THOMAS MERTON, JOSEF PIEPER, AND GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ: CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION IN THE TURBULENT TWENTIETH CENTURY

By

Alan G. Hartman

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Thesis Advisor:
Dr. Charles R. Pinches

Thesis Readers:

Dr. Patrick M. Clark
Dr. Will T. Cohen

INDEX

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Merton, Josef Pieper, and Gustavo Gutierrez are three theologians who were deeply affected by the turbulent and violent Twentieth Century. Merton was born in 1914 in France, Pieper in 1904 in Germany, and Gutierrez in 1928 in Peru. While these three theologians initially appear quite different from each other, their life experiences are representative of the struggle to act rightly in the mid-Twentieth Century. Merton and Pieper lived through the First World War, and all three experienced the Great Depression, the Second World War, the Cold War, The Second Vatican Council, and the social changes of the 1950s and 1960s. These major world events profoundly shaped Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez. While each was raised speaking a different language in a different country and on a different continent during the 1930s and 1940s, they each examined the role of man in a quickly changing and often enigmatic world. As the theologians developed their academic and theological writings, Merton, Pieper and Gutierrez endeavored to discern the nature of rightly directed action in response to the turbulent world in which they lived. As they did so, each returned to the theological affirmation that action in the world arises within right relation to God, a relation that is nurtured and structured by a contemplative vision of God and the ultimate eschatological destination of God's creation.

The Twentieth Century was a time of radical change for individuals as well as the world they inhabited. The Second Industrial Revolution gave birth to an increasingly mechanical and technological society which forced the Twentieth Century person both to reflect on who he is and how he should best interact with those around him. Collectively this led to ideological and social conflicts between adherents of Communism, Democracy, Fascism, Monarchism, National Socialism, and others. These conflicts led to war, revolution, and major social change across the globe. Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez, however, rejected the notion that machinery, technology,

and ideology alone were sufficient to fix the tattered world. They recognized the individual's growing disorientation in a time in which correct and rightly directed action had become difficult to discern. Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez rediscovered the richness and importance of one's spiritual life. In so doing they established that ultimately a better world can be born not so much out of invention and social development but through the cultivation of one's relationship with God. They established that growth in union with others does not come through artificial social constructions but instead is an organic result of purposefully contemplating God. In so doing the Christian increasing rejects the chaos and disorder of modernity and directs himself towards God and others in thought and deed.

In this Master's Thesis we will explore how Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez understood man's need to rightly act in his place and time. In the first chapter we will examine how Thomas Merton saw the contemplative experience as a way to connect intimately with God and one's neighbor, thus forming the Christian to become an agent of change in the world he inhabits. In the second chapter, we see that Josef Pieper explored the need for the Christian to live a virtuous, especially prudent, life in which he becomes infused with grace and able to rightly act in the world around him. The life of virtue, Pieper believes, is also the life which glimpses the Beatific Vision, in which ultimate reality is made manifest. Finally, in the third chapter, we will explore how Gustavo Gutierrez saw social praxis as the first step in growing into communion with others and God. Each theologian carries a common primary concern: discerning how to rightly act as one may grow closer to God and full communion with others. In so doing the Christian realizes his truest self as a human being and creature of God. These three theologians collectively established that rightly directed intention and action will allow man to better experience God's love, and in so doing grow in deeper relationship with Him.

Through rightly directed action one will not only correctly orient the Christian's efforts and activities but the faithful will be graced with an experience of love that may even allow him a glimpse of the Beatific Vision. Through appropriately acting within his historical moment and geographical place, the Christian meaningfully connects with others and the deepest realm of reality. When this happens, the Christian engages with the Divine nature. Much like in St. John of the Cross' Sixteenth Century poem *Dark Night of the Soul*, man not only connects to God metaphorically but immediately and directly as a result of his rightly directed action, which orients him away from himself and towards others and God.

Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez see encountering God as the proper result of one who acts prudently and is infused with the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. In their written works, these theologians ultimately share their rich academic and personal formations. Each was formed by great struggle, which propelled all three to seek out and understand precisely how it is that man, in his sinful and imperfect society, could best live as a creature of God. The answer, seemingly simple but in practice rather difficult, is a hopeful leaning on Christ and a constant effort to continuously grow in union with one's neighbor and God despite the vagaries of modern times. This challenge confronted these men as Twentieth Century Catholic theologians, and it remains a challenge for all people today.

Chapter I

REACHING GOD THROUGH THE SELF:

THOMAS MERTON'S UNIVERSAL UNDERSTANDING OF CONTEMPLATION AND THE INNER EXPERIENCE

Merton's Early Journey

Thomas Merton was a writer and thinker whose early life, full of travel, exploration, and the death of his parents at an early age, starkly contrasts to his life as a Trappist monk beginning in 1941.[1] Merton was born in France during the First World War to an agnostic father of English heritage from New Zealand and a Quaker mother from the Douglaston section of Queens, New York City.[2] Both parents were artists who were living and working in Paredes, France at the beginning of the twentieth century.[3] The family fled from France during the First World War and

[1] In a letter to Jonathan Williams, Merton writes about his life "Born in 1915 in Southern France a few miles from Catalonia so that I imagine myself by birth Catalan and am accepted as such in Barcelona where I have never been. Exiled therefore from Catalonia I came to New York, then went to Bermuda, then back to France, then to school at Montauban, then to school at Oakham in England, to Clare College Cambridge where my scholarship was taken away after a year of riotous living, to Columbia University New York where I earned two degrees of dullness and wrote a Master's thesis on Blake. Taught English among Franciscan football players at St. Bonaventure University, and then became a Trappist monk at Gethsemane Ky. In 1941. […] I now live alone in the woods not claiming to be anything, except of course a Catalan. But a Catalan in exile who would never return to Barcelona under any circumstances, never having been there" (Shannon, *A Life in* Letters, 10).

[2] "Mother did go somewhere, sometimes, on Sunday mornings, to worship God. I doubt that Father went with her; he probably stayed at home to take care of me and John Paul, or we never went. But anyway, Mother went to the Quakers, and sat with them in their ancient meeting house. This was the only kind of religion for which she had any use, and I suppose it was taken for granted that, when we grew older, we might be allowed to tend in that direction too. Probably no influence would have been brought to bear on us to do so. We would have been left to work it out more or less for ourselves" (Merton, *Seven Storey Mountain*, 11).

[3] Speaking of his parents in France during the First World War, Merton writes "They were in the world and not of it – not because they were saints, but in a different way: because they were artists. The integrity of an artist lifts a man above the level of the world without delivering him from it. My father painted like Cézanne and understood the southern French landscape the way Cézanne did" (*Seven Storey Mountain*, 3).

Merton was then raised as a child in Douglaston, Queens, New York City before the family returned to France, where his mother died when Merton was aged four.[4] Merton's father initially sought to take Thomas Merton with him on further travels after his mother's death in 1921. After a stay in Bermuda, Thomas' father, Owen Merton, saw this as impossible and returned him to his grandparents in New York City.[5] Thomas Merton later went again to France to live with his father in 1927, leaving his brother John Paul behind with their grandparents in Douglaston.[6] In 1927 Owen and Thomas Merton moved to London where the future mystic began attending Oakham boarding school.[7] Thomas's father continued his own international travels independently before becoming ill and dying when Merton was aged 15.[8] The newly orphaned student returned to his grandparents and brother in New York City to finish high school before returning to England for university. At the University of Cambridge he lost himself in decadence and vice that he would later reject and initially cite as a reason why he could not enter the

[4] "My Grandparents – that is, my mother's father and mother in America – were worried about her being in a land at war, and it was evident that we could not stay much longer at Prades. I was barely a year old. I remember nothing about the journey, as we went to Bordeaux, to take the boat that had a gun mounted on the foredeck" (Merton, *Seven Storey Mountain*, 7).

[5] On the wanderings of Owen Merton, father of Thomas Merton, Joan C. McDonald writes "Owen began to travel again, sailing from one continent to another with little plan or preparation. Initially Owen tried to include Tom in his travels" (*Tom Merton,* 39).

[6] "Tom… was not eager to be uprooted again from his comfortable life in Douglaston during the past two years. He did not relish going to a new and strange place with his father after his experiences in Bermuda and in Massachusetts… Tom would miss John Paul and wondered when they would live together again" (McDonald, *Tom Merton*, 44).

[7] "In the autumn of 1929 I went to Oakham. There was something very pleasant and peaceful about the atmosphere of this little market town" (Merton, *Seven Storey Mountain*, 75).

[8] "On January 18, 1931, the Headmaster at Oakham called Tom into his office and handed him a telegram. Owen was dead. Tom fell into the numbness he had experienced at his grandparent's home when we was nine, when a letter had come from London, informing the family that Owen may be dying" (McDonald, *Tom Merton*, 57).

priesthood.[9] In crisis, he returned to his grandparent's home in New York City and ultimately finished his university education at Columbia University in New York City.[10]

Merton's childhood and adolescence were enriched by extensive travels and an exclusive education, which allowed the mystic to consider himself more European than American.[11] Merton was also forced to confront death and great suffering not usually known to school aged youths:[12] the loss of his mother at age six, the difficulties of attending a boarding school in England while his father was independently travelling before falling repeatedly ill beginning in 1923 and dying in 1931. His personal tragedies were complicated by the trauma of the First World War, which forced him and his family to flee France and the onset of totalitarianism in Europe in the early 1930s. In this decade he also endured the Depression, and lived lasciviously while at the University of Cambridge, which many biographers argue included his fathering a child out of wedlock, an incident which Merton himself never addressed or confirmed directly.[13] Even after entering the Monastery, we see that Merton comes to see himself as a wayfarer because of all of his life changes and lack of a precise place that he feels is home. We see this

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[9] In a January 1942 letter written to Abbot Frederic Dunne, O.C.S.O. as a Gethsemane Novitiate, Merton writes a brief summary in his life in which states "In September 1939 […] I began to pray for a vocation to the priesthood. At that time I was considering the Order of Friars Minor. I even sent an application for admission to that order, and was accepted: however, before beginning the novitiate, I recalled an incident of my past life, and believing this made me unworthy to be a priest, and supported in this belief by a friend who was a priest, I withdrew my application and did not enter the novitiate" (Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "To Abbot Frederic Dunne, O.C.S.O.", 5).

[10] "He (Tom) closed out his affairs at Cambridge and returned to New York, scrapping his original plans for a life in England and determined to make a new start. Now with the advice of Popp and probably financial assistance as well, he enrolled in Columbia University in New York City" (McDonald, *Tom Merton*, 71).

[11] "I myself am not that much of an American. I am on the contrary more of a European […] I still don't have any feeling for the land and the continent that you have" (Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "To Robert Lawrence Williams," 230).

[12] "My mother died when I was six, my father in 1931" (Shannon, "Letter to Abbot Frederic Dunne, O.C.S.O." January 2, 2914. *A Life in Letters, 4).*

[13] In his 1942 letter to Abbot Frederic Dunne, O.C.S.O., Merton writes that in 1939 "I was considering the Order of Friars Minor. I even sent an application for admission to that order, and was accepted: however, before beginning the novitiate, I recalled an incident of my past life, and believing this made me unworthy to be a priest, and supported in this belief by a friend who was a priest, I withdrew my application and did not enter the novitiate" (*A Life in Letters*, 5).

particularly in an April 4, 1962 letter to the Pakistani Sufi expert Abdul Aziz in which he writes "I believe my vocation is essentially that of a pilgrim and an exile in life, that I have no proper place in this world […] for that reason I am in some sense to be the friend and brother of people everywhere, especially those who are exiles and pilgrims like myself."[14]

Merton writes about these happenings in his initial and tremendously successful autobiography *The Seven Story Mountain*, which he published as a Trappist seminarian in 1948. Merton's early years could not have foreshadowed that he would become a leading Catholic thinker and writer who remains one of American Catholicism's leading lights. It was only when Merton entered into the Trappist Monastery of Gethsemane in Kentucky that his painful struggle to understand the lived experience in the context of constant change and mortality for the purpose of growing in union with God.[15] Merton's extensive early wanderings with his father together with his father's lack of stability—physically, health-wise, and spiritually—allowed Merton to understand the fundamental importance of stability and commitment.[16] However, in his maturity he comes to disown his Catholic-centric views found in *Seven Story Mountain*, writing:

> My thought at the time of writing was hardly matured and I just said what came to mind, as people so often do and more often in those days. It is, unfortunately, so easy and so usual simply to compare the dark side of someone else's Church with the bright side of one's own. Thank heaven we are getting over that now.[17]

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[14] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "To Abdul Aziz," 345.
[15] In a 1963 letter to "My Dear Friend," who today has not been identified, Merton explains "People often ask why I am here in the first place, and what the contemplative life means to me. It means to me the search for truth and for God. It means finding the true significance of my life that is led in the 'world' and which, to me, is a source of illusions, confusion and deceptions" (*A Life in Letters*, 8).
[16] "There are three gifts I have received, for which I can never be grateful enough: first, my Catholic faith; second, my monastic vocation; third, the calling to be a writer and share my beliefs with others" (*A Life in Letters*, 8).
[17] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "To Mrs. Mycock," 315.

Seven Story Mountain was the first text written by Merton, and it reflects the initial enthusiasm that he had as a new monk, still discovering monastic life. However, the more he grew into his vocation and matured as monk, the greater became his awareness of the need to be engaged with the whole of society, even from within the monastery.

Merton's Continued Growth as a Monk

While in the monastery Merton began to see Catholicism as immortal, constantly renewing itself and not destined to stagnate and die. Merton also grew in ecumenical awareness and writes, "The living Tradition of Catholicism is like the breath of a physical body. It renews life by repelling stagnation. It is a constant, quiet, and peaceful revolution against death."[18] The Trappist sees a life spent in the Church as subject to the frustration inherent in the human condition but prepared for renewal and enlightenment. On this he writes "The constant human tendency away from God and away from this living tradition can only be counteracted by a return to tradition, a renewal and a deepening of the one unchanging life that was infused into the Church at the beginning."[19] Merton sees that the Christian who enters fully into the life of the Church not only seeks to remove himself from his frustrated and ultimately stagnant human experience but also connect with an eternal experience that has been "infused into the Church at the beginning" of time. This self-denial and prayerful focus on the ultimate meaning and analysis of all things is the primary and initial requirement of the contemplative endeavor.[20] In his

[18] *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 142.
[19] *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 143.
[20] "Solitude and silence, essential to the contemplative life, have become highly valued luxuries sometimes accessible only to the rich" (Merton, *The Inner Experience*, 135).

October 10, 1967 letter to Daniel Berrigan, S. J., Merton affirms his view of the role of the Christian:

> In my opinion the job of the Christian is to try to give an example of sanity, independence, human integrity, good sense, as well as Christian love, and wisdom, against all establishments and all mass movements and all current fashions which are merely mindless and hysterical.[21]

In this way Merton saw the Christian as having an active role in society that is rooted in prayer and faithfulness. This means that even the cloistered monk must also engage in society even though he is often not physically connected to the world outside of his monastery. The Trappist therefore sees the Church as an agent of social engagement and revolution. In a June 25, 1968 letter to Daniel Berrigan, Merton affirms the need of the Church to be socially engaged with the Civil Rights Movement when he writes:

> What are the reasons for wanting to get in there with the movement for racial justice? Setting aside the obvious and indisputably valuable ones which stem from personal conscience and the need to affirm an honest and loyally Christian position, there is also the matter of bearing witness to the fact that the Holy Roman Catholic Church is not, much as one might be tempted to think so, ossified and committed to the status quo, but that she is really alive and means to do something about justice… [22]

In this quote we see that Merton sees the Church as an agent of social change, and not simply an institution that is "ossified and committed to the status quo." He sees all Christians, even contemplative Christians, as needing to engage with society for the betterment of all. As a contemplative monk, Merton's way of engaging with the world outside of his monastery is his writing, which he sees as the only "definite" way for him to participate in social change.

> …As for writing: I don't feel that I can in conscience at a time like this, go on writing just about things like meditation, though that has its point. I cannot just bury my head in a lot

[21] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "To Daniel Berrigan," 273.
[22] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, 268.

> of rather tiny and secondary monastic studies either. I think I have to face the big issues, the life-and-death issues: and this is what everyone is afraid of…[23]

Merton sees the contemplative life as one of struggle wherein one grows in closeness to God and progressively takes on the responsibility of discerning and acting on God's will, which "necessarily brings that peace which Christ promised and 'the world cannot give.'"[24] Therefore Merton sees engaging in society as a responsibility of the contemplative.

> What is the contemplative life if one doesn't listen to God in it? What is the contemplative life if one becomes oblivious to the rights of men and the truth of God in the world and in His Church? Answer: Listen to the Superior and shut up because the superior is God. My own Abbot always manages to show just enough good will and tolerance on the crucial issues to keep me hesitant about the next drastic step; but I think that in my own case everything indicates my staying put and waiting. Nothing else is definite enough and writing does get someplace. When it gets past the censors.[25]

As a socially engaged contemplative, Merton's works and letters show that the more he matured and aged as a monk, the greater he saw participating in social justice as a necessary component of Christianity.

Thomas Merton writes that entering fully into the eternal reality of the Church is very difficult and a revolutionary product of contemplation. We find this in his 1962 text, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, written when Merton is a mature thinker and writer. At the time of its

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[23] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "Letter to Dorothy Day," August 23, 1961, 276.

