

**Down & Out: Parallels and divergences
in structure and method
between the theological responses of Martin Luther
and contextual theologies to their times.**

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ABSTRACT

Down & Out: Parallels and divergences in structure and method between the theological responses of Martin Luther and contextual theologies to their times.

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The thesis compares the structure of the theological responses of Martin Luther and contextual theologies, especially those of Juan Luis Segundo and Albert Nolan. The structure of the theologies are described using concepts derived from the methodologies of research programmes developed by Imre Lakatos. The social and ideological background of the ruling ideology of Luther's time (medieval Catholicism) and that of contextual theologies (neo-colonial capitalism) are presented. Parallels are found in that the ruling ideology utilises a monopoly on legitimating authority to orientate the life energies of people to achieving legitimation in terms of norms set up by the ruling class. These norms result in an exchange of work for legitimation, and so exploit people. This constitutes an 'in and up' theology: Resources are drawn in in order to climb up to a position of legitimation. Both Luther and contextual theologies respond by reversing this pattern, decoupling legitimation from the norms of the ruling class and the work of people. They constitute 'down and out' theologies: God, the legitimator, is down with people, and because legitimation is given freely to people down where they are, energies flow out to serve the common good. Dissimilarities between Luther and Contextual Theologies are found in the locus of legitimation (individual vs. social), the role of faith, and the negative heuristic (dialectic of the cross vs. transformation of the system). It is argued that the difference in negative heuristic is mainly responsible for the perennial nature and conservatism of Lutheran Theology versus the rapid demise of South African contextual theology. The results of the investigation show that the conceptual structure of Lakatos' epistemology, coupled with an analysis of the flow of legitimation and orientation, is useful in structuring and evaluating theological systems on the questions where does legitimation come from, where to does the theology orientate, and how are orientation and legitimation linked. These questions may be seen as a new way of formulating the law/ gospel distinction of classical Lutheran theology.

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Dedication

To my Father, with whom I learned to argue.

Preface

While I am indebted to many people from whom I have learnt theology and in discussion with whom I have grown in my capacity to reflect theologically, the thoughts in this thesis, where it is not indicated to the contrary, are my own, for which I take full responsibility.

Sola experientia facit theologum

(WA Tr 1, 72)

Tentatio, die lehret, was Christus ist

(WA Tr 1, 196)

Ille digne theologus dicitur, qui posteriora Dei per crucem conspecta

intelligit

(WA 1, 362)

Vere theologia est practica

(WA Tr 1, 72)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

In the tenth year of inclusive democracy in South Africa, we look back on the process of liberation. In 1988, Mpumlwana wrote: "... South Africa will definitely be transformed if three things can happen together: an unrelenting popular movement of resistance, co-ordinated international pressure on the government of South Africa, and religious legitimation for change." (in Nolan 1988, viii) These three things did come together, and South African Liberation (or Contextual, or Black) theology contributed to the third aspect. This movement expressed itself through documents such as Kairos, Road to Damascus, Evangelical Witness, and institutions such as the South African Council of Churches and Institute for Contextual Theology. South African contextual theology was also seen as an important aspect of world-wide theologies of liberation. These, Boff & Boff (1988, 4) picture as a great tree, solidly rooted in the practice of the great mass of the poor.

Yet, ten years after democracy, the buzz in South Africa around contextual theology has grown silent. Surveys show South Africa to be one of the most materialist and consumerist societies world-wide. This has assumed proportions to the extent that ex-president Nelson Mandela deemed it necessary, in the Steve Biko memorial lecture, to criticise the rampant materialism of South Africans (The Star, 28 September 2004). The inequality in income between poor and rich, as measured by the Gini index, has increased since 1994. Many notable liberation theologians occupy positions of power in a government that, in practice if not in ideology, implements neo-liberal policies¹.

How could a movement that had such broad support and espoused such a fundamental shift in spirituality and conception of Christian faith convert within a decade to be little noticeable in a society dominated by consumerism? This is the first question leading to this study.

The second question is more chronic, though not less disturbing to a Lutheran Christian: How could it be that the fundamental and radical shift, the 'theologische Hauptrevolution' of Luther, that had a major impact in the transition from Middle Ages to modernity, and that showed such a remarkable capacity to deeply influence people over the centuries since, so quickly turn from a socially revolutionary movement to a consistently conservative force? Martin Luther encouraged his followers to disregard his writings, to write 'new decalogues' - and yet, the Lutheran Church is the only major confession of the Western Church that has adopted no new confessional writings since the time of the Reformation.

From the Lutheran point of view, the importance of considering Contextual Theologies may seem less now than in the previous decades. During the 1990s, almost all churches, and also Lutheran

¹The priorities of the South African government are made clear in the sequence 'Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Programme, or in the sequence of this quote from 'A people's contract to build a better South Africa and a better world.' "At the core of this programme is the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment. That rests on three pillars: Growth and development of the First Economy, increasing its possibility to create jobs; addressing the challenges of the second economy; building a social security net to lessen poverty." (GCIS, Pretoria, 26 August 2004, p.1) To confirm that this programme assumes the global capitalist economy as the framework within which it operates, the document continues: "The first economy is advanced and skilled, becoming more globally competitive". This is what liberation theologians have called developmentalism. These impressions are further confirmed by the statement of the spokesperson of the ANC: "I have not joined the struggle in order to remain poor" (The Star, 22 November 2005, p. 11)

churches, sought to define their theology in relation to contextual theologies². Since the advent of democracy in South Africa, the importance attached to contextual theologies and their role in public debate has declined considerably in this country. Among Christians, it seems, the emphasis is more on revivalist churches than on contextual engagement. This shift is signified by the membership of leading political figures from previous liberation movements in churches that have often been accused of propagating a theology of prosperity. Worldwide, with the fall of the communist block, neo-liberalism seems to be unquestioned in its ideological hegemony in our time. But maybe this is exactly a reason to pursue the intentions of contextual theologies.

From the perspective of Contextual Theology, one may well ask why a study of Luther is important at all. The Lutheran church seems to be a particularly inflexible church. Yet, maybe the situation described above, in which the role of contextual theology can be so completely reduced in such a short time, is an indication that it may be of benefit to contextual theology to ask after the reasons why a church can stay with a basic insight for so long. Conversely, maybe it is important for the Lutheran church, with the danger of inflexibility being apparent, to ask what relevance the approach of contextual theology has for it, and to legitimate such an approach by referring to its foundational paradigm in Martin Luther.

So it seems that the two movements in question are mirror images: Liberation theology quickly subsiding, once its proximate aim had apparently been achieved, Lutheran theology remaining, but quickly becoming static. Yet, this study will attempt to show that many fundamental parallels exist. Central to both are the questions of legitimacy and orientation, on three levels: personal, social, and theological. I will attempt to show that the relative weighting and relation is behind the difference in effect. What is meant by legitimation and orientation, and why do we use these terms? This will be discussed in section 1.3 below, and then become clearer in the body of this investigation. This study will attempt to show that, for both, the issues of legitimacy and orientation are central.

There have been a number of studies on the relationship of the theology of Martin Luther and contextual theologies. Yet, most of them have focussed on specific themes. The danger in this is that, in theologies that are as unsystematic as both Luther's and Contextual Theologies are, the overlap of statements on particular topics does not yet prove much. The question about structure is to go a step deeper than individual statements and to ask after the basic thrust of the theology.

This study, as we will show, sees the structure of a theology in the answers to the questions:
From where is legitimacy obtained, and how is this legitimacy mediated and granted?
Where to does a theology orientate life, and how is this orientation effected?
How do orientation and legitimation relate?

The reasons for selecting these questions as defining the structure of a theology will be given below.

²The synod of ELCSA(NT) had passed a critical assessment of contextual theology in 1991, while some Lutheran theologians in South Africa were part of the drafting and also signed documents of contextual theology, such as the road to Damascus. Even among congregants, discussion of this topic was asked for.

1.2 Delimitation of the Study

Both the Theology of Luther and Contextual theologies are broad subjects with an immense body of literature and widely divergent opinions. This thesis cannot aim nor claim to deal with all the issues and relate to all the works in these fields. Therefore, the aim of this study needs to be clarified and defined more exactly, and its scope limited.

1.2.1 *Structural* parallels and divergences

A number of studies on Luther and Contextual or Liberation Theologies have appeared (Altmann 1989b; 1992; Boff 1988; Shaul 1991, Hoy 1990). These studies generally identify common themes, often with the intention of legitimating contextual theology in churches of the reformation, but also sometimes with the aim of criticising present churches of the reformation fundamentally for their inability to relate to context. While the interest of the present study is consonant with the previous studies, its method will be somewhat different. It will not identify certain *topoi* in Luther's theology germane to contextual theologies, such as the theme of the priesthood of all believers, or freedom of a Christian, or analysing the position of Luther vis a vis contextual theology on a specified *topos*, such as faith and works (Hoy 1990). Instead, this study will attempt to identify a fundamental structure or thrust that underlies both theologies. This fundamental structure or thrust will be seen in the intentions of the theologies relative to their theological and social context, and what the theologies attempted or managed to change. In doing so, we look more towards the performative aspects of language than to the descriptive.

1.2.2 Luther's theological response to his time - not ours

As stated above, this study assumes that theology is only meaningful as a response to the situation and question of its time. Theological language is not primarily about stating objective facts, but about assertions that respond to and influence the situation in which they are made - and how they make a difference to this situation. In analysing Luther's theology, therefore, we need to be careful in relating his response to *his* time, and not to ours.

1.2.3 Limitation of the study regarding Luther's theology to the central topics and the theological development.

Luther's theological writings, as compiled in the Weimarer Ausgabe, fill a bookshelf. Writings on Luther fill a library. This study needs to limit its scope in respect of such a volume of literature. Therefore, it will concentrate on primary sources in Luther related to the centre of his theology, which is generally accepted to lie within the field of justification by faith, theology of the cross, understanding of the word of God. In order to facilitate comparison with contextual theologies, Luther's responses regarding the outworking of faith and political involvement of Christians will also be considered.

Consideration of secondary literature on Luther will largely be limited to studies relating his theology as a response to his time.

1.2.4 Delimitation of the study regarding contextual theologies

Contextual theologies are a wide and diverse field. Not all theologies can be considered. Therefore, this study will limit itself to examples of contextual theologies from Latin America and South Africa. Contextual theologies are very much conscious of the performative nature of their theological language, and of the method of doing theology that brings them together, more than statements. Many contextual theologians express themselves on the structure and method of their theologies. Also, it is a broadly based movement, not linked to one exceptional person. Therefore, not one theology is analysed, but threads common to different contextual theologies are identified and used in finding the parallels and divergences to Luther's theology.

1.2.5 Contextuality

This study takes contextuality seriously, also in its approach to the theologies mentioned. The basic thrust of a theology is not seen in the descriptive nature of the language it uses, but in the performative aspect. That means that, besides understanding the content of what is said, we need to enquire what this assertion effects in the context of the theological debate and social structure of its time in order to comprehend its significance. This is what Nolan (1988,7f) refers to as the 'spirit' or 'shape' of the Gospel. I believe all theology, if it is of any significance, is a response to its time. Both contextual theologies and Luther's theology will, in analysing their structure, be related to the context in which they occur.

1.3 Heuristics and cores - an approach to the structure of theologies derived from Imre Lakatos

Some of the elements of how we define the structure of a theology in this thesis are derived from the work of Imre Lakatos, who worked on epistemology of the natural sciences.

Is it legitimate to use elements of an epistemological model designed for the natural sciences in analysing theologies? And what could the benefit of such an approach be?

In response to the first question, one can note that, especially since the publication of Thomas Kuhns' work, it has become common to utilise the concept of 'paradigm' and 'paradigm shift' in human and social sciences, and also in theology (Van der Merwe 1988, Hefner 1988, Lategan 1988, Küng 1989). These concepts, however, originate in a work on the epistemology of science. Common usage, therefore, legitimates the transfer of epistemological models between branches of intellectual enquiry. There have been studies relating the epistemology of Lakatos to theological enquiry (Arnold 1987, Murphy 1987). Indeed, in this transfer an explicit endeavour to show the compatibility of different areas of enquiry becomes apparent.

However, not all epistemological models for the natural sciences would be applicable to humanities and theology. Those models which presuppose that scientific theories can be strictly proven or disproven would not apply to theologies. However, Lakatos' model does not fall into this category. Indeed, Lakatos' assumption that science, in general, will consist of different, mutually competing, 'research programmes', which cannot be objectively disproven, but show their strength in the insight they generate (Murphy 1989, 310), seems quite compatible, at first glance, with the parallel existence of different theologies.

Accepting that the use of theories of science is legitimated by common practice, and that, at first glance, the Lakatos' theory seems not incompatible with such usage, what further can legitimate the utilisation of elements of Lakatos' model in analysing theologies? According to Lakatos' model, a research programme is in the end legitimated by the fresh insights it provides (Lakatos 1978, 179). The use of elements from Lakatos' model in this study, therefore, may be legitimated by the insight this can provide. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

This leads to the next question: What can the benefit of using elements from Lakatos' model in analysing theologies be? These benefits will, I believe, become apparent during the course of this study. However, a few general comments may be appropriate at this point. Firstly, there are considered opinions that the epistemological model of Lakatos is currently the best available (Murphy 1989, 310). In addition, it provides us with a model of structure. As was said above, this study attempts to compare the structure, rather than individual statements, of theologies. In order to do so, a model is needed which will enable us to bring pronouncements of theologies into a comparable structure. I believe Lakatos' approach will be helpful in this regard. The reason for this is that Lakatos' model is, in essence, an attempt to create possibilities for comparison and dialogue between different 'paradigms'.

Lakatos, responding to the seminal theory of paradigm shifts of Thomas Kuhn, and the opposing views of Karl Popper, developed his epistemology of scientific research programmes. Lakatos attempts a middle way between the falsificationism of Popper - which attempts to show that

objective truth is possible - and the relativism of paradigms of Kuhn - where no cross-paradigm conversation seems possible. His special concern was to be able to distinguish proper science from pseudo-science (Lakatos 1978, 103). He attempts to define a differentiation between progressive and stagnant research programmes, depending on the question whether they achieve novel and surprising understandings, or spend most of their energies defending their previous assertions and accommodating their theories to contrary evidence, without making significant new predictions (Lakatos 1978, 179).

Lakatos recognises that researchers in general tend to stick to established models, even when they derive new insights. However, sometimes radical shifts occur, so that communication between different groups of researchers becomes confused. To understand these processes, Lakatos has devised a structure for research programmes:

At the centre of a research programme, there is a 'hard core' of propositions. These propositions are often universal in scope and are made irrefutable by the methodological decision of the researcher (Lakatos 1978, 47). These propositions can often be regarded as metaphysical (Arnold 1987, 18). Even though this hard core is essentially speculative metaphysics, and not verisimilitude, its function is to serve as powerful imaginative device serving to increase our understanding of the world (Lakatos 1970, 175). Any contradiction with the research programme is shielded from these 'hard core' central theories by auxiliary hypotheses, which function as a protective belt around the hard core, taking up any refutations by being modified (Lakatos 1978, 51). The 'hard core' itself is seldom, if ever, modified - all the activity takes place in the 'protective belt'. In addition to the hard core and the hypotheses of the protective belt, there is a negative heuristic, which directs criticism away from the hard core and toward the protective belt (Arnold 1987, 22). Very important is the positive heuristic, which suggests new research avenues, ways of elaborating the auxiliary theories, of explicating the content of the hard core and deriving from it novel predictions (Lakatos 1978, 179f). As long as the positive heuristic produces auxiliary theories that predict novel facts, the research program is progressive. As soon as the capacity of the positive heuristic dries up, and all the energy is used by the negative heuristic to protect the hard core, the research program degenerates (Lakatos 1978, 179).

What is a 'heuristic'? The Oxford definition states: "adj: 1. enabling a person to discover or learn something for themselves. 2. Computing proceeding to a solution by trial and error or by rules that are only loosely defined. noun 1. (heuristics) the study and use of heuristic techniques. 2 a heuristic process or method.. - origin from Greek *heuriskein* 'to find.'" This is exactly the sense in which heuristic is used by Lakatos, and in this study: A heuristic is a loosely defined method in search of answers to a problem. One make use of this method without assurance in advance that it will, indeed, in the end solve the problem or give an answer at all. Once an answer is found by way of the heuristic is then evaluated to see whether it is helpful in addressing the problem (Arnold 1987, 22).

In this sense, the use of elements from Lakatos' theory of science in this study is a heuristic device: We try it out, without knowing whether it will be helpful - and we will, at the end, evaluate whether it has contributed to our understanding.

1.4 Legitimation and orientation as central aspects of theologies

In order to utilise the elements from Lakatos' work in defining the structure of a theology, we need to find a way to structure the core of a theology. We propose, heuristically, that the hard core of a theology is defined by the way the central functions of a theology and the central content of the theology are related. The central functions of a theology are how it provides legitimation³ and orientation to believers. The central content is how it conceives of God. In other words, we work on the supposition that faith, and therefore theology, is concerned with two primary questions: legitimation and orientation. In describing the structure of a theology, we therefore ask primarily: Where does it conceive and receive legitimation from, and whereto does it orientate life?

The central role given to legitimation and orientation in this study needs to be motivated at this point. The meaning of these concepts also needs to be elucidated. In doing so, we pre-empt some of the argument of the body of this study. However, how can one show that the method one proposes for a study is appropriate to the material of the study except by pre-empting a description of this material?

We use legitimation in three respects: personal, social, and theological. Personal legitimation, in this usage, is identical to the term 'justification', which is more commonly used in theology. Why, then, use the term 'legitimation'?

The centrality of justification to Lutheran theology is well known. However, as we will show below, justification by faith alone in Luther's theological development can not be coherently conceived without also addressing the question of the legitimation of theological statements and the legitimation of the social structure of the church. The central point of justification received purely in faith by the individual is, in Luther's case, indissolubly linked to the legitimation of theological statements purely by argument on the basis of Scripture. Both of these, however, are linked to the source of legitimation of the social structure of the Roman Catholic church. These linkages will be shown below. It is in order to include these three aspects under one term that we use the word 'legitimation'.

Legitimation is also important for contextual theologies. In the opening quotation at the beginning of this chapter, the importance of contextual theologies for the advent of the 'New South Africa' was seen in the fact that they provided 'religious legitimation for change'. Indeed, this legitimation of social transformation is arguably the main emphasis and aim of contextual theology. However, contextual theologians are conscious that this aim is inextricably linked to a new approach to theologising. It is the new way of doing theology, and associated with this, the way of legitimating theological statements, that defines contextual theologies as a group in difference from 'academic theology'. Therefore, in contextual theologies, legitimation in both social and theological senses is central. However, in looking into the content and practice of contextual theologies, one realises that a third, personal, dimension of legitimation is of equal importance to contextual theologians: To give to oppressed people a new sense of dignity, of self-esteem - one can say of personal legitimacy. These three aspects are succinctly described in the following quote:

"Gutiérrez emphasizes three means of liberation, all of which are interdependent, comprising a single, complex process that finds its deepest sense and its full realisation in the saving work of Jesus Christ:

(1) The aspiration of oppressed people and social groups to escape the domination of wealthy countries and oppressive classes.

(2) An understanding of history in which man assumes conscious responsibility for his own destiny, leading to "the creation of a new man and a qualitatively different society"

³Legitimation is used as a parallel, but broader, term to the traditional theological term justification. This is done in order to avoid spiritualising narrowing of the meaning and to make the parallel between theological and existential legitimation clearer. This change of term is similar to what, for instance, Klaus Nürnberger does by replacing 'justification' with 'acknowledgement of the right to be' (Anerkennung des Seinsrechtes) (Nürnberger 2003, 6).

(3) *The transformation of man through encounter with Jesus Christ. "Christ the Saviour liberates man from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression."* (Lazareth 1975, xi)

Therefore, also in contextual theologies, legitimization of a personal, theological, and social level is of prime importance and interlinked.

However, legitimization in contextual theology is not an end in itself. The legitimization contextual theologies aspire to give are legitimations for change, for a new praxis. In other words, the legitimization serves a new orientation of life. With this term 'orientation', we include both what is referred to in classical theologies as ethics, and what contextual theologies describe as 'praxis'. We use the term because it denotes the importance of the aims of actions.

That orientation of life - toward liberation and transformation - is of central importance in contextual theologies is common cause. Indeed, it is apparent from the quote above. It will also be shown in the section on contextual theologies below.

That orientation of life - ethics - is important in Luther's theology is not quite as obvious. However, a survey of the titles of his writings shows that he often did write and preach on ethical topics. In his booklet: *On good works*, Luther wrote:

Daher kommts: wenn ich den Glauben so sehr betone und solche ungläubigen Werke verwerfe, beschuldigen sie mich, ich verbiete gute Werke, obwohl ich doch gerne rechte gute Werke des Glaubens lehren wollte. (WA 6, 205) Therefore: if I emphasise faith and reject such faithless works, they accuse me of prohibiting good works. However, I really wanted to teach the good works of faith.

As we will show below, it was important to Luther to give a new orientation to life, to teach a new ethics.

Having, in a preliminary way, found that legitimization and orientation are important issues in Luther's theology and in contextual theologies, we therefore propose to investigate the structure of theologies with the assumption that the theories of legitimization and orientation form the core of a theology. If one translates this assumption into more classical theological language, the assumption is that the process of justification and salvation, as well as the fundamental characteristics of the new life of the saved, are central to theologies. In other words, we assume that theologies are, at their core, soteriologies. This assumption is supported by other theological studies.

1.5 Steps of this study

First, we will investigate Luther's context and time, and attempt to relate his theological response to this time and see what structure this response takes. Then, we will attempt to define the structure of contextual theologies. Finally, some implications for theologising in our time are drawn.

2 Luther's Context

2.1 The purpose of this chapter

In order to correctly interpret the performative aspect of Luther's theological response to his context, we need first to understand this context.

In order to relate Luther's theological structure as a response to the context, we need to answer the questions we see as central to the understanding of the structure of a theology also of the context, i.e.:

Where does legitimization (personal, social, and political) come from, and how is it obtained?

Where to is life oriented, and how is this orientation effected and supported?

In order to answer these questions, we present a relatively broad and moderately detailed survey of the situation at the time of Luther. We enter into more detail on the context of Luther than on that of Liberation Theology, as this context is more foreign to us. From this survey, which will conclude with the theological situation, we will at the end of the chapter distill the aspects relevant to the answer to the questions posed.

2.2 Political situation

The 16th century was a time of rapid social change. Feudal structures were losing power, peasant revolts were increasing, cities were growing rapidly with the rise of trade and the merchant class. The colonisation of the Americas widened perspectives. The discovery of print revolutionised information transfer. All of this together caused both fear and hope in broad sections of the population. Apocalyptic religious movements were common. Observant piety, such as pilgrimages, was booming (Shaul 1991, 25f). Cultural and social movements of emancipation were exerting influence from the bottom up, while forces leading to the centralisation and disciplining of state authority were working top-down. (Lutz 1984, 229). The Reformation was one part of this re-ordering of social forces. It was an event parallel to developments in constitutions and in economics (Pascal 1933, 1). Luther's theology can be interpreted correctly only in relation to all these forces (Pascal 1933, 2).

Luther lived during the transition from feudalism to early capitalism. Feudal structure was based on a hierarchy, which claimed divine legitimization, and mutual obligations of the different parties: feudal lords were obliged to provide their serfs with land and protection, while these in return were obliged to provide the lords with part of their labour and the willingness to serve in the army (Altmann 1992, 8).

This structure was disintegrating. Through the development of trade, the rise of the cities and the growth of early capitalism, the authority of feudal lords and the emperor declined. This decline of authority of lords and emperor was hastened by the disputes between Emperor and Pope, and the strengthening of the power of the princes and national kings. The result was that the medieval social order was undermined. The balance of forces between emperor and pope was dissolved into a competition of numerous smaller groups: The emperor was reduced to King of Spain and prince of a few territories, though he had colonial claims further afield, the pope became little more than local prince in Italy with financial claims in all Europe. Princes became autonomous Kings in France and England. Capitalists in general saw their interest to lie with the emperor. Urban patricians saw their interest to lie with the princes and opposed to the capitalists. The propertyless classes - peasants and workers - were exploited by everybody. The imperial knights had no real role or place in the new society and survived purely by exploiting peasants (Pascal 1933, 19). All these forces could not be unified. A new social order, with a new religious and ethical base, was required (Pascal 1933, 20f).

In order to understand this situation better, we want to investigate the history leading to this state of affairs and the role of the different classes in more detail.

2.2.1 History

Two struggles dominate the politics of the later middle ages: Firstly the controversy between pope and emperor concerning who, finally, has the higher authority, and secondly the increasing tendency of local lords to subject surrounding territories to themselves and to claim autonomy from the emperor as national kings.

The roots of the power struggle between pope and emperor lie in the imperial constitution of Charlemagne and Otto 1. Charlemagne could regard the pope simply as the head of his bishops, who were all his officials (Johnson 1976, 192). The emperor invested bishops with territory, in order to break the power of local princes. These territories gave a lot of income and power to the church. However, as long as the emperor chose the bishops, they were subservient to him. Under the church reform by Pope Hadrian, the power to invest bishops was denied the emperor as part of reducing the secularisation of the church. The consequence was that the power of the pope increased (Johnson 1976, 194-199). In the 13th century, the papacy reached the pinnacle of its power under Innocent III. It had made the secular powers dependent on itself (Lau 1969, 10f). This was illustrated in the penitentiary pilgrimage of emperor Heinrich to Canossa. He was forced to do this because his armies had deserted him for fear of the ban pronounced by the pope on him. The pope had proclaimed this ban because Frederick was attacking papal territory, and had instituted a counter-emperor (Johnson 1976, 199f). However, the power of the papacy soon declined: It needed the support of the King of France in the dispute with the Emperor, and therefore became beholden to the French throne, leading to the 'Babylonian exile' of the papacy in Avignon, and the spectacle of two popes mutually excommunicating and banning one another (Johnson 1976, 218f). These developments undermined the inner authority of the medieval social structure - by which the emperor, especially, lost ground (Johnson 1976, 200).

2.2.2 Nation States and principalities

Because of the loss of inner legitimacy, by 1500 the empire had exceeded its time. The emperor was without effective power, except in those territories where he was feudal lord. The imperial diet could scarcely decide on any joint course of action. General taxes were not paid. The imperial court was not respected, because its judges were poorly paid and it seldom sat. The emperor could not prevail against the stronger territorial princes. In Germany, there was no central administration as in France or England (Pascal 1933, 2f). In response to this situation, Nicolas of Cusa, a leading philosopher of his time, suggested an increase of the authority of local princes, by giving them the judicial authority and allowing them to raise taxes to institute an efficient administration, and holding regular diets. Some of these proposals could be implemented under emperor Maximilian, whose position was weakened by the many wars he was involved in. When he reneged on the agreements, anarchy returned in the empire (Pascal 1933, 3f). In Germany, though, the idea was effectively implemented by way of leagues between different territories, resulting in the particularisation of German territory.

The emperors, at that time of the house of Habsburg, sought to counter these developments, especially by their marriage strategies. This gave emperor Charles V the kingdoms of Austria, Burgundy and Spain, as well as the imperial crown. This strong position led to conflict with France, who desired to break up the effective encircling, and the papacy. Because France and the pope did their best to weaken the power of the emperor, and could do so most effectively by increasing the autonomy of territorial princes in Germany, they effectively advanced the cause of the Reformation (Lau 1969, 5).

Outside of Germany, the power of the emperor was weak. In these territories, one stronger territorial prince could more and more subject the whole country to his rule. In this manner, France, England, Poland and Spain could become nation states. By playing off pope and emperor, the kings in these nation states could also ensure substantial rights over the church in their territory (Kinder 1964, 187-191.201). States in Europe outside Germany were involved in a process of centralisation, in which Kings asserted themselves against the Empire and territorial princes, and obtained substantial autonomy from the pope, enabling them to implement reforms locally.

In Germany and Italy, on the other hand, the power of Emperor and Pope prevented the centralisation of authority under one King. However, territorial princes also centralised authority within their territories. Some smaller principalities were incorporated into larger ones. However, the countries remained divided into many secular and ecclesial principalities and free imperial cities with republican constitutions (Lau 1969, 4f).

