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ criticisms of hegemonic universality and their emphasis on praxis, what is the function of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*? How does the church abandon the framework of fear and resist the backlashes from within and without?

5.2.4 Celebrating the Spirit Alive at Many Centres

5.2.4.1 Situating Inter-religious Dialogue at the Centre of the Struggle for Justice: Challenging Islamophobia

Since September 11, 2001, Muslims in North America have been objectified, stereotyped, demonized, silenced and killed. Grosfoguel maintains that the 9/11 attacks on the United States led to a global resurgence of Islamophobia: “The events of 9/11 escalated anti-Arab racism through an Islamophobic hysteria all over the world, specifically among dominant elites in the

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72 Gregory Baum argues that the *Compendium* assumes a pre-Vatican II ecclesiology and reduces CST to ‘system’ which ignores the dehumanizing forces which are operative in the present historical situation. Gregory Baum, “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,” *The Ecumenist* 42, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 19.

United States and Israel.” He asserts that Islamophobia has been used by Western elites to conceal geopolitical calculations and imperial intentions: “Islamophobic representations of Muslim people as savages in need of Western civilizing missions is the main argument used to cover-up global/imperial/military and economic designs.” He argues that Islamophobic racism has “multiple faces” today. Orientalist views of Islam that began in the 18th century were preceded by three hundred years of Occidentalism. The Cartesian epistemological “point zero” perspective which produced the myth of the non-situated subject and the Western males’ capacity to create a knowledge that was universal beyond space and time, produced an epistemic racism. For Grosfoguel, epistemic racism and epistemic sexism are the most hidden forms of discrimination in the global system. Islamophobic racism is a form of epistemic racism, where non-Western epistemologies that understand human rights, human dignity and democracy in different ways, are considered inferior. Muslims can only be part of the discussion if they cease to think from within the Islamic tradition and adopt Western Eurocentric definitions. Further, Grosfoguel argues that epistemic racism has led to the Orientalization of Islam.

Edward Said has insisted that the American justifications for the invasion of Iraq and the war on terror, like the earlier British justifications for colonialism, were based on essentialist, imperialist

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75 Ibid., 16.


77 Deepa Kumar of Rutgers University argues that the construction of Islam and the Middle East takes place within five frames in the post 9/11 world: Islam is portrayed as monolithic despite having 1.57 billion adherents; Islam is a sexist religion and Muslim women are victims who need to be rescued; the Muslim mind is incapable of science, rational thinking and reason; Islam is an inherently violent religion; and, the West spreads democracy, whereas Islam sponsors terrorism. Deepa Kumar, “Framing Islam: the Resurgence of Orientalism During the Bush II Era,” Journal of Communication Inquiry 34, no. 3 (2010), 254-277. Http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav DOI: 10.1177/0196859910363174 (Accessed May 15, 2011)
and racist constructions. The Bush II administration was able to construct the conception of a single unified essentialized backward and violent Islam that was incompatible with modernity and a menace to civilization. Rosemary Ruether argues that the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were framed as an apocalyptic struggle between Christianity and Islam. On September 16, 2001 President Bush evoked the historical wars between Christians and Muslims by stating that the US response to 9/11 would be a “crusade” against evil. He referred to terrorism as “Islamo-fascism.”

Islamophobia is pervasive in Canada. The British journalist Robert Fisk has recently accused the mainstream Canadian press of being “irretrievably biased and potentially racist.” Two prominent members of the Canadian Islamic Congress complained to the Canadian, Ontario and B.C. human rights authorities, about the publication in *MacLeans* magazine of 18 articles they considered to be Islamophobic. Controversies about the hijab, the niqab, ‘honour killings,’ ‘forced marriages,’ polygamy, sharia, and free speech, are widespread and well-publicized.

*Toronto Star* columnist Haroon Siddiqui asserts that the current debates over multiculturalism

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have become “a smokescreen” for attacking Islam.\textsuperscript{84} He notes too that since 2010, mosques in Hamilton, Montreal and the Vancouver area have been firebombed and vandalized.\textsuperscript{85} In May 2011, Charles McVety, a Christian Zionist activist who is in charge of Canada’s Christian College and Christians United for Israel, and who claims to have a close relationship with Stephen Harper, sponsored Geert Wilders, a Dutch politician who has compared the Qur’an to Hitler’s \textit{Mein Kampf}.\textsuperscript{86} Finally, there is the high profile case of Maher Arar who was tortured in Syria with Canadian complicity.