[24] "Contemplation should not be exaggerated, distorted, and made to seem great. It is essentially simple and humble. No one can enter into it except by the path of obscurity and self-forgetfulness. It implies also much discipline, but above all the normal discipline of everyday virtues. It implies justice to other people, truthfulness, hard work, unselfishness, devotion to the duties of one's state in life, obedience, charity, self sacrifice. […] Contemplation is not a kind of magic and easy shortcut to happiness and perfections. And yet since it does bring one in touch with God in an I-Thou relationship of mysteriously experienced friendship, it necessarily brings that peace which Christ promised and which 'the world cannot give.' There may be much desolation and suffering in the spirit of the contemplative, but there is always more joy than sorrow, more security than doubt, more peace than desolation. The contemplative is one who has found what every man seeks in one way or other" (Merton, *The Inner Experience*, 116-117).

[25] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, 268.

publication, Merton had already served for two decades as a Trappist Monk and was in charge of teaching novices in the monastery.[26] Addressing the social turmoil of the 1960s, Merton addresses and challenges his reader's understanding of "revolution."[27] Even as a vocal supporter of the Civil Rights Movement, Merton feels that there is an inevitable frustration in all social revolutions and that the world is becoming increasingly hostile, thanks largely to the onset of the atomic age and the Cold War.

> A REVOLUTION is supposed to be a change that turns everything completely around. But the ideology of political revolution will never change anything except appearances. There will be violence, and power will pass from one party to another, but when the smoke clears and the bodies of all the dead men are underground, the situation will be essentially the same as it was before: there will be a minority of strong men in power exploiting all the others for their own ends. There will be the same greed and cruelty and lust and ambition and avarice and hypocrisy as before.[28]

Merton clearly establishes not only the difference between false revolutions of the political world but also implies that a contrasting and true revolution must also exist outside of the political and social world. Thus a simply political revolution cannot touch on the eternal and is therefore doomed to frustration and anguish. Merton's clear belief in a Christian revolution shows that he sees a major change in society as possible, and working to enact such change as the obligation of every Christian. Merton writes that Catholicism "must always be a revolution because by its very nature it denies the values and standards to which human passion is so powerfully attached."[29] This revolution supersedes the fallible nature of the human being and forces Catholics to "assent

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[26] Throughout his correspondences at this time, he often refers to his role as educator to novices. See *A Life in Letters,* 15-62. Should there be some page numbers here?
[27] In 1962, the United States was locked in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, China had just become communist in 1948, and the Cuban Revolution had successfully suppressed democracy and religion in this once Catholic country two years prior in 1959.
[28] *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 144.
[29] *New seeds of Contemplation*, 143.

towards God."[30] This "assent" cannot be seen as anything other than revolutionary by Merton. It is unlike political revolutions, which Merton argues are not "assenting" in nature but cyclical because they only lead to further violence and socio-political frustration.[31]

Despite his view of Catholicism as revolutionary and assenting, one finds an increasingly strong criticism of Catholic monastic life in Merton's works. This is particularly so in his posthumously published text *The Inner Experience*, first published in 2003. In *The Inner Experience*, Merton critiques the monastic life as he lived it, which was then a quickly growing institution in the United States. In the post-World War Two period, vocations within in the United States grew tremendously in most dioceses and religious orders. This is the reason why Merton criticizes the then contemporary monastic environment as a place of bustling and ever expanding activity, which risked becoming too triumphalist and self-referential.[32] Merton feared that "monastic institutionalism" threatened the monks' way of life.[33] Monasteries then often hosted hundreds of young and newly arrived vocations and were places of constant construction because of the need to expand their buildings to house the many new arrivals. Ironically, it was

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[30] "Assent" is a term that Merton himself uses in *New Seeds of Contemplation*. However, he uses the term to refer to the Catholic faith. Merton writes that Faith is "first of all an intellectual assent" (*New Seeds of Contemplation*, 127). Later Merton adds that Faith "has to be something more than an assent of the mind. It is also a grasp, a contact, a communion of wills, 'the substance of things to be hoped for.' By faith one not only assents to propositions revealed by God, one not only attains to truth in a way that intelligence and reason alone cannot do, but one assents to God Himself. One *receives* God. One says 'yes' not merely to a statement *about* God, but to the Invisible, Infinite God Himself" (*New Seeds of Contemplation*, 128).

[31] "I hear a lot of political talk about revolution coming in and it sounds highly irresponsible and calculated to do nothing but get a lot of people's heads knocked off for no purpose whatever. More and more I think in a kind of post-political eschatology which in any case I cannot articulate" (Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "Letter to Daniel Berrigan," September 1968, 265).

[32] "We are here to live, and to 'be,' and on occasion to help others with the recharging of batteries. I attempt in my own way to keep the monks from getting buried in their own brand of ideological manure, and to maintain at least occasional contacts with the fresh air of reality. On the other hand the manure itself is much less obnoxious and much more productive than what is forked about indiscriminately on the outside. At least it is not lethal…" (Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "Letter to Henry Miller," May 12, 1963, 57).

[33] "That is the trouble with the great overemphasis on monastic institutionalism. In fact, the monk comes to be for the sake of the monastery, not vice versa. […] This is not to say that obedience is not the 'heart of the monastic ascesis.' It is. But merely doing what you're told is not obedience. And in order to make it obedience, a 'pure intention' is not sufficient either. This unfortunate oversimplification of the monastic life is what drains it of all meaning and spirit" (Merton, A Life in Letters, "Letter to Father Ronald Rolff," February 14, 1964, 39).

the widely read work of Thomas Merton that was also responsible for many new vocations in his Trappist order, which grew enormously during this time, and which was very quickly growing into an "industrial" institution, which created monasteries that were well populated and busy. [34] William H. Shannon emphasizes the importance of *The Inner Experience* when he notes that the text was a mature work and a product of approximately twenty years of continued though sporadic development, finished only in 1971, three years after Merton's death.[35] *The Inner Experience* was completed the same year that Gustavo Gutierrez began seriously discussing Liberation Theology.[36] Like Gutierrez, Merton's last text emphasizes the need for social praxis, even by monastics.[37] While it is true that Merton in this work clearly does not note that the Church has had an oppressive role in history, he sustains that its current mode of operation is oppressive both to monks as well as those living in secular society near the monastic communities who have no interaction with the monks.

> It is strange that contemplative monasteries are content simply to receive individuals as retreatants, encourage them to receive frequent Communion and make the Way of the Cross, but do not do more to form groups of men who could help and support one another […] Such groups do not need to be organized. They simply need to form themselves, under the guidance and encouragement of priests who are already interested in contemplation.[38]

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[34] While the Post-World War Two explosive growth period in vocations is well documented, I learned of Thomas Merton's direct influence on vocations by speaking with Brother Robert Kiernan O.S.B on January 8th 2013. Brother Kiernan was a Marine veteran of World War Two who entered the Trappist monastery at Gethsemane, Kentucky after being inspired to do so after reading Thomas Merton's *Seven Story Mountain.* He confirmed that many other men at that time also entered into monastic life after reading Merton's works. Br. Robert Kiernan was a Trappist monk at Gethsemane monastery for over fifteen years before becoming a Benedictine monk at the Weston Priory in Weston, Vermont, where he still lives as a monk.

[35] Shannon notes this in the introduction to the 2003 HarperCollins edition of *The Inner Experience*. Shannon is a leading scholar in Mertonian studies and founded The International Thomas Merton Society (ITMS) in 1987.

[36] Gutierrez first gave presentations on Liberation Theology in 1968 and 1969 at conferences in Chimbote, Peru, Montevideo, Uruguay, and Cartigny, Switzerland. In December 1971 his seminal text, *Teología de la Liberación, Perspectivas,* was published by CEP in Peru and translated into English in 1973 by Orbis Books.

[37] "The monk should have the courage and patience to keep his life going as a sign of freedom and of peace: he should be in his own way open to the world, and he should even to some extent be able to share some of the advantages of his life with the people of the world who seek a little silence and peace to restore their perspectives. The monk can in his own way be effectively concerned with worldly problems: more effectively for the fact that he is not immersed in them up to his neck." (Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "Letter To Mother Coakley, R.S.C.J," 51).

[38] Merton, *The Inner Experience*, 137.

In *The Inner Experience*, Merton sees a need for monks and contemplatives to be actively engaged in the world around them and not locked away in monasteries wherein they become wholly consumed by monastic life within the walls of the monastery. Merton writes:

> The contemplative life is much more than a life in which one does not see, think about, notice, or attend to what goes on 'outside the monastery.' A contemplative is not just a man who stays apart from other men and meditates while they struggle to make their living. He is not just a man who forgets about the world, with its political or cultural upheavals, and sits absorbed in prayer while bombers swarm in the air over his monastery. Most of the trouble with the contemplative life today comes from this purely negative approach.
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> The contemplative life is primarily a life of *unity*. A contemplative is one who has transcended divisions to reach a unity beyond division… The true contemplative is not less interested than others in normal life, not less concerned with what goes on in the *world, but* more interested, more concerned. The fact that he as a contemplative makes him capable of a greater interest and of a deeper concern. Since he is detached, since he has received the gift of pure heart, he is not limited to narrow and provincial views… his mission is to be a complete and whole man, with an instinctive and generous need to further the same wholeness in others and in all mankind.[39]

Thus Merton recognizes the need for contemplatives to act in the world, precisely because of their special heightened awareness of God. The Trappist sees monks as able to more clearly see the world because they do not participate entirely in it. Consequently, Merton sees the need for monastic communities that are engaged with secular society because they can have a meaningful impact on secular society due to the clarity offered by their perspective and spirituality.

> What we need today are monastic communities that are more and more aware of the opportunities they possess in this regard; opportunities for special kinds of apostolate and for special kinds of contemplation, for eremitical solitude, for community projects in study and research, for special ways of poverty and labor, for peculiar forms of monastic witness, for unusual and pioneering dialogue.[40]

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[39] Merton, *The Inner Experience*, 147-148.
[40] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "Letter to Dom Gabriel Sortais," September 26, 1962, 35.

Merton not only saw social engagement as needed by monasticism, but in a November 20, 1958 letter to Dom Gabriel Sortais, the Trappist writes that he is prepared to found a monastery that worked directly with the Indigenous of Latin America in the interest of "lifting them up."

> …Ideally speaking, the kind of monastery I imagine would have not only a cultural mission but also a social one. Our aim would be to strive, to some extent, to lift up the Indians physically, morally, spiritually by providing a clinic, encouraging education, cooperatives, art-projects. The monastery would be perhaps the nucleus of a farming community of Indians. What I am saying now, of course, is more a project than a definite plan.[41]

Imagining a monastic community so engaged with society in 1958, before the Second Vatican Council, was rare.[42] However Merton later saw his early vision as affirmed by the Second Vatican Council.

> The radical change in the church's attitude toward the modern world was one of the significant events that marked Vatican II. In the light of the Council it is no longer possible to take a completely negative view of the modern world. It is no longer possible, even for contemplatives, to simply shut out the world, to ignore it, to forget it, in order to relish the private joys of contemplative Eros. To insist on the cultivation of total recollection for the sake of this Eros and its consolations would be pure and simply selfishness. It would also mean a failure to really deepen the true Christian dimensions of Agape, which are the real dimensions of the contemplative life.[43]

Therefore Merton sees that the contemplative, like all Christians, must engage in society, something he also affirms in his 1963 work *Life and Holiness*. In this Christ-centric text Merton argues that the role of the Christian in modern society is revolutionary and cultural.

> The task of the Christian is then not simply to concern himself with social justice, with political order and fair trade practices. It goes much deeper than that. It is a question of the very structure of society and of man's cultural heritage. The task of each Christian today is to help defend and restore the basic human values without which grace and spirituality will have little practical meaning in the life of man.

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[41] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, 29.
[42] For a detailed discussion by Merton on the role of contemplatives and their struggle to react to *aggiornamento* and the call to be "open to the world" see Merton, Thomas. *Contemplation in a World of Action.* Chapter 7, "Openness and Cloister," pp. 128-141.
[43] Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, 134.

The "task of the Christian" that Merton demands allows him to "defend and restore the basic human values… in the life of man" and thus renew the society in which he lives.

Merton writes that man can only become aware of his eternal nature and the enormity of his responsibility to his neighbor through solitude. While solitude may seem like the antithesis to engagement with one's neighbors, he regularly writes that solitude is something absolutely needed by the contemplative.

> To those who feel in themselves a craving for solitude I can only say this: do not trust your hunger and do not insist too hard on satisfying your own desire. Solitude is a gift of God and not a work of man. I know from my own experience that the solitude which I now enjoy would never have been mine if I had been able merely to follow my own will.[44]

Therefore Merton writes that one who seeks solitude must first seek God and not walk away from the social needs of the world. Merton affirms that all Christians should have an experience of solitude because it is only through solitude that one can discern between "seriousness and pettifogging regularism."[45] He even recognizes the crucial role that the monastery can play in facilitating others a mode for coming into contact with solitude and then employing their new understanding of life and the world around them that will also enrich the secular world. Merton, who became the first monk in his monastery to live in a hermitage apart from the community, hoped that other hermitages would be built to allow retreatants a place where they could encounter solitude, silence, contemplative prayer, reflection, and time to penetrate the word of God and listen to His Voice.

> There is certainly every hope that there will be hermitages here that people can go to for a day or two. […] The problem is to distinguish between seriousness and the pettifogging regularism that puts exaggerated emphasis on trivial externals and the letter of outdated usages, thus preventing a real return to the essence of life, which is in solitude, silence, contemplative prayer, reflection, time to penetrate the word of God and listen to his voice, etc., etc. And of course with all this there is absolutely essential

[44] "Solitary Life in the Shadow of a Cistercian Monastery," 3.
[45] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "Letter to Dame Marcella Van Bruyn," 48.

> humility, compunction, self-stripping and 'self-naughting,' which people seem to get away from, with their hopes of 'self-expression' […]."[46]

Merton writes that "there is no true solitude except interior solitude. And interior solitude is not possible for anyone who does not accept his right place in relation to other men."[47] This must therefore mean that the physically isolated solitude that Merton so often writes about as necessary to begin one's contemplative journey is ultimately needless if one is strongly united to others through love and in the uniting and loving reality that is God. Merton clarifies that "[t]rue solitude is in the home of the person, false solitude the refuge of the individualist" and that the "home of the person" is not the unique home of oneself within one's mind or imagination but rather "home" in a sea of love with one another.[48]

Merton even saw the need for a new type of "applied monasticism," where the monastery itself could become a sort of hermitage that fosters "unusual and pioneering dialogue:"

> It seems to me that we all need more and more to deepen the grasp we have of our rich monastic heritage, and the closer we get to the source, the more fruitful and splendid our lives will be, in all kinds of varied expressions and manifestations. It seems to me that the monastic life is wonderful precisely for the way it embraces many varied approaches to God. And it would seem that what we need today are monastic communities that are more and a more aware of the opportunities they possess in this regard; opportunities for special kinds of apostolate and for special kinds of contemplation, for eremitical solitude, for community projects in study and research, for special ways of poverty and labor, for peculiar forms of monastic witness, for unusual and pioneering dialogue. We have not scratched the surface of this rich land of ours that our Fathers have left us…[49]

Much like the monastery that Merton wished to found near an Indigenous community in Latin America in 1958, here we see that Merton continues to believe that monastic life could be renewed and become a vehicle for spiritual, intellectual, and social change in the world. Thus

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[46] Merton, *A Life in Letters*, "Letter to Dame Marcella Van Bruyn," 48.
[47] *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 56.
[48] *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 53.
[49] Merton, *A Life In Letters*, "Letter To Father Ronald Roloff," O.S.B., September 16, 1962, 35.

Merton sees the monastery as a liminal space where the Christian may encounter God and help one's neighbors.

The Mertonian scholar Christine M. Bochen writes that one can trace throughout Merton's writings "an ever-deepening social consciousness, which was nurtured in and through a life of contemplative prayer which moved the monk and writer to bear witness to the integral relationship between contemplation and compassion, between spirituality and work for justice and peace."[50] Today, with the distance of more than fifty years since Merton's death, we also have the luxury of reading Merton's correspondences with Dorothy Day and his support for the Catholic Worker Movement, as well as the articles he wrote for *The Catholic Worker,* which were largely published anonymously or under a pseudonym.[51] Through the mystic's diaries, letters, and later travels until his sudden death in Bangkok while attending an ecumenical meeting of Eastern and Western monks, we find Merton to be an exceptionally rare and highly socially engaged Trappist monk.[52]

Merton writes that "since contemplation is a gift not granted to anyone who does not consent to God's will, contemplation is out of the question for anyone who does not try to cultivate compassion for other men."[53]

> The world is the unquiet city of those who live for themselves and are therefore divided against one another in a struggle that cannot end, for it will go on eternally in hell. It is the city of those who are fighting for possession of limited things and for the monopoly of goods and pleasures that cannot be shared by all.
>
> But if you try to escape from this world merely by leaving the city and hiding yourself in solitude, you will only take the city with you into solitude; and yet you can be entirely out of the world while remaining in the midst of it, if you let God set you free from your own selfishness and if you live for love alone.