In the 15th century, territorial princes and kings strove to attain influence in the church within their territory, in order to reduce the outflow of finances to the papacy. This led to the reestablishment of national churches in Europe, in which the king or prince had substantial influence on who filled church posts, appeals to Rome were prohibited, church income was directed to the state and payments to Rome were disallowed. All of these rights were codified in concordats with Rome. (Lau 1969, 10f). In Germany and Italy the political particularism prevented the establishment of national churches. However, the stronger princes did secure substantial rights over churches in their territories (Pascal 1933, 5f). Cities also consciously diminished the influence of the papacy. Some expelled the local bishop, others instituted their own preachers posts and churches (Lau 1969, 11).

2.2.3 Nationalism and Protest

The Reformation found Germany permeated by a climate of nationalism and anti-papal protest. This had a long history: Already during the reign of Ludwig IV Lupold von Bebenburg compiled a proof that the empire was independent from the Papacy. Writings such as the *Belli fortis* by Keyser and the *Germania* by Ennea Silva strengthened feelings of self-worth in Germans. *Germania* by Ennea Silva actually was written to counter accusations that papal exploitation was impoverishing Germany, and described the flowering of German cities. Nicolas of Cusa (1400-1464) proposed the election of ecclesial office bearers by those who were entrusted to their care. He motivated this as a remedy of dereliction of duties. The imperial diets as from 1456 had as a recurring point on the agenda *gravamina*, or complaints (Dickens 1974, 1-7)

At the Diet of Augsburg 1518, a crusade proposed by emperor and pope was rejected because of the costs involved. A complaints about the tax burden imposed by the pope was compiled: These taxes included annates and palliates. The allocation of offices to foreigners was criticised (Pascal 1933, 53). The Diet of Worms, which pronounced the ban on Luther, compiled a *gravamina* containing 102 complaints. Nationalism around the turn of the 15th to 16th century was amplified by humanists, who utilised the new possibilities opened up by print (Dickens 1974, 1.8).

2.3 Social and Economic situation

The society of the middle ages was strongly stratified. The bottom rung of society was occupied by serfs, peasants and dependent journeymen. Above these were independent craftsmen, traders and citizens of free cities, as well as knights. The highest social level was occupied by the nobility composed of the territorial princes and the imperial families.

In feudal society, the primary mode of production was subsistence agriculture with some exchange of commodities. Little money was in circulation. (Altmann 1992, 8). This was changed by the crusades and the colonisation of the Americas. By the new markets, products and the exchange of goods introduced through the crusades, new issues arose: Trade routes needed to be protected, standing armies kept, cities and trade grew beyond the capacity of simple goods exchange. This new situation required a centralisation of political administration. It reduced the social influence of the peasants. The resources needed for this centralised administration were obtained by increasing taxes on the rural gentry and peasantry, while at the same time curtailing the rights of both. Some of the gentry managed to become part of the commercial middle class that came about through trade (Altmann 1992, 9).

2.3.1 Trading companies and Capital

Money-oriented trade led to the establishment of the class of money-owners, bankers and lenders. These cooperated closely with the papacy, which was the largest financial power of the time. The moneyed classes often had influence throughout Europe. They were in conflict with the impoverished. By 1500, German bankers had taken over the leading role from those in northern Italy. (Pascal 1933, 12). Capital was differentiated into industrial, commercial and banking sectors (Pascal 1933, 13). Cities were the centre of commercial power, and were leading the transition, but were politically under-represented (Lau 1969, 11)

Trading capital in general resulted in monopolies, which were allowed to trade in specific territories in a profit-sharing agreement with the princes of those territories, or were excluded from territories by high tariffs. This resulted in highly inflated prices, especially for peasants and wage earners, whose income did not increase accordingly (Pascal 1933, 16f, 18).

Money accumulated in individual trading companies. Access to money led to the subversion of the laws against usury (taking interest on moneys lent out). Availability of money also enabled growth of the long distance and foreign trade. The accumulation of capital gave companies the possibility to influence decisions of Emperor and Pope. In the time of Luther, lending out money against interest became common, because the church, as a financial power, benefited from this, and therefore regularly gave dispensation from the laws prohibiting it (Pascal 1933, 181). Bank capital soon grew to be the most important variant of capital. The capital grew by speculative investments in trade, especially in the East-India trade, and by high-interest loans to governments, who often urgently needed money to finance their payments to professional soldiers in their armies. Bankers often obtained control over mines, which were ceded to them as security for loans, which were not repaid (Pascal 1933, 13). However, the influence of bankers declined as politics became more determined by the two poles of Emperor and king of France. Also, as they had more and more of their money invested in loans of a specific prince, they became beholden to that prince. In the end, therefore, banking became an instrument of absolutism (Pascal 1933, 14f)

Industrial Capital grew by centralisation and introduction of machines, powered by water mills. Control of traders over raw material and product sales led trade societies to close entrance to the trade, in order to increase their power base. This led to formation of a hereditary trade patriciate, and the reduction of apprentices to wage labourers (Pascal 1933, 17).

2.3.2 Peasants, journeymen and knights

During the middle ages, the rights of peasants were continuously reduced. In late middle ages, this happened especially by the introduction of Roman law. In German law, the relationship of peasant and feudal lord was based on mutual commitment. Different classes of peasant, from freeman to serf, were envisaged, and peasants had direct access to the judicial process. Roman law, on the other hand, classed all peasants as serfs. Peasants, who could not speak Latin nor read and write, had little access to the judicial process, run in terms of Roman law. This resulted in the prince becoming an absolute ruler, long lawsuits involving learned councils - in contrast with German law, in which the peasants could, assembled as a local diet, decide cases themselves, and the prince was bound in terms of mutual trust and fidelity (Pascal 1933, 129f). Through this, both the peasants having freehold, and those having leasehold were all reduced to servitude (Pascal 1933, 130). The result was that malcontent about the reduction of rights and economic misery was brewing among peasants (Lau 1969, 8). This led to the *Bundschuh*-uprisings, in which remission of debts, abolition of tariffs, reinstatement of alienated rights, local judicial authority under old law, reduction of priest's income and removal of the confessional obligations were demanded (Pascal 1933, 128.131f). Often, the uprising was initially supported by the under-class of the cities, but these often made separate compacts with the authorities. (Pascal 1933, 129). Mostly, apart from Switzerland, the uprisings were too disorganised to have success (Pascal 1933, 132). The condition of peasants deteriorated especially from the 15th century on. Prices increased, the rural areas were more and more exploited by both cities and gentry.

The lower classes in the cities were also suffering a reduction in their living standard around 1500. The government of cities was, in general, in the hands of a hereditary patriciate composed of

traders and master artisans. The prices of raw materials and manufactured goods were set by traders' associations, who thereby effectively controlled wages. It was almost impossible to obtain artisan status, due to the high fees and intricate regulations. (Pascal 1933, 131). This rule by the patriciate led to regular protests. The result often was constitutional change, in which a further grouping was incorporated into the patriciate of the city - but the same dynamics then led to the included grouping becoming wealthy, and the remaining underclass again protesting (Lau 1969, 11).

Because the introduction of guns changed the nature of warfare, mounted knights were no longer the mainstay of any army. The most important part of the armies were now paid soldiers armed with muskets. Therefore knights became redundant. They lost their social role, and became a restless element in German society, unsuccessfully trying to reestablish their political power (Lau 1969, 11). They were either subjugated by the princes or lived as robber-barons from exploitation of peasants and traders. While the knights as a social class disintegrated, some young members of this class studied and became part of the administrative staff of the principalities (Lau 1969, 7).

2.4 Situation in the church

In contemplating the situation of the church at the time of Luther, it is most important to note that the whole culture of the time was religious, and the church and religion therefore formed part of all aspects of life (Maimela 1988, 35). The church was, without a doubt, the ruling social force, and all of life was oriented toward the quest for salvation (Shaull 1991, 26).

This ruling position of the church is shown clearly in the privileges the clergy, as a social class, had: they were subject to an own, different law, the canonical law, and could only be judged by ecclesial courts. A sign of the ruling position of the church was the primacy, which the pope claimed over the emperor (Johnson 1976, 199-201). In addition to the social status, the church was the largest landowner in most of Europe, and the largest section of income went to the church (Johnson 1976, 204-209, 220f). Because it owned and earned so much, and had its own courts, it was in effect very much a part of the social structure as a separate, but integrate, state and nation within other states and nations (Johnson 1976, 207). As such, the church was part of the feudal structure: Office bearers of the church, such as abbots and bishops, were at the same time feudal lords and princes. Theology sacralized the hierarchical social order - for instance by enthroning emperor and kings, and the enthronement of a king was seen as a similar sacrament to the ordination of a bishop (Johnson 1976, 193). Hierarchical structure also dominated ecclesial life: Just as right to land was given in the feudal system from a higher lord to a lower liege, the right to administer blessing and grace was given from a higher prelate to a lower, and grace flowed like a substance from top down through the hierarchy of the church, starting with the pope, and was therefore controlled by the church structure (Shaull 1991, 27f). As salvation was the central concern of the time, and this salvation was available only through the structure of the church, the ability of the church to give or withhold access to salvation and grace gave it enormous power (Maimela 1988, 36f; Shaull 1991, 29; Boff 1988, 202).

2.4.1 Abuses in the church and attempts to reform the church

Signs of disintegration of the structure of the church were prevalent. Abuse of powers and privileges was common. Examples are the use of indulgences and the sanction of the ban for financial gain; effective legalisation of the concubinage of priests through taxes imposed by bishops; high life in both monasteries and at the courts of bishops and other prelates. The responsibility of prelates to those entrusted to them was at a low point. (Pascal 1933, 7). Ecclesial positions were seen as a source of income and power, while the responsibilities of the positions were often entrusted to lower clergy, who were often scarcely educated (Lau 1969, 12). The result was that in the clerical estate two classes occurred: those that occupied ecclesial positions mostly lived as feudal lords. Below them, a proletariat of scarcely educated priests made its living by reading masses and memorials and performing other religious rites for payment. Rural priests were almost uneducated - seminaries only started in the 16th century. (Johnson 1976, 228f)

During the last centuries of the middle ages, there were many attempts to reform the church. These attempts came from monastic orders, lay movements, humanism and nationalistic tendencies, such as the movements around the *gravamina*. The complaints were common: church authorities were secular lords, sale of indulgences part of a system of taxes and exploitation. During the middle ages, reform of the church was necessary for reform of society. Hopes for fundamental reform were disappointed by the Fifth Lateran council of 1512 which was called by Pope Julius II after nine cardinals had called a council. The cardinals were placed under ban, because they had arrogated to themselves the right to call a council, which the pope claimed as his sole prerogative. Theme of the council was not reform of the church, but the condition of the soul between death and resurrection (Johnson 1976, 280). By claiming the sole prerogative to call and set agendas for council, the pope therefore frustrated attempts to reform the church. However, desire for reform continued in many ways. Religious reform was also an aim of mysticism, which aspired to a renewal of religion based on a deep spiritual experience (Altmann 1992, 3). Observant sections arose in all monastic traditions. Spiritual literature arose which also worked in this direction (Lau 1969, 13).

2.4.2 The church as financial power

Since the 14th century, the church increasingly centralised and expanded its financial administration and its constitution. It also increased its financial requirements. Thereby, its character shifted more and more to that of a financial institution (Johnson 1976, 221). This resulted in protest of nationalist and anti-clericalist nature (Pascal 1933, 6). The national churches in countries with strong kings did not remit much money to the Kurie. Therefore, the funding requirements of the papal court needed to be sourced primarily from Italy and Germany (Johnson 1976, 218, 280). Therefore, the papal court needed new sources of financing to finance its considerable expenditure, especially on building, art and war.

In England, the church effectively was a social upper class. Clergy comprised less than 1 % of the population, but the church took in 25% of the gross domestic product. In Germany and Italy, where the church owned up to one third of the land, the proportion of GDP accruing to the church was even larger. One tenth of the income of the local church was remitted to the papal court as annates. In addition, the income from some sources was directly transferred to Rome, for instance the proceeds from the sale of indulgences (Johnson 1976, 221).

It is instructive to investigate the question of indulgences more closely, both because it was central to the beginning of the reformation and because it well illustrates the relationship between financial interests and spiritual matters in the medieval church.

Indulgences arose out of the relief from church punishments granted as prize to those who participated in the crusades. It was soon understood to be an alternative to all penitentiary duties. The penitentiary duties, according to Thomist theology, form the third part of penitence, after contrition and absolution. They were to be understood as a proof of earnestness of contrition and as a pedagogical tool. Such duties could be the saying of prayers, or some action that was of service to the church or the poor. The system of penitence was deemed necessary to absolve Christians of acts of sin committed after their baptism. In baptism, both guilt and all penalties were remitted, and the person was installed into a state of grace. However, if a person sinned after baptism, penitence was necessary to restore the state of grace. Otherwise, medieval theology held, they would, not being in state of grace, be damned. This was especially important for Christians who lived in the world and were exposed to its sinfulness, as they could not become part of the perfect life of asceticism in the monastic orders. (Maimela 1988, 37) The absolution proclaimed, during sacramental confession removed the guilt of the sin, but it was valid only once the penitential duties had been performed - by which way the punishment for the sin was borne. These duties were set by papal jurisdiction.

However, in late medieval time, it became more and more common to offer the option of purchasing indulgences that absolved the bearer from the necessity of performing the penitential duties. This arose from the concept that giving alms to the poor, or a worthy cause, such as the building of a church, was a good work and therefore compensated for some punishment due. However, this soon degenerated into the abuse of indulgences as a way to obtain funding for the

church. At the same time, the, canonical punishments and penitential duties were made more onerous (Pascal 1933, 42; Johnson 1976, 230ff). This development reached its climax in the assertion that indulgences were even valid for souls in purgatory. At the same time, priests selling indulgences were granted extraordinary rights to absolve from sin, so that the purchase of indulgences effectively was coupled with forgiveness of sins - and some letters of indulgence did bear the phrase 'absolution from both guilt and punishment. Thereby, the penitential discipline of the church was subverted by the church itself. (Pascal 1933, 42f). The sale of indulgences was motivated with the theory that the church could decide on the use of the treasure accumulated from the good works of Christ and the saints. These good works compensate for the debt of punishment owed by people. The pope could, as if this treasure were a substance, transfer the ownership thereof to other people (Pascal 1933, 43). This development in indulgences is indicative for the more and more narrow focus of the papacy on financial matters. The church thereby became a particular financial power. The result was that those who had money could use it to obtain salvation. This reinforced the division of society between haves and have-nots (Pascal 1933, 44, Johnson 1976, 234). A similar development occurred in the church buildings: In many churches, almost the whole of the floor space was occupied by innumerable altars or chapels. These altars were endowed by a person who, through the capital of the endowment, paid for a priest. This priest would say one mass after the other for the soul of the giver or for someone nominated by the endower (formulation) - thereby accumulating the heavenly account of such person with the value of such masses and prayers. Substantial portions of the church were also occupied by mausoleums of rich people, who bought the privilege to be buried in the church. Often, very little space was left for a congregation (Johnson 1976, 227f).

2.4.3 Theological developments

In theology, the late medieval time is marked by the decline of Thomism and the rise of Occamism (Lau 1969, 12; Johnson 1976, 268). Thomism asserts a consistent principled correspondence of nature and grace, embedded in a harmonious metaphysical system, which can be perceived by the enlightened mind (Schmid 1960, 237). Occamism, to the contrary, is also called nominalism for the reason that it sees general concepts purely as constructs of the mind, without reality of their own. In Occamism, therefore, something is good and evil not necessarily of itself, but purely because God freely declares it to be either good or evil. Therefore, truths of faith cannot be perceived or proved by mind, but need to be believed as it were blindly (Kinder 1964, 184; Schmid 1960, 238). As for salvation, nominalism asserts that humans need to co-operate with grace by doing what is within their power, in order to prepare themselves for the efficacious receipt of sacramental grace (Schmid 1960, 277). During this time, the papacy asserted ever more strongly the monopoly the pope has on deciding on valid interpretation of scripture, even though not all universities acknowledged this (Pesch 1982, 107).

The structure of medieval catholic theology and practice can be profitably described by referring to the issue that formed the occasion for the reformation - indulgences. Because the critique of the reformation is directed at the principle and basis of the theology, and not only at its abuses, we base our description of the theology of indulgences on a article by WH Kent, published in the Catholic Encyclopaedia in 1910, and publicised on the Web under 'New Advent' in 2004 (Kent 1910).

The definition states: (A) *"In the Sacrament of Penance the guilt of sin is removed, and with it the eternal punishment due to mortal sin; but there still remains the temporal punishment required by Divine justice, and this requirement must be fulfilled either in the present life or in the world to come, i.e., in Purgatory. An indulgence offers the penitent sinner the means of discharging this debt during his life on earth."*

In analysing this, we note:

1. That God appears in the context of this statement, as in the whole article, as a principle of divine justice, who has laid down laws, punishments, and whose mercy translates into providing a system by which humans can be saved from these punishments.
2. The abstract nouns, here and elsewhere, are treated in essence as substances: Guilt and punishment are seen as debts, and satisfaction or merits are compensatory substances, which can be transferred between persons, as evidenced in the next quote:

(B) *"An indulgence is valid both in the tribunal of the Church and in the tribunal of God. This means that it not only releases the penitent from his indebtedness to the Church or from the obligation of performing canonical penance, but also from the temporal punishment which he has incurred in the sight of God and which, without the indulgence, he would have to undergo in order to satisfy Divine justice. ... In granting an indulgence, the grantor (pope or bishop) does not offer his personal merits in lieu of what God demands from the sinner. He acts in his official capacity as having jurisdiction in the Church, from whose spiritual treasury he draws the means wherewith payment is to be made. The Church herself is not the absolute owner, but simply the administratrix, of the superabundant merits which that treasury contains. In applying them, she keeps in view both the design of God's mercy and the demands of God's justice. She therefore determines the amount of each concession, as well as the conditions which the penitent must fulfill if he would gain the indulgence."*

3. We note that, in conceiving of debt to God and merits as substances, the Church, through its hierarchical institutions, is regarded as administrator and dispenser of these substances. This is also evidenced in the following:

(C) *"The existence of an infinite treasury of merits in the Church is dogmatically set forth in the Bull "Unigenitus", published by Clement VI, 27 Jan., 1343, and later inserted in the "Corpus Juris" (Extrav. Com., lib. V, tit. ix. c. ii): "Upon the altar of the Cross ", says the pope, "Christ shed of His blood not merely a drop, though this would have sufficed, by reason of the union with the Word, to redeem the whole human race, but a copious torrent. . . thereby laying up an infinite treasure for mankind. This treasure He neither wrapped up in a napkin nor hid in a field, but entrusted to Blessed Peter, the key-bearer, and his successors, that they might, for just and reasonable causes, distribute it to the faithful in full or in partial remission of the temporal punishment due to sin."*

4. The aim of the whole process, and indeed the aim of life presupposed by the practice is to attain peace in the hereafter, as evidenced in the quotation from St Cyprian (D):

"Those who have received a libellus from the martyrs and with their help can, before the Lord, get relief in their sins, let such, if they be ill and in danger, after confession and the imposition of your hands, depart unto the Lord with the peace promised them by the martyrs " (Ep. xiii, P.L., IV, 261).

5. The process and presuppositions of the doctrine of indulgences can therefore be summarized as follows:

- a. The aim of life is to attain peace with God and therefore to depart life in a state of grace, thereby attaining the blessing of heaven.
- b. This aim is attained by a practice of life that utilises both the activities of life (time, in prayer, fasting, good deeds, alms to poor, donations to the church) in a manner that is sufficient to the rules that God, through the administration of the church, has set for the attainment of this end.
- c. Of course, the practice does not merit the grace by its own worthiness (de condigno), but, through the mercy of God, by correspondence (de congruo) to the conditions God in the church has set for the granting of such mercy.
- d. The church, through its hierarchical structure, has absolute authority from God to dispense grace. This grace is regarded as a substance, which can be transferred through channels of the church.

6. By being the sole agent able to dispense a good - access to grace - that is highly valued, the church has immense power. This structure is open to abuses, in which the church exchanges grace for pecuniary gain or utilises it to leverage power, as is admitted by Kent (op.cit).

2.4.4 Piety

During the late middle ages, more and more preaching services arose - although often these were little more than serial presentations of stories and legends of saints. Many lay fraternities arose, as a kind of spiritual insurance policy, through which some of the merits of the more saintly monks were in effect transferred to the lay brothers. Adoration of saints, pilgrimages and honouring of relics grew apace. These observant pieties were often used by local Lords, cities or churches as source of income. Frederick the Wise, for instance, spent a lot of money to obtain relics for his church in order to attract pilgrims (Lau 1969, 13). Due to the prevalence of war and sickness, occupation with death and fear of death and judgement played a large part in public consciousness - as can be witnessed in the art of people like Albrecht Dürer. The tension between the harshness of life and the high expectations from it, orientation to the life beyond and constriction in the joys

and sorrows of the present life are recurrent themes in paintings (Dürer), plays (Everyman) and in songs. (Dickens 1974, 18).

The piety of observances was transcended, though, by creative impulses. One such impulse was the *devotio moderna*, which flowered especially in the Rhine valley. This especially involved the middle classes, who had the possibilities to practice the spiritual disciplines of the mystical withdrawal espoused by the *devotio*. The quiet mysticism did not espouse protest or confrontation, and yet undermined the spiritual authority of the prince-bishops and the system they stood for. (Dickens 1974, 19f). By turning away from self, the *devotio moderna* also turned away from own practises and works and concentrated more on God and his work of grace (Lau 1969, 13).

2.4.5 Humanism

Humanism to some extent paved the way for the Reformation. Humanist impulses were present in nationalism and in the *devotio moderna*. The understanding of biblical languages and the discovery of the text of the biblical sources, as evident in the work of Erasmus and Reuchlin, were very important preparatory steps (Johnson 1976, 268.271). Humanism was often represented in the artistic faculties of universities. These were mostly less well endowed with funds than the theological faculties. The graduates of the artistic faculties often served at the courts of the princes as advisors and administrators. Some humanists made a point of publishing works in German, mostly historical in nature, in order to advance nationalism, e.g. Brant's "Narrenschiff" (published 1494). A number of proposals for church reform also came from humanist circles, protesting especially against the purchase of posts and indulgences. Ulrich v. Hutten, who had humanist education, wrote virulent protests against the papacy. Initially, he was a strong supporter of Luther (Dickens 1974, 21-29.46f).

2.4.6 Protest against developments in the church: Secularisation

The relationship of secular and spiritual was complicated by the end of the middle ages. On the one hand, seen to be total opposites, and one really had to leave behind the world and enter into the spiritual life of the monastery in order to be holy and a full Christian. Only the church, and its special places and objects and actions - church buildings, relics, indulgences and sacraments - were means of grace and holiness, while secular life was in essence without much value. On the other hand, church and world were very much identified, with the church being a state, using and amassing power and money like other states, bishops being feudal lords, and often having the same immoral life as other feudal lords (Altmann 1992, 5f; Maimela 1988, 36f).

The protest against this duplicity led to a stronger self-worth of secular persons and institutions in their own right (Pascal 1933, 7). In a sense, this corresponded with the differentiation between *jure humanum* and *jure divinum*, made by Occamism, and the acceptance that 'by human right' has an own status, independent of the divine law. (Pascal 1933, 8). Culturally, the same happened with regard to morals in humanism. The aim was to liberate people from the tutelage of the church and enable them to make their decisions autonomously. (Pascal 1933, 9). This liberation by education was especially the aim of Erasmus (Johnson 1976, 272f). This process found its support especially among the patricians of the cities (Dickens 1974, 152). This corresponded with their interest as a well-educated elite. However, they did not dare to draw the full consequences of the programme and continued to accept a further authoritative role for an, albeit reformed, church (Pascal 1933, 10f).

2.5 Summary: The Roman church as an exploitative foreign power legitimated by absolutist ideology

The situation, especially of the church, can be summed up as follows:

The church was structurally a political power in competition with other powers, especially the empire. It had its own constitution and legal system, as well as financial administration. Its "population" was composed of the clergy, present in all countries. In late middle ages, the financial and juristic aspects gained dominance, while the spiritual calling was neglected. The church used its spiritual authority and monopoly to extract financial benefit from the general population and leverage political power (Altmann 2000, 113). It obtained a large part of the Gross National Product of all countries in Europe, while benefiting only a small percentage of the population (Johnson 1976, 220.224).

The power of the church was founded in essence on an absolutist ideology. The pope, as representative of Christ, was not subject to any human authority, but conversely had authority over every human. In the same way, it was held that clergy were not subject to secular law, but were above lay power. This hierarchy was legitimated by the access to grace: The pope, as representative of Christ, was authorised to dispense the grace of God. In addition, he alone could authorise others to dispense grace. Therefore, grace and authority flowed like a substance down the hierarchy. What applied to grace also applied to legitimation: The pope was the prime legitimating source. This is evidenced in the outcome of the power struggle between emperor and pope - the pope legitimates political structure, and not conversely. The papal interpretation of scripture was therefore the only legitimate. The same principle also applied to legitimating assemblies: As only the pope could call Councils, so he only could also set their agenda and interpret their decisions.

The acceptance of this structure, and the exploitation that it produced, rested on the centrality of religion in society. As eternal salvation was the highest good, obtaining it was the aim of every life. This salvation was accessible only through the structure of the church, which was distinct from normal, secular life and institutions. Access to grace was obtained through specifically religious activities, as specified by the church, like sacraments, relics, and indulgences. The efficacy of these religious practices rested on the authorisation of the person performing them by the church hierarchy. The image was that of grace cascading down the institution from higher official to lower: grace and authority flowed from Christ through pope to cardinal to archbishop to bishop to priest to lay person. To get closer to grace, one had to become part and climb in this hierarchy. Right to life and fulfilment of life depended on the hierarchical institution of the church.

However, the authority and assurance of this system was undermined in two respects:

Theologically by Occamism (Nominalism), which made the efficacy of the sacraments dependent on the disposition of the recipient. The recipient was required to have done all that is within herself to prepare herself for grace. As it was never quite certain whether the recipient had in fact done all he could to be correctly disposed, the validity of the sacraments and the grace conferred by the church was placed in question.

In public life, the legitimacy of the church, and the authority with which it could confer legitimacy, was undermined by the contradiction between the claim of the church to be a totally different, spiritual body, and the obvious worldliness of the church.

These two factors led to a feeling of insecurity, whether one really was in a state of grace, which was often heightened by the preaching of the church, which often concentrated on increasing the fear of damnation. The consequence was that people lived in dependency on a system of grace that was not quite trustworthy - resulting in a greater effort to attain some certainty by increased observant piety, or alternatively, looking for other ways of piety.

The hierarchical structure was closely allied to feudalism. Feudalism was in dissolution. The reasons for this are the conflicts between pope, emperor and kings/ princes, and the change in the economic basis of society from agricultural subsistence to trade- oriented capitalism, which

necessitated more centralised states with a more efficient administration. These developments were to be seen most clearly in the cities, in which the new, bourgeois class had more and more self-confidence to resist the feudal structure. This also led to a orientation to this world more than the next - issuing in a movement of secularisation

2.6 The structure of medieval Roman Catholic theology

As stated in the introduction, the structure of a theology is, in this study, defined by

- from where does it draw legitimacy and in which way does it confer legitimacy,
- to where does it orientate life, and how is this direction given,
- and how do legitimacy and orientation relate.

Though the description of a theology, if reduced to the structural elements as mentioned above, may seem simplistic, I believe this simplification is helpful in understanding the issues at stake.

2.6.1 God as judge

The source of legitimacy in medieval Roman Catholic theology is the judgement of God. Indeed, for believers, this judgement, because of the grace of God in Christ, can be merciful. However, for this judgement to be positive, i.e. to indeed confer legitimacy (righteousness) a believer has to do 'what is in himself' (*facere quod in se est*). This judgement is therefore conditional on the achievement of the believer, who has to ensure that she does what is in herself in order to achieve the state of grace, i.e. legitimacy. The God who confers legitimacy is therefore conceived of as a stern judge, to whom believers relate primarily in fear, and from whom they flee to the institutions of the church for protection.

2.6.2 Legitimation conferred by hierarchical church structure

The legitimation is conferred through the Roman church hierarchy. The Pope, as representative of Christ on earth, has final right to confer legitimacy, and to empower others to do so. This concept of legitimacy is put into the terms that grace, like a substance, flows from Christ through his representative, the pope, to his church, and in this church cascades down the hierarchy.