In \textit{The Ugly Canadian: Stephen Harper’s Foreign Policy}, Yves Engler argues that in shifting Canadian foreign policy away from the “centrist pretense” to the far right of the political spectrum, Stephen Harper must please his reactionary base. This includes the ideological right, evangelical Christians, right-wing Zionists, cold-Warriors, the military-industrial complex, mining and oil executives, and Islamophobes.\textsuperscript{87} Racist remarks and tactics have become a constitutive part of the Harper strategy. For example, on the tenth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, in an interview with the CBC’s Peter Mansbridge, Harper asserted that the major threat to Canada “is still Islamicism.”\textsuperscript{88} Harper insisted that “When people think of Islamic terrorism, they think of Afghanistan, or maybe they think of some place in the Middle East, but the truth is that threat exists all over the world.”\textsuperscript{89} The comment provoked criticism both within and outside of Canada. The Islamic Supreme Council of Canada urged Canadians to contact the Prime Minister’s Office to demand an apology for "insulting the faith of

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 235.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
1.6 billion Muslims.” Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, secretary-general of the Organization of Islamic Co-operation which represents 57 Muslim countries responded that Harper’s remarks would “obstruct global efforts to counter bigotry and hatred between religions and cultures.” Engler points out that in an earlier interview in July 2011 with *MacLeans*, Harper echoed George W. Bush’s ‘war on terror’ rhetoric by claiming that global politics is a “struggle between good and evil.” Engler reasons that Harper is framing himself as a leader of the Judeo-Christian alliance involved in an apocalyptic struggle.

A second example of Islamophobia in the Harper government concerns the newly formed Foreign Office of Religious Freedom. Engler notes that in addition to no left-leaning Christian groups, no “Sunni or Shia Muslim leader was invited” to the inaugural meeting. A final illustration is the case of the Canadian citizen Omar Khadr, the longest serving Western prisoner at Guantanamo Bay and the first person since World War II to be prosecuted in a military court for war crimes committed while still a minor. Critics have cited racism at the centre of the Harper government’s decision to obstruct the extradition and repatriation of Khadr, in spite of appeals by Amnesty International, UNICEF, and the Canadian Bar Association.

Walter Mignolo argues that resisting Islamophobia will require engaging “in a global and multi-versal project of decoloniality.” The soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris provide direction for

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93 Ibid., 236. Engler notes that no Buddhist, Sikh or Hindu representatives were invited. The speaker’s panel included a prominent evangelical, a Catholic priest, the head of B’nai Brith and a Baha’i community leader.
negotiating one of these fronts. Both point to ways of encountering the Other without colonizing or annihilating the Other. They offer approaches to dialogue which can defuse conflicts and promote peace. As I have described, they stress listening and solidarity. They refuse to translate the Other into objectifying stereotypes, and they are willing to cross borders to see from the perspective of the Other. They are open to the local histories, knowledges and spiritualities of the Other. They reject academic dialogue among the elites who are part of the oppressive structures, and begin rather with the dialogue of life at the grassroots level. In the section on “Liberating Evangelization” in Chapter Four, I argued that Gutierrez’ and Pieris’ approaches to dialogue rested on four theological foundations. The first three are immediately relevant here: the universality of God’s grace, a christology that identifies Christ with the poor, and a willingness to “cross over” and see reality from the perspective of the Other. I believe that contemporary liberation theologies can use these collective theological maneuvers to dismantle Orientalism and challenge Islamophobia.

Regarding the first theological move, Gutierrez and Pieris challenge fundamentalist Christians and those who hold exclusivist positions vis-à-vis revelation and salvation. Gutierrez argued that God has been salvifically operative since creation. Las Casas challenged the colonizers’ belief that the Indigenous were damned and argued from the universality of God’s salvific design that all peoples are capable of receiving salvation. For Pieris, symbiosis assumed the reality of divine grace. The universality of God’s grace means that the divine is salvifically present in Islam.

With respect to christology, fundamentalist theology rips Jesus from his Asian roots, transforms him into a white tribal god and enlists him in an apocalyptic struggle between Christianity and Islam. The christologies of Gutierrez and Pieris resist this orientalist frame. The Pentecostal breakthrough includes both the historical Jesus and the Risen Christ, and insists that the
theological understanding of the latter must be grounded in the former. A great strength of Pieris’ understanding of the incarnation is that the *logos* is present not only in the historical Jesus, but also in other persons and communities. Both Gutierrez and Pieris insist that to oppress the Other is to oppress Christ himself. Gutierrez sees Christ in the “scourged Christs of the Indies;” for Pieris the Asian Christ is sacramentally present in the poor in Asia. Both soteriologies challenge Christians to see Christ present in Muslims who are oppressed.