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[50] "Sowing Seeds of Contemplation and Compassion: Merton's Emerging Social Consciousness," 17.
[51] See Merton, Thomas. *Passion for Peace*. New York; Crossroad, 1995.
[52] Incredibly for a monk of the 1960s in a Kentucky monastery, he even wrote three texts about Eastern traditions and thought: *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (1965), *Mystics and Zen Masters* (1967), and *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (1968). The writing of these works exhibit a Trappist who holds a deep concern for the world outside of his monastery.
[53] *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 77.

Merton states that the contemplative is separated from the glutton by "love." He also argues that contemplatives cannot seek refuge from the world and all of its secular and social problems but instead must engage with the world because the contemplative loves all the more purely and therefore feels all the more strongly the need to work in the world for the betterment of man.

Merton displays a remarkable understanding of the sensitive social awareness in this text. It validates that Bochen indeed is correct in noting that in *New Seeds of Contemplation* the reader finds a clear call to social involvement simply because doing so permits the actor to love God more strongly and indeed become a more loving agent in secular society. Bochen notes that Merton's social consciousness is first found in *New Seeds of Contemplation*. She writes that this text reflects a deep maturation of the social consciousness of Merton and his understanding that he, in his role as a contemplative, feels an obligation to help the world that existed outside of the walls of his monastery.

> By 1961, Merton was ready to sow in earnest the seeds of compassion and justice and peace that had taken such firm root in his heart. Having found a place for the world in his solitude, Merton was ready to begin speaking out and speak out he did – with conviction and determination – against violence, war, discrimination, and racism – building on the insights to which he gave expression in a book on contemplation written more than a decade earlier. The signs of the times were clear.[54]

The increased social awareness of Merton, therefore, could arguably be part of Merton's increased love for man and a strong sensitivity to the suffering and lovingness of man thanks to his practice of contemplation. So too then is this the needed response of the compassionate man who lives in a secular and modern society, which is inundated with falseness and distractions.[55]

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[54] Bochen, "Sowing Seeds of Contemplation and Compassion: Merton's Emerging Social Consciousness," 25.
[55] "[Modern man] may be in some sense educated, but his education has little to do with real life, since real life is not something with which modern man is really concerned at all. The conscious life of modern man is completely lost in intellectual abstractions, sensual fantasies, political, social, and economic clichés, and in the animal cunning of the detective or the salesman. All that is potentially valuable and vital in him is relegated to the subconscious mind: and sex is not what he most tends to suppress. The tragedy of modern man is that his creativity, his

Contemplating man's role in the world, and particularly the role of the contemplative in his monastic vocation, Merton also feels compelled to describe the very nature of God as a loving entity.

> God is a consuming Fire. He alone can refine us like gold, and separate us from the slag and dross of our selfish individualities to fuse us into his wholeness of perfect unity that will reflect His own Triune Life forever.
> As long as we do not permit His love to consume us entirely and to unite us in Himself, the gold that is in us will be hidden by the rock and dirt which keep us separate from one another.[56]

Thus we find here that not only must man love God, but he must seek to unite with the whole of Creation, beginning with his neighbors. Merton emphasizes the actual role of the contemplative because only the contemplative can love most strongly because he has been given the grace to do so. In this way, there is a mutual growing into one another where those who seek God ultimately come into communion with the whole of Creation.

> It is true that for me sanctity consists in being myself and for you sanctity consists in being *your* self and that, in the last analysis, your sanctity will never be mine and mine will never be yours, except in the communism of charity and grace.[57]

This "communism," therefore, is little other than the unity of the individual in God with others through charity and grace.[58] "Communism" is a loving reality wherein one lives his contemplative call through great charity and grace and in so doing unites to the contemplative nature, or the lovingness, of the other and therein creates a sincere and even mystical linking that allows one to directly connect with the heavenly experience of God.

> Contemplation is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is

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spirituality, and his contemplative independence are inexorably throttled by a superego that has sold itself without question or compromise to the devil of technology." (Merton, *The Inner Experience*, 129).

[56] *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 70.

[57] *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 31.

[58] Regarding the contemplative, Merton writes "His only Master is God. Only when God is our Master can we be free, for God Is within ourselves as well as above us. He rules us by liberating us and raising us to union with Himself *from within*. And in so doing He liberates us from our dependence on created things outside us" (*The Inner Experience*, 52).

> spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being. It is a vivid realization of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent and infinitely abundant Source. Contemplation is, above all, awareness of the reality of that Source. It *knows* the Source, obscurely, inexplicably, but with a certitude that goes both beyond reason and beyond simple faith. [59]

A Summation of Merton's Understanding of Contemplation

William H. Shannon defines the nature of Merton's endeavor towards contemplation as universal and possible for all Christians. Shannon was a priest and leading Merton scholar until his death in 2012.[60] He completed this, his last book, in the very last months of his life. In this text, the elderly and ill Merton scholar writes that "Thomas Merton's greatest achievement, I believe, was to help us understand contemplation was not just for monks. He made contemplation a household word."[61] Shannon's seemingly simple summation of Merton's greatest achievement underlines the fundamental message that the Trappist monk sought to convey to his readers: that by fully engaging in the world through prayer and loving endeavor, he made his readers aware of the need for contemplation as well as the graces that await one who works towards contemplation. In this way, Merton's engagement with the world allowed him to live fully as a contemplative while also sharing in deep and meaningful communion with the modern world.

Merton's engaging with the world through writing on contemplation was not just a ministry but an organic flowering of an intensely felt sense of human community. Through inviting modern man to contemplation through his publications he challenged the common,

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[59] *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 1.
[60] Shannon was the leading founder of "The International Thomas Merton Society" in 1987, which remains one of two leading world societies dedicated to the study of Thomas Merton's life and works.
[61] *How To Become a Christian Even if You Already are One*, 51-52.

sinful, generally disinterested public to participate more fully within the human family and society in general.

> That I should have been born in 1915, that I should be the contemporary of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Viet Nam, and the Watts riots are things about which I was not first consulted. Yet they are also events in which, whether I like it or not, I am deeply and personally involved. The "world" is not just a physical space traversed by jet planes full of people running in all directions. It is a complex of responsibilities and options made out of the loves, the hates, the fears, the joys, the hopes, the greed, the cruelty, the kindness, the faith, the trust, the suspicion of all. In the last analysis, if there is war because nobody trusts anybody, this is in part because I myself am defensive, suspicious, untrusting, and intent on making other people conform themselves to my particular brand of death wish.[62]

Merton's challenge was for his reader to become his most sincere, true, and therefore loving and contemplative self. The human family thus becomes itself most perfectly when working in harmonious communion. In this way Christians are most Christian when they are best able to express their human neighborliness in concert with others. This metacommunion permits the participant to gain a mystical glimpse of our final end. On this Shannon writes:

> Heaven isn't a place we go to. Rather it is Someone we go to. That is what heaven really is. It is, quite simply, becoming ourselves fully and totally. This will happen, not when God becomes more fully present to us, but when we are always fully aware that we are in God's presence.[63]

Shannon also notes that Merton understands man as being most fully himself when he is in God. This realization of the self in God becomes not only the goal of human life but man's ultimate destiny. Here there is an awareness and awe resulting from contemplative reflection on the journey of man's total union with God.[64] Shannon calls this experience "a spiritual revolution."

> The experience of contemplation, therefore, goes far beyond a change in behavior. It is nothing less than a spiritual revolution that awakens deep levels of consciousness in us,

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[62] Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, 143.
[63] *How to Become a Christian Even if You Already Are One*, 73.
[64] This concept has a long tradition in mystical poetry. From the "Song of Songs" to poetry written by the Spanish Baroque Mystics St. Teresa of Avila ("Vivo sin vivir en mí") and St. John of the Cross ("En una noche oscura").

> not just the surface consciousness of our superficial selves, but the inner depths consciousness of our real self which we experience as nothing apart from being of God. It is the experience of utter joy. Merton writes 'the only true joy on earth is to escape from the prison of our own false self and enter by love into union with Life Who dwells and sings within the essence of every creature in the core of our own souls.'"[65]

Shannon is aware of the existence of a "true self" who is an all-loving being, united with God and man. This "true self" exists on a "deep level of consciousness" that needs to be "awakened." This is to say that such a level of consciousness can be experienced only if one actively seeks to awaken it through contemplation. The Merton scholar, like Thomas Merton himself, calls this tremendous and mystical union with others "revolutionary." Consequently, Shannon affirms Merton's vision of the Church as ongoing renewal wherein loving becomes a revolution and is a radical new beginning which, when shared with others, will bring about a new and constantly renewing social experience that brings the Christian closer to God because of their living in deep communion with others.

> This experience awakened in Merton a sense of responsibility to his fellow men and women and moved him to involvement, through his writings, in the great social issues of his day. So too for us; as soon as we let go of the notion of separateness, we know that we are responsible for one another, especially for those who are in need. My responsibilities to the homeless, the sick, the needy, the oppressed, the marginalized spring from that deep oneness in God that I have with them and with all my sisters and brothers. I must love them as myself, for, in a very real way, they are 'my other self.'[66]

Shannon clarifies that Merton consistently and regularly encourages the Christian to become a contemplative because it allows him an awakening to one's true self via an experiential contact with God. This reaffirms the "assenting" movement one makes when becoming a contemplative must also be an "outward" movement towards others. Just as the contemplative monk's love and

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[65] *How to Become a Christian Even if You Already Are One*, 78.
[66] Shannon, *How to Become a Christian Even if You Already Are One*, 92.

focus must move inwards to his true self and upwards towards God, so too must his spiritual movement be increasingly outwards and engaged with all of God's creation.

Merton's vision of unity binds man in union with God and is made possible by encountering God through contemplation. Contemplation allows a touching on the core substance of all Creation, which is the very essence of all that is made. Mystical union with God is the primary goal of Merton and thus the Trappist contemplative sees life and death as part of a great continuum of existence that is marked only by a fundamental difference in expression. Merton's vision of unity extends to the whole of Creation and places great responsibility on the Christian to work towards deep and peaceful communion with the whole of existence. Merton sees this conformity in union with Creation as the only sincere path to God, because it is a union with Creation in its most profound and complete sense, and this therefore opens the gate to a mystical understanding of God and Creation.

Chapter 2

TAKING ACTION THROUGH LOVE AND HOPE, THE TRANSFORMATIVE ORIENTATION OF JOSEF PIEPER'S THEOLOGY

The theologian Josef Pieper (1904 - 1997) argued that man had an obligation to fully enter into his time and place through prudent action and unity with his neighbor and God. He sees this communion as propelled by hope and strengthened in love. Pieper argues that the forward and ascending movement of union with one's neighbor and God is a natural response to the Christian experience of hope and love, which begins naturally and proceeds supernaturally, calling man to reach outwards, away from himself, and towards neighbors and God. In this chapter, I will examine how Josef Pieper sees prudence, hope and love as theological virtues that allow man to act rightly and thus grow in communion with God and the world around him. I will also show how Pieper's understanding of the theological virtues of hope and love carries one into unity with the core of all things and sustains him in his pilgrimage towards God.

Pieper's Life and the Priority of Prudence

Like the two other theologians considered in this thesis, Thomas Merton and Gustavo Gutierrez, Pieper was greatly influenced by the monumental socio-political events of the Twentieth Century.[67] Barely thirty years old when Adolph Hitler came to power, Pieper served in the Nazi army. He writes that he did so, however, while being opposed to the Nazi party and

[67] Pieper was a German scholar who in his lifetime saw Germany devastated by two lost World Wars, The Great Depression, and The Cold War.

state since its electoral win in 1933.[68] The need to participate in the Nazi State despite conscientious or religious objections was common at this time.[69] Proof of his ideological difference with the Nazi State is found when Pieper's first book, and the publishing house from which it was published, were banned in 1933, the year in which the Nazi state was established.[70] Pieper was drafted into the Nazi army on February 1, 1940.[71] He first worked as a military psychologist and War Administration Advisor, the latter being a position of importance within the Nazi army.[72] In fact, his elevation to this position required good standing within the Nazi Party and the approval of many levels of Nazi military command.[73] Yet Pieper's disillusionment with the war grew; in 1943 he asked to be relieved of his position of "War Administration Advisor" and return to his previous role as psychologist.[74] The rise of National Socialism and The Second World War had a very heavy influence on Pieper and on his writings that were composed beginning in the 1930s. In his publications, Pieper regularly wrote against

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[68] For more information on the polemical relationship between Catholics, the Catholic Church, and the Nazi state see Lewy, Guenter. *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*. Boulder, Da Capo Press, 2000 and Zahn, Gordon C. *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars*. New York, Dutton & Co., 1969.

[69] Many German Catholics faced this same dilemma. On this Guenter Lewy writes "Hitler Youth started a wide membership campaign that appealed to the members of the Catholic youth organizations to abandon their old leaders, opposed to true German unity, and to join the ranks of the National Socialist movement" (*The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, 121).

[70] In his autobiography, Pieper writes "I was not in Germany when the Nazi regime took over. I had cast my vote against it early on the morning of 5 March 1933… in my pocket I had the money from my first book, which had been reprinted three times in rapid succession. It was a surprisingly large amount for someone in my circumstances. But when we returned, almost seven weeks later, on the first "Birthday of the Fuhrer", not only had the book disappeared, but the publishing house as well" (Pieper, *No One Could Have Known*, 89).

[71] "…. My call-up letter arrived by registered mail. I had to report on 1 February 1940 and at the very same place as my father in 1914: behind the Evangelical church" (Pieper, *No One Could Have Known,"* 144).

[72] "Pieper decided to avoid a mobilization order by serving in the selection department of the Wehrmacht as a military psychologist. In this capacity, Pieper, among other duties, screened potential pilots for the Luftwaffe and, traveling to the troops near the front lines assessed candidates for commissions. From his own account it is clear that none of his scholarly aptitude was lost in the performing of his duties. Pieper's skill soon saw him promoted to 'war administration advisor,' and no doubt the sharp edge of the German war effort was spared the blunting which comes from an ill-chosen recruit" (Vickery, "Searching for Josef Pieper," 8).

[73] "At the suggestion of a high ranking Party official, Pieper decided to apply for a regular commission as an army psychologist, a position that required good standing with Hitler's government. In spite of evincing a clear unwillingness to join the Nazi Party, Pieper was apparently willing to make himself as palatable to the Party as possible in order to secure a desirable vocation" (Vickery, "Searching for Josef Pieper," 9).

[74] Much of this information can be found directly in Josef Pieper's Autobiography; No *One Could Have Known: An Autobiography: The Early Years, 1904-194*. San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1987.

totalitarianism and used totalitarianism as an example par-excellence of a reality that contrasts one's natural and supernatural ultimate end: union with God.[75] Pieper specifically notes that totalitarianism's failure lies in its abuse of the virtue of fortitude and idolization of a fictional "heroism," which he sees as a form of false-fortitude.[76] Pieper also used his experiences of totalitarianism to illustrate the dangers of stoicism that are found in any individualistic society that understands man's self, or the state itself, as an ultimate end.[77]

Pieper's first forty years were spent in a nation and society ravaged twice by war and regularly by poverty, strife, and conflict. This likely encouraged the German theologian to see the supreme role of prudence as a virtue that moderates all other virtues. Jon Vickery calls Josef Pieper a "philosopher of virtue" who "said no to the spirit of the (his) age."[78] Pieper maintained that "the virtue of prudence is the mold and 'mother' of all the other cardinal virtues, of justice, fortitude, and temperance. In other words, none but the prudent man can be just, brave, and temperate, and the good man is good in so far as he is prudent."[79] The consequences of Germany's losing the First World War were severe. These consequences included Germany losing its overseas colonies and entering into a devastating economic depression worsened by astronomical inflation. In 1933 Adolph Hitler was made Chancellor of the Third Reich and with

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[75] Regarding Communism, Socialism, and totalitarianism in general, Pieper writes: "anti-individualism has created a 'universalist' social theory which flatly denies that there are any relations between individuals as individuals and which therefore, quite logically, declares that commutative justice is an 'individualistic non-concept.' How little these 'Schools of thought' tend to remain pure 'theory' can be seen from what we have experienced of totalitarian regimes. These are characterized by the fact that the state, which can impose its will by force, leaves hardly any room for 'private relations' between individuals as such, and that individuals encounter one another almost exclusively in an official capacity as individual functionaries serving the state" (*The Christian Idea of Man*, 20-21).
[76] "The call to heroic sacrifice… met with little enthusiasm in Josef Pieper. Rather, it aroused his suspicion, which in turn led him to inquire once more into Aquinas's teaching on fortitude" (Vickery, 4).
[77] Scholar Jon Vickery wrote an excellent study examining Pieper's questionable activities during the Second World War and suggests that Pieper too lacked fortitude in resisting National Socialism. Vickery also notes, however, that he remained a strong voice of dissent in the Third Reich despite how most scholars depict his activities and writings during National Socialism ("Searching for Josef Pieper." *Theological Studies* 66.3 (Sep 2005), 622-637).
[78] Vickery, 12.
[79] *Four Cardinal Virtues*, 3.

this Germany returned to autocratic rule, which led to the Second World War and the atrocities that followed. When the war ended Germany was divided, subjugated to foreign rule, and the entire Western world entered into the fearful period known as the Cold War. In this socio-historic milieu, Pieper was part of a generation of men and woman who were strongly confronted with the need to examine how one must act in his place and time.