Socially, the same pattern occurs as the one described above for personal legitimation: The church legitimates social institutions through its hierarchy - and, because such legitimation is conditional on the service of these institutions toward the church, the church obtains power and resources from social institutions.

Also in the theological sphere, the assertion that the pope is the final arbiter of theological truth implies that the legitimation of theological statements is conferred through the hierarchy of the church.

The legitimation is conferred in terms of a fixed set of rules - canon law - in which the person seeking legitimation has to conform to the criteria set in order to access the legitimation of the system: *facere quod in se est*.

2.6.3 Orientation to find personal salvation

The effect of this process of legitimation is that life is primarily directed at obtaining legitimation - it is a quest for salvation. The consequence of this is that the resources of life (energy, time, and money) are used to a considerable extent in this effort, and therefore flow to the church in return for the legitimation granted. The life and energy of people of the middle ages were directed to specific religious works. People were prepared, because of the religious value associated with them, to take on the hardships and dangers of the crusades. A large part of the disposable wealth of both rich and poor was utilised to purchase indulgences, endow or purchase masses, finance pilgrimages and support the building of magnificent churches. This flow of temporal resources - in the forms of grants, benefices, donations, and moneys paid for indulgences and during pilgrimages - to the church resulted in the immense wealth and power of the church in the middle ages - and its consequent worldliness.

2.6.4 Articulation⁴ of legitimation and orientation

From what is said above, it is clear that the relationship between legitimation and orientation of life is that life is orientated by the necessity to obtain legitimation. The value of activities is determined in terms of their value in the spiritual quest. Religious works and objects are given greater value than secular. These religious works are especially the works of observant piety: Masses, pilgrimages, indulgences, prayers. Life here on earth is, in itself, of no value compared to the infinite value of everlasting bliss - or the infinite negative value of everlasting torment. So all the value of this life is judged by the efficacy thereof in obtaining life hereafter - and fleeing hell. Orientation of life is therefore with the, ultimately selfish, aim of achieving legitimation.

2.6.5 Negative heuristic - Insufficient disposition of sinner

The negative heuristic is the methodology with which a system addresses seeming discrepancies of the expectations it creates with actual experience. How does the medieval Catholic system react if a person, like Luther, scrupulously follows the pattern of the system and yet does not achieve the end, i.e. if a person devotes his life to the pursuit of salvation, and yet does not experience the purported result: legitimation from God, the assurance of salvation? The answer seems to lie on two levels: Either, the person has not yet done sufficient according to what is in him - or the fact that he distrusts the system itself is the problem. In the first case, he must do more. In the second case, he has committed the most serious sin possible - mistrust in God's salvific system - and therefore justly is condemned. The problem is that the system itself introduces doubt: In the first case, it is not clear how much a person must do in order to have 'done what is in his power' in order to be saved. In the second case, the internal conflict of the system of necessity generates doubt in its validity.

2.6.6 Positive heuristic - Elaboration of tradition

The positive heuristic of the system consists in the ever more exact elaboration of the tradition. Should abuses occur, the abuses are regulated by new church law within the system. For example, the abuse of indulgences was curtailed by regulating who had the authority to dispense which indulgences. However, in spite of repeated attempts to regulate the system, new abuses always recurred. This seems to indicate that the system falls into the 'degenerate' classification - where most energy is expended on regulating the exceptions, instead of energy being generated to incorporate new activities.

Theologically, a similar situation occurred: Scholasticism consisted in layer upon layer of commentaries, refining each question and attempting to resolve discrepancies between authorities in ever new interpretive strategies. Again, this seems to indicate a degenerate system.

It is clear that in all scholarly and reformist attempts, the fundamental flow of legitimation remained the central point of the Roman Catholic doctrine.

2.6.7 Result: Exploitation, insecurity and rigidity

The result of this system is clear from the social situation of the late middle ages: Because the church could transact an infinite amount (the treasury of the church) of an invaluable commodity (legitimation) for allegiance, power and money, these commodities of the church grew without bounds - to the extent that relatively the populations of Europe were impoverished.

Because the church could use the control over grace it had to obtain funds, the church grew ever richer. This caused worldliness within the church. At the same time, the questioning of the medieval system caused insecurity regarding the salvation offered by the church. Because the control of legitimacy was both the basis of personal benefit of those involved in the church, and conferred on them their sense of legitimacy personally and socially, it was impossible to question

⁴ The term 'articulation' is used for the link or relationship between legitimation and orientation because this brings with it the image of a working joint which can bend in different directions.

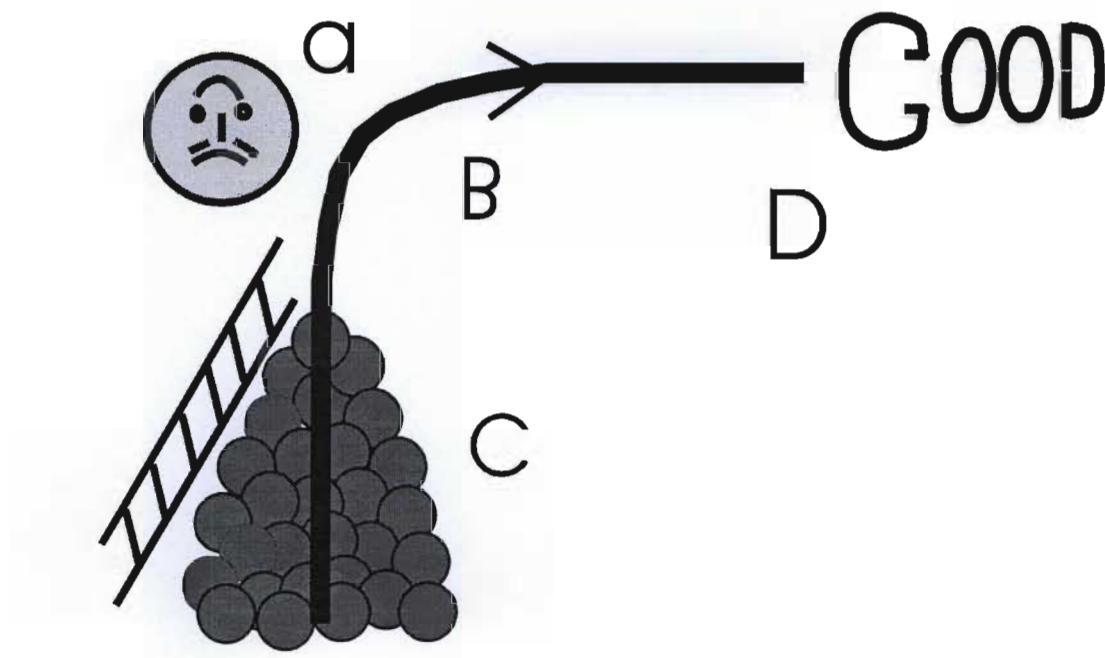
this central aspect of the structure without demolishing the entire structure. This led to the rigidity and ferocity with which opponents of the system - heretics - were persecuted.

Pictorially, this can be represented as follows:

God is above all, as a stern judge (A). The life of the believer is directed upward, in a quest to attain legitimation (B). In this process, the resources of life are utilised to build up a store of merit toward achieving the legitimation (C). The belief is that true life will only be attained after legitimation has been granted - in the bliss of heaven (D). To put this theology into a phrase, it can be described as an "in and up" theology: The aim is to rise up to the level where a valuable life will then become possible, and to this purpose, as much of the resources of life as possible are devoted and drawn in. It could also be called an 'r'-type theology, after the shape of the flow.

This structure can be clearly seen in action in the theology and practice around indulgences: Firstly, the preaching and theology around indulgences emphasises the severity of the judgement of God. The effect is to orient life to achievement of salvation - a state of grace, legitimacy - in God's judgement. Second, the preaching emphasises the uniqueness and efficacy of the legitimacy the church, through its hierarchy, can confer. Third, the resources of the person flow to the church in return for legitimation.

It is therefore at this point - indulgences - where the conflict between Luther's theology and the theology of the Roman catholic hierarchy ignited - and the intractableness of the conflict was a sign that the fundamental structure of the theologies made any compromise impossible.



3 The structure of Luther's theology in relation to his time

We delineated the structure of late medieval theology above. How did the structure of Luther's theology differ from this, and what implications did this change have?

In order to answer this question, we first give a broad overview of the theological development of Martin Luther - in order to be able to see the dynamics of the process of theological change he underwent, and, at the end, to again distil the structure of his theology in as simple terms as possible.

To sketch Luther's theological development as a response to his context, both social and theological categories need to be used, as these aspects were closely interwoven in late medieval times (Boff 1988, 200). As described above, the church as institution and the quest for grace played a central role in society. As institution, the church was exploitative. As a vehicle for grace, it was both demanding and ineffective. The structure of this system was that religious legitimacy was conferred by the hierarchically structured church, and the power to confer or withhold legitimacy was utilised to leverage political and economic power for the church institution. The importance placed on the quest for salvation (legitimacy) oriented the life of the believers, and directed the flow of resources, from the world to the sacral realm. This chapter will try to relate Luther's central concerns to this situation (Altmann 1989b, 70).

The relationship between Luther and his time is twofold: Luther's reaction to the questions of his time, on the one hand, and on the other the response of the people of his time to Luther. This study concentrates on the first part. However, the reaction to Luther is an important indicator of the accuracy and efficacy with which he addressed the relevant questions. This reaction has been treated in a number of studies, e.g. Dickens (1974), and the results will be integrated where appropriate.

3.1 Luthers personal context

3.1.1 Social Context

In enquiring after the structure of Luther's theology as a response to his time we ought also to look at the personal social context from which Luther came. Certainly, Luther's theology cannot simply be derived from his psychological or social history. However, his background certainly influenced the particular perspective from which he experienced and addressed questions posed to him (Press 1984, 189). Studies by Press and Selge (1984) convincingly confirm the speculation of Pascal (1933), that Luther's social background is primarily in the bourgeois circle of advisors to territorial princes. With these, he shared a humanist education. On the other hand, he had extensive contact with many social classes in Ernestine Saxony. He had little contact beyond the borders of this small state, for instance to the Imperial and free cities of southwestern or northern Germany. A few motivations for this statement deserve mention.

Luther's origins and environment brought him into contact with many groups of his time. His family was of peasant stock. His father, though, was a miner, and worked himself up into being a small mining entrepreneur. His mother came out of a family of the Eisenach citizenry. He himself studied liberal arts with friends who became lawyers and advisers in government. He became a monk in a reformed, strictly observant, order. He lived in a city, Erfurt, that was subject to social unrest (Press 1984, 190). He studied in this city and in Wittenberg at universities where humanism was in the process of reforming the universities to be a vehicle of middle class advancement. These universities came to be his primary area of work and circle of contact (Press 1984, 191). However, he also was a citizen of Wittenberg, and took his civic responsibility, for instance in providing care for the poor, seriously - and interfaced closely with the city government (Press 1984, 192). As

pastor, priest and confessor, he had intimate contact with both rich and poor, city dwellers and peasants. Luther's wife, Katharina von Bora, came from a noble family, and Luther had close relation with the advisors of the Prince-Elector of Saxony, who were noblemen (Press 1984, 192). The multiplicity of these social contacts gave Luther understanding of social issues from a number of perspectives, and enabled him to take his position without being taken in by any one grouping. The common thread in all this was humanist education, which involved both critique of the hierarchical-scholastic middle ages, and openness to the world (Selge 1984, 220f; Dickens 1974, 57.63f).

However, while his social background was varied, his geographical background was quite narrow: He really only knew ernestinian Saxony, a closed, little state, though it was economically progressive through the mining activities, and in a cultural upswing through the establishment of the university. Its administration was reasonably good, with a strong and honest local prince, who had extensive rights to internally govern both church and state (Press 1984, 193f). Luther was on friendly terms with a number of counsellors at the court of Elector Frederick. These often presented his point of view, and also advised Luther on political issues (Press 1984, 195). As he was often dependent on them for life and limb, they were probably extremely important to him, and he would have taken their counsel very seriously. His attitude to the state was probably also formed by the awareness that the court protected him and listened to his advice (Press 1984, 196). Luther therefore lived mostly under a exemplary government, and also at an axis of social transformation - the rising class of bourgeois state officials. These officials were modernising the territorial state and reforming the feudal society (Press 1984, 196f).

The social forces of Luther's time are especially the estates, and how these moved and new estates formed, the territorial states, that were in the process of formation and the free cities. Luther knew the capital city of a territorial state. The situation of rural peasantry and the free cities is not well known to him (Selge 1984, 219). However, his appearance in person before the Diet of Worms was motivated by referring to his great support under common people and the good he did to them (Pascal 1933, 81). His contact to common people probably comes from his pastoral role both in parish and in his order, and his writings give evidence of his ability to feel himself into the situation of people and to theological interpret their situation, and to explicate theological insight closely to life (Pascal 1933, 56).

3.1.2 Theological Background

Luther's school education was in the milieu of strict traditional Catholicism. In Magdeburg, he was at a school of the 'Brothers of a common life' for one year, and he could have gained some impulses from the *devotio moderna* in this time. (Schmid 1960, 276). Through his superior, Staupitz, he had some contact to German mysticism. He had great appreciation for their writings, as is evidenced by his preface to the "*Theologia Deutsch*", which he had published. These impulses were important for Luther's development of his theology of humility, which issued in his theology of the cross (Pesch 1983, 74f).

During his study of liberal arts in Erfurt, Luther got to know humanism (Pesch 1983, 71f). His opposition to scholasticism is already clear at this time (Pascal 1933, 23).

The theological training Luther received in Erfurt was according to the *via moderna* of Occamism. His theological set work was the Sentence-commentary by Gabriel Biel (Pesch 1983, 72; Dickens 1974, 79-82). However, already in his first lectures he used writings by Augustine - *De Trinitate* and *De civitate Dei*, together with a collection of excerpts from Augustine. These did not, however, include excerpts from the anti-Pelagian writings. The marginal notes Luther made clearly show his attempts to obtain a harmonisation of Occam and Augustine (Pesch 1983, 72). Luther discovered more and more support and inspiration in Augustine as time went on. As he got to know Augustine's writings, he read them voraciously, especially *De spiritu et littera* and the anti-Pelagian writings (Pesch 1983, 73; Dickens 1974, 84-88). Luther had, though his knowledge of Thomas of Aquinas seemed sketchy, been opposed to Thomism. He saw himself, in the tradition of his order, as an interpreter of Augustine. His position against scholasticism is most clearly formulated in *Conclusiones contra scholasticam theologiam* (Pesch 1983, 75-78).

3.2 Luther's central theological insights

Without a doubt, Justification by faith alone is the centre of Luther's theology (Althaus 1983, 195, Dickens 1974, 73, Pascal 1933, 92f). Around this centre, the primacy of scripture as norm of faith, the theology of the cross and the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist are important themes for Luther. However, Luther's theology is not to be seen as a static dogmatics. We need to find the relationship of the structure and development of his theology in relation to his time and context. The question therefore is how Luther arrived at his central insights and in which way these insights relate to the most important issues of his time.

My thesis is:

1. Because Luther took the church doctrine of his time seriously, and participated fully in the quest for salvation, which church doctrine prescribed, he experienced the internal contradictions of the church system in existential and soteriological depth.
2. Luther interpreted scripture from the context of this soteriological and existential problem.
3. In his encounter with scripture he came to a theological method, commonly regarded as his theology of the cross, in which experience and authority of scripture are dialectically related.
4. Being urged by his responsibility as pastor and teacher, he drew conclusions from this method for one aspect of church praxis - the sale of indulgences. This led to a conflict with the church hierarchy, as the church structure could not allow discontinuance of the principles embodied in indulgence sales.
5. The controversy with the church on indulgences caused Luther to formulate the implications of his approach both for legitimation of theological statements and of persons. In the conflict, both the liberating nature and the solidity of the new approach were shown.
6. Therefore, Luther's approach led from a controversy based in a specific occasion of pastoral responsibility to the general formulation of his teaching on justification by faith. This teaching fundamentally subverted the medieval hierarchical-sacramental church structure. Therefore, no compromise could be found.
7. The liberating consequence of Luther's new approach was experienced broadly. In consequence, Luther quickly gained stature and authority, and his opinion on many issues was asked for. His fundamental approach was therefore explicated, deepened and applied in the controversies and issues posed to Luther in the time that followed.
8. Luther's new approach motivates a concept of church that is neither hierarchical nor sacramental, but communitarian.
9. Luther's theological method, at its core, involves the dialectical relation of experience and authority of scripture.

This thesis is to be motivated in the following sections. After motivating this description of Luther's theology-in-process, we will be able to outline the structure of Luther's theology as a response to the theology and society of his time.

3.3 The origin of Luther's Theologia Crucis in his conflicts of conscience

3.3.1 Luther's Conflicts of Conscience

1. Because Luther took the church doctrine of his time seriously, and participated fully in the quest for salvation, which church doctrine prescribed, he experienced the internal contradiction of the church's system in existential and soteriological depth.

Already early in his life, Luther experienced himself to be in a threatening closeness to God. He saw Christ as the judge at the last day. He expected this judge to reward those who could show signs of faith. However, he could not find in himself the capacity to produce such faith. He writes:

Ich fasste die Sache ernst an, da ich den Jüngsten Tag schrecklich fürchtete und doch von Herzensgrund verlangte, selig zu werden (WA 54, 179). (I approached the matter with earnestness, as I feared the Last Day deeply and had a heartfelt desire to be saved)

Luther tried to interpose saints between himself and Christ, but this did not solve the problem (Brecht 1981, 82f). His entry into the monastery only deepened the conflicts. He had expected, in accordance with medieval piety and doctrine, that his entry into a holy place would reduce his conflict of conscience, as he had fled the world. However, he experienced the same world of conflicts of conscience, his self-centeredness, fear of judgement and resulting hatred of God (Altmann 1992, 6f). Therefore, his trust in the sacramental system of the middle ages was subverted, especially as it had become uncertain due to the Occamist doctrine of '*facere quod in se est*', which meant that the efficacy of the sacrament depended on the disposition of the recipient, who had to do whatever he could from his side to prepare himself for grace. Luther's later polemics often attacked this sentence. The earnestness, with which Luther tried and failed to attain certainty of grace showed that the salvific system of the Middle Ages had become unworkable. This was due mainly to the emphasis on God as a judge, which held people in continuous tension and put pressure on them to ensure their access to grace (Shaul 1991, 29). Luther's central question was how to obtain a gracious God. He had done everything that he could, according to the dictum *facere quod in se est*, to obtain this goal, but he experienced that his uncertainty about salvation had only grown. Because of this, his hatred against God, who threw him into such conflicts of conscience and threat of damnation, also grew, and, realising this as sin, his affliction increased (Altmann 1992, 30f). These conflicts of conscience reached their climax in the concern, whether God had not withdrawn grace from him. As this fear was in itself regarded as blasphemy, his despair grew more and more (Brecht 1981, 86). These thoughts occur especially in the commentary on Romans, and therefore took place around 1515. When Luther consulted Staupitz about these conflicts, Staupitz advised him to see in his suffering and conflicts his identification with the suffering and conflict endured by Christ on the cross, and therefore to understand them as a part of God's salvific work in him. It is from this thought that Luther's theology of the cross then developed (Brecht 1981, 87). As Luther's concern in his conflicts was for the nature of salvation and the character of God, his conflicts led him to theological depth (Brecht 1981, 88).

3.3.2 Interpretation of Scripture in relation to existential questions.

2. Luther interpreted scripture from the context of this soteriological and existential problem.

Luther's interest in the Bible began early - already during his youth, but especially since he obtained his first personal Bible when he became a monk in 1505 (Brecht 1981, 91f). He read the Bible with intense questions, expecting from it answers to his conflicts of conscience (Brecht 1981, 91). However, instead of quietening his conflicts, the Bible deepened them, as it undermined his confidence in the sacramental system even more (Brecht 1981, 93; Shaul 1991, 30). However, he always held that only persons who struggled in their conscience could truly understand the Bible:

Meine Theologie habe ich nicht auf einmal gelernt, sondern ich habe immer tiefer und tiefer danach forschen müssen. Dazu haben mich meine Anfechtungen gebracht; denn die Heilige Schrift kann man nimmermehr verstehen ohne die Praktiken und Anfechtungen (WA 40 III, 672; WA TR 1,979; WA TR 1, 941). (I did not learn my theology all at once. I had to search deeper and ever deeper for it. I have been brought to do this by the afflictions of

conscience (Anfechtungen) I experienced; for one can never understand Holy Scripture without practices and afflictions.)

Luther became an interpreter of the Bible in the tension between the biblical texts used in the divine services, especially the Psalms, and his conflicts of conscience (Brecht 1981, 93). His way of interpreting the Bible was special in that he intensely sought to understand the text not from a detached objective position, but in being involved with it with his questions and emotions, and being prepared to be changed by the text (Pesch 1983, 49-52, 59f; Brecht 1981, 131; Althaus 1983, 17.56f). His theological method therefore in essence is listening to scripture (Althaus 1983, 18). The consequence was that his teaching on scripture was novel. He related to the burning questions of his time, and always asked conscientiously for the true meaning of the text. He allowed the text to criticise both church and society. Themes that recur are the critique of lax piety, the lack of love of neighbour, the greed for money by church prelates, exploitation of the poor and the lack of rights accorded to them (Brecht 1981, 144f.149; Pesch 1983, 62ff, Altmann 1992, 47.54). He understood the Psalms especially as prayers of people who suffered from conflicts of conscience, and held that they could only be understood by those suffering from such conflicts (Brecht 1981, 132). Actually, theology in general could only be done by people who were conflicted and dissatisfied (Altmann 1989b, 71).

During the first lecture on the Psalms, Luther still utilised the traditional hermeneutic of the fourfold meaning of scripture. In this exposition, the *sensus literalis* is interpreted christologically, while the allegorical sense is interpreted to refer to the reality of the church, the tropological as referring to human reality, and the anagogical as referring to the last things. (Ebeling 1981, 110f) However, he reworked a combination of the literal and tropological (seen by Luther as soteriological) sense toward his prophetic-literal interpretation aiming toward Christ (Pesch 1983, 59f). He therefore reinterpreted the literal sense as fundamentally referring to Christ, and the tropological sense as implying God's action on us, with Christ being both example for us and acting on our behalf (Ebeling 1981, 112f). This thought of Christ acting on our behalf subsequently led Luther to the imputational concept of justification (Pesch 1983, 61f). Later, during the lecture on Romans, Luther explicitly rejects the fourfold interpretation of scripture, and refers to Nicolas of Lyra in only accepting the literal sense of scripture (Altmann 1992, 49.54; Pesch 1983, 62ff).

The Bible confirmed Luther's experience that humans can never do enough to satisfy God's demands, and therefore always remain sinners before God (Brecht 1981, 132f). He held on to the relationship to God, which initially meant accepting the judgement of condemnation (Brecht 1981, 133). It is only in this humble acceptance of condemnation that Luther thought one could have part in the justifying power of the cross (Brecht 1981, 135). Therefore, Luther saw God's action as contradictory: In humbling the sinful human, he brings the sinner closer to God (Brecht 1981, 135). Consequently, every claim to own goodness is of itself sin. Only total attrition gives any possibility to be justified (Brecht 1981, 136). In this dialectic the theology of the cross and the distinction between law and gospel have their roots (Brecht 1981, 137). In reading the Bible, Luther uses a number of translations, primarily the Vulgate, but also, as from 1516, the Greek New Testament edited by Erasmus. In studying the original language, Luther came to new insights. For instance, his conception of penance changed to concentrate on inner renewal instead of the outward rite of penance due to the Greek μετανοειν in place of *poenitentiam agere* (Pascal 1933, 48f, WA 1, 525f). It is through this concentrated, existential interpretation of scripture that Luther progresses in a new theological direction. Later on, he writes:

Damals (1519) hatte ich die Schrift schon sieben Jahre lang aufs fleißigste privatim und öffentlich gelesen und gelehrt, so dass ich alles fast auswendig konnte; dann hatte ich auch die Anfänge der Erkenntnis und des Glaubens an Christus gewonnen, nämlich, dass wir nicht durch Werke, sondern durch den Glauben an Christus selig werden; schließlich hatte ich auch das, wovon ich jetzt rede: der Papst ist nicht nach Göttlichen Recht das Haupt der Kirche, bereits öffentlich verteidigt (WA 54, 184) (At that time (1519), I had already most diligently read and taught Scripture privately and publicly for seven years, so that I knew almost all of it by heart. I also had the beginnings of understanding and of faith in Christ, this being that we are not saved by works, but only through faith in Christ. Lastly, I had already defended the thesis in public of which I am speaking now, that the pope is not head of the Church by divine law.)

3.3.3 Theology of the Cross

3. In his encounter with scripture he came to a theological method, commonly regarded as his theology of the cross, in which experience and authority of scripture are dialectically related.

Luther's concentrated reading of scripture in the light of his personal conflicts and social reality, as described above, is already a new theological method, if one compares it to the late medieval practice, which centred on interpreting normative theologians, in so-called Sententiaries. Luther was critical of this scholasticism from early on - he wrote that he was looking for a theology that would not speculate, but find the 'kernel of the nut' *die den Kern der Nuss und das Mark der Knochen erforscht* (WAB 1; 17 Nr.5). His theological method is already different from medieval theology, even if the reformational insight (*Reformatorisches Erkenntnis*) had not yet happened. The new insight of the reformational insight is linked by Luther to a new interpretation of Romans 1:17 during 1518 as relating to passive justification, in the subjective usage of the genitive, where righteousness is created in us by God (Pesch 1983, 82f). This in itself is in continuity with medieval theology - though not with Occamism, which was what Luther knew (Pesch 1983, 87). The interpretation of God's righteousness as a subjective genitive was common amongst medieval exegetes, whom Luther knew (Pesch 1983, 87). Also the rejection of justification by works was an attack only on Occamism, but not on the whole of medieval theology (Pesch 1983, 88). There are also roots for Luther's demand for a theology that applies to human experience in Tauler. Equally, his theology of the cross can be related to theologies of humility in monastic and mystical circles (Pesch 1983, 88f; Dickens 1974, 76f; Brecht 1981, 137). However, the consistent combination of all of the above set Luther on a path that was both new and risky. Already in the first lecture on the Psalms, this path diverges from what Luther could have learnt, and shows underlying potential for conflict (Pesch 1983, 93).

The critical elements of Luther's theological method, the development of which we have described above, are:

1. The immediate relationship between the Word of God, found in the Bible without interposition of church dogma, and the Christian with his inner and outer experience, who is in conflict of conscience and desires assurance: The same immediate relationship between word of God and the social and church context applies. For Luther, all of theology is to be soteriology: Understanding of God in his relationship to the human being, and of the human being in his relationship to God. There is no objective doctrine of God (Althaus 1983, 21). The relationship between God and humans is determined by the sin of humans and the justification by God (Althaus 1983, 21). This is summarised in the understanding of the sacraments, in which everything depends on the word of promise from God and the faith of the recipient (Pesch 1983, 95). The result is that the office of the church has little theological or soteriological significance. It is because of this understanding that Luther, being able to draw his personal legitimation before God directly from the word of promise, could be equanimous in the face of condemnation by the hierarchy of the church (Pesch 1983, 96f).

Luther's interpretation of scripture is further defined by its christological concentration, which developed out of the tropological-prophetical sense of scripture he used in the lecture on Psalms. This leads, because of the strictly soteriological concentration of Luther in his quest for assurance in the midst of conflict of conscience, through the theology of the cross to the Christ-centred understanding of justification (Schild 1969, 95). Only those who are in conflict of conscience can understand scripture.

2. The dialectical way in which scripture and experience are put into relationship in Luther's Theology of the Cross: Again and again, Luther avers: Where the experience is one of being assailed by the wrath of God and the realisation of one's own sinfulness, faith believes in the grace of God hidden underneath the experience of wrath. By keeping these poles together in utmost tension, the believer can derive consolation precisely in the moment of greatest affliction of conscience. It is this consolation that in the end can grow into assurance (Althaus 1983, 58-61; Pesch 1983, 94f):

An den anderem soll er verzagen und sich zuversichtlich in die Tiefe der Barmherzigkeit Gottes begeben, der ihm die Vergebung der Sünden treulich zusagt. Summa Summarum: Der Gerechte lebt nicht aus den Werken noch aus dem Gesetz, sondern aus dem Glauben (Römer 1, 17) (WA 1, 633). 8. Über das hinaus ist der höchste Grad des Glaubens, wenn Gott nicht mit zeitlichem Leiden, sondern mit Tod, Hölle und Sünde das Gewissen strafft. Hier zu glauben dass Gott gefallen an uns hat, ist das höchste Werk (WA 6, 209). (He must despair of everything else and go confidently into the depths of the mercy of God, who promises him forgiveness of sins trustworthily. In summary: The righteous does not live by works nor by the law, but by faith (Rom 1:17). 8. Beyond this, the highest degree of faith is when God does not punish with sufferings of this time, but with death, hell and conscience. To believe in this situation that God delights in us, is the highest work.)