Regarding the third theological maneuver, Pieris’ understanding of symbiosis provides an explicit vision and a practice for engaging Muslims. By reinterpreting baptism as cross-bearing discipleship, Pieris provides Christians with a theological rationale for dialoguing across differences. A significant dimension of Pieris’ project is to train Christians to recognize God’s voice outside the bible and obey it. I have shown that Pieris has spoken of faiths as “languages of the spirit,” that “each faith is a language of liberation, that is to say, a specific way in which the spirit speaks and executes its redemptive intention in a given cosmic/human context.” Pieris advocates going beyond dialogue at the level of theological interpretation to a deeper core-to-core dialogue. Pieris’ focus in his writings has been the Buddhist Christian dialogue and he does not develop the contours of the Christian-Muslim dialogue. However, the evidence that Pieris...

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95 Pieris, “Faith Communities and Communalism,” 100.
96 Pieris argues that in the context of the Christian Buddhist dialogue, each tradition has its respective idiom: Christian agape and Buddhist gnosis. What makes the dialogue possible is that each tradition contains within itself the idiom of the other tradition. In other words, there is a Christian gnosis which is agapeic and a Buddhist agape which is gnostic. In Christianity and Buddhism there is the interpenetration of the two distinct idioms which facilitates dialogue. My concern here is dialogue with Islam and Pieris’ reflections do raise questions about the nature of other inter-faith dialogues: what are the implications of Pieris’ claims for dialogue among other religious traditions, for example, between Christianity and Hinduism? or between religions where the dominant idiom is the same, such as, Christianity and Islam, or Christianity and Judaism? How does Pieris envision his approach extending to dialogues among members of religious traditions other than Christian, e.g., between Islamic and Jewish communities? How would one characterize the liberating primordial experience or language of the spirit of these other traditions, and as in the case of Christianity and Buddhism, have there been mutual interpenetrations of salvific languages of the spirit among these traditions? Pieris does give some clarification. He says that within every person and within every religion the two languages of liberative knowledge and redemptive love are present. He goes on to characterize Vedantic Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Daoism as dominated by the gnostic idiom, whereas in Judaism, Christianity and Islam agapeic discourse predominates. However, in all these religious...
approach can work with other religious traditions is found in the Basic Human communities which include not only Christians and Buddhists, but also Muslims, and other religious and non-religious partners.

In the context of contemporary Islamophobia, interreligious dialogue is a constitutive part of the new theological agenda for those Christians struggling for global justice.

5.2.4.2 Witnessing to the Activity of the Spirit in Global Social Justice Movements

The soteriologies of both Gutierrez and Pieris support solidarity with religious and non-religious Others who are challenging the neoliberal project throughout the globe. Pieris’ theology is most helpful here. Pieris amends “extra ecclesiam nulla salus” to read “no salvation outside the Reign of God.” It is only through commitment to the historical struggle against mammon, that rich and poor, Christian and non-Christian, can achieve salvation. Unlike many theologies in the Western tradition which virtually ignore the Spirit, Pieris’ soteriology incorporates a sophisticated pneumatology which leads to a Pentecostal breakthrough: the Spirit is alive at many centres. Philip Gibbs points out that in Pieris’ approach to Buddhism, he is not following Karl Rahner’s theory of “anonymous Christianity” and offering a Christian interpretation of a non-Christian religion. Rather, Pieris’ work “amounts to a Christian’s search for a non-Christian interpretation of the saving Word in an Asian (Buddhist) context.” In other words, solidarity with non-Christian Asians helps Christians understand how the Spirit is present in contemporary Asia. Pieris’ theological project is not about proselytism, but about the joint efforts of dialogue partners, faithful to the liberating experiences of their own traditions, to join together in the struggles against oppression. This has important implications for a theological approach to

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traditions both languages are present, unless for some reason the less dominant idiom has been repressed See Pieris, “The Asian Reality and the Christian Option: A Plea for a Paradigm Shift in Christian Education in Asia,” 162-168, and “Western Christianity and Asian Buddhism: A Theological Reading of Historical Encounters,” 26-28.


social movements. To rephrase Gibbs: in the struggle against neoliberal hegemony, Pieris’
soteriology offers Christian theology the opportunity to discover how religious and non-religious
Others interpret the saving Word in the context of the global social justice movement.99