Two notable contemporaries of Pieper were Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1907 – 1945) and Konrad Adenauer (1876 – 1967). Bonhoeffer was a protestant theologian and minister who was killed by the Nazi state in the final year of the Second World War and Adenauer was a devout Catholic who, despite many personal tragedies, rose to prominence in Germany as the mayor of Cologne during and after the First World War. Adenauer was a persecuted Nazi opponent in the Second World War but ultimately became the first Chancellor of postwar Germany. He presided as Chancellor from 1949 to 1967, the years in which Pieper wrote many of his most formative texts including *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (1967), a translation and amalgamation of texts published in German in 1934, 1937, 1939, and 1953.[80]

Pieper's publication on "Prudence" especially stands out as an important work for his time. "Prudence" was titled *Traktat über die Kugheit* when first published in 1937 in Germany. This is especially noteworthy because in 1937 the Third Reich entered its sixth year of power and Pope Pius XII released the Papal Encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge,* or *With Great Anxiety*, which addressed the disturbing socio-political situation arising in Germany at that time. The encyclical was secretly written, smuggled into Germany, and unexpectedly read aloud at every

[80] It is important to note that Piper wrote four texts in German that would be edited and published together in English as *The Four Cardinal Virtues*. "Prudence" is a translation of *Traktat über die Kugheit* (1937), "Justice" is a translation of *Über die Gerechtigkeit* (1953), "Fortitude" is a translation of *Vom Sinn de Tapferkeit* (1934), and "Temperance:" is a translation of *Zucht und Mass* (1939).

Mass in Germany on March 14, 1937; Passion Sunday.[81] Jesuit priest Peter Grumpel stated that this encyclical "was arguably the Holy See's harshest criticism ever of a political regime."[82] The encyclical's language "was clear and explicit: Hitler was deceiving the Germans and the international community. The encyclical affirmed that the Nazi leader was perfidious, untrustworthy, dangerous and determined to take the place of God."[83] It further suggested that National Socialism was really "the arrogant apostasy from Jesus Christ, the denial of his doctrine and of His work of redemption."[84] In 1945 an anonymous journalist reporting on the encyclical wrote that it "brought light, direction, consolation and comfort to all those who seriously meditated and conscientiously practiced the religion of Christ. But the reaction of those who had been inculpated was inevitable […] (and) 1937 was for the Catholic Church in Germany a year of describable bitterness."[85] Thus German Catholics who did not agree with the political actions of the Nazi regime acutely felt the danger inherent in denouncing Nazi rhetoric and actions.

World War Two appeared imminent in 1937 and the papal encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* affirmed to the faithful that the Nazi ideology was contrary to Catholic beliefs. Pieper asserted in his 1937 text that "prudence is needed if man is to carry through his impulses and instincts for right acting" and that "prudence is the '*measure'* of justice."[86] Here we find that Pieper is responding to a place and time wherein right action and justice appear absent to Christians. The encyclical stated that "whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power […] above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and

[81] Zenit Staff, https://zenit.org/articles/the-encyclical-that-infuriated-hitler/.
[82] Zenit Staff, https://zenit.org/articles/the-encyclical-that-infuriated-hitler/.
[83] Zenit Staff, https://zenit.org/articles/the-encyclical-that-infuriated-hitler/.
[84] Anonymous. "Text of Pope Pius XII's Address to the Sacred College of Cardinals." *New York Times*, 22.
[85] Anonymous,"Text of Pope Pius XII's Address to the Sacred College of Cardinals." *New York Times*, 22.
[86] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 7.

created by God."[87] The encyclical also warns that "none but superficial minds could stumble into concepts of a national God, or a national religion; or attempt to lock within the frontiers of a single people, within the narrow limits of a single race, God, the Creator of the universe, King and Legislator of all nations."[88] Like Pieper, Pius XII is acutely aware of the Nazi state's wrongly directed and unjust actions. On this A. Valdez states that *Mit brennender Sorge* was composed to "express the grievances of the Church in Germany with the German government's violations of the Reichskonkordat, as well as to decry the National Socialist ideology that undermines Catholic doctrine" and "directly address the Church in Germany in order to give them encouragement in their suffering and to remind them of their personal responsibility before the Church and before God."[89]

This was the complicated socio-political milieu in which Pieper deeply reflected on how a Christian may live virtuously in the modern world. Pieper is an Aquinian scholar who believes that the virtues are the path to good Christian life. Aquinas saw the meaning of virtue as "manliness or worth, and hence general moral excellence based on right action and right thinking, which produce goodness of character."[90] Aquinas maintains that "[t]he morally virtuous person is one whose appetite has the order of reason realized in it: his very appetite, in other words, operates with perfection, and the infallible sign that a person has reached this state of human excellence is that he *enjoys* acting virtuously."[91] As such the morally virtuous man is not only acting and thinking rightly but he enjoys doing so and thus attains happiness.

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[87] *Mit Brennender Sorge, paragraph 8.*
[88] *Mit Brennender Sorge, paragraph 12.*
[89] Valdez, 17.
[90] Oesterle, xiii.
[91] Oesterle, xiv.

Happiness, Aquinas believed, will be attained through the practice of the virtues as they form us to act in a morally virtuous way.

Pieper especially sees prudence as the highest of the cardinal virtues because it relates both to knowing and acting.[92] He notes that "the whole ordered structure of the Occidental Christian view of man rests upon the pre-eminence of prudence over the other virtues […] prudence is the foremost of virtues."[93] He further argues that "prudence is the cause of the other virtues' being virtues at all,"[94] while it is also true that the knowledge given by prudence requires that one sees the world rightly, which is impossible when lacking justice, fortitude or temperance.[95] In this way prudence is also a fruit of contemplation. The German theologian writes that to "contemplate means first of all to see – and not to think!"[96] He goes on to write that "contemplation is visual perception prompted by loving acceptance" which indicates "utmost delight" and "a desire to 'see enough' that can never be satiated."[97] In this way prudence not only governs all other virtues but allows one to "see" rightly, and endeavor to continue "seeing" more of that which will be revealed through rightly directed action.

Understanding the complicated historical, political and social moment in which the theologian finds himself in 1937, the year in which his work on prudence was originally published, the reader becomes even further aware of the inner turmoil that must have led him to focus on the value of examining the correct way for one to live a morally righteous life. Pieper

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[92] Pieper is clear regarding his ordering of the seven virtues. He feels that the order of importance in the virtues, even though they are all mutually affirmative, is 1. Charity, 2. Hope, 3. Faith, 4. Prudence, 5. Justice, 6. Fortitude, 7. Temperance.
[93] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 3-4.
[94] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 6.
[95] "Virtue is a 'perfected ability' of man as a spiritual person; and justice, fortitude, and temperance, as 'abilities' of the whole man, achieve their 'perfection' only when they are founded upon prudence, that is to say upon the perfected ability to make right decisions" (Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 6).
[96] *Only the Lover Sings, Art and Contemplation,* 73.
[97] *Only the Lover Sings, Art and Contemplation,* 75-76.

writes that prudence is "the standard of volition and action"[98] and an "illumination of moral existence […] denied to every man who 'looks at himself.'"[99] Even more importantly, the German theologian perceives prudence as a virtue that is "infused" into Christians, which allows the faithful to be "aware that participation in the life of the Trinitarian God is the supernal goal of Christian existence."[100] Just as Thomas Merton struggled with how he, his monastery, and other monastic communities should respond to the complicated social happenings of his time, Pieper explores how virtuous living allows for man to appropriately act in his time and place.

In his text, Pieper maintains that prudence is the virtue that allows the Christian to pick out and do the right act, to hit the target. On this Pieper writes that prudence "lays the ground for the manly and noble attitude of restraint, freedom, and affirmation, which marks the moral theology of the 'universal teacher' [i.e., St. Thomas] of the Church."[101] Prudence for Pieper, as for St. Thomas Aquinas, is a lynchpin virtue since by it we turn knowledge into action. As the theologian holds, for a person to live in a rightly ordered way they must be prudent. On this Pieper affirms that "the free activity of man is good by its correspondence with the pattern of prudence. What is prudent and what is good are substantially one and the same; they differ only in their place in the logical succession of realization. For whatever is good must first have been prudent."[102] The primacy of the virtue of prudence in dictating right action also makes clear the subsequent need to act since being virtuous is not a question of "possessing" virtue but rather "living" virtuously.

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[98] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 9.
[99] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 22.
[100] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 11.
[101] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 27.
[102] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 7.

The question of acting rightly in Nazi Germany was a fundamental issue that Pieper had to confront as a German Catholic. Gordon C. Zahn notes the difficulty that German Catholics had during this period in choosing between their religious beliefs and the Nazi secular values in which "the most sacred [values] of all are those designated by the terms *Volk*, *Vaterland*, and *Heimat*.[103] Pieper himself discusses his own difficulty in discerning how to participate in the Third Reich as a writer and journalist in the sixth and seventh chapters of his autobiography.[104] Together these texts clearly show that the faithful of this period had to struggle to act virtuously in their place and time. Pieper gives an example of the level of confusion felt by the faithful when he describes a 1934 Solemn Procession of the Eucharist in Munster, Germany in which participated "the bishop, the cathedral chapter, the municipal authorities, the University and several thousand citizens […] an event organized by the town as a political community."[105] In this procession Nazi brownshirts also marched "alongside Bishop Von Galen;" the German theologian later come to view the brownshirts as "mercenaries of the Antichrist."[106] Pieper, therefore, acutely felt and experienced the difficulties inherent in acting virtuously in a time of great adversity; doubtlessly this experience focused his need to further explore the nature of rightly directed action.

Charles Pinches and Stanley Hauerwas note that Christian virtue is "characterized as Christian charity, the relation this mutuality involves is one in which love produces love, limitlessly, for it has its end in God, who is boundless love. In the end, then, Christian virtue is

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[103] Zahn, 21.
[104] In Pieper's autobiography *No One Could Have Known. An Autobiography: The Early Years*, the German theologian goes into great detail about his personal struggle with accepting and working with the Nazi state, which he sustains he never agreed with despite writing for a book series labeled *Reich und Kircke*, or *Church and State* (95).
[105] *No One Could Have Known*, 95.
[106] *No One Could Have Known*, 95.

not so much initiated action but response to a love relation with God in Christ."[107] The very "knowing" of how to act prudently is thus a result of knowing what to reach for in response to the loving gifts we have been given. A prudent act will keep one reaching out towards the Divine.[108] Prudence this way builds upon itself: the more a man is virtuous, the more he is disposed to "teachability" and so all the more able to see reality as it really is. On this Pieper notes that docilitas, or docility, "is the kind of open-mindedness which recognizes the true variety of things and situations to be experienced and does not cage itself in any presumption of deceptive knowledge."[109] From this comes the "ability to take advice" and the "desire for real understanding;" these allow one to endeavor appropriately in their information gathering and decision making.[110]

Pieper builds on St. Thomas Aquinas' emphasis on the importance of man's activity being "right" in its orientation if it is oriented towards truth. The German theologian writes that the "pre-eminence of prudence signifies first of all the direction of volition and action toward truth; but finally it signifies the directing of volition and action toward objective reality."[111] Thus thinking and doing directly involve us in our being, and, as such, is fundamentally a moral endeavor. For not only do our acts show how we perceive reality, they also form us further in that perception. On this the German theologian writes:

> Human activity has two basic forms: doing (*agere*) and making (*facere*). Artifacts, technical and artistic, are the "works" of making. We ourselves are the "works" of doing.

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[107] *Christians Among the Virtues*, 68.
[108] "The virtue of prudence… being the perfected ability to make decisions in accordance with reality – is the quintessence of ethical maturity (of which, of course, teachability is a great component). And the pre-eminence of prudence over justice, fortitude, and temperance means imply that without maturity truly moral life and action is not possible" (*Four Cardinal Virtues*, 31).

[109] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 16.
[110] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 16.
[111] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 9.

> And prudence is the perfection of the ability to do, whereas "art" (in St. Thomas's sense) is perfection of the ability to make. "Art" is the "right reason" of making (*recta ratio factibilium*); prudence is the "right reason" of doing (*recto ration agibilium*).[112]

This is why the "right" orientation formed in us by prudence is so important and also why Pieper is so explicit in his denunciation of casuistry.[113] He sees prudence as that which allows "ethical growth" to "take place in the course of our replies […] to the reality outside of us."[114] Thus, prudent action is a reflection of maturity and nothing like casuistry, which "carried to excess, substitutes techniques and prescriptions for the infinite suppleness which the virtue of prudence must retain in the face of the complexities of the ethical life."[115]

Pieper sees prudence as an "intellectual virtue" because it allows for certainty when discerning "decisions" regarding matters that are "concrete, contingent, and future" wherein there is no "certainty which is possible in a theoretical conclusion."[116] For this reason Pieper writes that "prudence means […] nothing less than the directing cognition of reality. Out of this cognition good acts are 'born.'"[117] As such man depends on prudence so that he may operate correctly and productively and "right" in his activity. This, therefore, is the immediate goal of human endeavor. It allows man to truly express his own "creatureliness." Pieper argues that "the goodness of concrete human action rests upon the transformation of the truth of real things; of the truth which must be won and perceived by regarding the *ipsa res*, reality itself."[118] Therefore, one cannot effectively act in society without being appropriately and realistically informed about

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[112] Pieper, Josef. *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 29.
[113] "A moral theology which relies too much upon casuistry necessarily becomes a 'science of sins' instead of a doctrine of virtues, or a theory of the Christian idea of man" (*The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 30).
[114] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 30.
[115] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 30.
[116] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 18.
[117] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 25
[118] Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 25.

reality.[119] For this reason prudence also requires contemplation because it is through contemplation that one may be driven to act prudently.

In expressing this understanding of a true and ultimate reality, Pieper sees that living virtuously means that one is naturally conforming to their true and fullest nature which he calls "self-realization."[120] Pieper establishes that "man's concrete moral actions receive their existence, their being, their real goodness, from the will's power of realization"[121] and thus self-realization implies a deeply mutual union which allows one, through grace, to perceive the immense and loving essence that is "the reality outside us that is not made by ourselves."[122] Pieper writes "This rootedness itself, the kind of connection that links natural and supernatural virtue, is expressed in the well-known dictum that grace does not destroy nature but presupposes and perfects it."[123] This grace-filled essence is what Pieper above refers to as "ultimate truth," and the comprehension of this "ultimate truth" is when "concrete moral action cognition and will are interwoven into oneness. Both strands have their beginnings far beyond the narrow reality of self-understanding."[124] However, this oneness happens through a grace-filled understanding of the eternal that is "infused into our being"[125] through charity, at which time all "works and being are elevated by charity to a plane which is otherwise unattainable and utterly inaccessible." For this reason Pieper feels that the "divine love conferred by grace shapes from the ground up and throughout the innermost core of the most commonplace moral action of a Christian."[126]

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[119] "In this way prudence is fundamentally important because it dictates the nature of activity that the Christian performs. "The virtue of prudence… being the perfected ability to make decisions in accordance with reality – is the quintessence of ethical maturity… the mold and mother of all moral virtue" (Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 31).
[120] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 30.
[121] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 34.
[122] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 30.
[123] *The Christian Idea of Man*, 39.
[124] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 34.
[125] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 37.
[126] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 37.

Pieper describes this end to which all human life points as "the ultimate fulfillment, the absolutely meaningful activity, the most perfect expression of being alive, the deepest satisfaction, and the fullest achievement of human existence."[127] Pieper sees endeavoring for this contact with the eternal as the most important exercise a creature can undertake because it can bring the man to act in such a way that is consonant with the ultimate reality. In this way man's self-realization is more fully transforming than enrapturing. Pieper feels that man's goal is to become aware of the meta-reality that surrounds all Creation. Awareness of this deeper and fuller level of existence is the key component in one's understanding of the world and the people around him. This closeness to God translates through prudence to acts that fit reality, that is, ultimate reality. Reaching this profound understanding of reality is the noblest effort of the creature and it becomes the path for our most meaningful action. Properly directed action, therefore, remains the focus of Pieper's work on prudence. We see this especially in the conclusion of his text on prudence when he notes that "even the supreme supernatural prudence, however, can have only the following aim; to make the more deeply felt truth of the reality of God and the world the measure for will and action."[128] Thus the prudent man who acts in a way that is prudent allows not only for the individual to become self-realized but also grow into communion with the "reality of God."

Prudence, Contemplation and the Theological Virtue of Hope

In his work *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation* Pieper refers to the supreme reality as "the core of all things." This mature work was first published in Germany in 1988

[127] "Work, Spare Time, and Leisure," *Only The Lover Sings*, 22.
[128] *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 40.

under the tile *Nur der Liebende singt* when Pieper was eighty-four years old. In it Pieper notes that striving to make contact with the "core of all things" is an activity that is "meaningful in itself."[129] On this he writes, "whenever in reflective and receptive contemplation we touch, even remotely, the core of all things, the hidden, ultimate reason of the living universe […] there is an activity that is meaningful in itself taking place."[130] Thus Pieper sees contemplation as prudent because "such reaching out in contemplation is the root and foundation of all that is."[131] Indeed Pieper sees this "contemplative immersion of the self into the divine mysteries"[132] as a vehicle that allows a person, such as an artist who is making art, to produce something resulting from inspiration received during contemplation, at which time "something like a liberation occurs […] not only for the creative artist himself but for the beholder as well."[133]

Pieper's understanding of contemplation coincides with Thomas Merton's understanding of it as an activity in which "all other experiences are momentarily lost. They 'die' to be born again on a higher level of life."[134] Merton, like Pieper, goes on to write that contemplation "is a sudden gift of awareness, an awakening to the Real within all that is real. A vivid awareness of infinite Being at the roots of our own limited being."[135] Thus the contemplative is able to experience a moment of self-realization wherein he is also called to action. The action element is key to living appropriately as a contemplative. On this Merton writes that "contemplation is also the response to a call: a call from Him Who has no voice."[136] As we saw earlier, this is the well-spring of virtue for Pieper because "the virtuous person is in such a way that, from the innermost

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[129] *Only The Lover Sings; Art and Contemplation*, 23.