Besides the assurance that flows from the dialectical relationship between experience and scripture, a new relationship to the world also emerges. As everything in the world is sinful, but also everything is underlain by God's grace, there is no longer any need to divide the world into separate realms of holy and profane, as in medieval theology. The front between holy and profane goes through every institution and person (Altmann 1992, 6f; Dickens 1974, 75).

A further consequence of the dialectical relationship of wrath and grace of God is the distinction and interrelation of law and gospel that Luther later develops and denotes as the central point of theology (Althaus 1983, 218).

The common thread of the points mentioned above is that the world is no longer seen statically in terms of separate ordered realms, but dynamically in dialectical relationships of opposing aspects (Altmann 1992, 16f). The centrality of these insights is clearly visible in Luther's formulations in Heidelberg Disputation:

19. Nicht den nennt man angemessenerweise einen Theologen, der das unsichtbare Wesen Gottes sieht dadurch, dass er erkennt, was geschehen ist. 20. Sondern den, der das, was von Gott sichtbar wird, und den Rücken Gottes durch Leiden und Kreuz erblickt und erkennt. 21. Der Theologe der Herrlichkeit nennt das Böse gut und das Gute böse, der Theologe des Kreuzes sagt das, was die Wirklichkeit ist. 22. Jene Weisheit, die das durch Werke erkannte unsichtbare Wesen Gottes betrachtet, bläht ganz und gar auf, macht blind und verhärtet. 23. Und das Gesetz bewirkt den Zorn Gottes, tötet, verflucht, macht schuldig, verdammt, was nicht in Christus ist. 24. Dennoch ist jene Weisheit nicht als solche böse und ist das Gesetz nicht zu fliehen, sondern der Mensch ohne die Theologie des Kreuzes missbraucht die besten Dinge in ganz schlimmer Weise (WA 1, 361-3) (19. One does not properly call a theologian one who perceives the invisible nature of God by perception of what has happened. 20. But one properly calls a theologian one who perceives and recognises what is visible of God and the back of God through suffering and cross. 21. The theologian of glory calls what is bad good, and what is good bad, the theologian of the cross says, what really is. 22. The wisdom which contemplates the invisible nature of God recognised in works, inflates totally, makes one blind and hardens the heart. 23. And the law causes the wrath of God, kills, curses, makes guilty, condemns, whatever is not in Christ. 24. However, not this wisdom in itself is evil, and one should not flee from the law, but the human without the theology of the cross abuses the best things in the worst possible way.)

Luther understood this approach to be in continuity with church tradition. He regarded himself as interpreter of Augustine and Paul. His theology was by no means finished as a closed system - it rather was a continuing attempt to search for answers to questions. Insofar as it contains all the seeds of the later theology, it can be seen as reformational turning point, but Luther himself experienced a breakthrough only during the time of conflict with the church hierarchy (Pesch 1983, 92). The fundamental elements of this theological method remained in place throughout his life, though - all commentators emphasize the dialectical nature and scriptural orientation of Luther's method (Ebeling 1964, 101.121; Kettunen 1989, 127).

3.4 Controversy on indulgences and justification by faith alone

3.4.1 The controversy on indulgences

4. Being urged by his responsibility as pastor and teacher, he drew conclusions from this method for one aspect of church praxis - the sale of indulgences. This led to a conflict with the church hierarchy, as the church structure did not allow discontinuance of the principles embodied in indulgence sales.

Because of the theology described above, Luther had already become estranged to medieval theology and spirituality, in which the encounter between God and human is mediated by the sacramental system of the hierarchical church. His theology of the cross was able to reinterpret experiences of affliction on conscience and punishment as being signs of the grace of God. Therefore, it could not give place to a desire to flee from punishments. It also took the claim of God on the whole of life seriously. Grace was no longer conceived of in substantive, but in relational terms, and merits found no place in this approach. Therefore, the whole system of indulgences was alien to Luther's thought. When indulgences were sold in the area around Wittenberg a conflict was almost inevitable. The reason for this sale of indulgences was to fund both the palliate for the Archbishopric that Georg of Erfurt had acquired and the building of the St. Peter's cathedral in Rome (WA 51, 540). Luther describes the sequence of events in the following words:

Im Jahre 1517 wurde also der Ablass in dieser Gegend um schändlichen Gewinnes willen verkauft. Ich war damals Prediger, ein junger Doktor der Theologie, und fing an, den Leuten abzuraten, sie sollten den Ablassschreibern kein Gehör schenken; sie hätten Besseres zu tun. Und ich glaubte dabei ganz gewiss, dass ich den Papst als Schutzherren hätte (WA 54, 180) Als bald schrieb ich zwei Briefe (an den Erzbischof von Mainz und den Bischof von Brandenburg). Da man mir kein Gehör schenkte veröffentlichte ich den Disputationszettel ... Das hieß den Himmel herabstürzen und die Welt im Brand stecken ... Weil aber die Deutschen die Plünderungen ... der Römischen Betrüger müde waren, warteten sie indessen mit großer Spannung auf den Ausgang dieser Sache (WA 54, 181). (In the year 1517, indulgences were sold in this area for filthy gain. I was a preacher at the time, a young doctor of theology. I started advising people not to listen to the purveyors of indulgences - they could do better. And I truly believed that I had the pope as patron in this. I therefore wrote two letters (to the Archbishop of Mainz and the Bishop of Brandenburg). As I was not listened to, I published the disputation pamphlet. This meant throwing down heaven and igniting the world. But because the Germans were tired of the pillaging of the Roman liars, they awaited the outcome of this issue with great expectation.)

Luther considered himself bound, because of his responsibility in pastoral care and teaching, to question a practice that he found theologically questionable and pastorally unsound (Prien 1985, 118). Luther's 95 "Theses on the power and efficacy of indulgences" clearly show the form of the theology described above. They equally witness Luther's conviction still to be totally within the realm of Catholic theology. In accordance with his theology of the cross and his exegetical insights on penance (WA 1, 525-527), the theses demand a) that all of life be penance (Th.1), by which not sacramental, but inward penance is meant (Th.2). They emphasise b) the necessity and the salvific nature of punishment that is accepted (Th. 4.40.93-95). c) The power of the pope is restricted to act in respect of penalties imposed by the church (5.8-13.20-28.33.76), d) They assert that in case of true repentance the promise of the word of God effects forgiveness even without indulgences, actions or sacraments of the institutional church, and therefore regard the word as to be honoured more than indulgences (6.36-39.54-62.79). e) They point out that works of love are to be preferred to indulgences, and the punishment of God should be accepted rather than avoided (40-49). f) The exploitation and desire for money evident in the sale of indulgences is criticised (50f.65-67.73.86) (WA 1, 530-628). In this condensed overview of the 95 theses, it is apparent that the main elements of the critique of Luther can be derived from the two elements of the theological approach described above. The theology of the cross gives rise to a.b.e). The direct relationship of the Word of God and human reality results in b.d). In c) it is clear that the theological approach of Luther

fundamentally undermines the whole nature of the institutional church of Luther's time, and that a fundamental controversy is unavoidable. From e) and the last part of the Luther quote above it is also clear that Luther's approach, if it could assert itself, would be experienced as liberative for many people.

3.4.2 Controversy with the church and the authority of scripture.

5. The controversy with the church on indulgences necessitates Luther to formulate the implications of his approach both for legitimation of theological statements and of persons. In the conflict, both the liberating nature and the solidity of the new approach were proven.

Luther's critique on indulgences spread like wild fire, and found wide acceptance. Theological critique concentrated on the question of the authority and infallibility of the pope, since the theses were otherwise in accordance with accepted theology. The infallible authority of the pope was not, at the time, generally accepted, even though it had been in ascendance for a long time, especially in Italy and in the Dominican order (Pascal 1933, 49f). Luther, in part also due to the tension between Augustinian and Dominican orders, found much support within his own congregation, even in spite of condemnation by the papal court (Pascal 1933, 50). In his answer to the condemnation by the Papal court, Luther began to seriously question the authority of the pope to decide matters of teaching. This then led him to reject the authority of the pope to excommunicate people, since the pope may only decide on membership of the outer, institutional church (Pascal 1933, 52). The theological dimension of the conflict is most clearly shown in the dialogue of Luther and Cardinal Cajetan (Pesch 1983, 103f). This encounter, although it was between two leading theologians of the time, really was an encounter between theology and institution. The result was that Luther and Cajetan were always talking past each other. Luther approached the matter as a discussion of theological content. Cajetan, on the other hand, regarded the theological question as decided by the decision of the pope, and he approached the discussion purely as a clarification on how the retraction of Luther was to be done. Cajetan, however, was clearly very aware of the burning issues (Pesch 1983, 105f). The dispute began with the question on the right of the church to allocate the merits of the saints and Christ, thesis 58. This was by no means an accepted consensus of theologians. The discussion moved very quickly, however, to the Luther's questioning the sole right of the office of the church to decide on the interpretation of scripture. For Cajetan, it was unthinkable that scripture could be legitimately interpreted outside of or against the office of the church, while Luther (in accordance also with the University of Paris) held that the interpretation of scripture should be able to be used critically against the officials of the church. (Pascal 1933, 55; Pesch 1983, 107f). In our day, the leader of the doctrinal section of the Roman Church, Cardinal Ratzinger says that the decisive split between Protestantism and the Catholic church was due to the breach of this authority; that it was an occasion in which "the authority of the exegete is put over the authority of the Church and her tradition." (Messori 1985, 158) The discussion then moved on to the question of the origin of assurance of grace. Luther asserted that grace comes only from the individual belief in the promise of the word of God. The institution of the church played no role in this. Cajetan, on the other hand, asserted that grace was only accessible through the channels of the institutional church (Pesch 1983, 109ff). On this point, Luther did indeed have a position outside of the position of the church hitherto. This was new teaching. Therefore, this must be seen as the reformational breakthrough. This breakthrough is connected with the separation of the encounter of the individual conscience and the word of promise from the channels of the institutional church (Altmann 1992, 45f; Pesch 1983, 112f). "It was (only) the response of the Confutation that made it clear that 'justification by faith' was the central issue of the reformation." (Hoy 1990, 265) By making this separation, Luther experienced an added conflict of conscience: Could he, a single person, be right in this question against the whole of the institutional church? Was his insistence on his own thinking not arrogance in the extreme, totally opposed to his theology of humility? He wrote:

Was und wie mein Herz in diesem ersten und zweiten Jahr gelitten hat, und wie groß damals meine echte Demut, ja beinahe Verzweiflung gewesen ist, ... (WA 39 I, 6) (What and how my heart had suffered in this first and second year, and how large my true humility, yes, almost my despair had been)

Ich hatte aber bereits den Katechismus mit nicht geringen Erfolg gelehrt; dass er nicht verdammt werden durfte, wusste ich, und auch, dass ich das nicht ertragen dürfte, wenn ich nicht Christus verleugnen wollte (WA 39 I 7). (I had already taught the catechism with not inconsiderable success. I knew that it could not be condemned. I also knew that I could not accept such condemnation without disavowing Christ.)

The tensions this added conflict brought with it then brought on the final breakthrough, in which the dark tones of the initial theology of humility were overcome. This happened in 1518, according to the description of Luther:

Unterdessen war ich in diesem Jahre (1518) von neuem daran gegangen, den Psalter auszulegen. ... Mit außerordentlicher Leidenschaft war ich davon besessen, Paulus im Brief an die Römer kennen zu lernen. Nicht die Herzenskälte, sondern ein einziges Wort im ersten Kapitel war mir bisher dabei im Wege: 'Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes wird darin (im Evangelium) offenbart. Ich hasste nämlich dieses Wort 'Gerechtigkeit Gottes' weil ich durch den Brauch und die Gewohnheit aller Lehrer unterwiesen war, es philosophisch von der formalen oder aktiven Gerechtigkeit zu verstehen, nach welcher Gott gerecht ist und die Sünder strafft. Ich konnte den Gerechten, die Sünder strafenden Gott nicht lieben, im Gegenteil, ich hasste ihn sogar. Wenn ich auch als Mönch untadelig lebte, fühlte ich mich vor Gott doch als Sünder, und mein Gewissen quälte mich sehr. Ich wagte nicht zu hoffen, dass ich Gott durch meine Genugtuung versöhnen konnte. ... jedoch klopfte ich rücksichtslos bei Paulus an dieser Stelle an; ich dürstete glühend zu wissen, was Paulus wollte. Da erbarmte Gott sich meiner, .. (dass) ich endlich den Zusammenhang beachtete: 'Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes wird in ihm offenbart, wie geschrieben steht: Der Gerechte lebt aus Glauben.' Da fing ich an, die Gerechtigkeit als eine solche zu verstehen, durch welche der Gerechte als Gottes Gabe lebt, nämlich aus dem Glauben. ... Da fühlte ich mich ganz und gar neu geboren .. (WA 54, 185f). Meanwhile in that same year, 1518, I had begun interpreting the Psalms once again. ... I had conceived a burning desire to understand what Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans, but thus far there had stood in my way, not the cold blood around my heart, but that one word which is in chapter one: "The justice of God is revealed in it." I hated that word, "justice of God," which, by the use and custom of all my teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically as referring to formal or active justice, as they call it, i.e., that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust. But I, blameless monk that I was, felt that before God I was a sinner with an extremely troubled conscience. I couldn't be sure that God was appeased by my satisfaction. I did not love, no, rather I hated the just God who punishes sinners. In silence, if I did not blaspheme, then certainly I grumbled vehemently and got angry at God. I said, "Isn't it enough that we miserable sinners, lost for all eternity because of original sin, are oppressed by every kind of calamity through the Ten Commandments? Why does God heap sorrow upon sorrow through the Gospel and through the Gospel threaten us with his justice and his wrath?" This was how I was raging with wild and disturbed conscience. I constantly badgered St. Paul about that spot in Romans 1 and anxiously wanted to know what he meant. I meditated night and day on those words until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid attention to their context: "The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: 'The just person lives by faith.'" I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e. that by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just person lives by faith." All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light. I ran through the Scriptures from memory and found that other terms had analogous meanings, e.g., the work of God, that is, what God works in us; the power of God, by which he makes us powerful; the wisdom of God, by which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

It was only at this time that Luther arrived at the insight that became for him the centre of his theology: Justification by faith alone (Pinomaa 1990, 79f). At this point, the fundamental nature of his theology was already in place, and all that follows is explication and application. However, the insight of justification by faith alone was already present as seed in the principles outlined before. It needed the conflict with the authority of the church, however, to bring Luther into the conflict between his conscience and scripture, on the one hand, and the church. This conflict of theological legitimation intensified his affliction on personal legitimation - acceptance by God - to the point where the breakthrough could occur, and Luther could come to the final acceptance that both theological and personal legitimation come directly from the encounter with the word of God, and in acceptance of the work of God. (Pesch 1983, 101; Pinomaa 1990, 79f). The breakthrough is therefore to rely in faith solely on the word of God, even in conflict with the institution of the church (Fischer 1976, 178f; Grane 1978, 39; Pesch 1983, 97). Luther formulated this breakthrough in writings published soon after it occurred, during in 1518: the disputation *De duplici iustitiae* and the pamphlet *Tröstung furchtsamer Gewissen* (*Consolation of troubled consciences*) with the words: "Christ alone is our righteousness, received through word and faith" (Pesch 1983, 98). This insight had been obtained in the struggle about legitimation, both of his person and of the teaching of the church:

"Denn ich selbst habe meinen Papisten sehr viel zu verdanken, dass sie mich durch des Teufels Toben so zerschlagen, bedrängt und geängstet, das ist, zu einem guten Theologen gemacht haben, wohin ich sonst nicht gekommen wäre (WA 50, 660) (For I have much cause to be grateful to my papists, that they have battered, harried and threatened me so much, that is, that they have made me to a good theologian, which I would otherwise not have become.)"

Luther's reformation came about in the dispute with the church of his time. He was opposed not only to the empirical reality of this church, but also to the principle on which the Roman church rested. (Althaus 1983, 248, my translation) Therefore, the critical issue of the reformation is not only justification by faith alone, but also the conception that both theological and personal legitimation happen in the encounter between the conscience and the word directly, and criticism and assurance against the church are made possible (Pesch 1983, 101). Luther's emphasis of the literal sense of scripture is not important as an access to an absolute understanding of scripture, but because it gave access to a relevant interpretation of scripture in a specific context - the critique of the papal monopoly of interpretation, which legitimated itself through the use of the fourfold sense of scripture (Altmann 1992, 54). There are two issues at stake: the issue of office and theological critique, and the issue of the right of the individual as against the institution. With Luther, it became clear that each individual needs to obtain assurance and faith for him or herself. In this sense, the individualism of modernity began with Luther (Pesch 1983, 101f). After this breakthrough, Luther quickly drew the consequences: He denied the claims of the papal church to obedience, spiritual authority and salvific mediatorship through the sacraments. In this, it became clear that Luther's new insight was a frontal and fundamental attack on the church of his time (Fischer 1978, 179).

3.4.3 Justification through faith alone

6. Therefore, Luther's approach led from a controversy based in a specific occasion of pastoral responsibility to the general formulation of his teaching on justification by faith. This teaching fundamentally subverted the medieval hierarchical-sacramental church structure. Therefore, no compromise could be found.

The insight of Luther mentioned above was an answer to both questions of his time: It gave access to personal legitimation - salvation - independent of church hierarchy and opened the way for a reform of the church by providing a different source of social legitimation. It was a deep spiritual experience with tremendous consequences for both church and society. Compared to mysticism, it had the advantage that the experience of the presence of God did not presuppose the resources needed for extraordinary practice or discipline. Compared to the observant piety of the time, as expressed in pilgrimages and indulgence sales, it had the advantage that it did not presuppose access to resources, was not open to exploitation and offered consistent assurance. It therefore opened a way to salvation accessible to all, especially the poor and powerless, and thereby gave

them new self-confidence and dignity (Maimela 1988, 38). It was not necessarily easy - '*all of life should be repentance*', but it was a way open to all. This was experienced as liberating. (Altmann 2000, 113) At the same time, the new concept of salvation withdrew from the church institution both absolute divine authority and financial sources. It made thoroughgoing reform possible, since the church was not seen as constituted from above, through the pope as representative of Christ, but from below, by the local, individual encounter with the Word of God. No institution or person could decide on the salvation of any one else, as this was decided in the individual encounter between conscience and God, and the faith therein (Fischer 1978, 178f). Luther's insight was a fundamental liberation (Maimela 1988, 38; Shaull 1991, 29.32; Lau 1969, 16; Altmann 1992, 4).

3.4.3.1 The structure of "Justification by faith".

The structure of the fundamental approach of Luther is determinative both for his central insight of justification by faith, and for the later explication thereof in relation to issues posed to him.

To Luther, the article on justification by faith is the main point, the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, the *proprium* of Christianity. (Althaus 1983, 195). He can say the same of Jesus Christ, because justification by faith is nothing else than the correct understanding of faith in Jesus Christ, and justification can never be separated from Christ (Althaus 1983, 196). Luther is not consistent in his use of '*justificare*': It mostly denotes the judgement of God, in which the human being is declared to be righteous (*iustificatio reputare, computare, forensica*). In other instances, the whole process by which the human being is made essentially righteous is implied (*iustificatio transformativa*) (Althaus 1983, 197). Luther writes:

Zweifach ist die Gerechtigkeit der Christen, wie auch die Sünde der Menschen eine zweifache ist. Die eine Gerechtigkeit ist eine Fremde, von außen eingegossene. Das ist die, durch welche Christus gerecht ist und durch den Glauben gerecht macht (WA 2, 145). Die zweite Gerechtigkeit ist unsere eigene .. (die) wir mit der ersten und fremden zusammen wirken. ... Die zweite Gerechtigkeit ist ein Werk und eine Folge der ersten Gerechtigkeit (146f). (The righteousness of Christians is dual, just like the sin of humans is dual. The one righteousness is foreign, imparted from outside. This is the righteousness by which Christ is righteous and makes righteous through faith. The second righteousness is our own, ... (which) we work together with the first and foreign one ... The second righteousness is a work and consequence of the first righteousness. "Therefore let us learn diligently this art of distinguishing between these two kinds of righteousness, in order that we may know how far we should obey the new law." (LW 26, 11)

The former, forensic justification, is the effective cause of the latter; while the latter, transformative justification, is final cause and eschatological motivation for the former (Althaus 1983, 204-210). The experience of forensic justification necessarily produces activity, works, that show that faith is genuine (Althaus 1983, 214):

"We say that justification is effective without works, not that faith is without works. For that faith which lacks fruit is not efficacious but a feigned faith." (LW 34, 176) (Hoy 1990, 282)

In both cases, the righteousness can only be accepted in faith as a gift through Jesus Christ: One accepts the merciful judgement of God on oneself and lives on the basis of this. The "*pro me*" is an essential part of faith, which is, just as the justification that it believes in, a gift of God. In faith, Christ is present with the human being, and faith grasps Christ and claims the righteousness of Christ, together with his presence, as one's own (Althaus 1983, 200ff).

"We must look at this image and take hold of it with a firm faith. He who does this has the innocence and the victory of Christ, no matter how great a sinner he is ... therefore, we are justified by faith alone, because faith alone grasps this victory of Christ." (LW 26, 284) (Hoy 1990, 278)

This implies that one does not trust in oneself, and one's own righteousness any more, nor is pleased with oneself. In this way, faith is fulfillment of the first commandment, by giving God the glory, and not claiming honour for oneself. In this, faith is not work produced by the human being, but is solely the work of God (Althaus 1983, 203.197f). Therefore, the tension of a person being always *Simul iustus et peccator* is necessary: The person is justified outside of his own self in the judgement of God, and knows that in himself, as far as his own abilities and work is concerned, he remains a sinner. The completion of transformative justification remains unaccomplished, though it has begun, until the end of his life (Althaus 1983, 211). The simultaneity of righteous and sinner is no peaceful coexistence, however, but the war of new being against old, of Christ in me against the old Adam. In so far as Christ is in me and battling the old Adam, I am just. Therefore, *simul iustus et peccator* denotes aspects of the person which are in conflict with each other. Because the process is never completed, I continue to depend both on the merciful judgement of God, against my real sinful state, and for his Spirit's assistance in upholding the new being against the old (Althaus 1983, 212f).

"But God overlooks these sins, and in his sight they are as though they were not sins. This is accomplished by imputation on account of faith by which I begin to take hold of the righteousness of Christ; and on his account God reckons imperfect righteousness as perfect righteousness and sin not as sin, even though it really is sin." (LW 26, 231-232) (Hoy 1990, 281)

Therefore two aspects remain conjoined: The human being remains a dependant, almost passive, recipient of God's action; and the dialectic remains that the human being is declared righteous in so far as she acknowledges that she is a sinner and totally dependant on God's grace. These aspects show the continued relevance of the theology of the cross and humility, and the concentration on the immediate action of God in his word, which encounters the sinner, judges him, and grants him grace. However, there is a shift in colour: The theology of humility was dark, knowing only the reality of judgement, humbling itself under this judgment, and hoping against hope in a possible grace, without certainty of it. The theology of justification by faith, on the other hand, is alight with joyful confidence and gratitude because of the certain trustworthiness of the promise of grace, which transforms the life of the recipient.

3.4.3.2 Justification as transformation.

Justification is therefore simultaneously a forensic and a creative process. In both cases, God is the subject. In identifying oneself with Christ and having part, because of the personal unity with Christ, in the righteousness of Christ, one is also united with Christ in being made part of the work of Christ on oneself: As Christ has suffered for one, so also one is made part of the suffering of Christ which mortifies the sinful self (Althaus 1983, 187f). Christ in us is active in combatting the power of sin, and in this battle we participate in the victory Christ has won over the power of sin, thereby liberating us from the powers that cause sin in us. (Althaus 1983, 189). Christ is alive and working in present history (Althaus 1983, 190). In the Heidelberg disputation, Luther states:

26. Das Gesetz sagt: Tue dies, und es geschieht niemals. Die Gnade sagt: Glaube an dieses - und schon ist alles geschehen (WA 1, 364) 27. Richtig müßte man das Werk Christi wirkend und unser Werk gewirkt nennen und so gewirkt, dass es Gott gefällt um des wirkenden Werkes willen. (WA 1, 364) (26. The law says: Do this! and yet it is never done. Grace says: believe in this - and already everything is done. 27. Correctly, one needs to call the work of Christ effecting and our work effected, and effected in such a way that it pleases God because of the effecting work.)

3.4.3.3 Justification and action.

Justification by God received in faith is therefore not in contradiction to action by humans, and does not lead to ethical paralysis. Justification has a dual relationship to action: It is determinative presupposition and source of human action.

Justification is determinative presupposition of human action in that it excludes the possibility of understanding human action to cause salvation. No human can produce the true loving obedience to God demanded in law. God is determined to give salvation freely, and not to allow people to earn it. Any human action cannot earn merit - it can only be obedience (Althaus 1965, 11f). Positively, justification implies that God, as he accepts the sinner who believes in person, also accepts the sinful work of that person, uses it in his work of salvation, and regards it as a good work (Althaus 1965, 13f). This corresponds to a twofold understanding of the term 'good': Ethically, something is good if it corresponds to the demand of the law. Meta-ethically, something is good if it is done in faith. The ethically good has no worth to God if it is not also meta-ethically good, i.e. in accordance with the first command, which demands faith. This is evident in the way in which Luther prefixes every explanation of the commandments in his small catechism with the phrase: We shall love and fear God (Althaus 1965, 14f). This primary work of faith gives goodness to all works (Althaus 1965, 16). The implication is that Christians are free to act according to the demand of every situation, because they may trust in the grace of God that is promised to them before they do anything. Therefore, the differentiation between 'Holy' and 'Secular' is undermined - all works are of equal worth, because the Christian is before God in each situation (Althaus 1965, 17).

Faith is not to be seen as a work which deserves the reward of justification. However, it is the source of 'good works' and the beginning of a new, essential righteousness, because it unites the person with Christ and introduces the Holy Spirit into the heart of the person, and thereby begins to transform the person into the likeness of Christ. Christ becomes the operative power in the heart of the believer (Althaus 1983, 203f; 1965, 18-22).

"Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and confident that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times. This knowledge of and confidence in God's grace makes me glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all creatures. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God who has shown him his grace. Thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire." (LW 35, 370-371) (Hoy 1990, 282f)

Christ therefore justifies us on the one hand outside of ourselves, in the application of the righteousness of Christ to us in the forensic judgement of God, and then also inside ourselves, in making us like him through discipleship. Faith always looks on the Christ outside of us, and exactly thereby is his power in us, which renews us, gives us obedience, regenerates us and makes us ethically fruitful (Althaus 1983, 204).

"We say that justification is effective without works, not that faith is without works. For that faith which lacks fruit is not efficacious but a feigned faith." (LW 34, 176) (Hoy 1990, 282)

These two aspects belong inseparably together: Forensic justification is the source of transformative justification in the human being, but with God the endpoint of the transformative process, the total renewal of the person, is the reason for the forensic application of justification to the sinner. Because God aims for transformation of the person through imputation of righteousness, he also moves in and works on the person to attain this goal. God himself wants to overcome sin in us (Althaus 1983, 205f). Therefore, the righteousness of the Christian is a present fact in the imputation by God. However, as far as experience is concerned, it is a future hope. In other words, the imputation of righteousness is simultaneously *propter Christum* and *propter initium creaturae suae in nobis*: God's judgement and his work concur. If God regards us 'as if' we were without sin, this has the intention of overcoming the 'as if' in the completion of the new creature in us, and yet remains necessary, while we remain on earth as fragment of fulfillment, as forgiveness *propter Christum* (Althaus 1983, 207ff). The emphasis of the objective action of God places the individual in the context of the history of salvation, and overcomes the individualism of salvation only for me (Altmann 1992, 37). Because of the interest he has in the process of renewal, Luther consistently explicates commands as ethical instruction. In the *Sermon on Good Works*, he wrote:

Siehe, so habe ich's gemeint, wenn ich allezeit den Glauben gepriesen und alle Werke, die ohne solchen Glauben geschehen, verworfen habe, um dadurch die Menschen von den falschen, nur äußerlich glänzenden, pharisäischen, glaubenslosen 'guten Werken', von denen jetzt alle Klöster, Häuser, Stände übervoll sind, zu den rechten, wahrhaftigen, grundguten, gläubigen Werken zu führen (WA 6, 209). (See, this is what I meant, when I always praised faith and rejected all works done without this faith, in order to lead people away from false, purely superficially shining, pharisaic, faithless 'good works', of which all cloisters, houses and estates are overfilled at present, to right, true, thoroughly good, faithful works.)