In Chapter 1, I noted some of the Canadian and international social movements that are resisting
the neoliberal project. Pieris’ understanding of core-to-core dialogue presents both challenges
and opportunities for Christians involved in social movements. There is an affinity between
Christian participation in social movements and the Christian experience in the Basic Human
communities. In both settings, Christians enter into core-to-core dialogues with peoples whose
“languages of the spirit,” may be rooted in a theistic or non theistic understanding of the Spirit.
Further, there is an affinity between the struggles of diverse social movements today and the
 cosmic spiritualities emphasized in the Basic Human communities, which pay attention to
overcoming oppression in the historical present. In bringing Pieris’ vision of dialogue to the
social movements, emerging liberation theologies need to ask new questions: about the nature of
these diverse “languages of the spirit;” about the foundational experiences which gave rise to
these movements; about the meaning of communicatio in sacris as mediating access to the
collective memory and the core liberating experiences of the movements; about sharing with and
being challenged by the uniqueness of the Other’s liberative approaches; and about the risk of
losing one’s own Christian identity. Again the challenge here is to do the theological work within
the particular context of the movements in which one is involved. Pieris has given us one
example, the Basic Human communities in the Sri Lankan context. In addition to Christians and
Buddhists, the Basic Human communities include people of other faiths as well as agnostics and

99 Pieris is not the only theologian to highlight the activity of the Spirit in the World. Cormie maintains that social
movements are “primary sites of encounter with the Divine.” See Cormie, “Movements of the Spirit in History,” 11.
Samuel Rayan has said that listening to God’s Word spoken outside the Judaeo–Christian tradition forms a
cornerstone in the process of decolonizing theology. See Rayan, “Decolonization of Theology,” Sedos Bulletin 30
atheists. The promise for Christians of engaging in the work of social movements is immense: transcending differences to achieve a common goal, participating in the creation of a more just world, seeing how the Divine is present and reveals Itself in the actions of those who join together to struggle for global justice, and if the dialogue develops, discovering how non-Christian theistic and non-theistic partners understand the uniqueness of the saving Spirit in movements that are working for a better possible world.

5.3 Conclusion

To conclude this Chapter, I highlight ten important insights where the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris can contribute to the further development of new liberation theologies which challenge the neoliberal project:

a) *Conversion to history and the cross:* New liberation theologies will focus on the particularities of history and understand that for the majority today history is conflictual.

b) *Reconnect economics and history:* Liberation theologies will demand that economics be re-embedded in the realities of peoples’ lives and that economists scrutinize the hidden consequences of their theories in order to eliminate what dehumanizes.

c) *To confront neoliberalism is to confront idolatry:* In the context of the neoliberal project, the market and progress have replaced the Christian God as the new divine and focus of our faith. Mammon today has manifested itself as “Absolutized Capital” and “Divinized Money.”

d) *The option for the poor will remain the spiritual directing principle of any new liberation theology:* The option for the poor embraces the voices of others and challenges privilege, deconstructs Eurocentric universal constructions, and dismantles the “end of history.”
e) **Challenge neoliberal historiography:** The singularity of the “end of history” frame based on social evolutionary models of history and reinterpreted by thinkers like Fukuyama, obliterates other pasts and possible futures. It offers a justification for colonialism and imperialism and undermines the hope for a better possible world. New liberation theologies will employ the option for the poor to help people reconnect with their pasts, cultures, communities and traditions, and ground hope by offering the possibility of different futures.

f) **Decentre the European subject and its claims to disembodied objective and universal knowledge:** The option for the poor and the dialogue of life dismantle Eurocentric universality, identify epistemological distortions, uncover religious and political sectarianisms, and help us understand new ways that neoliberalism generates poverty. They open theologies to other voices and offer liberation theologies opportunities for the discovery of new knowledges, including resources, traditions, and spiritualities both inside and outside Christianity.

g) **See Christ in the oppressed Other:** In addition to the scourged Christ of the Indies and the Asian Christ, there are many other crucified peoples today who suffer under neoliberal hegemony. To identify Christ with the Other dismantles orientalism, helps us recognize the Other as subject, and encourages us to listen to these new voices.

h) **Situate inter-religious dialogue at the heart of the struggle for justice:** New liberation theologies will promote inter-religious dialogue in ways that do not compete for adherents, but rather promote global justice. Following Pieris, these theologies will facilitate core to core dialogues in which followers of all religious traditions will encourage one another to be faithful to the fundamental liberating vision of their own
traditions and confront mammon in its current neoliberal guise.