[130] *Only The Lover Sings; Art and Contemplation*, 23.
[131] *Only The Lover Sings; Art and Contemplation*, 23.
[132] *Only The Lover Sings; Art and Contemplation*, 25.
[133] *Only The Lover Sings; Art and Contemplation*, 27.
[134] New Seeds of Contemplation, 2.
[135] New Seeds of Contemplation, 3.
[136] New Seeds of Contemplation, 3.

tendency of his being, he realizes the good through his action."[137] In his action the truly virtuous person reaches out toward the reality he sees, a reality that is truthful, even if it is not yet fully realized. This also indicates why, for Pieper, a key component for living virtuously is a strong infusion of the theological virtue of hope. This is because hope, the opposite of despair, allows the endeavoring man to keep going in his journey towards self-realization through contemplating the ultimate Divine reality, and this in turn allows him to live and act rightly as a person.

Pieper writes that "Hope, like love, is one of the very simple, primordial dispositions of the living person. In hope, man reaches 'with restless heart,' with confidence and patient expectation, toward the *bonum arduum futurum*, toward the arduous 'not yet' of fulfillment, whether natural or supernatural."[138] This is because through hope man can see beyond his current situation and look forward to fulfillment after the difficulty has ended. Incarnation forces the man to depend on hope as a means to self-realization because supernatural hope looks to something beyond suffering, which may even become attainable only because of suffering. Pinches writes that the wayfarer needs hope because "it is by hope that she keeps moving toward her goal, her eternal happiness […] hope is the most autobiographical (virtue). Hope regards always my own story, stretching it forward to its best possible end and propels the Christian to action despite hardship and travail, because its goal is something greater. "[139] Suffering, as seen by hope, is thus a hurdle that the Christian must expect along his way to fulfillment yet one's "capacity to suffer depends on the type and extent of the hope that we bear within us and build upon."[140]

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[137] *The Christian Idea of Man*, 11.
[138] Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 100.
[139] *Faith, Hope, Love,* 15.
[140] Benedict XVII, *Spe Salvi*, 84.

Hope is also the theological virtue specific to the state of "being on the way," a characterization that captures an essential theological truth of man's life. Pieper calls wayfaring man "homo viator;" his nature is to travel towards God. Therefore the state in which *homo viator* is found is the "status viatoris,"[141] which is ultimately a good thing because "to be a viator, means to be making progress toward eternal happiness."[142] Being on the way demonstrates that man must virtuously work towards fulfillment with God. Gilbert Meilaender states that "virtue involves a quest for perfection, we are always 'on the way' – never fulfilled, never completed"[143] but hope, "the proper response to the experience of being on the way,"[144] encourages man along his journey without knowing where it will lead.[145] Pinches maintains that "the theological virtue of hope is linked to action or movement,"[146] which moves towards fulfillment. The more one practices the virtues, and leans on Christ and "others who walk close by,"[147] his habits will guide him in his actions and define his route as genuinely progressing.

> [T]he positive side of the concept of being on the way, the creature's natural orientation towards fulfillment, is revealed, above all, in man's ability to establish, by his own effort, a kind of justifiable 'claim' to the happy outcome of his pilgrimage. This ability is none other than the possibility of meritorious action, which has the character of genuine 'progress'.[148]

Acting rightly allows man to construct, shape, and even co-create his own true identity and self by allowing him to grow in character. In this way "the character we have come to have through

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[141] "To be on the way, to be a *viator*, means to be making progress toward eternal happiness: to have encompassed this goal, to be *comprehensor*, means to possess beatitude. Beatitude is to be understood primarily as the fulfillment objectively appropriate to our nature and only secondarily as the subjective response to this fulfillment. And this fulfillment is the Beatific Vision" (Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 92).
[142] Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love,* 93.
[143] Meilaender, 116.
[144] Meilaender, 128.
[145] "Of course we began this road with hope. The hope our journey has produced is not different from that which it began except in this: as we began to hope, we could not anticipate where it would lead." (Pinches, *Christians Among Virtues*, 126.
[146] "How To Live in Hope," 23.
[147] Pinches, "How To Live in Hope," 24.
[148] Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 93.

suffering and endurance is able to produce hope because by it we learn to inhabit the narrative of God's work in Jesus Christ and so to see all existence as trustworthy."[149] Thus man's journey is a pilgrimage that forces him to act in such a way that he most truly and sincerely conforms to his own true state of being while oriented towards his right destiny. "The *status viatoris* comes to an end at the moment when uncertainty comes to border on certainty" and this comes only through unity with God after death. [150]

Hope sustains one's journey towards God along an unknown route. And, in fact, Pieper sees that all three theological virtues allow the Christian to respond to God, while also depending on them to venture towards God.[151]

> Faith, hope, and love are the response to the reality of the Divine Trinity which has been revealed to the Christian in a supernatural way through the revelation of Jesus Christ. And furthermore, the three theological virtues are not only the response to this reality, but they are at the same time the capacity and source of strength needed to make this response; they are not just the answer, they are also, so to speak, the mouth which alone is capable of making this answer.[152]

The theological virtues are not only the way, they give us what we need to walk it, as well as the strength and vision to act as we move. This is particularly important to understand because here Pieper says that once man makes contact with the divine and eternal reality, he is given, through revelation, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, which he calls, following Aquinas, infused virtues. These theological virtues allow the Christian the needed means to understand the experience of the beatific life as well as to look forward to the change from the *status viatoris* to

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[149] Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues*, 126.
[150] Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 94.
[151] "Theological virtue is an ennobling of man's nature that entirely surpasses what he "can be" of himself. Theological virtue is the steadfast orientation towards fulfillment and a beatitude that are now 'owed' to natural man" (Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 99).
[152] *The Christian Idea of Man*, 37.

the *status comprehensoris.*[153] Gazing upon the Beatific Vision, then, is not simply contact, through grace, with the Divine and Eternal substance that surrounds all of Creation but the infusion of the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love through grace.[154]

This revelation sustains the pilgrim as he grows in contact with the "core of all things." Pieper explains how the theological virtues are revealed to the Christian when he writes:

> In faith the Christian becomes aware of the reality of the Divine Trinity in a way which transcends all natural awareness. Hope is the answer – given by God to the Christian in his inner existence – to the revealed fact that Christ, in the most real sense of the word, is the "Way" to eternal life. Finally, love is – in accord with the reality of things – the answer given to all the powers of affirmation enjoyed by man, in grace, - to the inexhaustible lovable reality that is God. All three Theological Virtues are inextricably connected with one another; they "flow," as Thomas says in his tract about hope, 'back into themselves in a holy circle; one who was led to love through hope also has from now on more perfect hope, just as his faith is now stronger than before.'"[155]

Therefore, the role of each of these three theological virtues becomes clear. Faith allows the pilgrim to become "aware of the Divine Trinity." By hope, the homo-viator is strengthened for the journey, leaning on Christ who "is the 'Way' to eternal life." Faith understands but hope feels because it is in the appetite. Finally, love affirms in man's grace and unites him to the "inexhaustible lovable reality that is God." "Inexhaustible" is the key word when referring to God. It implies His eternal nature and the importance of faith, hope, and love. Effectively, the progressive revelation of the theological virtues allows man to continue along his journey ever more assured of the rightness of his orientation.[156]

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[153] "The 'way' of man leads to death. Since man, by his sin, came under the law of death at the beginning of his history, his life has become an incipient death. The 'way' of man leads to death as its end but not as its meaning. The meaning of the *status viatoris* is the *status comprehensoris"* (Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 94).

[154] "Faith, hope, and love can be expressed in three sentences. First: faith, hope and love have all three been implanted in human nature as natural inclinations (habitus) conjointly with the reality of grace, the one source of all supernatural life. Second: in the orderly sequence of the active development of these supernatural inclinations, faith takes precedence over both hope and love; hope takes precedence over love; conversely in the culpable disorder of their dissolution, love is lost first then hope, and last of all, faith. Third: in the order of perfection, love holds first place, with faith last, and hope between them" (Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 103).

[155] *The Christian Idea of Man*, 38.

[156] "The theological virtues do indeed orient us for our supernatural end, which is in God" (Pinches, "On Hope," 16).

Hope, which provides strength in difficulty, also, as a virtue of the appetite, consoles and encourages, allowing the Christian to continue on his path towards unity with God even when it is the most difficult and discouraging. Pieper notes that "the only answer that corresponds to man's actual existential situation is hope. The virtue of hope is preeminently the virtue of the *status viatoris*; it is the proper virtue of the 'not yet.'"[157] In this, man's journey forces him to turn away from himself and towards God to truly seek an understanding of the finite lived reality to which he belongs in his incarnate state. By the theological hope we are equipped to "lean on Christ" which we must do when the journey is difficult. In this way "hope is a steadfast turning toward the true fulfillment of man's nature, that is, toward good, only when it has its source in the reality of grace in man and is directed toward supernatural happiness in God."[158]

The Beatific Vision

When rightly directed, man's action includes not only right intention and proper action but also is infused with hope in a way that it carries him towards God, from contemplation to fulfillment. Pieper states that when *homo viator* attains his goal he becomes *homo comprehensor*, "which means to possess beatitude."[159] Once this beatitude is possessed, however, man has attained fulfillment "and this fulfillment is the Beatific Vision."[160] God is revealed to man as he grows in union with the core of all things. Pieper writes that "all our natural hopes tend toward fulfillments that are like vague mirroring and foreshadowings of, like unconscious preparations

[157] *Faith, Hope, Love*, 98.
[158] Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 100.
[159] *Faith, Hope, Love*, 92.
[160] *Faith, Hope, Love*, 92.

for, eternal life."[161] Therefore man's yearning for unity with God increases the more he practices prudence and hope. These virtues consequently enhance his capacity to gaze upon the Beatific Vision as they mature in him. The Beatific Vision is thus revealed to those who arduously work towards it, in accordance with their natural and supernatural desire to conform to eternity. As Meilaender states, "only the pure in heart see God – not because they have earned it, but because only they can really see. Only they have the true Christian prudence which makes this vision possible. Hence, the reward which is proper to virtue is something for which we may hope, but something not at our disposal."[162]

Jesuit priest F. J. Boudreaux notes that the etymology for Beatific Vision comes from "beatus, happy; facio, I make; and visio, a sight; all of which taken together make up and mean a happy-making sight."[163] He writes further that the Beatific Vision means "a sight which contains in itself the power of banishing all pain, all sorrow from the beholder, and of infusing, in their stead, joy and happiness."[164] Thus the person who is living a virtuous life and finally gazes upon the Beatific Vision is not only someone who has received a special grace to attain this sight but someone who is also pure of heart and permitted to gaze upon a vision of heaven itself. Boudreaux writes that "happiness […] is none other than the possession and enjoyment of God himself in the Beatific Vision."[165] Thus, happiness accompanies the one who attains such a miraculous vision.

Man's prudent and hopeful reaching out towards the Beatific Vision also requires him to intensely grow in the virtue of love. Love is the agent that dispels blindness to the ultimate and

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[161] *Faith, Hope, Love,* 108.
[162] Maeilaender, 132.
[163] Boudreaux, 6-7.
[164] Boudreaux, 7.
[165] Boudreaux, 2.

final substance of Creation. This is the highest grace-filled gift that the Christian can experience and that which directly leads one towards God. The "back-flowing" that the Christian experiences after attaining this love not only strengthens him in faith, hope, and love—the latter of which directs all the virtues outward to those in the world around the lover—but also allows for a greater manifestation of godly Love, or *Caritas*, in general.[166] Chad Lakies describes this perfectly in a footnote in his article "Challenging the Cultural Imaginary: Pieper on How Life might Live." There Lakies notes:

> The reader may be immediately struck by the narrow idea of contemplation alone as that for which man is created. However, this is not Pieper's view. Contemplation for Pieper, as for Thomas and Aristotle, in whose traditions he is following, is definitely aimed at something–the beatific vision. The contemplation of the divine is that end of our human pursuit of knowing of which Pieper speaks. From such contemplation, Pieper is able to conclude that contemplation of the divine 'contains a whole philosophy of life, a basic conception of the nature of man and the meaning of human existence.' In such contemplation, man's desire to know is fulfilled in an ultimate sense, thus bringing ultimate happiness.[167]

The Thomastic understanding of the Beatific Vision here is particularly helpful because it clearly describes the nature of the mystical contact that man encounters when he moves outwards from himself and upwards towards God, and through this action gains a profound "awareness" of Creation through grace and revelation. This new "awareness" is not just a new understanding of the self nor a new conceptual certainty of the deep and ontological interrelatedness of all of Creation, it is eschatological. Just as the Beatific Vision allows one to "see" a very real glimpse of the final analysis, this is an eschatological vision, which also allows one to see the world as it

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[166] "Caritas comprehends all the forms of human love… it is our own natural, native will, kindled at the creation and by virtue of this very origin tempestuously demanding appeasement, that is now exalted to immediate participation in the will of the Creator himself – and therefore necessarily presupposed… the whole conception of *caritas* is dominated by felicity. If happiness is truly never anything but happiness in love, then the fruit of that highest form of love must be the utmost happiness, for which language offers such words as felicity, beatitude, bliss" (Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 275-276).

[167] This quote is found in Footnote number 6 on page 500 of Lakies' article.

really is—which is also as it is also meant to be. In this vision one also sees God's will for the world as well as what the world will look like at the end of time.

Lakies clarifies this notion of the Beatific Vision, commenting on two works of Pieper. The critic writes:

> In both *Happiness and Contemplation* and in *Tune with the World*, Pieper raises the specifically Thomistic idea of the beatific vision. His argument is that man is made for "seeing" and the ultimate kind of seeing is, as Plato concluded, "contemplation of divine beautify." And before Plato, Anaxagoras gives the same purpose for life: seeing. In seeing, we are presented with a sharp alternative to the present cultural imaginary which sees life as purposed for productivity.[168]

We understand that the Beatific Vision is a form of contemplation of the Divine. This is not simply a Christian reality but rather something even philosophers in the ancient world were aware of. In his own works, Pieper regularly refers to classical philosophers, including Aristotle and Plato, and he often uses their ancient philosophies to validate profound ideas related to Christian mystical union with God.[169] He does this to show that what he is referring to in Christian theology has a deep presence in human history. Gazing upon the Beatific Vision has been a goal of man since Creation. Seeing God has long been the yearning of man and this desire has been found throughout history. It follows for Lakies that the purpose of man's work is not just production and temporal action, but meaningful endeavor that brings man closer to God, and ultimately into union with God. Once man gazes upon the Beatific Vision, he not only grows in

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[168] Lakies, 505.

[169] An in-depth study of the instances in which he refers to Classical philosophers is far outside of the general scope of this work. In fact, Pieper himself notes the difficulty in comparing and contrasting Classical theologies and Christian theology in his work *The Idea of Christian Man*. There he writes, "[i]n recent years, the attempt has been made from a Christian perspective to show the relationship of the individual to the common good of the 'we' as the fundamental structural element of the life of the community, and thus to present 'legal justice' as the true form of justice. It was also maintained simultaneously that this is the true meaning of classical theology. It is very difficult to make a correct judgment of this attempt since important and complex distinctions have to be made" (21).

union with God but also with those around him. This brings man into a mystical relationship with the whole of Creation.

As we have said, man gains a glance of the Beatific Vision once he has formed virtuous habits that bring him towards right action and ultimately God. These same habits strengthen man's ability to relate to others around him and act in such a way that they too may grow to see God. Love is for both Pieper and Aquinas the highest of all the virtues; it is essential as the Christian lives out his life in relation to others. Pope Benedict XVI saw love as an "outreaching" virtue that causes the Christian to act "in relationship" between himself and others. On this he writes:

> Life in its true sense is not something we have exclusively in or from ourselves: it is a relationship. And life in its totality is a relationship with him who is the source of life. If we are in relation with him who does not die, who is Life itself and Love itself, then we are in life. Then we 'live.'[170]

Life and love therefore are tightly interrelated in that they mutually compel us towards God and others, and away from ourselves. Our loving relationships move us closer to God. In this way "[l]ove of God leads to participation in the justice and generosity of God towards others. Loving God requires an interior freedom from all possessions and material goods: the love of God is revealed in responsibility for others."[171] "Responsibility for others" forces the Christian to be an agent of action in his time and place. Action informed by the virtues brings man into deep communion with others. Within this communion he can respond to God's love and mirror it for others.

Pieper sees responding to God through action in the world as participation in "an eschatological reality in the present." On this, Lakies writes:

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[170] *Spe Salvi*, 27.
[171] Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 28.