Criterion for good works, in the ethical sense, shifts from the medieval conception. It is no longer effectiveness in procuring salvation for myself - which is in principle selfish. To the contrary, my own salvation is a given, which may be accepted by faith. Criterion for ethical goodness is efficacy of service to neighbour (WA 6, 207; Shaull 1991, 32; Bertram 1978, 272; Althaus 1983, 123f). Luther uses the image that a Christian becomes similar to Christ and as such becomes a channel of the love of God which flows to all people:

Aus dem allen folgt der Schluss, das ein Christenmensch nicht in sich selbst lebt, sondern in Christus und seinen Nächsten: in Christus durch den Glauben, in seinen Nächsten durch die Liebe. Durch den Glauben fährt er aufwärts zu Gott, und von Gott fährt er wieder abwärts durch die Liebe und bleibt doch immer in Gott und der göttlichen Liebe. Joh 1:51 Das ist die rechte, geistlich, christliche Freiheit, die das Herz von allen Sünden, Gesetzen und Geboten frei macht. Sie überragt alle andere Freiheit wie der Himmel die Erde. Gott gebe uns, dass wir sie recht verstehen und festhalten. Amen (WA 7, 38) Alle Christliche Lehre, Werk und Leben kurz, klar, im Übermaß begriffen ist in den zwei Stücken Glauben und Lieben, durch welche der Mensch zwischen Gott und seinem Nächsten gesetzt wird als ein Mittel, das da von oben empfängt und unten wieder ausgibt... Siehe, das sind dann recht Gott-förmige Menschen, welche von Gott empfangen alles, was er hat in Christo, und wiederum sich auch, als wären sie der anderen Gott, mit Wohltaten erweisen (WA 10,1) (From this flows the conclusion that the Christian does not live in himself, but in Christ and his neighbour. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbour through love. Through faith he ascends up to God, and from God he descends through love and yet remains perpetually in God and God's love. (John 1, 51) This is the true, Christian freedom, that liberates the heart from all sins, laws, and commands. It transcends all other freedoms like the heaven transcends the earth. May God give us, to understand this freedom correctly and to hold on to it. Amen. All Christian doctrine, work and life is comprehended briefly, clearly and fully in two concepts: Faith and love, through which a human is set between God and his neighbour as a vessel, which receives from above and lets flow out at the bottom ... These are truly people in the image of God, who receive from God all he has in Christ, and, as if they were gods to others, show them good deeds.)

Luther taught and lived the ethical fruitfulness of justification by faith in the loving service of neighbour which addresses her need (Altmann 1992, 37). Because of this, Luther also emphasises the political duties of Christians as exercise of love towards the neighbour. In this, Luther was confident that rational consideration of needs and means could show the most effective way in which service is to take place. This fits well with the need to analyse situations thoroughly in order to address the actual root causes of suffering, as proposed by contextual theologies. Luther himself was never passive, but actively involved himself in issues of service and politics on every level (Altmann 1992, 38).

3.4.3.4 The meaning of praxis for faith.

The relationship between faith and works is, however, not purely unidirectional in Luther's mind. The practice of faith is not irrelevant to faith. Firstly: Practice of faith in good works is the way in which faith transforms a person. This is not instantaneous, but a continuous process. The Christian remains an old and new person simultaneously. On the one hand, this is the *simul iustus et peccator*, which always is true of the whole person. At the same time, there is a continuous battle of the person of faith against the flesh, which is, like faith itself, simultaneously the work of God and the human being (Althaus 1965, 26f). This is similar to baptism, which is simultaneously God's promise and also commitment of the human being. The battle between faith and flesh

happens in life through suffering, conflict of conscience, and in the occupation of the Christian. One of the prime results is to counter arrogance (Althaus 1965, 27f). The battle is fought through the discipline imposed by God on people through suffering and the discipline people impose on themselves in asceticism (Althaus 1965, 29f). The measure of asceticism must be given by its aim, and not prescribed by the church. This is intimately connected with service of the neighbour (Althaus 1965, 30f).

Secondly, love which serves the neighbour is a sign of faith, and contributes to overcoming sin in the person (Althaus 1983, 374). Assurance that faith is true can only be obtained through the practice of love: *'Die Liebe ist das Zeugnis des Glaubens und macht, dass wir Zuversicht haben und der Barmherzigkeit Gottes gewiß sind.'* (WA 39 II, 248; 1983, 63f) (*Love is witness to faith and gives us confidence and assurance of the Love of God*) Works follow on faith in the sense of priority, but the sequence in time is not strictly one after the other. Love and faith are two sides of the same coin. Love is practice of faith (Althaus 1965, 23f). Like all of life, faith is actual, and therefore present only in the actions of life, not pure and separated from them. Every act of life is either done in faith or in unbelief. Works are nothing but the concrete explication of faith (Althaus 1965, 24). It is in acting that a person experiences what it means to believe or not, and whether he believes: Praxis is confirmation of faith and strengthens faith. Therefore, works flow out of faith, and again flow into faith, strengthening it (Boff 1988, 211; Althaus 1965, 25; 1983, 213-217; Ritter 1982, 28). This praxis of faith relates both to actions in faith and suffering accepted in faith. For Luther, the latter is more important (Althaus 1965, 25f).

This approach liberates every person, especially those bound by society, to be a responsible person, as every one has direct access to the source of justification, which is at the same time a source of authority and legitimation for her actions. This source is the word of God (Shaul 1991, 34.36).

Looking back on the method Luther followed, we can observe the following : Luther's position originates from the conflict of conscience which he experienced in a historical controversy, into which he was forced by the responsibility he took for pastoral care. He comes to his insights by relating the Word of God in scripture directly to his deepest conflicts, while earnestly seeking to understand the direct meaning of the scripture. In relating his experience, which seems to be contradictory to the love and justice of God witnessed to in scripture, he thinks dialectically, and thereby sustains the tension between opposite poles in experience. This dialectic works itself out on the one hand in being able to acknowledge tensions and negatives within one reality, and utilising the tension to initiate a process that moves toward transformation of the person and the overcoming of these tensions. It is in this process that faith becomes real.

3.5 Explication in concrete issues

3.5.1 Social ethics and teaching on twofold administration of God

7. The liberating consequence of Luther's new approach was experienced broadly. In consequence, Luther quickly gained stature and authority, and his opinion on many issues was asked for. His fundamental approach was therefore explicated, deepened and applied in the controversies and issues posed to Luther in the time that followed.

Luther lived and worked during a time of social transformation. His writings achieved extremely broad reception amongst groups with widely divergent expectations (Press 1984, 201). He himself tried not to take the position of any group or class, but to concentrate on emphasising the precedence of faith (Press 1984, 201). Through the wide distribution of his pamphlets, Luther had an almost unassailable social status. Because of this personal status, he could integrate divergent social forces in the social movement that the reformation became. However, he always had to distance himself from interpretations of his work that he could not accept (Press 1984, 201). Because most of his writings were in reaction to specific social issues and questions, his works are unsystematic, but quite context oriented (Althaus 1965, 105) Luther's own evaluation is:

Meine Bücher aber sind ein rohes und ungeordnetes Chaos, wie es eben der Gang der Dinge - ungeordnet wie er war - mit sich brachte (WA 54, 179). (My books are a raw and unordered chaos, as the flow of occurrences - unordered as it was - brought it about.)

Luther's position in addressing the issues posed to him grew out of his conviction that Christians have a responsibility and abilities to act in every sphere of life and in all situations. The responsibility grows from the fact that they are subject to the will of God, and not autonomous. The will of God, in Luther's view, is loving service of neighbour. Therefore, not the special 'churchy' things are what Christians should do, but the normal, worldly things are the responsibility of Christians to do in service of neighbour:

3. Die Werke der Lebenserhaltung und des Gemeinnutzes werden nicht für gut Werke gehalten, sondern nur kirchliche Werke. So verringern sie Gott den Dienst, dem alles dient, was im Glauben geschehen kann. (WA 6, 205) (The works that serve the preservation of life and the common good are not deemed good works, but only church works. In this way, they minimise the service due to God, who is served by everything that can be done in faith.)

For this reason, Luther shows a lot of interest in social issues and in social reform. In 'To the nobility of the German nation, on the betterment of the Christian estate' he proposes a number of social reforms, such as the prohibition of usury (WA 6, 490ff). Because the structures of society are not divinely ordained or justified, they are subject to rational evaluation on whether they serve the interests of love and justice. In making decisions on how to best serve one's neighbour, the life of a Christian is a continuous process in which, in every situation anew, one needs to distinguish law and gospel (Althaus 1983, 234). On the one hand, Christians are called to judge rationally what serves love in each situation, and therefore have the authority to compile 'new decalogues'. On the other hand, they need to be wary of being misled by their flesh and their own interests, and therefore need the continued critique of the law of God as expressed in scripture (Althaus 1965, 38; 1983, 220.236f). By this freedom to order society by rational action, Luther created space to reform feudal structures, which had been legitimated by the catholic church as divinely ordained. (Altmann 1992, 9f). This freedom to decide the rational way of service and justice is the immediate consequence of the immediate relationship of the individual in his conscience to the Word of God, which judges him, grants him mercy and sends him into the world.

Luther, in his dispute with the church hierarchy, continuously appealed to Christian freedom, personal decision based on the individual conscience before God. This had effects far beyond the bounds of the church (Lutz 1984, 230). Especially the marginalised and the groups involved in social advancement received more self confidence through Luther's claims. They themselves claimed to be free and responsible decision-makers on their own lives, and made decisions that Luther did not always approve of (Shaull 1991, 34f). Because Luther did not divide the world into secular and sacred, every work and activity received dignity before God. Luther did not secularize the whole world, but placed all of the world in direct relationship to God (Shaull 1991, 37f; Altmann 1992, 6f). The reformation saw the real sphere of activity of the Christian in everyday life, rather than in asceticism. This resulted in both intensification of Christian life, but also in making it more of a civil affair (Seebaß 1984, 231). Especially normal work was given more dignity: It is part of God's ordinance of creation and of natural law. Therefore, God is active in our 'secular' work just as much as in our faith. Our work is God's work, through which he acts for the good of his creation. Our life is not maintained by our work, but by God, who lets his blessing flow through the channel of our work. This gives to the everyday labour the dignity of being a channel of God's blessing (Althaus 1965, 105).

Luther resisted interpretations of his concept of freedom which used it to motivate social emancipation. This was especially the case with the peasants. It was in this context that Luther explicated the teaching on the twofold governance of God (sometimes called the doctrine of the two kingdoms). The roots of this position go back to the lectures on Psalms and Romans. The fundamental aspects of this conception are already explicated in 'On secular authority: In how far is one required to obey it', which Luther wrote to answer questions of evangelical Christians who lived in a territory governed by a Roman Catholic prince. The issue at stake, though, arises in

principle, because Luther rejected the static-spatial separation of the world into sacred and profane spheres. That implied that the radical ethical claims of Jesus, which had been confined to the sacred sphere of monasticism during the Middle Ages, again applied to every Christian - as is natural due to the immediacy of the relationship of every Christian to the Word of God. However, it seemed that the radical claims of Jesus would make normal life in society impossible, and would prohibit normal Christian participation in society. But this would contradict the higher value given to the everyday life of Christians and the maintenance of society and creation as acts of God in his continuous creation. Luther exegetically finds two series of statements: The law of Christ, not to use violence, not to retribute etc., and on the other hand statements that legitimate the authority of governments, that command obedience to it, and that allow it to punish. The latter are in accordance with natural law. (Althaus 1965, 49f). Luther resolved the dichotomy dialectically by distinguishing (not separating) two ways of governance of God: the worldly and the spiritual. The worldly governance of God is instituted for the maintenance of creation everywhere, the spiritual is instituted to realise the Kingdom of God by proclamation of the word of grace leading to faith (Althaus 1965, 51). In the latter, the only power is that of the word. God administers this through Christ. In the worldly governance, power is used, and God acts through creatures as is necessary for the maintenance of creation (Althaus 1965, 52f).

Luther interpreted the sermon on the mount as a call to freedom and love of neighbour: Freedom from the world and its goods, being totally committed to serve one's neighbour in love, which is the total opposite of the world. The question is: How is this possible in the concrete commitments one has as family head, citizen or owner of property? (Althaus 1965, 68) Luther's interpretation differs from the Roman Catholic, which restricts the 'evangelical counsels' to those who withdraw from worldly responsibility as monks, and thereby absolves the normal Christians in the world from the claim of the radical ethics of Jesus. At the same time, two levels of Christians are created. Luther also distinguishes his interpretation from that of the radical reformers, who also regard it as impossible to live up to the directives of Jesus in the world as it is, and therefore either withdrew from the world to form separate communities, or attempted to change the world and society to be such that the directives of Jesus could be directly applied. (Althaus 1965, 69, Altmann 1992, 72f). In accordance with his principle of immediate relation of Word and conscience, Luther wants to let the directives of Jesus retain their full force for every Christian in their life in the world and society as it is. He does this by relating the freedom and love required in the ethics of Jesus to the inner intention, which is to be translated into action where it is appropriate (Althaus 1965, 70f). In applying this principle, Luther can make radical statements:

'Was man übrig hat und dem Nächsten nicht dient, das besitzt man mit Unrecht und ist gestohlen von Gott, denn vor Gott ist man schuldig zu geben, zu leihen und sich nehmen zu lassen (WA 10 III, 275) (Althaus 1965, 71) (Whatever one has to spare and one does not serve the neighbour with, one has unjustly and as theft from God, because before God one is obliged to give, to lend and to let others take from one.)

However, Luther concludes that the same inner intention will result in dual forms of action, depending on whether one acts in one's own interest or in the interest of others. For Luther, a Christian is always both in relation to himself and others, and his actions are either determined by his private interests, or by specific responsibilities he has to others - which to Luther constitutes an 'office' (Althaus 1965, 72f). In regard to himself, a Christian is obliged to fully apply the directives of Christ, suffer violence, forego his rights, but in his responsibility to others, a Christian is entitled and obliged to use whatever power he has to protect and advance them (Althaus 1965, 74). These very different forms of action yet are related to the same inner intention: The command to act in loving service to others (Althaus 1965, 75; Altmann 1992, 75-77). In this service of others, offices, also purely secular offices, are instituted by God, and therefore Christians should serve in such offices, even if these offices necessitate the use of force or violence (Althaus 1965, 76). Both administrations of God are instruments in God's war on Satan (Althaus 1965, 85f) and in both cases their purpose is to serve life (Althaus 1965, 84f).

Because of the commitment to serve life, the Christian can only accept the institutions that serve this purpose - like the state - in gratitude and obedient acknowledgement of their role as vehicles of God's work (Althaus 1965, 123). However, at the same time these institutions are to be held accountable to their role to support life, and governments may therefore be criticised publically. However, obedience to the state is independent of one's evaluation of the governments actions,

and for oneself, one is obliged to suffer injustice (Althaus 1965, 124). A Christian should be prepared to co-operate in the governance of the state (Althaus 1965, 127f). In the teaching on the twofold administration of God, Luther's interest also is to introduce distinctions between church and state, which would free the state from ecclesial authority. He motivates the need for use of force by Christians in the execution of their office as a way to protect weaker, more vulnerable, persons from the violence of the sinful (Press 1984, 199). A consequence of the twofold governance teaching is that no separate estate of clergy with separate rights could still be motivated. The autonomy of the 'spiritual estate' is thereby removed, and secular government is strengthened (Press 1984, 200). However, the distinction of the two ways of government goes deeper than the separation of Church and State - it is more dynamical and dialectical than such a static-spatial separation (Nessan 1989, 264; Altmann 1988, 141-143). The two ways of governance are interrelated, and therefore those entrusted with responsibility to proclaim the word of God also need to criticise and guide the secular government, while the administration of justice by the secular government fully applies to the church (Altmann 1992, 70f). Luther was forthright in sharp criticism of princes - e.g. in his exposition of Ps 82 (Althaus 1965, 121). Duties of government are to create freedom of expression for preaching, which might criticise them, ensure justice and guard the rights of the poor and maintain peace. Wherever they do not fulfill these duties, public proclamation must criticise them and announce the judgement of God on them. This implies that the state is not at all autonomous - it is subject to the calling to act in service of life which God has given it (Altmann 1992, 78-80; Dickens 1974, 68f vs. Pascal 1933, 103.111f). The critical question is whether one subjects oneself to God's word and is motivated to serve the other, or whether one wants to lord it over others. (Press 1984, 197f; Althaus 1965, 151). However, the church is not identified with the word or the spiritual administration: The Word of God restricts both. Christians are called to civil disobedience if the state requires them to act in violation of God's commands (Althaus 1965, 130-135.152).

In the teaching on the twofold administration of God, we see the same elements that we have previously detected in Luther's theological method: He approaches the Word of God in the light of the questions of his time, which was characterised by the preeminent position of the church. He attempts to keep the divergent experiences together through a dialectical tension, rather than separating them into static realms, and allows for dynamic interrelation of the poles within the overall framework of God being the subject and of God's intention to serve life. The flow of legitimation is again from God directly to both the individual and the structures of society - and the direction given to the actions of both individuals and structures is the service of the common good.

It would widen the scope of this study too much if it would attempt to analyse Luther's economic ethics as well. Suffice it to say that he based his criticism, which was directed at all parties, on considerations of justice and equality of all. He applied the principle that action in society should be motivated by service of love, and not by personal gain, and argued on this basis against profiteering, the principle of prices set by supply and demand, monopolies and interest-bearing loans (Pascal 1933, 183ff; Althaus 1965, 109ff).

3.5.2 Understanding of the church

8. *Luther's new approach motivates a concept of church that is neither hierarchical nor sacramental, but communitarian.*

This new concept of church is a natural consequence of the principle of the direct encounter of the individual with the word of God: Because the conscience of a person is bound only by scripture, and each person has the same direct relationship with God through the word, there is no need nor right for a hierarchical structure of the church to connect the individual to God. However, because faith comes out of the external word of Scripture, which all Christians share, each Christian, in his or her earnestness in seeking to understand the word, is required to listen to others and share with others about the understanding of scripture. Luther's teaching on the common priesthood of all believers is developed in the booklet *To the nobility of the German nation on the improvement of the Christian estate*. Luther first motivates that all Christians have the right to act within the church, and then requests the nobility, because they have the obligation to act for the welfare of their subjects, who

are entrusted to their care, to reform the church within their territories. To prepare this argument, he first demolishes the 'three walls' with which the Roman church had protected itself against reformation with arguments from scripture and tradition of the church. The three walls are: That the clergy are a preferred estate which is not subject to secular authority and that has the sole right to act in matters of church and faith; that only the pope may legitimately interpret scripture and that only the pope may call a council (WA 6, 405f). Luther proposes the general priesthood of all believers, which means that every Christian receives grace, legitimacy, and the right to interpret scripture and teaching directly from God. This is said in opposition to the papal monopoly on legitimation and interpretation of scripture (WA 6, 407f). In contrast to a church defined by the authority of an office he asserts a concept of church which is the community of all who were called to faith by the word. The consequence is that neither hierarchy nor rite define the church (Grane 1978, 42f). Rather, the church is firstly seen as the local assembly of all Christians in a given area (Altmann 1992, 61). The implication is that the church is defined primarily by the word of God, which creates faith and calls Christians together as community (Altmann 1992, 62f). As all Christians have in principle equal right to act in the church, those who have the necessary means should act when the need is there to reform the church - and so he calls on princes and other local authorities to initiate reforms (Pascal 1933, 62f). The reforms he proposes are the abolition of the secular powers of all church officials, including pope, bishops and abbots, drastic reduction of the size of the papal court and its budget, reduction of the remittances to the central church by prohibition of the payment of annates, nationalisation of the church in Germany by abolition of the right of the pope to decide on the filling of posts or to intervene in local decision-making; abolition of pilgrimages, indulgences, the interdict, cloisters, enforced celibacy of priests, votive masses and fraternities, reform of universities and more (WA 6, 415ff). On sacraments, Luther writes in *On the Babylonian captivity of the church*, in which he opposes the substantive understanding of the sacrament by reinterpreting it as a concurrence of God's command and promise with a material sign. In this way, the central character of the encounter with the word of God is again emphasised (WA 6,513f.517f passim).

In asserting the general right of all Christians to interpret scripture, Luther is careful to avoid the danger of arbitrary interpretation in support of one's own interest. To this aim he places the interpretation of Scripture into the community of believers, and connects it to intensive study of scripture. This is shown in the booklets *That a Christian congregation has the right to judge on doctrine and call preachers* and *To the councillors of Christian cities* (Altmann 1992, 47f). For Luther, the result of freedom of conscience vis-a-vis the structures of the Church was decisive, since he could hold on to his fundamental insights against the church hierarchy only on this basis. (Shaull 1991, 53f).

It is instructive how Luther related the true, pure and hidden church of faith to the empirical church, which he recognised to be a 'site of struggle'. In this we see an illustration of Luther's negative heuristic: He acknowledged that in experience, the church was sinful and sometimes, or even often, made mistakes. He did not respond to the experience of an imperfect church with the attempt to form, by exclusion of all imperfect factors and sinful people, a new, perfect church. In analogy to the existence of the Christian, who remains sinner, and in whom faith yet initiates a process of critique and transformation, the empirical church, too, remains sinful and is subject to critique and obliged to involve itself in transformation so that the pure church of faith may become more visible in it (Altmann 1992, 63f). As in previous cases, Luther's theology of the cross dialectically relates the truth of faith to experience. This experience is in conflict with what is believed. The relationship of the truth of faith to experience is one of both critique of the present and goal of a transformative process. Faith includes the trust that the reality of faith will in the end triumph over the contrasting experience. (Shaull 1991, 53f). The consequence is that the empirical church is desacralized and opened to critique and transformation, without making the structure of the church something completely irrelevant to faith (Boff 1988, 203f). The church should be an instrument of God in his fight against evil, and a place of healing especially for the weak, a community of sharing (Altmann 1992, 65). The community of faith is a given, but is also to be lived out in concrete sharing, both spiritually and practically (Althaus 1983, 262f). Luther redirects the interpretation of the creed's "community of saints" from heaven to the community of Christians on earth - and instructs Christians not to seek to share in purposed merits of saints in heaven for one's own benefit, but to seek to share and serve with saints on earth for the benefit of others (Althaus 1983, 257.259f). This twofold emphasis, giving up the idea of an empirically more holy church, and

directing the attention not towards one's own advancement in holiness, but towards service of others, leads toward true community and destroys the religious class-thinking in Catholicism (Althaus 1983, 259.261). Christians should live in servant form. Again, the guiding principle for action is that of service:

'Alles, was wir haben, muss stehen im Dienst, wo es nicht im Dienst stehet, so stehet es im Raub.' (WA 12, 470) (Everything we own must be used in service. Where it is not used in service, it constitutes robbery.)

Luther's teaching on church was anti-clerical, it regarded the church as a community of equals and expected that a new spirit of spiritual responsibility would permeate all areas of life (Pascal 1933, 94). On the basis of this theology, the population in Wittenberg began a thorough reformation of life (Pascal 1933, 95). This process was intensified by Anabaptist preachers from Zwickau, who claimed to have had direct revelation from God, and who urged transformation of the church by force. The aim was to create a new, 'perfect' church. Luther opposed this process, because he did not agree with the use of force in renewing the church, and because he did not believe in the aim of creating a 'perfect' church. As the Reformation progressed, it became clear that the church did need, for the governance of its affairs in this world, a structure that could implement and watch over regulations. Luther instituted a system of visitation of congregations. He entrusted the governance of this church structure to secular authorities. This course of action seems influenced both by Luther's good experience of the new form of governance in the state he knew, and by his instinctive fear of chaos. This led to the creation of a church structure headed by the secular ruler. (Pascal 1933, 116-119). From this, unfortunately, a new hierarchy and orthodoxy, also inflexible, arose, which was in contradiction to Luther's earlier insistence on freedom of conscience (Pascal 1933, 120f.122f, Shaull 1991, 53f).

In ecclesiology, as in other questions, Luther's theology was formed by his responses to questions coming out of the developments of his time. His method of responding is, in general, with his basic principles, and utilise a dialectical and dynamical relationship to relate the contradictory aspects of experience to his fundamental beliefs. The dialectic again has the aim to both realistically accept reality as it is, and to dynamically transform it. Aspects of Luther's responses, though, are clearly conditioned by his personal experience, disposition, and fears - and, as everything in his or any theolog, need to be subjected to a dialectical process of critique and renewal. Certainly, the state church form falls into this category.

3.6 The structure of Luther's theology

Having presented this broad sketch of the development of Luther's theology in relation to his time, we can now analyse this theological response in terms of the framework proposed in the introduction, i.e. in terms of its source of legitimation, the direction of life orientation it offers, and the positive and negative heuristic with which it relates to experience.

3.6.1 Legitimation - Justification as a free gift of grace received by faith

Legitimation, in the formulation of justification, righteousness or salvation, is clearly at the centre of Luther's theological development and his controversies. As seen in 3.4.3, especially 3.4.3.1, above, Luther divorces justification from the structures of the church and places it into the immediate confrontation of the person with the word of God. In this confrontation, legitimation is conferred by God and accepted in faith by the believer, without preconditions of achievement being set. The believer is therefore passive in the reception of legitimation. The source of legitimation is God's grace alone, and it is conferred gratuitously. The legitimation God grants is unconditional - no previous efforts or disposition of the recipient are needed, and therefore is reliable.

3.6.2 Life orientation - Service of neighbour as love growing out of faith

The consequence is that the orientation of life is fundamentally changed. As the granting of legitimation by God can be taken as a given, life does not need to be oriented toward it - though life is to be oriented by it: Legitimation is not the aim of life, but the gratuity with which it is granted becomes an impetus orienting and forming the pattern of life in that, equally freely, life is oriented toward service of the neighbour. The definition of 'good works' is therefore radically changed: Good works are no longer those specific religious works done with the object, and purported result, of legitimating or justifying the individual - rather, good works are those works in the normal sphere of life that serve the common good, and the well-being of the neighbour. The resources and energies of life are therefore not exploited for the purpose of salvation, but set into the service of life.

"Love and good works must also follow faith. So they are not excluded as though they did not follow, but trust in the merit of love or works is excluded from justification." (BoC 117:73)

Precisely because the deeds of the Christian do not bear the burden of contributing to his legitimation or his right of existence, the believer is free to seek the welfare of the neighbour through his deeds in a self-disinterested way:

"The children of God do good with a will that is disinterested, not seeking any reward, but only the glory and will of God (LW 33, 201; WA 18, 694:17ff) (Hoy 1990, 288)

"First the gospel is preached ... in which the spirit and grace are offered with a view to the remission of sins, which has been obtained for us by Christ crucified, and all this freely, and by the sole mercy of God the Father, whereby favour is shown to us, unworthy as we are and deserving of damnation rather than anything else. Then follow exhortations, in order to stir up those who are already justified and have obtained mercy, so that they may be active in the fruits of the freely given righteousness and of the spirit, and may exercise love by good works and bravely bear the cross and all other tribulations of the world." (LW 33, 150; WA 18, 692:20ff) (Hoy 1990, 287)

No-one who has read the many treatises Luther wrote on the life of a Christian can agree that Luther continued to have *"a paralysing concern with justification of the self"* (Segundo 1974, 122) (Hoy 1990, 255). To the contrary, the assertion of Manas Buthelezi *"God doesn't need good works, it is the neighbour who needs them. Man in faith is man for others"* (Buthelezi 1973, 152f) is a consistent interpretation of Luther's theological impetus. In this sense, Luther agrees with other reformers, such as Martin Bucer, whose first treatise was entitled, *"That nobody should live for himself alone, but for his neighbour"*. (1523) While Luther's point of departure was on the problem of personal salvation, Bucer began with the neighbour - yet the conclusion was similar. *'The human being,'* he wrote, *'can stop being preoccupied with himself, because he is sure that God, the eternal Father, is concerned for him as for his own beloved child'* (Segundo 1986, 441).