i) **Liberate Catholic Social Teaching**: A new dynamic paradigm for CST will be receptive to and incorporate key elements from new theological voices, like those of Gutierrez and Pieris, which have irrupted around the world since the 1960s.

j) **Celebrate the Activity of the Spirit in the World**: Resistance to neoliberal hegemony and the movement to democratic, equitable and ecological globalization will not be possible unless social movements can work together despite differences. New approaches to liberation theology need to develop a “pentecostal breakthrough” which allows Christians to listen to other languages of the Spirit and join together in solidarity with people in social movements who are struggling for another possible world.
CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented a theological response to key elements of certain North American expressions of neoliberalism, that is, the thesis challenges neoliberal assumptions and assertions vis-à-vis the option for privilege, unitary allegedly universal perspectives, and linear understandings of history as progress. I have argued that neoliberalism as a global project is more than economic, that it endeavours to transform all of human life: family, culture, politics, and religion. I have cited critics who insist that the neoliberal project has led to increasing gaps between rich and poor within and across nations, deepened patriarchy and racism, increased conflict and war, and now threatens the survival of the planet. I have sketched some examples both of the implementation of this project and resistance to it in North America. A significant focus of the thesis has been a theological critique of the implementation of the neoliberal project under the Harper government. I have maintained that theology has an important role in challenging neoliberalism. I have noted that key proponents of neoliberalism from the beginning have argued that their project had its basis in the Judeo-Christian tradition. I have stated that for many adherents, neoliberalism is a powerful orthodoxy which functions as a missionary faith. Many assumptions that neoliberals make about the nature of the human, about the good life, about where to place our faith and our hope, about the dynamics of history, about the universal nature of the North Atlantic experience, and about the translation of the non-Euro-American Other from subject to object, these are theologically repugnant and need to be challenged.

I have shown that the soteriologies of Gustavo Gutierrez and Aloysius Pieris have a relevance that goes beyond the borders of Peru and Sri Lanka, respectively. I have argued that the neoliberal project shares many of the hegemonic Eurocentric biases inherent in colonialism and developmentalism. Examining how Gutierrez and Pieris have re-contextualized and reframed
key theological debates vis-à-vis “privilege,” Eurocentric universality, and history as progress within their respective contexts, can inform the development of contemporary theologies which can challenge the neoliberal project. Further, both Gutierrez and Pieris have acknowledged the part played by the church in the colonial project, and both have demonstrated that implicit in many of the dominant liberal and conservative North Atlantic theologies are ideological distortions which purposely or inadvertently legitimate imperialism. Both are critical of the sectarianism of the European Catholic church. A sincere study of their theologies can contribute to the renewal of the church in the contemporary world.

At the heart of their soteriologies is another imagination which gives birth to the total re-reading and reconfiguration of theology. They reject theologies which stress hierarchy, power, triumphalism, individualism, a bias toward capitalism, a domesticated Jesus, and salvation as a consumer or other-worldly reality. In contrast, they reconnect history and salvation; they speak of a polycentric church where the Spirit is alive at many centres; they celebrate plurality and diversity; they underscore the necessary connection between faith and the openness of history; they reconnect christology and history; they take seriously the activity of the Logos in the histories of those who are not Christian; they insist that to oppress the Other is to oppress Christ himself; they name history as an end time struggle against idolatry; they offer alternative visions of the church which reject ecclesiologies that place the church above history, or at the centre of political power; through their reading of the Exodus, the Prophets, Jesus’ life and teaching about the Reign of God, they reassert that the God of the Scriptures is above all a God who identifies with the poor; they give priority to discipleship and reframe theology as a spirituality; they encourage a liberating evangelization that brings together interreligious dialogue and justice; they maintain that the salvation of the oppressor is intrinsically linked with the salvation of the oppressed; they establish a theological foundation for Christian participation in social
movements and help those involved transcend differences to work to achieve a common goal; they expand our understanding of the horizons of revelation and encourage us to be attentive to opportunities for new experiences of the Spirit. With this different imagination, theology now serves the world community.

In the final part of the thesis, I engaged dimensions of the Harper agenda in light of the works of Gutierrez and Pieris. I offered probes into how the option for the poor challenges economic privilege, the neoliberal subject and the attack on the Canadian Women’s Movement, and Harper’s version of history as progress which reconfigures Canada into a Warrior Nation. I argued that elements of their soteriologies could inform the development of a new CST paradigm. I demonstrated that their understandings of grace, christology, and dialogue, challenged North American orientalist and racist constructions of Islam, and offered ways to enter into conversation and solidarity with Muslims. I showed that their soteriologies ground Christian participation in local and global social movements working for justice.