> And so, even as Pieper's work envisions the impossible by calling forth an eschatological reality in the present, for the Christian, the practice of the future is possible because the hope that it embodies in the Christian life emerges out of life in the religious community of the Church, which is a living sign of the age to come."[172]

The wayfarer can in this sense see beyond his historical age and towards the age of the things to come. So the Christian may also live his life in such a way that he remains focused on the primary and ultimate target: union with God. Man may thus live in his age without being dominated or directed by its false views of reality, which was Pieper's central concern while writing in the shadow of Third Reich. The pilgrim's orientation remains fixed on the future and towards unity with God.[173] In life, however, practicing the virtues also brings man into deep communion with others as fellow creatures of God. Thus, just as man travels towards God, he must move into solidarity with others. Benedict XVI sees that man finds God's love when he acts on behalf of others and sustains the truth in his life that the "love of God is revealed in responsibility for others."[174]

Conclusion

Pieper is very important to the reader today because the theologian's historical age is not just that of the mid-20th Century and all of the war, horror, and death that is therein implied. Instead Pieper's age is our Modern Age wherein the individual is valued based on his productivity in society.[175] John Haldane argues that this remains our age: "arguably, today we

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[172] Lakies, 509.
[173] "*Caritas*, in renewing and rejuvenating us, also brings us death in a certain sense… because it consumes everything and transforms everything into itself, a fire" (Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 281).
[174] *Spe Salvi*, 28
[175] Josef Pieper discusses in depth the 20th Century "totalitarian work state" in several of his works and particularly in his essay "Work, Spare Time, and Leisure."

stand in even greater need of an understanding of the relation of norms and values to our shared human nature and our common human destiny."[176] The "age" that Jon Vickery says Pieper rejects is not one that has since passed. Instead we are still living in this same individualistic, production-orientated age. We can see and hear Pieper rejecting our own age and our same socially lived reality today. In this he remains our teacher.

While it can be rightly said that Josef Pieper establishes a "theology of the virtues," Pieper's discussion of the virtues really studies the reality of God. Such thoroughly theological study not only allows one to understand Pieper's conception of the virtues but also how he believes that one comes to have (and practice) the virtues through grace and revelation. As a strong defender of the virtues, Pieper is showing us that we need the good habits (what virtues are) that equip us to choose and act well, to conform in what we do and who we are with what is the truth about us and God and the world. But we cannot know truth without intellection (importantly, prudence is an intellectual virtue) which sees and knows and reflects. Reflection is necessary to avoid erroneous action. The full realization of this truth requires more than natural prudence; it requires the theological virtues that come to us as gifts and transform our vision, since we live in a time between times.

The three theological virtues are necessary for this life; in the next life we will live only by love because faith and hope will disappear, for then we will see God face to face. In this present life faith and hope are buoyed up by the glimpses we get of the ultimate reality and work into our lives in charity. Pieper believes these glimpses are opened to us in our leisure, when we rest and recollect. Earlier, we saw that hope and love are virtues that allow the Christian person to respond to God while also being an agent of hope and love in his relationships with others.

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[176] *The Christian Idea of Man*, Introduction, IX.

Benedict XVI affirms that we must live in communion with others when he writes "No one lives alone. No one sins alone. No one is saved alone. The lives of others continually spill over into mine: in what I think, say, do and achieve. And conversely, my life spills over into that of others: for better and for worse."[177] Thus the orientation of pilgrims towards God is also squarely focused on others. Living a life of virtue requires that the Christian reach out to others, because his salvation also depends on theirs. All pilgrims grow into the rightness of their journey's orientation as their actions are guided by the virtues. Growing itself reminds the creature of his creatureliness and therefore of the radical transformation that brings him into full communion with God.

The constant growth and maturation of love moves toward fulfillment and is sustained by hope. Gazing upon the Beatific Vision encourages the Christian to patiently continue his hopeful work of growing in unity with God. Pieper writes that "love has the nature of a gift: not only being loved, but also loving."[178] Thus, one can deduce that it is not only through love that we approach happiness—which Aristotle and so many others have defined as the ultimate goal of life—but that we have a responsibility to hope and love, and to endeavor to hope and love even more powerfully. This transforms happiness into fulfillment in God in "the final analysis." Aquinas and Pieper affirm that this happiness has its full end in communion with God. This we glimpse even now in the Beatific Vision because it is held within us in hope. Ultimately it is contemplation that which Pieper and Merton see as the dominant factor that allows the Christian to act rightly in the world. Just as Pieper wrote that "in contemplation we touch, even remotely,

[177] *Spe Salvi*, 48.
[178] *Faith, Hope, Love,* 226.

the core of all things, the hidden, ultimate reason of the living universe"[179] we understand that this has a meaningful and immediate impact on how the Christian must act and live.

Both Josef Pieper and Thomas Merton fully understood man's need to stand in profound, mystical unity with others. Merton shares with Pieper the conviction that the Christian needs to gaze upon the Beatific Vision and contemplate God. Merton believes that unity with the whole of Creation and God is found through an experience of mystical unity with God, which also allows man to experience fraternity with one another. Contemplation, which Merton sees as the motor for a mystical experience that reveals the Beatific Vision, does not isolate us but is rather a profound act of communion with others. Merton saw that one becomes a contemplative when he becomes aware of the divine reality that surrounds him. Contemplatives have encountered the universal essence of all Creation through grace and solitude.

This is similar to the path toward the Beatific Vision we have followed in this chapter with Josef Pieper. It is Pieper, however, who understands that it is only by living the virtuous life that one finds the correct orientation in his actions so as to be better equipped fully to gaze upon God. In the next chapter we will consider the theology of another thinker and a rough contemporary of these two, Gustavo Gutierrez. Like Pieper from Merton, Gutierrez may seem to be a quite different sort of theologian from both of these men. Yet he also expresses that action rooted in contemplation is needed for the Christian to grow in unity with God and others. Both contemplation and engagement in social praxis are for Gutierrez essential to the Christian life and lead to the same goal: contact with God and the eternal essence of Creation.

[179] *Only the Lover Sings, Art and Contemplation*, 23.

Chapter 3

GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ AND GROWING IN UNION WITH GOD THROUGH SOCIAL PRAXIS

Gustavo Gutierrez is a Peruvian priest who was born on June 8, 1928 in the Montserrat barrio of Lima, Peru.[180] As a child he came to know adversity and marginalization both because of his living in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Peru's capital city and of poor health. He suffered from osteomyelitis which confined him to bed and a wheelchair between the ages of twelve and eighteen.[181] Daniel Groody argues that "his own illness over time sensitized him to the physical, psychological and spiritual suffering of others, and it would teach him much about hope and joy, as well as compassion and solidarity."[182] It is perhaps noteworthy that Gutierrez's experience of suffering in his youth connects him to the two theologians that we have already studied. In childhood Merton suffered the loss of both his parents as well as geographical displacement as a youth due to war. Pieper's early life was shadowed by the rise of the Nazi regime. As a soldier and military psychologist he was surely surrounded by great anguish and suffering regularly throughout the war. Now we see that Gutierrez, the youngest of these three, spent his younger years often immobile and confronting his own physical, psychological, and social tribulations.[183]

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[180] Groody, 21.
[181] Groody, 21.
[182] Groody, 22.
[183] It is important to note that a comprehensive biography of Gustavo Gutierrez is lacking. The introduction written by Samuel Groody, which I have been citing, is the only academic biography that I have been able to find.

Gutierrez's Early Growth as a Theologian

Gutierrez grew up in a place and time that was heavily influenced by international fascism, and the struggle to remain hopeful in a world consumed by war.[184] This formative period in Gutierrez's life allowed the young Peruvian to orient his vision towards hope and discern the need to act rightly. As Gutierrez himself reports on this time:

> from the age of 12 to 18 I had osteomyelitis and was confined to bed. There certainly were reasons for discouragement, but also very present was the gift of hope that came to me through prayer, reading, family and friends. Later my parishioners in Lima would also teach me volumes about hope in the midst of suffering, and this is when I decided to write a book about Job. Hope is precisely for the difficult moments."[185]

Thus the hopeful vision that Gutierrez discerned in his youth were key for sustaining him during personal sufferings as well as those of his parishioners. Gutierrez's hopefulness opened to him a life of faith wherein he came to see "theology not as religious metaphysics but as a reflection on Christian life under the light of faith, a *lumen fidei*, in order to live out the truth in love."[186]

Like Merton and Pieper, Gutierrez lived in Europe during his most formative years. From 1951 until 1959 he studied in the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium, the University of Lyon in France, and the Gregorian University in Italy.[187] Belgium, France, and Italy were still recovering from the war during these years and through his acquaintances and time in Europe the Peruvian seminarian surely became deeply aware of the collective suffering caused by the war.

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[184] Peru was an allied power during World War Two, however this followed a time of neutrality in which Peru was targeted for an unusually large amount of propaganda and influence by the Italian Fascist State. Peru was also a place of divided loyalty because of the numerically large Japanese Peruvian population and strong Spanish influence after the fascist victory in the Spanish Civil War in 1939. For further information on this refer to: Ortiz Sotelo, Jorge. "El Perú y la Segunda Guerra Mundial. La etapa de la neutralidad: 1939-1941." *Derroteros de la Mar del Sur*. 12 (2004), 87-99 as well as Ciccarelli, Orazio. "Fascism and Politics in Peru during the Benavides Regime, 1933-1939: The Italian Perspective." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. 70:3 (Aug. 1990), 405-432.
[185] Hartnett S. J., Daniel. "Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutierrez." *America*. 188:3. February 3, 2003.
[186] Groody, 22-23.
[187] Groody, 22.

Gutierrez's awareness of suffering and adversity only increased upon his return to Peru. He was ordained as a priest for the Diocese of Lima in 1959 and he returned to Peru in 1960.[188] The young priest began his pastoral work in his native country and, from 1960 to 1966, ministered to the Peruvian people. Gutierrez's powerful life experience, academic formation, and Peruvian ministerial challenges forced the nascent theologian to return to the Bible as a source of pastoral inspiration and his personal, academic, and pastoral preparation combined with the dynamic historical moment in which he was living. [189] This inspired the theologian to his now famous text *Una Teología de Liberación* in 1971. The text was translated into English as *A Theology of Liberation* and first published in English by Orbis Books in 1973.

Liberation Theology was a theological embodiment of the spirit of liberation that comprised the 1950s and 1960s. On this Groody writes that "the 1950s and 1960s gave rise to many different liberation movements throughout the world, as well as many waves of renewal across the globe."[190] During the 1950s and 1960s the developing world had awakened to a spirit of independence as a direct result of their experience of World War II. They were likewise becoming aware of the need of the world's aging imperial powers to depend on their manpower, resources, and ability. Academics sometimes call this period the "long 1960s" and Jon Agar argues that this decade has such historical and social importance that it should not be limited to the ten years that comprise the decade. As he maintains, "there is no consensus on when a long 1960s might begin or end."[191] In stating this Agar contextualizes the 1960s as a period of many

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[188] Groody, 23.
[189] "Though Gustavo's studies abroad were valuable and formative, they left unanswered many pressing questions that stemmed from his native social context. He discovered many 'classical' theological formations were not adequate to deal with the needs of the poor and oppressed in Latin America, so he began to read the theological tradition from a new perspective. He started rereading and relearning his previous education, especially by rereading the Bible and rereading history" (Groody, 24).
[190] Groody, 26.
[191] Agar, 568.

changes that significantly influence the years following 1969. As such, Gutierrez's 1971 *Una teología de liberación* can be considered one of numerous noteworthy manifestations of new social awareness exhibited by the intelligencia and masses alike during and after "the long 1960s."

This was also the time of the Second Vatican Council. Held from 1962 to 1965, its importance cannot be understated. The number of encyclicals promulgated during the council, *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), E*cclesiam Suam* (August 6, 1964), *Mense Maio* (April 30, 1965), and *Mysterium Fidei* (September 3, 1965) together with sixteen other council documents reflect the intensely rich spirit of discernment which permeated the church at this time.[192] In *Mense Maio* the Ecumenical Council over which John XXIII presided is explicitly described as a "momentous event" that "confronts the Church with the immense problem of how to renew herself in accordance with the needs of the times. On its outcome will depend for a long time to come the future of the Spouse of Christ and the destiny of innumerable souls."[193] Thus, not only did the Pope see the time of the Council as a time for the Church to renew herself but he was aware of the long lasting effects that it would have on Catholic faithful. The effects of this council on the lives of Catholics throughout the world were far reaching and the ramifications of these changes are still being experienced and examined today. It is clear, however, that Latin America was among the regions of the world most affected by the Second Vatican Council simply because Latin America was and remains the most Catholic geographic area in the world by population, percentage, and dominant culture.

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[192] The Second Vatican Council documents referenced here are: *Gaudium et Spes, Lumen Gentium, Dei Verbum, Dignitati Humanae, Unitatis Redintegratio, Orientalium Ecclesiarum, Nostra Aetate, Ad Gentes, Gravissimum Educationis, Christus Dominus, Apostolicam Actuositatem, Sacrosactum Concilium, Perfectae Caritatis, Presbyterorum Ordinis, Optatam Totius, and Inter Mirifica.*

[193] https://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul06/p6month.htm.

The council document titled "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," or *Gaudium et Spes*, is a conciliar document that helps us understand what was happening within the church during this period. *Gaudium et Spes* was "the last of the sixteen decrees to be approved and promulgated on December 7, 1965, the penultimate day of the council."[194] Norman Tanner notes that "*Gaudium et Spes* has been one of the most discussed of all the council's documents and has generally received a favorable reception both inside and beyond the Catholic church. It has, moreover, had a considerable and direct influence upon developments that have taken place both within the Catholic community and more widely."[195]

In Part I, Chapter IV of *Gaudium et Spes* we see that its authors recognize the increased expressions of independence and liberty that were characteristic of the "long 1960s." On this they write that "modern man is on the road to a more thorough development of his own personality, and to a growing discovery and vindication of his own rights."[196] The authors also recognize the important social and political movements that the world was experiencing at this time by stating "The Church […] by virtue of the Gospel committed to her, proclaims the rights of man; she acknowledges and greatly esteems the dynamic movements of today by which these rights are everywhere fostered. Yet these movements must be penetrated by the spirit of the Gospel and protected against any kind of false autonomy."[197] Thus, this encyclical promulgated by Paul VI affirms the momentous happenings of his time but warns that they can be problematic if not rooted in the faith. Finally, *Gaudium et Spes* maintains that:

> Christ, to be sure, gave His Church no proper mission in the political, economic or social order. The purpose which He set before her is a religious one. But out of this religious mission itself come a function, a light and energy which can serve to structure

[194] Tanner, xi.
[195] Tanner, xi – xii.
[196] *Gaudium et Spes*, 39.
[197] *Gaudium et Spes,* 41.

> and consolidate the human community according to divine law. As a matter of fact, when circumstances of time and place produce the need, she can and indeed should initiate activities on behalf of all men, especially those designed for the needy such as the works of mercy and similar undertakings.
>
> The Church recognizes that worthy elements are found in today's social movements, especially an evolution towards unity, a process of wholesome socialization and association in civic and economic means. The promotion of unity belongs to the innermost nature of the Church, for she is, thanks to her relationship with Christ, a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of the whole human race.[198]

Gaudium et Spes here affirms the need for the Church to "initiate activities on behalf of all men, especially those designed for the needy." This is quite obviously a precursor to what will be known as the "preferential option for the poor," a theological belief attributed to Pedro Arrupe, that Gutierrez would come to strongly support and promote. Also found in the above is an affirmation that the social movements of the 1960s are indeed leading towards a perceived and real sense of unity among the people of that time. Yet the church must ensure that the people affected by these social movements see the true sense of unity as not simply in fellowship or temporal spheres but in union together with Christ in the sacraments of the church.

Gaudium et Spes goes on to warn Catholics that they must be careful not to live a secular life divided from their spiritual life declaring that "the split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age."[199] *Gaudium et Spes* shows how the "social, economic, and political developments had been closely intertwined in the realities of life during the previous two hundred years, notably in western Europe, as well as in the reflection and teaching of the church." Catholics must act as Catholics in all areas of life and at all times. [200] This holistic approach to living out one's life had an

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[198] *Gaudium et Spes,* 41.
[199] *Gaudium et Spes,* 43.
[200] Tanner, 55. It is important to note that Tanner goes on to write that "Christians had been obliged to confront the results of the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution in 1789, the Russian Revolution in 1912, the spread of

important influence on Gutierrez and his way of understanding the obligation of all Catholics to engage with others in an embodied way as well as seek to create a more united and just society.

The Second Vatican Council inspired Gutierrez to discern a new way for Latin American Catholics to live out their faith. On this Michael Fleet notes that "in all Central American and Latin American countries, the Catholic tradition is a major source of socially relevant attitudes and values […] the Church affects the way virtually all people conceptualize and prioritize their social concerns, and the way they relate to one another and to the political process."[201] This new way of relating, detailed explicitly in *Gaudium et Spes*, showed the faithful how to fully integrate their faith lives into their daily lived experiences and activities, including in the political arena. This holistic approach combined with the emphasis that Liberation Theology placed on *lectio divina* led John Yoder to write that "Liberation Theology is thus not faddist, modernist, or progressivist, but restorationist. It retrieves in the canonical documents a witness which the intervening generations (whether culpably or not) had lost."[202] Indeed in *Gaudium et Spes* the reader is reminded of the primacy of the Gospel, which "constantly renews the life and culture of fallen man; it combats and removes the errors and evils resulting from the permanent allurement of sin."[203]

Participating in the council were the theologians Yves Congar and Karl Rahner, both colleagues of Gutierrez while he studied and worked in Europe.[204] Some of Gutierrez's former

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Marxism and Communism, and many other developments. A series of social encyclicals, from Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 to John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra*, saw the papacy responding to these developments" (55).