These two aspects, and the articulation between them are so clearly stated in two quotations from Martin Luther that these are repeated here:

"We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself but in Christ and in his neighbour. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbour through love. By faith alone he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbour." (LW 31,371) (Hoy 1990, 283)
All Christian doctrine, work and life is comprehended briefly, clearly and fully in two concepts: Faith and love, through which a human is set between God and his neighbour as a vessel, which receives from above and lets flow out at the bottom ... These are truly people in the image of God, who receive from God all he has in Christ, and, as if they were gods to others, show them good deeds.

3.6.3 The articulation of legitimation and orientation

It is of central importance to Luther that the relationship between legitimation and orientation, between justification and sanctification, be properly conceived. To him, a theology stands or falls with the correct relationship in this matter.

Justification, the gracious conferring of legitimation by God on the undeserving human, makes the human free from pious self-concern with his salvation, and therefore gives him the ability to serve his neighbour in disinterested love, using the strength and resources, the position in society and time God has given him.

Never may justification be made dependent on the orientation of life - because then whatever service of neighbour may result - it will always be essentially tainted by the desire to obtain legitimation through it, and therefore be structured not by the need and well-being of the neighbour, but by the pious self-interest of the human.

3.6.4 God: A furnace of love

Clearly, also for Luther, God is the origin of legitimacy. However, the concept of God is quite different: Instead of conceiving of God primarily as a remote and stern judge, Luther emphasises the nearness and great love of God - his friendliness and grace, which is freely given. Again and again, Luther warns against any attempt to understand God in his majesty. We must seek God in those places where he makes himself available to us - and these places are not far up, but down, near to us and our experience. God must be sought and understood where he shows himself in the child in the manger, in the man on the cross, in his presence in Holy Communion. It is in these places that we can see the true intention of God: his love. It is where God reveals himself, hidden in lowliness, that we can find him. Should we attempt to find God through our own efforts, by speculation and reasoning, attempting to climb up to his majesty by these ways, we will find him withdrawing and concealing himself from us behind impenetrable majesty and judgement.

The difference between the two concepts of righteousness is indicative also for the concept of God. In the concept of active righteousness, God's character of 'being just' is derived from the abstract concept of justice: 'giving each his due'. In this conception, God evaluates the actions of humans as to their sufficiency by standards God has set. If a person then meets these standards, having done what the God, in terms of the process of salvation he has instituted requires, in terms of the dictum *facere quod in se est*, the person is then proclaimed just. God's action, therefore, is primarily conceived of as judgement and evaluation of the prior action of the human - and the human action is one of attempting to reach the standards set by God, having to work his salvation.

Passive righteousness in Luther's conception is a righteousness conferred by God on humans, and passively received by humans. Luther therefore conceives of God as source of righteousness, and not as judge. God's righteousness is a righteousness by which he makes righteous those who believe in him. God is righteous - not by adjudging our righteousness by universal norms, but by making us righteous. God is giver, source. He shines righteousness on us like the sun shines light on us.

Luther articulated this concept of God, as overflowing fount of goodness, more and more clearly and in, sometimes dramatic, pictures: "*God is a burning furnace of love*" (WA 10 III, 56).

The transference of the medium of legitimation from the church institution to the direct encounter with the word of God also changed the concept of God from a remote entity, approachable only through many intermediaries, to an immediate and near reality.

There remains a strong element of transcendence, or inscrutability, in Luther's concept of God. Luther talks of the hiddenness of God in two senses: In the one sense, God, in revealing himself, hides himself under the opposite of what natural theology expects. Natural theology expects to find God in power and glory, far up above the realm of weakness and suffering. God, however, hides

himself in the weakness and suffering of Christ - in order that we, suffering and sinful as we are, may have direct access to him. In this sense, the hiddenness of God is his closeness and accessibility, his being down below with the poor sinner.

On the other side of the coin, God hides himself from the attempts of humans to reach him by their own power of mind or self-righteousness. If humans attempt to discover God by speculation on power, holiness, and by climbing up ladders of abstraction or of own righteousness - God hides himself in terrible inscrutability as a monstrous tyrant. (WA 18, 689; WA Br 1, 329)

3.6.5 Negative heuristic: Dialectic of the cross

The negative heuristic of a theology pertains to the method with which tensions between expectations or predictions generated from core aspects of the theology, and experience are resolved. In Christian theology, this tension is strongly linked to the experience of suffering and evil - or more broadly, the experience of non-salvation in the context of the belief in a God who can and desires to save.

For Luther, this negative heuristic is formed by the theology of the cross, as described in 3.3.3 above. In dealing with experiences of non-salvation, while desiring to maintain belief in the saving grace of God, the experience of affliction is interpreted as being an experience of the nearness of God, hidden under the opposite - as he was hidden under the opposite in the cross of Christ. Thereby, the experience of non-salvation becomes an experience in which the believer is identified with the cross of Christ, and through this identification can receive reassurance of the redemptive nearness of God at precisely the point where no redemption is experienced. This negative heuristic is strong enough to re-interpret the strongest possible dissonance with the fundamental core of the theology - belief in God's love - without either splitting the world into separate realms or dividing the experiences into different times (present affliction, future salvation).

A similar pattern obtains in the construction of the teaching about the two-fold governance of God. Confronted with the tension (not to say contradiction) between biblical passages which, on the one hand, forbid violence and are critical to the powers of the world, and on the other hand those that counsel obedience and participation in state structures, Luther does not divide the applicability into separate realms, neither as far as persons to which these are applicable, nor institutions, nor times, are concerned. He posits a dialectical relation between forms of relationship in which one person simultaneously exists.

In this negative heuristic, there is some sense of progression, described above under the heading 3.4.3.2 Justification as transformation: In justifying us through his word of grace, God makes us one with Christ. The Word of God, being a creative word, becomes active in us, transforming us to become like Christ, with whom we have been unified. Therefore, justification is simultaneously forensic and transformative (Bayer 1990, 50f).

However, the strength of this negative hermeneutic, together with the continuing impact of Luther's theology of humility, led Luther to the consequence that Christians should rather suffer the results of the sins of others, knowing that in their own sinfulness they do not deserve better, than be led to sin against others by doing them violence. This leads him to counsel the peasants involved in an uprising:

Christus sagt, mann solle keinem Übel noch Unrecht widerstehen, sondern immer weichen, leiden und nehmen lassen. (WA 18, 309) Christ says, one should not resist evil nor injustice, but rather yield, suffer, and let others take from you.

Luther's theology of the cross therefore has the tendency to advocate static acceptance of evil and suffering, rather than invigorating attempts to transform situations of suffering.

3.6.6 Positive heuristic: Existential confrontation with scripture

As seen above, Luther's positive heuristic consists primarily of

- a. perceiving a problem in its most radical and existential depth;
- b. confronting this problem with the Word of God, which for Luther comes from a christocentric interpretation of the Bible;
- c. this Christocentric approach at the same time has at its core the message of God as self-giving love;
- d. from the confrontation, a dialogical process in which a solution is developed ensues;

This method, especially in the way it by-passed, or at least relegated to subsidiary status, the tradition and teaching office of the church, was radically new.

3.6.7 Results: Freedom from self-concern

The main result of the approach of Luther was a radical re-orientation of life away from the ecclesial to the everyday: Aspects of life and institutions previously deemed secular and not valued received dignity. The burden of employing most energies of life to attain legitimation was removed, enabling energies to be re-channelled to this-worldly ends. Together with this, the authority and leverage of church institutions was dramatically reduced.

The intended result was that energies channelled in selfish pursuit of salvation should be made available for selfless service of neighbour:

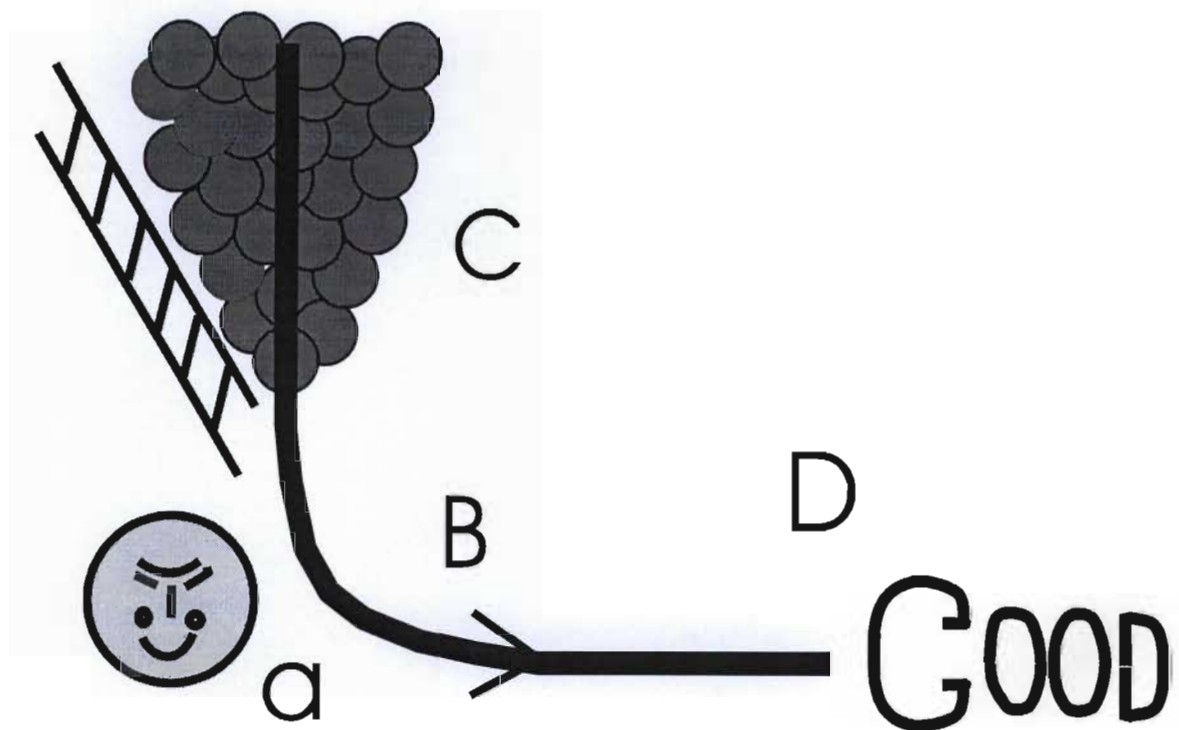
... auf dass wir ebenso unserm Nächsten Gutes tun, wie Christus uns durch sein Blut getan hat. Deshalb sind alle Gesetze, Werke und Gebote, die von uns gefordert werden, um damit Gott zu dienen, nicht aus Gott. ... Doch die Gesetze, Werke und Gebote, die von uns dem Nächsten zu Dienst gefordert werden, die sind gut, die sollen wir tun, wie der weltlichen Gewalt in ihrem Regiment gehorchen, folgen und dienen, die Hungrigen Speisen, den Bedürftigen helfen ... (WA 12, 157)
.... so that we may do good to our neighbour, just as Christ has done to us with his blood. Therefore all laws, works and commands that are demanded from us to serve God are not from God ... However, laws, works and commands that are demanded from us in service of our neighbour are good, and we should do them, like obeying, following and serving secular authority in its administration, giving food to the hungry and helping the needy.

Often, however, in the social circumstances of the time, energies freed from selfish pursuit of spiritual advancement were now directed to pursuit of social advancement. Equally, states freed from subservience to the church proclaimed their absolute authority. The negative heuristic of Luther, where tension-filled simultaneous relationships were used to structure differences, were often used to separate life spheres of influence with relative autonomy of each.

3.6.8 Graphical representation

Represented pictorially, this structure takes the following form: God is a near, loving and friendly God (A), having come down from heaven in Christ. Legitimation flows down to the believer freely, and is received as a gift (B). Also, all the resources of life are received as gift from God (C). Therefore, life is not orientated toward achieving salvation or prosperity - as this is a gift - but to let the grace received flow to the service of neighbour (D).

This is the picture of the medieval roman theological structure turned on its head. In contrast to the 'in and up' form of that theology, Luther's structure could be called 'down and out': God comes down to us humans, we do not need to climb up to him. It is down here, with us, that he gives us his grace and his gifts. Because we do not need to use the resources of this life to climb up to a level where we will meet God's approval of a worthwhile life, we may let the goods God freely gives us flow out freely to our neighbour. This conception of the structure of Luther's theology was for me to a great extent inspired by Gerhard O. Forde (1972, esp 7f.17f.). It could also be called an 'L'-type theology, after the shape of the flow.



4 The Structure of Contextual Theology as a response to its time

Our thesis in this chapter is that legitimation is a central issue for contextual theologies. More concretely, contextual theologies are grouped together and distinguished from other theologies by a common epistemological rupture, which amounts to a basic shift in the source of legitimacy for both theology and for person and society relative to the context they find themselves in. We will try to show that the structure of this shift in source of legitimacy, and consequent shift in orientation of life, is parallel to that in the reformation. To do this, we will, as in the previous chapter, give a broad presentation of the situation in which contextual theologies arise, and a general description of their response. In analysing the structure of the response of contextual theologies, we will concentrate on two theologians: Juan Luis Segundo, as representative of Latin American Liberation Theologies, and Albert Nolan, as representative of a South African contextual theology.

First, however, a reflection on the definition of "Contextual Theology" is appropriate. It was in 1974 that E Schlink could still write, quite in the abstract: "The concept of a contextual theology can be interpreted differently: In the realm of German theology, one would understand by this term especially a theology that corresponds to the text of the Holy Scripture. In the Anglo-Saxon arena, the term is used to denote a theology corresponding to the empirical knowledge of the present time" (my translation) (1974, 87). Today, such a sentence would no longer be possible. Contextual theology has become a recognised term claimed by a movement of theologies which consciously relate to their context in a common way. These theologies include Latin American liberation theology, Black Theology in the United States, Feminist Theology, African Theology and the constellation of Liberation, Black and African theologies in South Africa. Another presupposition of the quoted statement should no longer be possible: By relating only to German and Anglo-Saxon theologies, Schlink implies that with these two categories, all theology that is to be taken seriously is mentioned. This is a typical example of eurocentric thought. Theologies of the third world have, especially through contextual theology, claimed their own space and recognition.

However, the essay of Schlink does show that even at that time, and with the limited perspective, there was a recognition in academic theology that true theological thought always creatively takes on the questions and issues of its context, and responds to these in the light of its faith and tradition (Schlink 1974, 90; Baum 1990, 37). The question posed by contextual theologies is what the context, and the interests, of those doing theology are, and whether this context is suited to truly enlivening and creative theologising (ICT 1). The second critical question of contextual theologies to European theology is why it denotes all other theologies as related to their context - i.e. Latin American Liberation Theology - while, by not describing itself as 'German Academic Theology' or the like, implicitly denying its own particularity and claiming some universal and abstract status (ICT, 2)

4.1 Contextual Theology as a way of doing theology today

Contextual Theology has become a term denoting a number of theologies, which, consciously rejecting the claim of universality of European academic theology, reflect on Christian faith by intentionally relating this reflection to their specific social context and their faith response in this context (ICT 1f; Altmann 1989a, 41). Because of the conscious relation to their situation and praxis, contextual theologies are as diverse as the contexts from which they arise. Their common denominator does not lie in the conclusions which they attain, but in the way they arrive at such conclusions (ICT, 3). This method of doing theology is consciously articulated, but is no prescriptive law, but rather descriptive of what is actually happening in the different theologies. The commonality of contextual theologies is therefore more analogical than deductive (Dussel 1979, 189-192).

Contextual theologies include Latin American Liberation Theologies, Black Theology in the United States, South African Black and Liberation Theology, African Theology, Korean Min-Jung Theology, Feminist Theology and Ecological Theology (ICT, 2; Road to Damascus, I; Hoy 1990, 1) We will concentrate on Theologies from Latin America and South Africa.

Because of the strong relation of contextual theologies to their situations, it is necessary to describe the context out of which they arose. Latin American Liberation theologies are generally accepted to be the first consciously contextual theology, and therefore it will be described first, before then looking at South African contextual theologies.

Because contextual theologies are diverse, in spite of many commonalities, we will draw on a number of primary and secondary sources, but focus our analyses on two representatives: Juan Luis Segundo from Latin America and Albert Nolan from South Africa.

4.2 The economical and political context

Latin American Liberation Theology arose in the 1960s. The publication of *Teologia de la liberacion, Perspectivas* by Gustavo Gutierrez in 1971 brought this development to the consciousness to the theological debate worldwide. The process in which this theology arose has roots in political, economical, ecclesiastical and theological developments.

The politics of **Latin America** grows out of the history of colonial occupation. Indigenous nations were subjugated by the colonial powers. Their political autonomy and land was taken away, and they were often decimated both by war and diseases introduced by colonisers (McGovern 1989, 2) The population of Latin America originates from the remainder of the indigenous peoples, the slaves imported by the colonisers, and descendants of the settlers brought in by the colonial powers. Latin American states gained their political independence from the colonial powers in the 19th century. This was mostly a result of the desire of powerful and wealthy residents, who desired the freedom to be able to trade with Great Britain and the United States (Berriman 1987, 10f, McGovern 1989, 3).

Economic discontent of the population led to protest movements, mostly socialist in nature, around the middle of the 20th century (Gutierrez 1973, 89f, McGovern 1989, 6f).

The protest was suppressed by dictatorships, who often came to power by military coups. (Berriman 1987, 97, McGovern 1989, 2). The suffering caused by the suppression led a large part of the population to a clearer realisation of the exploitative nature of the social structure they lived under. This conscientisation was advanced by programs such as the adult education model of Paulo Freire (Altmann 1989a, 42, Berriman 1987, 35ff). Through these process, poor people claimed control of their lives and the dignity to be subjects of their own history (Gutierrez 1973, 91).

These developments correspond to the general awakening of people in the colonised world after the second world war, in which these people claimed their right to autonomy and liberation. People who were taught by the colonial system to define themselves in terms of the values imposed by the colonial power, discovered their own dignity, possibilities, and their own culture (Blaser 1980, 222).

In parallel, the Civil Rights movement in the **USA** arose in the 1960s, protesting against the racism against and political exclusion of blacks. Out of this movement, the "Black Consciousness" movement arose, with the aim of making black people aware of their own dignity.

In **South Africa**, colonisation in 1652 resulted almost immediately in opposition and struggle. The black struggle in South Africa went through four phases. In the Khoisan phase, these pastoralists fought Dutch occupation that dispossessed them from their grazing and hunting land in the latter half of the seventeenth century. This struggle continued up to the eighteenth century, by which time those Khoisan that survived diseases and warfare introduced by the settlers were incorporated into white society as servants. (Sebidi 1986, 4f)

In the tribalistic phase, covering most of the nineteenth century, the conflict again was about land. During the nineteenth century, most of the land in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, and Transvaal was placed under white dominion by use of arms - the Border wars in the Eastern Cape, the Zulu wars in KwaZulu, the Sekhukuni wars in the Transvaal - or chicanery (Sebidi 1986, 6f). The result was that many natives were obliged to become labourers for white farmers and in white mines and industry (Sebidi 1986, 7) Resistance by native population was fragmented and ineffective against the superior arms of the settlers (Sebidi 1986, 8)

In the nationalistic phase, organisations covering each of the then independent republics were founded in the early twentieth century, mostly aiming to introduce or keep the non-racial, qualified franchise obtaining in the Cape (Sebidi 1986, 8f). The disappointment of this hope in the Union led to the formation of the South African Native Congress, 1912, with the aim of negotiating for equality of opportunity (Sebidi 1986, 10f). The method of negotiating for more rights proved unsuccessful, and was superseded by more militant forms of struggle - the armed resistance of the ANC and PAC and the Black Consciousness Movement - as from 1960. (Sebidi 1986, 12)

The beginnings of the Black Consciousness Movement introduced a more radical approach to the conflict (Sebidi 1986, 13). This resulted in the armed struggle of the liberation movements, as well as more militant large-scale popular protest and civil disobedience in South Africa, as evidenced by the Soweto uprising and following protest actions. These were coupled with international isolation and pressure from trading partners. These actions intensified to a stage where suppression became possible only at punitive cost in international relations, finally resulting in negotiations which led to the first democratic elections in 1994.

The movements of protest and liberation in the colonised nations found support in developments in Europe. While up to the second world war, people in Europe and North America took it for granted that their superior culture gave them a right to hegemony over other nations, the rise of liberation movements and the critique of consumerist society led people in the West to question the assumption that western culture and concepts of development automatically has the right to regard itself as a criterion by which all others are to be measured. (Blaser 1980, 222f).

In this sense, the issue at stake in liberation theology is a fundamental issue for the understanding and societal structure of both the Western societies and the third world. Maybe an inkling of the fundamental nature of the problem addressed is the reason why so much interest was focussed on the struggle and process of liberation in South Africa: "Foreign interest also focusses on Southern Africa for another reason, and this is that so many people feel it is in some way their problem. As matters stand, the situation is a microcosm of the whole world's problems. Here a rich, white, 'officially Christian', colonial minority faces a poor, black, 'recently pagan', oppressed majority. Although an oversimplification ... the situation mirrors the global division between North

and South. ... This leads further, in that many of the problems afflicting the country are underlying ones in other parts of the world too, but are more acute and concentrated in South Africa." (Connor 1978, 210)

4.3 Developments in the church

Developments in the Catholic Church led to a transformation in the church life in Latin America that paralleled the political and economic developments sketched above. Latin America is largely Catholic, with historically more than 90% of the population belonging to the Catholic Church. Christianity came to Latin America as colonial power. The Catholic Church legitimated the colonisation, and cooperated closely with the colonisers (Berriman 1987, 10f, Altmann 1992, 57). The Latin American Catholic church is a branch of the Portuguese and Spanish national churches of the Middle Ages. The Kings had substantial powers within the church, the church being internally almost subject to the ruler (Johnson 1976, 217f; McGovern 1989, 2). The Catholic church followed the settlement pattern of the immigrant colonisers, being mostly concentrated on cities and towns with its churches, schools, hospitals and monasteries. Most of the population, however, were rural. The result was a popular Catholicism in contrast to the official church, in which the family and village community played the most important role (Berriman 1987, 10f).

The Catholic church had from the beginning cooperated closely with the power of the state. The few critical, prophetic voices, speaking on behalf of the oppressed, were exceptions, and were soon marginalised (Berriman 1987, 9f; McGovern 1989, 3). Independence from the colonial power therefore resulted in a crisis of the church. A number of Bishops abandoned their dioceses, and the church was weakened considerably (McGovern 1989, 4). Priests from the colonial country were suspended, expelled or returned - and there were never enough priests trained locally. The result was a decline in the ratio of priests per people from one in thousand in 1800 to one in five thousand in 1930 (Berriman 1987, 11f; McGovern 1989, 4.8).

The Catholic Church in Latin America had scarcely been influenced by the emancipatory developments that took place in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment and thereafter. The Latin American Church was determined by the spirit of the counter-reformation and its anti-protestant dogmatics (Berriman 1987, 10). The Bible had almost no role in the church, and was interpreted solely by way of official dogma (Altmann 1992, 43). Because of this isolation, the reforms introduced by the Second Vatican Council had dramatic effects. (Berriman 1987, 16). Vatican II rejected the triumphalist concept of church and replaced this with the concept of the mystery of the wandering people God (Altmann 1992, 57). It asserted the normative character of scripture and exegetical work, and gave lay people direct access to the Bible in language they could understand (Altmann 1992, 44). Together with the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* it opened the way for priests and bishops to get involved in social questions of the time (Berriman 1987, 20f). Also, the Pope called for more priests from Europe to go to Latin America, and these brought with them new approaches, especially the 'worker priest' movement. This resulted in priests living with workers and peasants and forming local groups such as the Golconda groups in Colombia (McGovern 1989, 6f; Berriman 1987, 21.35ff). These groups led to movements of priests and theologians discussing the issues of faith, poverty, and social justice, culminating in a meeting of theologians in Petropolis in 1964 (McGovern 1989, 8).

This approach was followed on when the Latin American Bishops' Conference, meeting in Medellin in 1968, decided to voice its support for social transformation and the establishments of base ecclesial communities. In Medellin, the Bishops attributed social ills to the dependence on Europe and the United States (Berriman 1987, 22f; McGovern 1989, 8).

Priests and nuns had lived as part of the middle class. However, some knew themselves to be called to live in solidarity with the poor. They left the middle class life of the towns and lived with the poor. There they initiated a process of conscientisation (Berriman 1987, 35ff). They introduced the reading of the Bible to these Christians at the base of the Latin American Church, and allowed them an active role in the church. In part also because of the lack of priests, and in conjunction with the new self-esteem generated by programs such as that of Freire, this led to the establishment of lay-led ecclesial base communities (Altmann 1989a, 42). The Bible was received with enthusiasm.

It was interpreted in an original way, often more authentically than by Protestants, who had become used to using the Bible for proof-texting dogmatics, or to regard it as being overtaken by social and natural sciences (Altmann 1992, 45). In base communities, Christians discovered the Bible as authorising them to live their own faith, both in private and in public, and to act together in common responsibility for society, and to celebrate faith together (Altmann 1989a, 43f). This was a total change from the hierarchical church of observances. Church was now constituted from the base upwards, where the local community receives its faith and guidance from its encounter with the scriptures, takes responsibility for its own life, and acts together in the world (Altmann 1989a, 42). Popular Catholicism was liberated into base communities, and the church became a liberating, instead of an oppressive, force (Altmann 1992, 58). Protestants in Latin America, by contrast, came into the country as marginalised minorities, and often developed into introverted communities. New protestant missions from the USA are often beholden to individualism and neoliberal social concepts. (Altmann 1992, 59)

Though church-based opposition to white domination has a long history in the **South African** church, going back to conflicts between some missionaries and settlers, and also to the creation of independent black churches as from the late 19th and early 20th century, the institutional churches, in general, either supported colonialism or were silent on social issues.

The counter-paradigm of contextual theology, as academically reflected and published theology, in South Africa is closely linked to the rise of black theology in South Africa, allied to the black consciousness movement which grew strongly in the 1960s and 1970s. The first important date for black theology is a seminar organised by the University Christian Movement in 1970 on the topic 'Black Theology' (Frostin (1988), 90f). Further conferences and seminars followed. Important exponents of South African Black theology include Manas Buthelezi, Allan Boesak, Buti Tlhagale, Frank Chikane and Takatso Mofokeng. One of the controversial issues in contextual theologies in South Africa was the question of co-operation with white people in the struggle against apartheid. This question was linked to the alternatives of regarding the oppression and struggle against it in South Africa as fundamentally a racist or a classist one. The racial analysis was at the forefront in the 70s, while the classist movement gained more strength in the 80s, with both black and white theologians being involved in drafting and signing the seminal documents of South African contextual theology.

The South African expression of contextual theology is found especially in the Kairos and Road to Damascus Documents, and the writings of people associated with these documents. As in Latin America, it was the experience of oppression and of a church which came in alliance with the colonial powers that led to these documents. As in Latin America, the oppressive system of colonialism and apartheid had been justified or tacitly accepted by the churches. As in Latin America, there had been a few missionaries and church leaders who opposed the injustices of the system. In the rebellion against the oppression, black youth searched, and found, alternative sources of spirituality in the Bible. Theologians who facilitated this process were in part influenced by developments in Latin American liberation theology (Kairos, Introduction).

4.4 Theological developments

During the developments sketched above, trained theologians reflected on the issues involved. Liberation theology takes place on three levels: In base communities, Christians use the Bible directly to find direction and make sense of life, without methodological precision. Leaders, pastoral agents and priests, who work among the people, reflect on issues in order to deepen the understanding and lead the people entrusted to them to greater understanding and responsibility. Academic theologians listen to the developments at the grass roots and work with pastoral agents and base Christians, while trying to account for the theology in the academic, world-wide debate in methodological clarity and precision (Boff 1987, 11f).

In the academic theological reflection, many influences from western theology were taken up. These were often fruitful and supplementary, fitting in naturally with developments on the ground (Berriman 1987, 81). This was natural, as liberation theology originated in a dialogue between priests, who were often trained in Europe, and the local poor in their context (Berriman 1987, 81f).