In researching this thesis, I found that the study of the neoliberal project in theology is underdeveloped. My thesis points to opportunities for further research. With respect to the soteriologies of Gutierrez and Pieris, more study could be done on: core-to-core dialogues between two agapeic religious traditions, especially Christianity and Islam; exploring new theological possibilities based on our expanded understanding of sources of revelation; examining how to embrace historical particularity without degenerating into a postmodern relativism; and taking seriously the theological implications of history ending through something like catastrophic climate change. With regard to neoliberalism, further theological reflection needs to be done on the Canadian reality. Each of the areas I touched on in Chapter 5 demands more attention. As well, the government’s suppression of knowledges, its treatment of First
Nations peoples, its attacks on labour, its deregulation of environmental safeguards, its tax policies, and its installation of “economic diplomacy” at the centre of foreign policy, necessitate further theological investigation. Theologians also need to explore the role played by religion and theology in supporting the Harper agenda.¹ The decolonial thinkers referenced in this study raise another issue that contemporary theology needs to address: how to move beyond a single issue analysis and examine a matrix of power relationships which dehumanize and oppress. As I noted, McKay described the Harper project as “massive” and “multi-faceted,” and the issues discussed in Chapter 5 give some insight into the many concurrent fronts on which the government’s agenda proceeds. Grosfoguel speaks of a “modern capitalist/patriarchal world-system,” which in addition to the economic and political, includes, sexuality, epistemology, and spirituality.² Mignolo has called for the need of a “multi-versal” approach.³ Decolonial thinkers challenge theology to examine not only particular issues, but also the relations and connections between issues. Another area for further theological reflection is the study of the relation between a theology of the Spirit and contemporary justice movements. Finally, it is not enough for theology to analyze and critique. In a recent talk, Naomi Klein stated that social movements can’t just reject the dominant neoliberal story; they have to offer an alternative story.⁴ Theology has much to offer in the development of this new story.

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² Grosfoguel “Decolonizing Political-Economy and Post-Colonial Studies: Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality.”


⁴ “We can’t just reject the dominant story about how the world works. We need our own story about what it could be. We can’t just reject their lies. We need truths so powerful that their lies dissolve on contact with them . . . we need our own story.” Naomi Klein, “Overcoming ‘Overburden’: The Climate Crisis and a Unified Left Agenda,” Common Dreams (September 4, 2013). Https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/09/04 (accessed September 5, 2013).
In the opening lines of *God’s Reign for God’s Poor*, Pieris articulated the challenge that many of the new theological voices are putting to the dominant theological paradigm:

This book is a lament, a critique and an appeal in one. It laments the fact that in the very early centuries of Christianity we had abandoned the evangelical mode of expressing the two basic and inseparable dimensions of Christian existence: the mission we have received from Christ and the spirituality which is defined by that mission. Our mission manifesto, therefore, has to be concurrently a declaration of our spirituality. But this is not the case with the dominant paradigm of theology we have inherited from the past and which refused to be dislodged. The persistence of this paradigm retards the renewal of the church’s mission and its spirituality.\(^5\)

Given the momentous changes that are occurring in our world, there are signs that the dominant paradigm is collapsing.\(^6\) As Pieris has reminded us, it was the Latin American Liberation theologians like Gutierrez, who retrieved the biblical vision of Christ’s mission. Gutierrez showed that the God of Jesus Christ had aligned Godself with the poor, so that God’s vision of liberation and the poor’s struggles to end oppression coincided. Together, Gutierrez and Pieris offer a vision that is both faithful to the gospel and intelligible in light of today’s exigencies. They help us see the presence of the frontierless Christ in those persons and movements struggling against the hegemony of the neoliberal ‘Babel’ and working towards a new Pentecost where the Spirit of hope, compassion and solidarity, is recreating an alternative harmonious world enriched by many voices.

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\(^6\) For example, see Leonardo Boff, “Was the Collapse of this Theology the Main Reason for the Resignation of Benedict XVI?” (March 18, 2013). http://leonardoboff.wordpress.com/2013/03/18/was-the-collapse-of-this-theology-the-main-reason-for-the-resignation-of-benedict-xvi/ (accessed April 4, 2013).
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