[201] Fleet, 106.

[202] Yoder, 290.

[203] *Gaudium et Spes,* 63.

[204] "While in France he worked with other noted scholars such as Yves Congar […] his work on the editorial board of the international journal Concilium and other venues brought him into friendship with some of the leading theologians of the day, including Karl Rahner" (Groody, 23).

professors as well as his own spiritual advisor, Gustave Thils, were experts in the council.[205] Furthermore, Gutierrez directly participated in the fourth session of the Second Vatican Council and felt "much at ease" at what he experienced there, although he left the meetings "with a sentiment of what the French call *sentiment mélange*, or mixed feelings" because his "Latin American social concerns […] were not present."[206] These personal connections to the council allowed him both to see the great promise it offered and that Latin America required more from the Church than what was discussed there. While it is not clear if his acquaintance with the aforementioned theologians influenced his interest in writing *Una Teología de Liberación*, one could easily imagine that he may have felt confident in his ability to write intelligently and meaningfully about important matters of faith due to his time collaborating with them on theological topics in Europe in the 1950s.

Gutierrez's formation continued following the Second Vatican Council, and he was especially influenced by the increased activity of the Episcopal Conference of Latin America, or CELAM, as well as by the 1967 papal encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. In this encyclical Paul VI notes that he traveled to Latin America in 1960 and Africa in 1962 at which time he came into "direct contact with the acute problems pressing on [these] continents full of life and hope."[207] *Populorum Progressio* goes on to affirm that in a time of great social change "All social action involves a doctrine. The Christian cannot admit that which is based upon a

[205] "'In Rome,' Gutierrez recalls, 'I met my spiritual director from Leuven, Gustave Thils (he was one of the experts), a dear friend from those years at Leuven, Charles Moeller, who was very much involved in the work of the commissions, but also other professors of mine like de Lubac, whom I knew well, Congar, Chenu, whom I also knew, Martelet and Roger Aubert. They were all experts at the council, and since I had a relation of friendship with them, they gave me the opportunity to have a very direct confrontation. Finally the theology that I had studied – in those days it was called 'progressive' – found a hearing in the church." (DeMattei, 526).

[206] Gutierrez said all of this in 1988 at a summer theology course at the Catholic University of Lima, which has been transcribed and published in *Theologies and Liberation in Peru* by Milagros Pena. The quotes in this sentence are found on page 95 of this work.

[207] This is found in point 4 of the *Populorum Progressio*; https://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul06/p6develo.htm.

materialistic and atheistic philosophy, which respects neither the religious orientation of life to its final end, nor human freedom and dignity."[208] This encyclical stated that Catholics must act rightly in an age when numerous social movements are either secular or not rooted in social action. On this the encyclical rhetorically asks "'If a brother or a sister be naked,' says Saint James; if they lack their daily nourishment, and one of you says to them: 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' without giving them what is necessary for the body, what good does it do?"[209] By promulgating these encyclicals Paul VI encouraged the faithful not to live a life devoid of charitable action but rather a life of faith that includes charitable actions and helping those in need. Moreover, one should not only perform charitable actions but rather "wage war" on "misery and struggle," which will ultimately "promote, along with improved conditions, the human and spiritual progress of all men, and therefore the common good of humanity."[210] This call to social action by Paul VI is informed by the spirit of the Second Vatican Council as we saw in *Gaudium et Spes* and, beyond that, a direct call to action on the part of the faithful.

Roberto DeMattei notes that in *Populorum Progressio* Paul VI "admitted the existence of 'situations' the injustice of which 'cries out to God's attention' and of violations of human dignity in which armed revolt could be legitimate."[211] This emphasis heavily influenced the statement that would be written at the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin American held in Medellín, Colombia, from August 26, 1968 to September 6, 1968. In this statement, Latin American Catholic leadership stated as a "pastoral conclusion" that Christians should "defend the rights of the poor and oppressed according to the Gospel commandment, urging our

[208] *Populorum Progressio*, Point 39; https://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul06/p6develo.htm.
[209] *Populorum Progressio*, Point 45; https://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul06/p6develo.htm.
[210] *Populorum Progressio*, Point 76; of the encyclical. https://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul06/p6develo.htm.
[211] DeMattei, 525.

governments and the upper classes to eliminate anything which might destroy social peace: injustice, inertia, venality, insensibility."[212] Throughout the document it is clear that the leadership of the Catholic Church is acutely aware of major obstacles facing the church and people in Latin America. In its concentration on issues including violence, greed, and injustice, it becomes evident that the poor and marginalized are those that suffer the greatest because they are excluded from dominant social and political power structures. In point 29 of this statement, another of CELAM's "pastoral conclusions" denounces the "arms race" that has taken hold among nations. Here "The struggle against misery is the true war that our nations should face."[213] As the statement emphasized, the real danger is not foreign, bellicose power but the misery that these nations inflict on many of their own citizens.

A Theology of Liberation

It was in the above context that Gutierrez wrote the monumental work *Una teología de la liberación*. The Peruvian theologian explicitly affirms that the theology about which he is writing is particularly needed in Latin America because of the oppressive social, cultural, economic, and societal structures that exist there.[214] Inspired by the Second Vatican Council together with the Latin American Bishop's Conference in Medellín in 1968, in his now classic work Gutierrez

[212] This is found in point 22 of the CELAM statement, which can be found in its entirety here: https://www.we-are-church.org/413/index.php/library/caring-not-scaring/264-medellin-conference-statement-1968.
[213]The CELAM statement can be found here; https://www.we-are-church.org/413/index.php/library/caring-not-scaring/264-medellin-conference-statement-1968
[214] "In Latin America, the world in which the Christian community must live and celebrate its eschatological hope is the world of social revolution; the Church's task must be defined in relation to this. Its fidelity to the Gospel leaves it no alternative: the Church must be the visible sign of the presence of the Lord within the aspiration for liberation and the struggle for a more human and just society" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 148).

regularly clarifies that the Latin American context is unique from that of the "developed world" and therefore requires a unique response.[215] Gutierrez is also clear in his writings that Latin Americans must act as the agent of their own social and spiritual transformation because it is often the non-Latin American socio-political powers that oppress and perpetuate the existing structures of social violence in Latin America:

> To characterize the situation of the poor countries as dominated and oppressed leads one to speak of economic, social, and political liberation. But we are dealing here with a much more integral and profound understanding of human existence and its historical future.
>
> A broad and deep aspiration for liberation inflames in the history of humankind in our day, liberation from all that limits or keeps human beings from self-fulfillment, liberation from all impediments to the exercise of freedom. Proof of this is the awareness of new and subtle forms of oppression in the heart of advanced industrial societies, which often offer themselves as models to the underdeveloped countries. In them subversion does not appear as a protest against poverty, but rather against wealth. The context in the rich countries, however, is quite different from that of the poor countries: we must beware of all kinds of imitation as well as new forms of imperialism.[216]

Gutierrez realizes that the poor countries of the world, and Latin American countries in particular, are dominated by the interests of wealthy, developed countries. The Peruvian's understanding of oppression as enacted and sustained by larger, wealthier, and foreign powers, moves him to emphasize the need for unity between Latin Americans themselves because of their experience of foreign exploitation.[217] Gutierrez especially decried what he saw as a subtler

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[215] "An unjust situation does not happen by chance; it is not something branded by a fatal destiny: there is a human responsibility behind it… This is the reason why the Medellín Conference refers to the state of things in Latin America as a 'sinful situation,' as a 'rejection of the Lord.' This characterization, in all its breadth and depth, not only criticizes the individual abuses on the part of those who enjoy great power in this social order; it challenges all their practices, that is to say, it is a repudiation of the whole existing system – to which the Church itself belongs" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 102).

[216] *A Theology of Liberation*, 17-18.

[217] "A new awareness of Latin America is making headway… there can be authentic development for Latin America only if there is liberation from the domination exercised by the great capitalist countries, and especially by the most powerful, the United States of America" (Gutierrez*, A Theology of Liberation*, 54).

subjugation of Latin Americans through foreign economic interests.[218] Yet Gutierrez also states that the oppression of the poor is not simply a Latin American concern but rather a universal issue that poses a "profound challenge to the Christian conscience."[219]

This "challenge to the Christian conscience" includes the obligation of the Christian to act in a way that benefits the marginalized precisely because "Jesus gives us an example of freedom as a distinguishing trait of a life in the service of others."[220] Gutierrez's focus on service underlines the need for social praxis by Latin American faithful.[221] He further notes that solidarity with others is a path towards liberty and an ideal expression of a Christian's faith life precisely because "[t]he search for union with the Lord governs the entire process of liberation and constitutes the very heart of this spiritual experience of an entire people." [222] Moreover, the effort to unite with God inherently moves one ever closer in community with his neighbors and the world.[223]

We can see here an important connection between the thought of Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez. Merton emphasizes that the beginning point of this mystical experience must come

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[218] "Currently foreign investment is gravitating towards the modern sector of the economy, that is to say, towards the more dynamic elements of budding native industry, binding it ever more closely to international capitalism. In this way a new kind of dependence arises, less apparent, but no less real" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 52).
[219] "It may seem somewhat reckless to speak of a spirituality taking shape amid the Latin American poor, but that is precisely what is happening as I see it. Perhaps some are surprised because they think of the struggle for liberation as taking place in the social and political sphere, and thus in an area that had nothing to do with the spiritual. Clearly, everything depends here on what one understands by 'spiritual.'[…] for the moment let me say that the process of liberation is a global one and that it affects every dimension of the human. Moreover, the poverty in which the vast majority of Latin Americans live is not simply a 'social problem;' it is a human situation that issues a profound challenge to the Christian conscience" (Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells,* 29).
[220] Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 92.
[221] "[T]he major themes of collective Christian experience in Latin America are those proper to Christian existence in its entirely… [O]ur experiences in the framework of commitment to the poor and oppressed of Latin America are sending us back to fundamental ideas in the gospels" (Gutierrez, *We Drink of Our Own Wells*, 93).
[222] "The search for union with the Lord governs the entire process of liberation and constitutes the very heart of this spiritual experience of an entire people" (Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 77).
[223] "Freedom exercised within a communion of life: such is the meaning of Christian freedom, such is the context for its full development" (Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 92).

from deep within the self, opening to what he calls an "Inner Experience" that allows one to live in greater communion with others. Pieper also sees the self as a primary touchstone for growing in unity with God. In so doing, Pieper argues that, as he lives out the virtues, a Christian will be sustained by hope and prudent action, which will ultimately allow him to grow in union with the "core of all things." Similarly, Gutierrez feels that the beginning of one's awareness of one's true self, as well as an experience of oneness with the whole of Creation begins with a sincere and meaningful commitment to one's neighbor. In this way, Gutierrez argues that one's life can be transformed into a mystical journey made possible by living in deep communion with others. Importantly, this includes both solitude and suffering.

> The journey toward life in community frequently takes an unexpected turn: a passage through a painful experience of profound solitude or loneliness.
>
> The experience of the solitude of the desert is a profound aspect of the encounter with God. Passage through this desert is a journey of pure faith, with the support and guidance of God only. In solitude the Lord speaks to us 'tenderly' (Hos 2:14), calls us to fidelity, and consoles us. Being all alone with God, who enriches us with the gift of happiness in the innermost depths of our being, is an effable, largely incommunicable, experience."[224]

Here Gutierrez echoes Merton's view of solitude as necessary for "life in community." In turn, one is awarded with "the gift of happiness" and thus a sense of fulfillment. This turn in Gutierrez's thought is noticed less frequently than it might be; his vision is commonly thought to be simply about social praxis and revolutionary social change. Yet, with both Pieper and Merton, Gutierrez is fully convinced that the active life also needs and arises out of the contemplative.

> Through commitment, concretely commitment towards the poor, do we find the Lord (cf. Matt. 25. 31-46); but at the same time this discovery deepens and renders more genuine our solidarity with the poor. Contemplation and commitment in human history are fundamental dimensions of Christian existence; in consequence, they cannot be avoided in the understanding of faith. The mystery is revealed through contemplation and

[224] *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 128.

> solidarity with the poor; it is what we call the *first act*, Christian life, practice. Only thereafter can this life inspire reasoning: that is the *second act*."[225]

Here indeed Gutierrez recognizes the fundamental importance of social praxis for the Christian. Social praxis is a "first act," which leads one to grow in community with others. It is also "contemplative"—not just "doing" but being and fully entering into the spiritual vision inherent in the action. Understanding the reason for acting, processing it all and theologizing about it, is a "second act." But first one must enter in. As Gutierrez argues, the act of working with others for the greater common good is something that leads one to union with God. Constructive social engagement is therefore godly; and contemplation is an activity that is best performed when one is intensely working with his neighbors for the betterment of everyone.

Gutierrez goes on to say that social praxis makes "explicit" the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love.

> Theology, as a critical reflection in the light of the Word adopted through faith on the presence of Christians in a tumultuous world, should help us to understand the relationship between the life of faith and the urgent need to build a society that is humane and just. It is called upon to make explicit the values of faith, hope, and charity that that commitment involves […] Theology is at the service of the Church's task of evangelization; it arises out of it as an ecclesial function.[226]

In this way, Gutierrez echoes Josef Pieper's words about how the theological virtues are paths to God. The Peruvian's emphasis on the primary importance of working for the poor and oppressed allows man to practice these virtues in a way that affirms the Christian journey of discipleship:

> following Jesus defines the Christian. It is a journey which, according to biblical sources, is a communitarian experience, because it is indeed a people that is on the move. The poor in Latin America have started to move in the struggle to affirm their human dignity and their status as sons and daughters of God."[227]

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[225] Gutierrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," 29.
[226] "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," 29.
[227] "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," 30.

Here Gutierrez also affirms Pieper's understanding of man's *status viatori*s, which we examined in the previous chapter, and extends its meaning to encompass the Christian experience as "communitarian" in nature.[228]

By growing in community with others we affirm the value of others' lives.[229] Alternatively, oppression and marginalization impoverishes everyone, even those at the very top of the social hierarchy. The Peruvian argues that only a "permanent cultural revolution" will eliminate current cycles of oppression.[230]

> To conceive of history as a process of human liberation is to consider freedom as a historical conquest; it is to understand that the step from an abstract to a real freedom is not taken without struggle against all the forces that oppress humankind, a struggle full of pitfalls, detours, and temptations to run away. The goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution; it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be human, a *permanent cultural revolution*.[231]

This demands that Christians struggle towards a new state of union with one another and build a more just society. The Peruvian theologian sees this "permanent cultural revolution" as one that will also liberate man from sin and lead him to holiness.

> Liberation from sin goes to the root of evil; it means that in the Bible the process of transformation leading to a just society and a new kind of human being is an experience and way of holiness. It is not surprising, therefore, that the word 'just' becomes synonymous with 'holy.' Both are used in the New Testament to describe the disciples of Jesus.[232]

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[228] "Made in the 'image of God,' the exemplar of all unity, we innately yearn for wholeness and integrity" (Conti, Joseph. *Holistic Christianity*, 5).
[229] "From this arises the reaffirmation of life as the prime human right, and, from the Christian viewpoint, as a gift of God that we must defend" (Gutierrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," 25).
[230] *A Theology of Liberation, 21.*
[231] *A Theology of Liberation*, *21.*
[232] *The God of Life,* 28-29.

The "genuine and total" nature of this liberation refers to its godliness. Liberation, therefore, is a task that is shared by everyone; it offers "the possibility of a 'genuine and total' liberation" for all mankind. [233]

> Liberation embodies a will to life. The action of liberation is directed against oppression, servitude, and death; against a situation that has at its root the breaking of friendship with God and others – that is, sin. Hence the essential importance of the liberation from sin that brings us into a new communion with the Lord and others. Liberation expresses the will to life; consequently, by liberating us, God is shown to be a liberating God, a living God, and the friend of life.[234]

Thus, arduously laboring for a "total" and "liberated" society is precisely what defines the "Paschal core of Christian experience and of all human life: the passage from the old to the new person, from sin to grace, from slavery to freedom."[235] The existing social, political, and economic reality about which Gutierrez writes is no other than a form of slavery to sin that thwarts man's ability to recognize another's humanity as well as his own. This is only overcome as we live in a community in which man labors in solidarity with others to construct a better world.[236]

"Social Praxis" [237] is the participation of a human being, together with others, in society as it moves towards a greater good. [238] The "Social Praxis" of which Gutierrez writes is needed

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[233] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 22.
[234] Gutierrez, *The God of Life*, 19.
[235] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 23.
[236] "Belief in God is something communal, we are constantly open to the new, the unlimited, the unpredictable. Others will realize, and experience, new demands made by faith in God – demands that would not have occurred to us as isolated individuals. The community, which possesses a variety of charisms and functions, will regulate the faith of its individuals and will, in its turn, be enriched by the varied experiences of the persons making it up. It is the people as a whole that belongs to Yahweh. There is no question of a thou and I, but of a thou and a we" (Gutierrez, *The God of Life*, 34).
[237] *A Theology of Liberation*, 32.
[238] "The process of liberation requires the active participation of the oppressed; this certainly is one of the most important themes running through the writings of the Latin American Church. Based on the evidence of the usually frustrated aspirations of the popular classes to participate in decisions which affect all of society, the realization emerges that it is the poor who must be the protagonists of their own liberation" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 67).

to enact the aforementioned "permanent cultural revolution," which allows the Christian a consistent framework for defining, refining, and implementing life-affirming social change for the betterment of all and ultimate fulfillment in "the final analysis."