Amongst the influences of western theology and philosophy, one of the most important is the development in hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, or epistemology, came to the conclusion that no reflection is free from influences of context and interest, conviction and position of the person reflecting. Since Luther, hermeneutics has undergone a number of fundamental shifts. Yet, critique of dogma and interpretation based on the central point seem still to make sense. In modern times, a wealth of historical information on the Bible and the circumstances of the different writings in it is available. This enables us to understand the differences between different writings better. We are also more aware that our presuppositions determine our understanding of any text. This leads naturally to a hermeneutics of suspicion, as proposed by Ricoeur (Altmann 1992, 53). We can clearly see the difference between the intention of scripture as worked out by the relevant discipline, and its effect on the direct reader (Altmann 1992, 54). All of this undermined the claim of modern theology to be an objective science of faith. If objectivity then is illusory, a conscious choice of interest and conscious inclusion of the context is legitimated (Blaser 1980, 221).

In biblical disciplines, archeological discoveries gave more exact knowledge about social and political contexts in biblical times. Thereby, the relation between biblical text and its context became clearer. In the biblical disciplines, the salvation-historical approach was an important impulse, because this pointed theology to history as the arena of God's action. The realisation of the importance of eschatological hope in New Testament thinking was also important, because it reoriented theology to the future. These impulses came together in European "political theology", which took a more direct theological interest in the political questions of its time (Blaser 1980, 223f).

4.5 Common method of contextual theologies

Contextual theologies are not rigidly defined. Common to all is concern to reach the poor and oppressed in their situation with a Gospel message that is relevant to them. In this sense, evangelisation is a fundamental concern for contextual theologies. In this sense, evangelisation means that one communicates only the essentials as good news. This implies listening to the needs of the people and translating the Gospel into language that can be understood: bringing a message that brings consolation to people in their characteristic anxiety (Hoy 1990, 17). For instance, Juan Luis Segundo is seeking to bring the consolation of the Gospel to bear on a very real faith in crisis in Latin America. The hermeneutic key to Segundo's theology is ... "evangelisation: Getting faith to reach people as good news" (Cabestrero 1980, 174) (Hoy 1990, 15). Because contextual theologies arise in situations of oppression, two fundamental concerns arise out of the commitment to evangelisation: Liberation Theol. has two agendas: "Liberation from all forms of oppression" and "insistence that theology must be truly indigenous" (Ferm 1986, 1) (Hoy 1990, 4f).

In order to recover the Gospel message as contemporary good news to the poor, that is to truly indigenise the Gospel, and not to dominate people with dogmatic content that is foreign to them, contextual theologies advocate "open theology" in which "methodological principles that allow for constant growth and development take precedence over a systematically organized body of

theological content" (Hennely 1979, 51) (Hoy 1990, 13). The Cameroon theologian Jean-Marc Ela says: Africanisation means 'allowing the Gospel to be reborn in Africa' (Nolan 1988, 26) "The gospel is good news for the poor, the gospel is a prophetic message for our time. You do not incarnate good news into a situation, good news arises out of a situation. ... The good news is about the meaning of our times, about the significance of what is happening in our country, about what God is doing." (Nolan 1988, 27)

Contextual and liberation theologies are therefore more about a process than a content. A number of contextual theologians have explicitly described the method of contextual theology. Mesters calls the defining elements of contextual reflection "Life, Bible and Community": "... (contextual) theology reflects on the meaning and relevance of a biblical *text* in the *con-text* of the community of faith, taking into account the *pre-text* of the reality of life and history." (Altmann 1989a, 42)

Other theologians formulate the method as the sequence 'See, Judge, Act'. In a more theoretical way, Clodovis Boff describes the method as a Theory -Praxis Dialectic, which includes a hermeneutical (judge) and a socio-analytical mediation (see), out of which a praxis flows (act) (Altmann 1989a, 42). Juan Luis Segundo has developed this method as a faith/ideology dialectic⁵. He is sometimes considered the most methodologically sophisticated of the liberation theologians (Hoy 1990, 24)

Contextual theologies do not want to repeat old formulations of faith in updated words, but about discovering, in a new situation, a message formed by the message of the Bible (Nolan 1988, 8.10). They aspire to be a process that would seek to "invent an ideology that would be constructed by a contemporary Gospel message." (Segundo 1975, 117) (Hoy 1990, 87f) i.e. "learning, through past ideologies, how to create the ideologies needed for new and unexpected historical situations" (ibid 120) (Hoy 1990, 88f). "One element is permanent and unique (hence continuous): faith. The other is changing and bound up with different historical circumstances (hence, discontinuous): ideologies" (Segundo 1975, 116)

It is important to note that contextual theology is to be seen as a continuous, dynamical process. It is a hermeneutical circle, shaping experiences to the shape of the gospel, and filling the gospel shape with experiences. (Nolan 1988, 28) This process can be pictured as a wheel, which, as it rolls forward, continually uses another part of the rim. In this picture, reality is the earth, on which the wheel rolls, while turning about the axle, the Bible, which determines the direction and continuity. The community of faith connects the centre of faith, the Bible, to reality. Different aspects of this process can be seen as the spokes of the wheel. These are:

4.5.1 Commitment

The first important principle of contextual theology is that reflection arises out of a prior praxis of faith and faith commitment. It does not replace such praxis. It is always a second act, after the first act of a life of faith. The life of faith, however, is identified with a life of solidarity with those impoverished by social structures, acting with them toward their liberation. Liberation is seen as the central axis of the biblical message and the life of Jesus (Boff 1988, 197, Nolan 1988, 113, McGovern 1988,9). Nolan writes: "I hope that by now I have made it quite clear that the practice of the struggle is the practice of faith even when it is not accompanied by an explicit profession of faith in God or in Jesus Christ. In reading the signs of the times in South Africa today we have been able to discover what Jesus discovered in his time: signs of hope. God is at work in the struggle. The 'works of faith' are there and the conditions for an explicit belief in the good news can be found in the spirit, the commitment, the courage and the hope of the struggle." (Nolan 1988, 178) In this action, the experience of Christian faith is implicit. Action gives a new perspective for the

⁵One needs to specify the sense in which Segundo uses the word "ideology". For him, ideology reflects on effective ways of achieving a given purpose: "If faith is that which teaches us which value is the one to which we can entrust our whole lives, then ideology is that which is concerned with effectiveness in using available means toward the end of the absolute value (Hoy 1990, 32)

interpretation of faith (ICT, 8f; Vidales 1979, 43f). The interpretation gives new courage and certitude to continue on the way (Boff 1988, 198).

'Commitment' is the first step, and a presupposition of contextual theologies, which begin by living out faith concretely - and then thinking about the meaning of the gospel and how it can strengthen one in this praxis. Segundo defines theologians as those who are "*involved in commitment, ours and others', who seek light from faith at the same time that we rethink faith from that commitment.*" (Cabestrero 1980, 172) (Hoy 1990, 6) In this sense, every Christian is doing theology (ICT, 3).

A prerequisite of contextual thinking is to acknowledge that one's own position is not normative, because it is determined by our social position and experience. This realisation liberates us from the danger of theological imperialism (Brown 1985, 80f). It implies that we foreground our contexts and use it consciously in interpreting the text of the Bible, while using contexts different to our own to enrich and correct our interpretation (Brown 1985, 90-92). To prevent theology being subservient to dominant culture, contextual theology, in a form of *theologia crucis*, gives a hermeneutic preference to the experience of those who suffer the destructive effects of the social order (Baum 1990, 37f). However, each context can be a gift enabling new insight to be won (Brown 1985, 90).

Contextual Theology and Bible interpretation acknowledges that there will always be a distance between the constant Gospel and the proclamation of the Gospel in our time, as it is influenced by the time (Brown 1985, 81). Dussel (1979, 191) describes the participation of the different, time-determined proclamations in the constant core of the Christ-message as an analogous Catholicism of different interpretations. Nolan talks about the shape or form of the message remaining constant, but its content changing. (Nolan 1988, 8) Segundo formulates this as the faith remaining constant, but finding expression in ever new ideologies: This distinction is important, because Christian faith is not directed to an a-historical idea, but to the historical action of God in the history of Israel, in the incarnation in Jesus and the outworking thereof in the Church (Brown 1985, 82f, Dussel 1979, 192). Therefore, the theologian is free to attempt new directions, while Christ remains a norm, but without the constriction of a single, perpetually normative interpretation (Dussel 1979, 193).

Because God's action is seen as fundamentally historical, the biblical text is read as being influenced by its literary and social context and its inner diversity is recognised, without the Bible thereby losing its authority. The different witnesses in the Bible enrich and complement one another (Brown 1985, 93).

The risk of being led by our own special interest in interpreting the Bible from our context is countered by the dialogue with and correction by other interpreters with different contexts. (Brown 1985, 90f). The community of faith - locally, regionally and universally - is therefore a fundamental part of theological activity - theology is never a project of an isolated individual, but always conducted in and for the community of faith (Boff 1987, 36, Altmann 1989a, 48)

As the gospel is about salvation from sin, and as sin is that which makes people suffer, the perspective from which theology is to start is the perspective of the suffering asking about how to overcome their plight. "*The gospel is about salvation from sin ... Salvation makes sense and becomes real good news only when we are quite clear about, and feel very strongly about, what we need to be saved or liberated from. Christians have always called this sin.*" (Nolan 1988, 31) "*Sin is about making people suffer, allowing them to suffer or ignoring their suffering.*" (Nolan 1988, 38)

The poor challenge those Christians, who consciously see their life as place of their faith, to live in a Christian way. Often, these Christians themselves are poor (Altmann 1989a, 44f). To contextual theologies, not all experience is equally important: Contextual theologies give preference to the experience of the poor and those who act in solidarity with them to achieve liberation, because they hold that this corresponds to the perspective of the Bible, and therefore enables a better access to the message of the Bible (Vidales 1979, 44f, Nolan 1988, 12). The poor are seen as those in

whom Christ, according to Mt. 25, is present - not only as recipient of help, but also with the dignity of acting subject, to whom we should listen attentively (Boff 1987, 23.43ff).

Whenever the Bible is read in fellowship with the poor, it is also read from their perspective. This is called the "hermeneutical privilege of the poor". This means that those themes that resonate with the poor, for instance the liberating action of God in history, the concern of Jesus for the poor as a sign of the inbreaking of God's reign, the Church as a community not only of faith, but also of property, are emphasised. Other themes are not disregarded, though (Boff 1987, 32f).

Because this process begins with a commitment to the poor, and the desire to construct a theology that addresses their present situation, it focusses on the suffering experienced by the poor and oppressed. In attempting to come to a new understanding of the Gospel as salvation from sin, it defines sin primarily as that which causes suffering (Nolan 1988, 31.48). The commitment to the Gospel as good news for today is therefore a commitment to find a message that will overcome suffering. In order to find this message, it is important to understand the root causes of suffering. The commitment to a praxis of faith with and for the poor therefore leads to the next step: Seeing the suffering of the poor and understanding the mechanisms which cause this suffering.

4.5.2 Social-critical mediation: See

In looking for effective strategies to counter the suffering in the world, a thorough analysis of the social dynamics is necessary, in order that action does not only improve symptoms, but addresses the root causes of suffering (Altmann 1989a, 45f; ICT, 9). Contextual theologies therefore make use of social sciences as a help in understanding the present: *"The fundamental difference between an academic theology and a theology of liberation is that the latter sees itself obligated at each step to put together the disciplines which open up the past with the disciplines which explain the present, and does that in the elaboration of theology, that is, in his intent to interpret the word of God directed to us, here and now."* (Segundo 1975, 7) (Hoy 1990, 78)

In Latin America, the liberal or conservative elites and development experts held the view that poverty is the result of insufficient industrialisation of the country - of under-development. The remedy for this was greater assimilation to the model of developed nations. This is called developmentalism. Liberation theologians challenged this, and used more conflictual models to understand the poverty in the third world as the result of exploitation by colonial powers. (McGovern 1989, 8f) For this reason, Latin American theologians used dependence theory and class struggle analysis as the models which were closest to experience. These are dialectical-conflictual models, coming from Marxist roots. They are used, however, without appropriating the world view of Marxism. These models see the impoverishment not as a result of failure of individuals or a system, but as a consistent result of the present system. By doing this, they enable the reflecting person to fundamentally critique the system and not to just marginally improve it (Altmann 1989a, 46f; Boff 1987, 25-27; Berriman 1987, 138ff, McGovern 1989, 9f)

In the USA and South Africa, racism is added to class conflict in the analyses of the causes of suffering, and there is some debate about the question whether race or class is the more important category to use. However, there is consensus that the system of racial capitalism is the underlying cause of suffering, that the removal, and not the reform of this system, is necessary, and that a gospel which truly brings good news would be a gospel which gives hope for the liberation from this system (Nolan, 1988, 69.155)

4.5.3 Hermeneutical Mediation - Judge in the light of Scripture

Contextual theology reflects on the experience, both the faith experience and the experience of social reality, in the light of the word of God. All theology "must keep going back to its book and reinterpreting it" (Segundo 1975, 7). This reflection takes place within the framework of the Christian community. It is based on the common commitment of this community to faith and the priority given to the issues of the impoverished. It is from this perspective that the Bible is read. This is based on the conviction that God is working dynamically in the present, and he does not simply bless the existing, but intends to transform it, and calls and uses people for this purpose. Therefore, the presence of God in history with the poor is emphasised, evil is judged, and God's will to triumph over evil in personal and social realms is announced (Altmann 1989a, 48-50).

Contextual theology arises out of the faith and life in the base communities. This is foundational for it. Theology is practised not only by experts with book knowledge, but by all Christians, who think about their life in faith. The aim of a contextual theology is therefore always to form part of a discussion in the community of faith: "... those books were successfully managing to avoid being consumer theology precisely insofar as they were addressed to lay people rather than to theologians; insofar as they were trying to open up paths rather than providing systematic solutions, insofar as they offered a method more than a body of content; insofar as they did not prompt people to stop theologising because in them people could find valid answers to presumably general problems" (Segundo 1979, xiii) (Hoy 1990, 14). Still, the special gifts of trained Bible readers are used in the service of the community (ICT, 3.9).

In the encounter between life and Bible, the members of the community experience that the Bible authenticates itself as Word of God, by illuminating the experiences made in life, opening a new perspective on issues, and giving people new hope and strength and direction in their life. In this sense the Bible places itself in the middle of the process, interprets itself and shows up its own authority (Shaul 1991, 74f).

Those who read the Bible from the perspective of the oppressed realise that oppression is a fundamental category in the Bible (Nolan 1988, 62), that the suffering of the oppressed is a result of sin and that God identifies with those who are suffering under it:

"Sin is a religious word that speaks of God as the one who is sinned against and who punishes sin. Sin is a moral word that indicates human responsibility and guilt. The criterion for sinfulness is not law but suffering. Sin always causes suffering. Sin is blind, hypocritical and self-deceptive. We sin not only by what we do but also by what we do not do, by omission. All sin is both personal and social because although only individuals can commit sin, their sins have social consequences and these can be objectified, embodied or institutionalised in structures such as nations, social systems, and laws. These embodiments of sin or sinful structures are the powers of evil in the world." (Nolan 1988, 48)

"Sin becomes visible in suffering. Our sin becomes visible in the suffering faces of the poor and oppressed people of South Africa. God speaks to us through them as he speaks to us through his servants, the prophets. And he speaks to us first of all about sin, about our responsibility for the excess of suffering in South Africa today." (Nolan 1988, 65) "Jesus suffered and died on a Roman cross because like Moses and the prophets of old and like the other prophets and prophetic leaders of his time, Jesus was horrified by the sufferings of the people, shared in their suffering, and was determined to do something about their plight. Jesus was one of the oppressed struggling to free all who suffered under the yoke of oppression. That is the meaning of the cross." (Nolan 1988, 61) "The suffering of the people of South Africa is one of the great signs of our times. It is a sign of God's presence as the crucified Christ." (Nolan 1988, 67)

In attributing the suffering not to individual acts, but to systems (as in the social analysis described above), contextual theology interprets these systems as evidence of the powers of evil of which the Bible speaks: *"The Apartheid system is, without doubt, another of the great signs of our times in South Africa today. Through this sign God is saying something to us about the reality of evil, about the Antichrist, about the reign of Mammon and about all we need to be saved from."* (Nolan 1988, 88)

However, in the midst of suffering, contextual theologies also detect signs of hope and of the presence of God who leads beyond suffering. They see this hope already in the prophets of the First Testament: "... the author of the second part of the book of Isaiah came to the conclusion that the sufferings of Israel did have a meaning ... these people will be a prophetic witness to the world through their suffering." (Nolan 1988, 64) They see grounds for hope, though, especially in Jesus Christ. "As of old, we are now witnessing the wonderful works of God as we see good coming out of evil and life out of death. The powers of evil are being outwitted by God ... God is preparing the conditions for salvation and bringing people together in solidarity and commitment, fearlessness and hopefulness, excitement, celebration and power." (Nolan 1988, 181) "The gospel or good news in South Africa today is the religious meaning or significance of what is happening in our country. We are experiencing a divine visitation. God in Christ, who is being crucified by the system, is rising up from below in a powerful struggle against the powers of evil that will end soon in victory and peace. God is doing a new thing. We are experiencing a very special moment of grace because the ... chains of the past are being transcended and now we have ... the promise of a day of salvation when the evils of apartheid will be overcome." (Nolan 1988, 194)

In this encounter with the Bible, the impoverished discover their self-worth as those with whom God identifies. They begin to develop authority to be subjects of their own faith and life. In being able to read and understand the Bible themselves, and to hear in it the Word of God giving them strength to live their lives as Christians and stand up for justice, directing them, how such a life can look. So they discover the unity of spirituality and everyday life (Altmann 1989a, 43f).

The Bible is consciously read in relation to its social context, and, where necessary, exegetical knowledge is used. Central, however, is the meaning of the Bible for questions of life in the community. The Bible is not read with the distance of objectivity. It is placed into direct relation to the concerns of the life of the reader. (Berriman 1987, 60f; Boff 1987, 34). In reading the Bible, one looks for the power of the Word to change life (Boff 1987, 34).

4.5.4 Practical Mediation - Act

Contextual theologies intend to overcome the division between natural and supernatural and sublate both into a historical process, on which theology reflects dialectically (Altmann 1992, 71; Altmann 1989a, 44, (Segundo 1976, 140). Therefore, the meaning of the Bible and faith for individual spirituality and for the practice in society is emphasized (Altmann 1989a, 53). Contextual theology interprets liberating acts perceived in history as acts of God, and answers to these with joy, just as Jesus called people to respond joyfully to the acts of God they saw in him (Bertram 1988, 269). Through this, contextual theology wants to encourage people to act for liberation, knowing that God acts through them, values their action, and builds his reign through it. (Bertram 1988, 269, Nolan 1988, 193).

For this reason, contextual theology asks the question what specific steps of discipleship can be taken now (ICT, 10). Theology is not sufficient in itself: It arises out of a life of faith, and should flow back into the praxis of faith and serve this praxis. Knowing that faith is more than our own accomplishment, contextual theology also leads to worship and meditation. However, the prime praxis to which contextual theology wants to lead is that of love, which, in its political form, acts for and with the poor (Boff 1987, 39). Contextual theology calls for discipleship both in the personal and political realm (Altmann 1989b, 74). Its aim is "*more being liberative than talking about liberation*" (Segundo 1976, 9)(Hoy 1990, 7).⁶

The purpose of the process of theological reflection is to challenge people to identify with the work of God, to act against oppression: "*Black theology is a call to metanoia for whites and blacks*" (Frostin 1988, 152). "*Turning to God means a conversion. ... It means turning from sin as we experience it today in South Africa - the cycle of sin, the system and our active or passive*

⁶In cases where reference is made to a quotation as derived from a citation in a secondary work, the format as presented here is used, with the original work being cited first, and the secondary work second.

involvement in it. ...On the other hand, it means turning to the whole process of salvation as God is working it out in South Africa today. Turning to God in our context means committing ourselves to structural change because that is the struggle for salvation going on at the moment." (Nolan 1988, 197)

In participating in this new action, people become part of the hopeful process of God: *"God is the basis of our hope because it is the good news of God's wonderful works that gives us hope. ... Hope and challenge always go together. They are dialectically related ... Without hope for the future of South Africa it is impossible to feel challenged to do anything about the situation. On the other hand, it is only when we begin to take up the challenge that we begin to feel hopeful. We find hope in the struggle."* (Nolan 1988, 195) It is participation in the struggle that is the defining characteristic of the people of God as a heroic minority: *"Such a minority church would be a heroic community that would orient itself toward the 'essential Christian message: the cross.'" (Segundo 1976, 212) It would be that community which would dare to live out the promise of the Gospel in the real life context where faith's work of love needs to be happening."* (Hoy 1990, 61)

"While faith is certainly not an ideology, it only has meaning as the foundation for ideologies" (Segundo 1975, 109) "However lofty it may be, it is always in the service of historical solutions to human problems - even though the latter will always be provisional and incomplete. In other words, faith is a liberating process, and it is so converted into a freedom for history, that is, a freedom for ideologies" (Segundo 1975, 110) (Hoy 1990, 90f).

4.5.5 And See-judge in light of scripture, and act again

After each step taken, the situation has changed. The community has had new experience of life and faith. Therefore, it is necessary to anew reflect on faith and life. Part of this reflection is to look back on what has happened. In doing so, members of the community are called to be honest about failings - so one can learn from them. The community also praises God for whatever he has done toward liberation through humans. This praise and celebration encourages the community to take the next step. "each new reality obliges us to interpret the revelation of God afresh, to change reality with that interpretation and, then, to go back to interpreting . . . and so on" (Segundo 1975, 8).

4.6 The structure of the societies in which contextual theologies arise

As we did in the case of Luther, we need to depict the structure of the legitimating ideology to which contextual theologies respond. In the societies to which contextual theologies respond, theology no longer has the central role it had at the time of Luther, where all of society was dominated by the church. Legitimacy is not conferred primarily in terms of theology, but in terms of the dominant legitimating ideology of the society. In all cases, this legitimating ideology may be called neo-colonial capitalism.

4.6.1 Legitimation in neo-colonial capitalism

The societies in question had been colonised. During colonial times, the colonisation had been legitimated by asserting that the colonial power was bringing civilisation to the barbaric nations it colonised. The colonised were regarded as not fully developed humans, who could not make decisions in their own affairs and did not know what was good for them. Because of their higher level of civilisation, the colonial power and colonisers had a right and a duty to take control over the natives and decide for them. The colonised were put into the role of children who still needed to imbibe and learn and become civilised - and until this was achieved (which would only be in the far future), were to be grateful that the colonisers would decide for them.

Legitimation for the colonised was therefore dispensed by the colonisers. Whether someone was regarded as a 'good native' depended on how much he assimilated himself to the behaviour, values and expectations of the colonisers.

Status in the colonial society was determined by how close the person was to the colonial mother country and its institutions. Officials of colonial government and church had the highest status.

These decided on the validity on behaviour in terms of the 'standards of civilised behaviour' brought from the 'mother country'.

At the same time, colonisation was always intended to be to the advantage of the colonising power - to profit the coloniser in terms of direct profit, raw materials, access to market or land for settlement. "The system of internal colonialism is at its roots a system of forced labour. ... the purpose of all colonialism is money." (Nolan 1988, 72) Black theologians affirm that the white power structure must be explained in terms of greed and economic interest, race being used to justify a system where a few had a monopoly of power and wealth (Frostin 1988, 116f) They perceive a close link between the politics of white domination and the economics of capitalism (Frostin 1988, 117) Most colonial enterprises started off as companies for profit. While the 'official text' therefore was bringing the light of civilisation to the darkness of the heathen world, the subtext was making money. For instance, the most common theme in correspondence between the governor of the Cape Colony and the Dutch or English colonial authorities was that the governor requested more resources in order to administer the colony properly, which was refused on the grounds that the colony was not showing any profit.

Also in South Africa, where race seemed to play such an important role, the real motive was economic power: Racism was seen as an ideology that justified the white conquest of the land and the exploitation of black labour (Frostin 1988, 119) *"The consequence is that racism is not the cause, but the justification of exploitation - and the solution is not integration of blacks into white, capitalist society, but fundamental transformation of society."* (Frostin 1988, 135)

With the end of the 'colonial era' in the sixties and seventies, the first system of legitimation - imbibing European civilisation - was de-emphasised. However, the second system - money - remains, and status is proportional to the quantity and quality of consumer goods a person has access to.

The structure of legitimation in capitalism is seen most clearly in the economic realm. The basic question on whether an action or entity is legitimate is whether it is profitable. The 'bottom line' is fundamentally the only norm of action in the economic sphere. In the era of globalization, this means that trans-national companies transfer investment, work opportunities, production and consumption at will to that place where the greatest profit can be achieved. This results in unemployment and immense pressure on governments to follow dictates of transnational companies (Kessler 2000, 47)

In the personal realm, legitimacy is conferred by economic power. Social acceptability is linked by advertising to consumption of the goods produced by large companies - and must therefore be bought.

People, or societies, that buy into this system, try to advance themselves within the parameters of the value system. *"If an oppressed person does not realise that he or she is being oppressed by a system, ... he or she might be tempted to try to move up to the top in order to join or to replace those who are up there. ... This is the individualist option for upward mobility. It is a rejection of God's grace."* (Nolan 1988, 198) Advertising often is designed not to sell the material product, with the direct benefits or qualities of this material product, but to sell the image (of success, liveliness, social status ...) that is associated with the product. A current example of this is a byline of a TV advert for a clothing store: *"Think of shopping as renting happiness"* In other words, consumerist society is based on the purchase of social prestige and life fulfillment - legitimacy - through purchase of goods. Legitimacy is therefor conferred through economic power.

Contextual theologies see this as an enslaving mechanism: *"Sin enslaves humanity ... Mechanisms are that craving leads to injustice, self-deception and -justification, which results in idolatry and dehumanized relationships"* (Segundo 1984, 21) (Hoy 1990, 102.105)

The church, too, is in danger of becoming part of such a system, which in essence is driven by fear: *"Three fears hinder evangelisation: Fear for material means of support of the church, fear of*

disturbing status quo and fear for gospel. These fears are causing an alliance with power" (Hoy 1990, 16)

In summary: In neo-colonial societies and in capitalism legitimacy is conferred in terms of criteria set by the powerful elite dominating these societies. Social and personal status and legitimacy is given to those assimilating to the norms of society. In consumerism, these norms are conveyed by the advertising industry. The underlying structure thereof is the purchase of social status through the purchase of consumer goods. Legitimacy is therefore defined by and accessible to those on top of the social hierarchy, those with economic power (LWB 2000, 170). The transaction in which legitimacy is obtained involves the exchange of material goods for the immaterial result of legitimacy. Social legitimacy is measured primarily in terms of efficacy for economic growth, and therefore growth of profit.

4.6.2 Orientation of life in neo-colonial capitalism

Life in colonial society was oriented toward the individual assimilation in the system. Individual advancement is conceived in terms of becoming more and more like a 'good Englishman'.

The underlying ethos of these societies, against which contextual theologies protest, is that of developmentalism. The content of this ethos is to take the structure of society, and its inequality, as a given, and to seek personal advancement within the structures of the society by conforming as much as possible to its ethos. In this ethos, personal advancement, especially in terms of the search for greater wealth for yourself, becomes the norm. Members, both of the oppressed and oppressing classes, can follow this orientation of life. A black theologian, Goba, critiques members of the black South African community: *"Influenced by capitalism we have become materialistically self-centered and the emphasis seems to be on individual enterprise and material acquisition for the individual - not the black masses."* (Goba 1972, 48) However, the participation in this orientation of life is not so much a free choice as acquiescence into patterns of life into which society socialises the individual. The selfish pattern of life therefore is something the individual finds him- or herself almost born into. Nolan recognises this and associates it with the tradition of original sin: *"We are socialised into its (Apartheid's) false values of racism, individualism, selfishness, competition, possessiveness, and money as the measure of all value. ... This is what the Christian tradition calls original sin."* (Nolan 1988, 90) Desmond Tutu agrees that the basic orientation of life in the socio-economic system of Apartheid is self-aggrandisement and getting when he sets his vision against this: *"I would look for a socio-economic system that placed the emphasis on sharing and giving, rather than on self-aggrandisement and getting."* (Tutu 1982), 100)

Against these critiques, adherents of neo-colonial capitalism, or developmentalism, presuppose that the basic structure of a society based on the orientation of each person to acquire as much wealth as possible is in order. The theory is that, if each individual works hard to acquire wealth, the total wealth and well-being of society will increase. If everyone aims to consume as much as possible, the amount of production will grow, work opportunities will increase, the economy will grow, and every one will be better off. If a society opens its market to global competition, the greater efficiency thereby enforced will make all societies more productive and everyone will benefit. Each society is encouraged to model itself on the free-market system of the west. Societies are encouraged to emulate the structure of societies in 'more developed' countries - to focus their national resources on participation in the global economy, greater efficiency of profit achievement for companies etc.