> Social practice is gradually becoming more of an arena itself in which the Christians work out – along with others – both their destiny as humans and their life of faith in the Lord of history. Participation in the process of liberation is an obligatory and privileged *locus* for Christian life and reflection. In this participation will be heard nuances of the Word of God which are imperceptible in other existential situations and without which there can be no authentic and fruitful faithfulness to the Lord.[239]

In this sense, engaging with others for social change is seen as the "deepest human dimension;" here a person "works out" his destiny while empowering others to do the same in their private and professional lives.[240] This is especially the case in a capitalist society where some will always have more resources than others.[241] Gutierrez believes that when the faithful act as such in every area of their lives, all will benefit and this will cause a revolution in which a new and more just society may be created.[242] This will happen as man gains a greater awareness of his true self and his social obligation; this leads him to a liberation from his sinfulness, allowing him to live in greater communion with God and his neighbors. [243]

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[239] *A Theology of Liberation*, 32.
[240] "Through a change in the relationship of production, it dignifies labor so that the worker, while humanizing nature, becomes more of a person" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 66).
[241] "The dynamics of the capitalist economy lead to the establishment of a center and a periphery, simultaneously generating progress and growing wealth for the few and social imbalances, political tension, and poverty for the many" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 51).
[242] "The untenable circumstances of poverty, alienation, and exploitation in which the greater part of the people of Latin America live urgently demand that we find a path toward economic, social, and political liberation. This is the first step towards a new society" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 55).
[243] "(A)n awareness of the need for self-liberation is essential to a correct understanding of the liberation process. It is not a matter of 'struggling for others,' which suggests paternalism and reformist objectives, but rather of becoming aware of oneself as not completely fulfilled and as living in an alienated society" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 82).

Gutierrez sees unity among humankind as something that is required for real social change. [244] This unity will empower man to greater communion.[245] Gutierrez writes that "unity is not an event accomplished once and for all, but something which is always in the process of becoming, something which is achieved with courage and freedom of spirit, sometimes at the price of painful, heartrending decisions. Latin America must brace itself for such experiences."[246] As noted earlier, Gutierrez assumes the path to unity includes struggle and suffering, something that Christians should understand given that Christ's path took him to the cross. Certainly, Gutierrez sees the establishment of such unity as impossible without the regular effort to create a more socially just society.

One person who works for social justice among the poorest of the poor for the benefit of all is the medical doctor and social critic Paul Farmer. Farmer has been greatly influenced by Liberation Theology and Gustavo Gutierrez.[247] Farmer calls Gutierrez an intellectual *accompagnateur* in his work.[248] Like Gutierrez, Farmer believes that "social structures of violence" are responsible for keeping the poor marginalized. Farmer's book, *Pathologies of Power,* directly addresses Liberation Theology's challenge to productively engage in society. In

[244] "Liberation from sin is one side of the coin; the other is communion with God and others. According to a classic distinction, *freedom from* is directed toward *freedom for*. It is to this *freedom for* that Christ's saving wok is also directed. By nailing sin to the cross, Jesus opened the way for us to full communion with the Fathe." (Gutierrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 138).
[245] "The entire process of liberation is directed toward communion… *Libertatis Conscientia* – that liberation is a way to freedom. But we must go further, for freedom is not an end in itself, but must be ordered to love and service" (Gutierrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free,* 139).
[246] *A Theology of Liberation* , 75.
[247] In an interview, Farmer stated "'Structural violence,' 'immodest claims of causality,' and 'a hermeneutic of generosity' – these concepts figure heavily in my written work, even when they are not called out by name. Far from suffering from the 'anxiety of influence,' I am proud of my debt to Gustavo Gutiérrez and liberation theology." (Griffin, 23).
[248] As Farmer says in an interview, "[u]nderstanding poverty as 'structured evil,' and understanding how it is perpetuated, is not the same as fighting it. But if we believe that knowledge can inform practice – if we believe in pragmatic solidarity as the best confirmation of theory – then it is best to have intellectual accompaniment. I have had Father Gustavo as my *accompagnateur* for many long years, including the decade before I had the chance to meet him in person" (Griffin, 16).

Pathologies of Power Farmer dedicates an entire chapter of the largely sociological and anthropologic work to the discussion of Liberation Theology. In this chapter, Farmer agrees with Gutierrez that social praxis is needed for the betterment of everyone: the powerful, the oppressed, and all who are in the middle.

> The suffering of the world's poor intrudes only rarely into the consciousness of the affluent, even when our affluence may be shown to have direct relation to their suffering. This is true even when spectacular human rights violations are at issue, and it is even more true when the topic at hand is the everyday violation of social and economic rights.[249]

Farmer evidently believes that the powerful and wealthy are typically unaware of their relationship with the suffering of the poor.[250] This is particularly so in Latin America where the vast majority of the population lives in absolute poverty. The failure of the powerful and wealthy minority to be in communion with the poor impoverishes them as well, since it blocks their ability to fully understand their role as an agent of social engagement and change.

Like Gutierrez, Farmer suggests that social "structures of violence" need to be transformed in their entirety.[251] Farmer and Gutierrez both note that only a complete transformation of existing social structures will allow for a revolutionary new understanding and ability for all to live in greater union with one another. Whereas Gutierrez refers to this revolution as "liberation," Farmer simply calls it "social justice."

> We must understand that what happens to poor people is never divorced from the actions of the powerful. Certainly, people who define themselves as poor may control their own destinies to some extent. But control of lives is related to control of land, systems of production, and the formal political and legal structures in which lives are enmeshed.

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[249] *Pathologies of Power*, 31.
[250] Farmer emphasizes the need to "listen" to the poor. "Understanding poverty and inequality requires multiple disciplines[…] most of all, it requires listening to those most affected by poverty, which is to say the poor and otherwise marginalized" (Griffin, 20).
[251] On this Farmer says "an understanding of poverty must be linked to efforts to end it. Father Gustavo has often noted, in his writing and in his speaking, that poverty means death" (Griffin, 21).

> With time, both wealth and control have become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few. The opposite trend is desired by those working for social justice.[252]

"The opposite trend" of "structural violence," therefore, would be a trend for "liberation" of the poor and wealthy alike; a total transformation that carries along both the oppressed and the oppressor into a fuller, deeper communion. As a medical doctor of some wealth and power, Farmer views working for social justice as a privilege.

> Making an option for the poor inevitably implies working for social justice, working with poor people as they struggle to change their situations. In a world driven by inequality, medicine could be viewed as social justice work. In fact, doctors are far more fortunate than most modern professionals: we still have a sliver of hope for meaningful, dignified service to the oppressed.[253]

Like Farmer, Gutierrez argues that the oppressed must be engaged in liberating themselves from a social situation of total oppression. Unlike Farmer, however, simply "changing their situations" is not the ultimate goal of Gutierrez. Instead Gutierrez sees that social praxis has its object in building the "reign of God" on earth[254] – and this informs the work of every Christian.

An Eschatological Hope

Gutierrez argues that Liberation Theology does not accept a dualistic "Christianity of the Beyond" or "Christianity of the Future." Instead Liberation Theology embraces the need to

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[252] *Pathologies of Power*, 158.
[253] Farmer, *Pathologies of Power,* 157-158.
[254] "The reign of God, which is a reign of life, is the ultimate meaning of human history, but its presence begins even now as a result of the concern of Jesus for the least regarded participants in this human history" (Gutierrez*, The God of Life*, 9).

hopefully act in history both so that it will bring the Christian through the future while assenting towards the beyond, as well as outwards towards his neighbor.

> The death and resurrection of Jesus are our future because they are our perilous and hopeful present. The hope which overcomes death must be rooted in the heart of historical praxis; if this hope does not take shape in the present to lead it forward, it will be only an evasion, a futuristic illusion. One must be extremely careful not to replace a Christianity of the Beyond with a Christianity of the Future; if the former tended to forget the world, the latter runs the risk of neglecting a miserable and unjust present and the struggle for liberation.[255]

"Christianity of the Beyond" encourages man to act rightly to better society and affirm the humanity of all men while "Christianity of the future" forces the Christian to understand himself as an agent of agent in the historical moment. Were an entire community engaged in this form of right action then Gutierrez suggests it would be a reflection of their godly nature; perhaps such a society would afford its inhabitants a view of the beatific vision.[256]

Such a vision created through rightly oriented action is another point of convergence for Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez. The Peruvian theologian writes that "through the struggle against misery, injustice, and exploitation the goal is the creation of a new humanity[…] this aspiration to create a new man is the deepest motivation in the struggle which many have undertaken in Latin America."[257] Gutierrez believes that only when all humankind becomes aware of its universal essence will all men work together to create a "new humanity." In this very way "to hope in Christ is at the same time to believe in the adventure of history, which opens infinite

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[255] Gutierrez*, A Theology of Liberation*, 124.
[256] "Christianity calls the divine experience of heaven the *beatific vision*; the direct and limpid vision of the divine Essence. A participation in the light and love of the Trinity… The beatific vision knows a Tri-Personal Wholeness that exceeds every created wholeness seen or dreamed, the most exquisite of these being mere sketches of shadows of the One" (Conti, Joseph. *Holistic Christianity*, 316).
[257] *A Theology of Liberation*, 81.

vistas to the love and action of the Christian."[258] Thus the Christian is most fully able to express his faith in Christ when rightly and actively engaged in society.

Unlike Farmer, Oscar Romero exemplifies Gutierrez's holistic understanding of how the Christian should act as an agent of social praxis.[259] Romero's engagement with the poor was "liberating" because it allowed Romero to attain a more complete view of the world around him.[260] Romero also argued that when one is actively engaged in society on behalf of the poor God gives him a "sensitivity," or awareness, for understanding what is just or unjust. As Romero declares with great compassion and understanding, "Dear Brothers and Sisters, especially those of you who have so much social sensitivity, you who do not tolerate this unjust situation in our country: it is ok, God has given you this sensitivity, and if you have a political vocation… work to enhance it."[261] Romero, like Gutierrez, recognizes that it is within the context of history and social action that man can find God. In this way we see that history is the *locus* of man's encounter with God. Romero writes that Jesus' birth "shows that God is marching with men in history and that we are not walking alone in history and that man's aspiration for peace, justice, a Kingdom of Divine Law."[262] Therefore, in man's natural context of history, or *chronos*,

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[258] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 140.

[259] Oscar Romero was the Archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador during a time of political instability and civil war. He became the most influential voice of social and political criticism in El Salvador, and remains a powerful figure today. Archbishop Oscar Romero was martyred because of his work on behalf of the poor and oppressed on March 24, 1980. In recognition of his work, Pope John Paul II gave Romero the title "Servant of God" in 1997. In April 2013, Pope Francis also "unblocked" the process to beatify Romero. Romero was finally canonized as a saint on October 14, 2018 (Allen, John L. "Francis 'Unblocks' Romero Beatification, Official Says." *National Catholic Reporter.* April 22, 2013.

[260] In an interview, Farmer noted that Romero's assassination was shocking to him. In learning of his death Farmer said he "learned about the resistance to tyranny and violence […] (I) stood in front of the Duke Chapel with more than a hundred fellow mourners, gathered in shock to grieve for the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador" (Griffin, 16).

[261] This translation is mine. It comes from Oscar Romero's April 13, 1979 speech. The original Spanish text is: "Queridos hermanos, sobre todo ustedes que tienen tanta sensibilidad social, ustedes que no toleran esta situación injusta de nuestra patria: está bien, Dios le ha dado ese sentido, cultívenla también" (132).

[262] This translation is also mine. The original is: "Ya su nacimiento marca que Dios está marchando con los hombres en la historia, que no vamos solos y que la aspiración de los hombre por la paz, por la justicia, por un Reino de derecho divino, por algo santo, está muy lejos de las realidades de la tierra" (26).

supernatural aspirations for the divine are realized when he acts rightly. This allows man to transform *chronos* into *kairos*. Both Romero and Gutierrez alike see that rightly acting allows one to transform oneself and others, and in so doing bring about something of the reign of God on earth. Accordingly, the Peruvian theologian writes that man's encounter with God in history is "not because God comes *from* history, but because history comes from God."[263]

Like Pieper, Gutierrez affirms that these natural and supernatural aspirations of the historical Christian are made possible only through hope. [264] "Hope makes us radically free to commit ourselves to social praxis"[265] and "to hope in Christ is at the same time to believe in the adventure of history, which opens infinite vistas to the love and action of the Christian."[266] Thus the Christian is disposed to "commit himself to social praxis" and to believe in the "adventure of history," which in its celestial dimension clearly assumes the character of a liberating pilgrimage.[267] The difference between a wanderer and a pilgrim is that a pilgrim is seeking something; he is walking towards a goal or place that is holy. We saw how Romero said that "aspiring for something holy" is a natural endeavor of created man because of his godly nature as a creature. Therefore, understanding "the adventure of history" forces one to view his own earthly pilgrimage as the prism through which he may unite with others and rightly act in an effort to grow in community with God and those around him. [268]

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[263] *A Theology of Liberation,* 146.
[264] "To hope does not mean to know the future, but rather to be open, in an attitude of spiritual childhood, to accepting it as a gift" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 125).
[265] *A Theology of Liberation,* 138.
[266] *A Theology of Liberation,* 140.
[267] "the perspective of a new primacy seems to be emerging – that of hope, which liberates history because of its openness to the God who is to come" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 125).
[268] "[T]he pressing task of the Church in Latin America is to strengthen its unity – a unity that does not conceal real problems but brings them to light and evaluates them in the light of faith. The deeper unity of a community that is on pilgrimage in history is a unity that is never fully achieved" (Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 160).

CONCLUSION

The Twentieth Century is often considered the bloodiest and deadliest century in world history. During this time hundreds of millions of men, women, and children were killed by warfare and persecution or died as a result of desperate living conditions that surrounded those bellicose events. Also, during the Twentieth Century urbanization attracted millions of people to cities and away from the rural countryside, making evident the presence of systemic poverty and social marginalization that often oppresses the poorest of the poor. Through all of this the Twentieth Century Christian often struggled to understand the quickly changing world and its eschatological repercussions. Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez were three such Christians. Armed with distinct theological formations—Merton as a Trappist monk, Pieper as a lay scholar, and Gutierrez as a diocesan priest—they independently examined how man should best act in society so that he might grow in communion with his neighbors and God. Keenly attentive to the world and time in which they lived, Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez sought to understand how rightly directed action allows man properly to participate in society and grow in union with God.

In the first chapter we examined Thomas Merton's approach to reaching towards God. In this Merton established that the Christian had an active role to play in society that is rooted in prayer and faithfulness. In response to his personal experiences of loss, migration, war, and the social changes of the 1960s, Merton gained a strong belief that the Church alone is the ideal revolutionary agent which, when its faithful are rightly oriented and founded in contemplation and prayer, allows Christians to grow in love so fully that they will naturally ascend towards God. As a natural result of this assent, Christians will actively and meaningfully engage in their

society because they will have grown in communion with one another and God to such a degree that right acting will be an organic outflow of their endeavors.

In the second chapter we saw that Josef Pieper was similarly shaped by personal adversity in a time of war. Yet Pieper affirmed that hope and love as theologically infused virtues allow man to lean on Christ and lead to prudent action in the world. When rightly directed, Pieper saw that the Christian will have right intention and proper action, and become infused with hope. This will allow him to grow further in consciousness of the true nature of all things. Pieper ultimately argues that when the Christian lives out his life in this way he will grow in awareness of a higher level of existence. Such an awareness will allow him to connect to the core of all things, gaining a glimpse of the Beatific Vision. This affirmation of one's action confirms man's status as a *homo viator* who pilgrimages ever closer towards fulfillment with God by engaging rightly with his neighbor.

Finally, in the third chapter we saw how Gustavo Gutierrez was also powerfully influenced by personal adversity, warfare, social upheaval, and a deeply meaningful encounter with Latin American poverty. His experience, together with the changes resulting from the Second Vatican Council, allowed the Peruvian theologian to affirm that right action must be rooted in a preferential option for the poor and love for one's neighbor, which will result in a revolutionary liberation from sin. Such rightly directed action will permit the Christian who lives in an increasingly secular society to engage holistically and lovingly with others and God. Gutierrez affirms that social action makes explicit the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, and allows one to enter into union with God by first seeking unity with others through social praxis. The Peruvian theologian argued that such rightly directed social engagement facilitates a

revolutionary change for all, allowing God's love to become more fully manifested wherever such praxis is found.

Studying these three Twentieth Century theologians together allows the reader to understand that the events of their time unified them as Christian faithful despite their geographic, cultural, and linguistic differences. They each reflected deeply on the nature of rightly directed action in a world and century rocked by unimaginable atrocities and change. They shared the ultimate goal of examining how man may grow in union with God through rightly directed human action. Desperately wanting to avoid the sinfulness and misery that they witnessed, they together came to see faithfulness, hopefulness, and love as essential for right action. Such action allows the individual to reach out from the self towards God and lovingly embrace others in the process. Merton, Pieper, and Gutierrez saw such action as revolutionary, and the key to creating a new society where God's love could be most acutely expressed and perceived.

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