Therefore, in this theory, the selfishness of trying to acquire as much as possible for myself, is in the end to the benefit of all. Developmentalism, or globalism, which is the foil for liberation theologies, presupposes that this concept is intact, and the aim of social and political activity is to integrate more closely into this pattern. Life is orientated toward the acquisition of wealth and the assimilation to the centres of power.

Life is oriented toward individual advancement within the system of norms conveyed by consumerist society. This involves primarily the acquisition of wealth and economic power in order to spend such wealth on consumer goods that demonstrate the status or legitimacy of

one's person (Kelly 2000, 195). Life is orientated toward the acquisition of wealth and the assimilation to the centres of power.

4.6.3 Articulation between legitimization and orientation

Is legitimization the result of achievement of the aims of life, or is conferred legitimization a driving force enabling life to be oriented in a certain direction? Clearly, in capitalism, legitimization is obtained by success in achieving economic power, which is the goal toward which life is oriented. In other words, the orientation of life is in service of the quest for legitimization.

Legitimation and social status in capitalism are dependent on the success with which one achieves wealth. Therefore, those who have little success in generating personal wealth and little means to purchase consumer items are of low social standing - and their life means little in society at large. Because each human has the desire to lead a worthwhile, meaningful life, and to be recognised by society, the pressure to achieve wealth is enormous. For those who are too poor and unable to achieve this end, the implication is that, in addition to the hardship of poverty in the material sense, society adds insult to injury by declaring their life a failure in terms of the values of this society.

The conditionality with which legitimization depends on achievement of wealth therefore puts immense pressure on individuals to, in one way or another, attain this social goal. Indeed, the relationship between legitimization and orientation of life is an enslaving mechanism, and people become driven by the desire for wealth, as an alien power, that dehumanises their relationships: *"there would not be enslavement if the human being were master of his actions ... they become ... beings driven by an alien power"* (Segundo 1985, 21) (Hoy 1990, 103)

4.6.4 The image of God

Where and who is God in this system? In the dictum of Luther, God is that which you trust. It is the principle that gives worth and orientation to your life. It is in terms of this principle that contextual theologies regard the oppression they protest against as idolatry. Therefore, a major task for theology is to identify false gods. Three criteria are advanced: Idols oust God, they legitimize oppression and they alienate humans from themselves. This idolatry creates a false consciousness - alienation - and slave consciousness of the oppressed (Frostin 1988, 108). Though capitalism does not have a God in the personal and obvious sense of an religion, yet it has an impersonal principle of absolute nature that can be regarded as an idol, and therefore it does make sense to ask about the 'image of God' in capitalism. The same applies to apartheid: Black theology perceives Apartheid as idolatry. *"Buthelezi's reference to Luther's definition of 'god' in the Large Catechism may be of special relevance. 'What does it mean to have a God? What is God? ... Trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and idol. ... For the two, faith and God, hold close together. Whatever then thy heart clings to ... and relies upon, this is properly thy God.'*" (Buthelezi 1968, 59) (Frostin 1988, 105f)

What is the God, or idol, of the "system" contextual theologies protest against? Using the definition of Tillich, that God is the matter of ultimate concern, this question translates to: What is of ultimate concern, of absolute and unquestioned value, in capitalism? In analysing society, one finds that the ultimate concern is wealth: *"This indicates that the ultimate concern in the economic system in South Africa is profit, not the common good - and thereby it is idolatry, worship of Mammon."* (Frostin 1988, 121)

Another way to ask the same question is to define God as the *summum bonum*, the highest good - from which all other things derive their value. In terms of what is all value measured in capitalist society? Again the answer is money: *"Money has become an object of devotion ... the measure of all value ... Money, a mere thing, is divinised, while people are treated as mere things or objects. ... It is our God and the pursuit of money is our religion."* (Nolan 1988, 85)

Therefore, we conclude that the God of capitalist society is money - almost all judgements of value are done in terms of cost, profit and monetary worth. The orientation of life is toward

acquiring more money - or showing one's possession of money by spending it on consumer goods.

In Apartheid society, the situation, as indicated in the description "racial capitalism" is similar, but somewhat less clear, as the issue of race is added. However, the fundamental structure remains the same - with race being an added idol. Race again is regarded as an ultimate measure of value, and an absolute, which may not be questioned. In South Africa, as race was used to legitimate the division in terms of which the exploitation of the majority was legitimised, race also became an idol: "*Evaluation of persons, rather than by their relatedness to God as creatures, by ethnic criteria is denial of creation and idolatry.*" (Frostin 1988, 141) Buthelezi argues that in South Africa, race has become an idol in South Africa, as a penultimate - race - has been elevated to ultimate significance, resulting in a denial of justice, which is a denial of the God of justice, and a division in the one Church of Christ (Frostin 1988, 108).

What are the characteristics of these idols?

In the first place, they operate primarily as abstract principles. No personal relationship is established - or intended.

Secondly, the principle of profit or consumption demands service, even sacrifice - while promising great future reward to those who sacrifice in its service now. So the individual is led to believe that if he sacrifices time, relationships, even his health now - it will be amply rewarded by the wealth he will have in future. In a similar way, a society is led to believe that the sacrifices of poverty, suffering and deaths now caused by structural adjustment packages will be rewarded by economic growth and wealth in future. Therefore, the relationship (if one can call it that) of the individual or society to this 'God' is one of present service and sacrifice exchanged for putative future reward.

Thirdly, the principle of profit or wealth has little regard for those who fail to achieve. Its concern is for those who attain power - and those are the paradigms it holds up. The judgement on those who loose is harsh.

These characteristics give description of the image of the 'God' of capitalism. Nolan calls this God a demon: "*We are up against a monster ... an evil spirit ... its name is Mammon ... We worship money - only we call it our standard of living. Jesus called it Mammon. It is an idol, a false God, a demon.*" (Nolan 1988, 84f)

Segundo calls it an inhuman idol, created in order to justify false desires: "*the desire for injustice/ deceitful justificatory reasons/ creation of an inhuman idol which justifies injustice/ the fall into inhuman mutual relations*" (Segundo 1986, 21) (Hoy 1990, 320)

The "God" of the capitalist-consumerist system is money. This idol demands sacrifice of time, work, the energies of life in order to reward these sacrifices in future with wealth and legitimacy. It has regard primarily for the successful - the failures do not count.

4.6.5 Negative heuristic - Failure comes from laziness

The negative heuristic of a system is the way in which the central thesis of that system explains away experiences that contradict the predictions of the theory concerned. In capitalism, the most important contradictory experience is the poverty and suffering that continue to occur. If capitalism is the best economic system possible, and if the collective selfishness and quest for greater wealth of all should increase the wealth of everyone, why is there still so much suffering, poverty and unemployment? If the under-developed nations should improve their economic situation by opening up their markets more to global trade, why has the gap between poor and rich countries only grown? In 89 countries with 1.3 billion people, the GDP declined between 1986 and 1997 (Kessler 2000, 46)

Developmentalism or capitalism will find reasons for this in either insufficient work efficiency on the part of the people, or insufficient application of its principles: It is the backwardness of

culture, the uneducatedness of the workforce, the laziness of the poor.... which is responsible for the underdevelopment of the third world, and the poverty of the poor in all societies.

The solution is to spend more effort on assimilating more closely into the system - and once the system generates enough profit, then, maybe, will there be money to finance basic human needs.

4.6.6 Consequences - Wealth concentration, poverty extension and stress

Individuals are therefore encouraged to strive for the acquisition of economic power - and the possibility to purchase the consumer goods which represent a valuable life - or legitimacy. To achieve this aim, enormous sacrifices are often made. People sacrifice their family life, and marriages break up because of the pressures of work. The stresses of attempting to move up in the social ladder often mean that individuals must sacrifice their health in order to attain advancement. Pressure to perform leads to stress-related psychological illness. "Kotze .. assert(s) that 'South Africa has one of the most psychologically ill societies in the world the root causes (are) 'the socio-political climate, ... a materialistic lifestyle, ... conditions of poverty and often social disorder'" (Nolan 1988, 81) The consequences are manifold: Drink and drugs are used to escape the suffering. Internalised aggression leads to violence, also within families. (Nolan 1988, 82f) The pressure to achieve wealth, coupled with the closing of opportunities to do so, can lead to crime.

Because the ability to generate wealth is enhanced by access to resources, the consequence of capitalism is that the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. The same applies to the income distribution between countries: Countries that have achieved prosperity and have investment wealth increase in wealth globally, while the poorer countries have, with very few exceptions, become proportionately poorer over the last decades (Kessler 2000, 46).

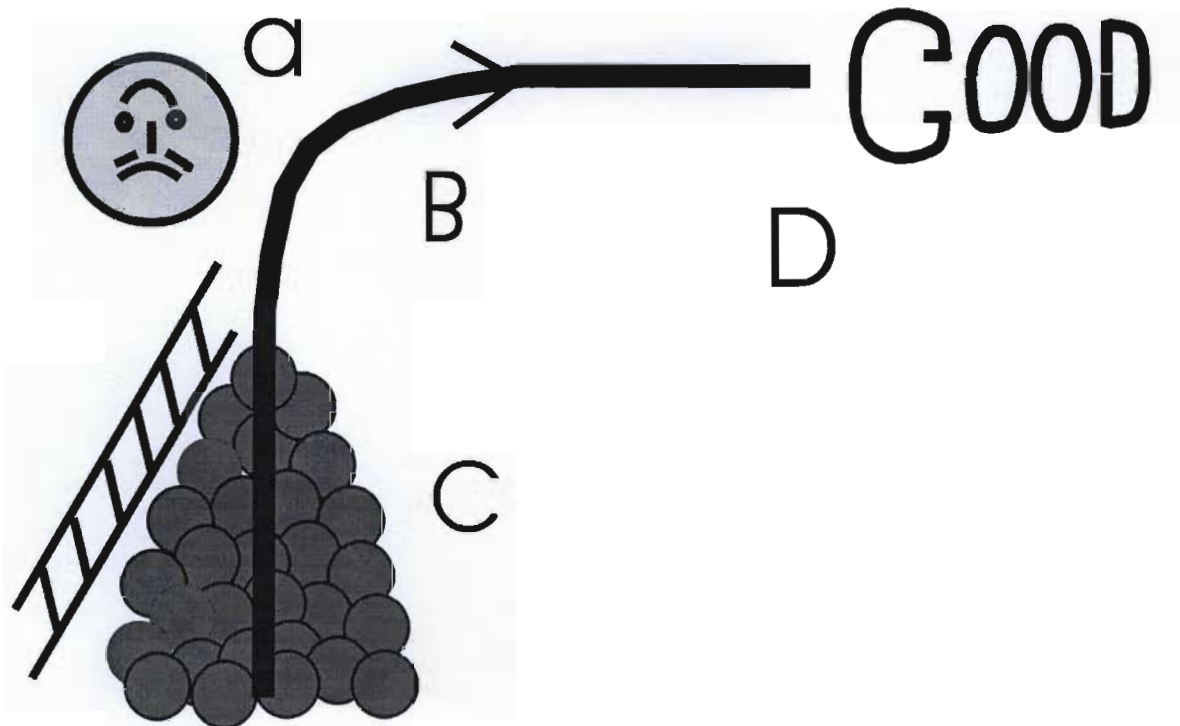
The effect is that the poorer sectors of society sell their produce and labour in order to buy consumer goods, which are the currency in which status, social legitimacy, and the feeling of being a worthwhile person, are being sold. The net result is that the investors in the companies who manufacture these goods are enriched by the quest of the poorer to obtain legitimacy.

Because self-worth is made dependent on achievement of wealth, the poor do not only suffer physically, but also existentially doubt their worth as human beings. Self-worth manifestly is low among impoverished communities. All these phenomena apply under apartheid: *"The system that justifies such exploitation, thereby enabling good profits for large companies, at the same time dehumanises blacks, reducing them to mere units of labour, and breaks up black families through the migrant labour system"* (Frostin 1988, 119f) *"It is a system of institutionalised violence, using migratory labour, which deliberately, not accidentally, destroys black family life. It is a system that uses structural unemployment, by having reservoirs of unskilled labour in the homelands, to provide cheap labour."* (Tutu (1982) 107)

Because the fundamental transaction of society involves the acquisition of legitimacy by the mass of people through the expenditure of work in terms of rules set by the powerful of the society, the result is that the rich grow richer, and that the poor have to contend with both poverty and lack of self-worth.

4.6.7 Graphical representation

In capitalism, life aims to climb upward (B)- and does so by attempting to accumulate goods, wealth, prestige and power (C). The god of this system is up, above (it is the wealthy that make the rules he represents) - and judges whether one has done and accumulated enough to qualify for the good life (Q). This good life only starts once this criterion has been satisfied. (D). As in the case of medieval roman theology, this is a 'in and up' type of theology: The energies of life are spent in accumulating goods and economic power, with the aim of, once one has accumulated enough, then to live 'the good life'.



4.7 The structure of the response of contextual theologies

4.7.1 Legitimation is given by identification with the struggle of the suffering

While the established society presupposes that legitimacy is conferred by the holders and centres of power, contextual theologies claim the source of legitimacy to be from the underside of history. Contextual theologies regard only theologies which work from the perspective of the poor as legitimate.

In the realm of personal legitimation the same basic shift occurs. Contextual theologies occur in societies with strong differentiation between elites, who control society, and marginalised. Legitimation in these societies is conferred by the elites on those who align themselves with the interest of the elites. In general, legitimation is linked to proximity with the elite. Contextual theologies undermine and reverse this, by claiming legitimacy of a person to come from proximity to and alignment with the marginalised. Those who join the struggle for the poor are working on the side of God in history - and therefore their life is worthwhile and legitimised. They seek the psychological liberation of the poor, black, or other oppressed, so that they can believe they are created in the image of God, and are empowered by God to act in history and become authors of their own destiny.

The same applies to legitimacy of social structures. In societies of inequality, the ruling ethos depicts the fundamental social structures that underlie and produce the inequality as a given, as immutable constants. All social constructs are measured by their correspondence to these, purportedly immutable, social bases. Contextual theologies radically change this: They regard social structures of oppression as not necessary, but man-made and removable by people. They change the criterion of legitimacy for social structures from correspondence with an abstract law, regarded as immutable, to the concrete question of whether the social structures are made to serve the interests of the poor. This fundamental shift is seen as corresponding to the practice of Jesus: *"Jesus turned sin on its head. ... The law at the time of Jesus, interpreted as a system of purity and holiness, sanctified the status quo, the structures of economic and political domination, ensuring that those who had privileges would never lose them.... Jesus rejected this system in toto ... He accuses (the scribes and Pharisees) of two great sins: idolatrous worship of money (Mat 6:24 par) and hypocrisy. ... It is the upholders of the system ... who must be regarded as the real sinners"* (Nolan 1988, 34ff).

Contextual theologies claim the source of legitimacy to be from the underside of history. Those who join the struggle for the poor are working on the side of God in history - and therefore their life is worthwhile and legitimised. The poor may believe that God cares for them, that they are created in the image of God, and are empowered by God to act in history and become authors of their own destiny. Social structures are legitimate if they serve the interests of the poor.

4.7.2 Life oriented to liberation

The orientation of life is intimately linked to the question of legitimacy: Life is oriented toward that which is legitimate. Contextual theologies, as they revolutionise the source of legitimacy, also convert the orientation of life. Societies in which contextual theologies arise are characterised by great social inequality. The system of exploitation orientates life, taking social inequality as a given, to the attempt to attain a better life for oneself, and move up the social ladder. Contextual theologies turn this around: They orientate life to serve the community of the poor. They therefore counsel, instead of personal advancement and careful preservation of little life by remaining within structures of oppression, bold assertion of life by struggle against oppression, based on hope for greater life.

A common pattern emerges in all these cases: Instead of regarding abstract concepts as immutable, and orienting life towards the top, the centre of power, the process is reversed. The concrete benefit and life of those below, those marginalised by power structures, is set as the aim of actions and life.

Religion, therefore, should orient life not toward serving God either in the sense that the God demands such service or in the sense that such service should benefit the individual, but in seeking the welfare of people at large. This is expressed by Julius Nyerere: *"God, any God, has a relationship only with the individual who has faith in him; no religion presupposes a God who has a relationship with an abstract noun or only with a collective unit. And certainly our worship of God is itself for the benefit of man, not for the benefit of God. For while worship can do some good for man, or can be believed to do some good for him, it obviously can do no good to perfection - that is to God. An individual's social living may, of course, be regulated to some extent by his religious beliefs, but these beliefs are not the purpose of his social living, even if a man regards them as the purpose of his life. The purpose of society is in all cases man, although in some cases the institutions of society will be shaped according to men's beliefs about the requirements of their spiritual development."* (Nyerere 1966, 13) (Frostin 1988, 75)

Nolan makes it clear that the orientation of life toward which liberation theology leads is the service of the people: *"Service is the key. Power should be used to serve people, to protect them, save them and give them freedom. When power is misused to dominate, control and oppress people, it corrupts... In South Africa today we call it people's power: power that is shared by all, for the benefit of all and as a service to all. The Bible calls it God's power. From the point of view of the worldly abuse of power, God's power of service and freedom appears to be weakness."* (Nolan 1988, 112) Nolan sees in this orientation toward service of neighbour a radical break with the structures of apartheid society, which are based on people seeking their own advantage and that of their racial group: *"Turning to God means a conversion. ... It means turning from sin as we experience it today in South Africa - the cycle of sin, the system and our active or passive involvement in it. ... On the other hand, it means turning to the whole process of salvation as God is working it out in South Africa today. Turning to God in our context means committing ourselves to structural change because that is the struggle for salvation going on at the moment."* (Nolan 1988, 197) Liberation theology orients those who follow it to this struggle, not for their own gain, but on the basis of God's intentions.

The same value is expressed in more abstract terms by Segundo: *"The great religious revolution of Christianity has been the abolition of the profane... on behalf of the absolute religious value of ... the profane"* (Segundo 1962, 35) (Hoy 1990, 56) In other words, it is not specific religious acts have religious value, but the service of the neighbour in everyday life has absolute religious value.

Contextual theologies orientate life to serve the community of the poor. The concrete benefit and life of those below, those marginalised by power structures, is set as the aim of actions and life. The aim of religion is not to gain salvation for oneself. God is served, not in order to obtain religious advantage for oneself, but by seeking the concrete betterment of the life of all the poor and marginalised, with whom God identifies.

4.7.3 The articulation of legitimation and orientation

In the first instance, the way legitimation and orientation are articulated in contextual theologies seems to indicate that the legitimation received from God serves as empowerment to orient one's life to the service of the poor.

Segundo is quite explicit that the orientation of one's life is not done with the aim of advancing one's own legitimacy before God: "Faith" is juxtaposed to any attempts to "use the religious realm in a desperate effort to secure for oneself, in a calculable and certain manner, the divine benefits" (Segundo 1984, 53) (Hoy 1990, 109) *"Faith frees the human being from the obsession of negotiating one's salvation with God, interceding with works based on the letter"* (Segundo 1984, 108f) (Hoy 1990, 127) In other words, faith is an orientation of life that does not aim to achieve benefits or legitimacy for oneself. To the contrary, the legitimacy conferred by God who identifies with the poor gratuitously frees the individual and gives him the motivation to serve the poor: *"When Christ consented to die for love of us while we were still God's enemies, he freed us radically from our moral fears and thus opened up a whole new possibility for us. Despite all our human limitations, we can now forget our own destiny"*

compromised by sin and move out creatively and freely to build the kingdom of God insofar as it depends on us." (Segundo 1986, 93) (Hoy 1990, 254) It is precisely the gratuitous nature of the promise of God that gives humans freedom from their self-concern and enables them to escape the cycle of sin caused by desires and fears for ourselves: *"In order to forget ourselves and the natural fears as creatures, and the sterile accounting relation to our salvation, faith is necessary, that is, trust in the gratuity of the promise. So the human being gives up preoccupation with himself -- which makes him easy prey for the natural and social mechanisms -- and puts his concentration of all his energies in the project which he has in his hands. In other words .. faith is not opposed to work. On the contrary, only faith makes possible the work of the human being, that is, the free work, which bears the stamp of the human being, which defies death* (Segundo 1984, 131) (Hoy 1990, 132f).

In Segundo, therefore, it is clear that the gratuitous granting of legitimation by God is the source and energy for the orientation of life toward service of one's neighbour: *"Faith (Paul's term) is necessary in order to liberate the human being from his obsession with his own security, to the end that, in a history which is changing and relative, he can seek without religious inhibitions the work (James' term) in accordance with the structure of values which his faith implies and which reality demands"* (Segundo 1984, 126) (Hoy 1990, 92) *"the decisive human quality is not love, (which is the result) but the inner mechanism which is capable of directing all the energies of the human being into a creative project of love, Faith."* (Segundo 1984, 133) (Hoy 1990, 135) In other words, faith in God and his gratuitous promise liberates us from self-concern, seeking our salvation through what we can do, and therefore makes us free for love and thereby to seek the welfare of the others.

While Segundo makes this relationship very clear, it is not as clearly stated in Nolan. However, also in Nolan, it is because God is active on behalf of the poor, that we are called to join in this action. In other words, God's action in intervening in history to give legitimacy, dignity, and hope to the poor precedes and precipitates the action of the individual - so that legitimation by God is the primary, and orientation of life the secondary phenomenon. *"Now this is precisely how we experience the struggle. It is a grace. ... It has nothing to do with the obligations and duties of the system. It transcends all the rewards and benefits that are offered to us in exchange for conformity. ... When things come to us freely and spontaneously they have the quality of grace or a gift. ... The hope, the commitment, the solidarity, the courage and the discipline we find in the struggle cannot be bought with money or with any other form of exchange. They are free. Above all, our particular kairos in South Africa today is a grace."* (Nolan 1988, 190) It is above all the hope that comes from knowing that God himself is on the side of the poor that gives courage and energy to take up the struggle: *"God is the basis of our hope because it is the good news of God's wonderful works that gives us hope. ... Hope and challenge always go together. They are dialectically related ... Without hope for the future of South Africa it is impossible to feel challenged to do anything about the situation. On the other hand, it is only when we begin to take up the challenge that we begin to feel hopeful. We find hope in the struggle."* (Nolan 1988, 195)

God's presence with the poor is a given, a gratuitous deed of God's grace. It is because of God's gracious presence that people are motivated, receive hope and determination for the struggle for greater justice. God's grace forms the basis for the love which does not need to seek its own benefit, but is free to seek the benefit of all in the liberation of the oppressed.

However, the causativeness of legitimation in regard to orientation is dispersed by the way in which faith is interpreted - and thereby one might say diluted: Because all those who struggle on behalf of the poor automatically are those who believe, faith becomes synonymous with action on behalf of the poor - and thereby the orientation of life, in action on behalf of the oppressed, becomes determinative again in the reception of legitimacy. This applies both to Segundo and to Nolan. Segundo writes: *"all those whose actions imply that there exists in the universe a power which is able to give life to the dead and call into being what does not exist share the faith of Abraham ... a "believer" is every atheist, pagan, Jew or Christian who renounces having a contractual relationship with the absolute and who believes in the promise inscribed in the*

same human values offered by existence, fighting for them as if death could not render his fight in vain" (Segundo 1984, 68) Nolan states: "I hope that by now I have made it quite clear that the practice of the struggle is the practice of faith even when it is not accompanied by an explicit profession of faith in God or in Jesus Christ. In reading the signs of the times in South Africa today we have been able to discover what Jesus discovered in his time: signs of hope. God is at work in the struggle. The 'works of faith' are there and the conditions for an explicit belief in the good news can be found in the spirit, the commitment, the courage and the hope of the struggle." (Nolan 1988, 178)

The legitimization the poor and those who struggle with them receive from God serves as empowerment to orient one's life to the service of the poor. Because of God's gracious presence with the poor people are motivated, receive hope and determination for the struggle for greater justice, God's grace forms the basis for the love which does not need to seek its own benefit, but is free to seek the benefit of all in the liberation of the oppressed.

However, by identifying faith closely with the praxis of the struggle for justice that the two are, for all intents and purposes, identical, the value of the gratuitousness of the trust in God is reduced, and the basis for hope and courage is reallocated to the activity of the struggle - and thereby the orientation of people toward the struggle becomes the basis for legitimization.

4.7.4 God is below & identifies with the suffering

The epistemological shift - making the perspective of the poor normative - equally finds its expression in the concept of God.

In an oppressive ethos, the god is a god of power, who stabilises the structures, and judges those who transgress against a rigid and abstract code of law which entrenches the structure of society. This concept of God is overturned by contextual theologies. God is liberator. He is down with the poor, and not up with the hierarchy. He is dynamic in history, and not the judge implementing an abstract and fixed code of law. This is clear in the following statements from Nolan: *"In our search for God, throughout this book, we have discovered someone who is down below with the crucified people of South Africa in their struggle for liberation. God is outside of the system and beyond the cycle of sin and guilt, amongst those who are being sinned against. It is from there that we must expect divine salvation to come." (Nolan 1988, 191) "Salvation comes from the cross and not from some heavenly throne. God and Jesus are transcendent not because they are on the pinnacle of the system but because they are below or beyond the system." (Nolan 1988, 192)*

Indeed, God is identified almost without remainder with the struggle of those outside the system of power and oppression. The transcendence of God is identified with his location with those excluded from the privileges of the system.

Though the tendency and intention of this 'God is below, with the poor' is clear, the statements quoted above, and the general topic, do beg some questions: Is God with the poor and suffering - all the poor and suffering, only because they are poor and suffering? Or is he with those poor who struggle against suffering? Or is he with all who identify with the struggle of and for the poor - even if they are from advantaged background? These definitions are used interchangeably in the work of Nolan.

4.7.5 Negative heuristic

The negative heuristic is the way in which a theory, a theology, responds to experiences that do not seem to fit into its fundamental way of interpreting reality and conferring legitimacy. In theology, the fundamental question bringing into play the negative heuristic is that of theodicy: If God is loving and almighty, why is the world imperfect and full of suffering.

For contextual theologies, the most fundamental challenge is maybe the question: If God is on the side of the poor and oppressed, why, then, do they continue to be poor and oppressed?

Contextual theologies answer this question in two ways:

In the first instance, they attribute the suffering to the system of oppression. Implicitly, all sin and therefore all suffering is attributed to the system: *"But is this not the cycle of racial and political sins ...? What about our other sins? ... Are there not some sins that escape this cycle? Sins are not isolated, individual deeds. ... Thus many of the sins that may appear to be outside of this cycle are in fact side-effects of this cycle. ... All the forms of oppression and therefore all the forms of alienation and sin are interrelated."* (Nolan 1988, 98f)

In addition, they point to the experiences where one can see the signs of God working to overcome the suffering of the oppressed - and take this as reason for hope and as a challenge to make real what is promised in these beginnings.

The tension between what should be and what is experienced is therefore correlated with two sets of tensions: the tension between system and struggle, and the tension between present and future. In Nolan, the first correlation is dominant, while in Segundo the second is more prevalent. Segundo writes: *"As sure and as certain as the eschatological wager may be, it is still eschatological. Visible reality is such that 'the flesh will always subject that freedom to sin, hence failure on the plane of meaningfulness'"* (Segundo 1988,) 118) (Hoy 1990, 317)

4.7.6 Consequences

What are the consequences of this theology?

In the first place, the oppressed receive dignity and self-esteem - because this theology announces to them the legitimation by God. God is close to the poor, and he cares for them.

Secondly, this theology challenges both poor and rich to invest their lives in the service of the common good - through participation in the struggle of the poor, and not to strive only for personal enrichment. Through this, contextual theologies create a sense of solidarity and community amongst the participants. To those active in this struggle, it gives hope that, in the end, there is hope for their actions. This gives energy and the ability to sustain actions that are taken in difficult circumstances.

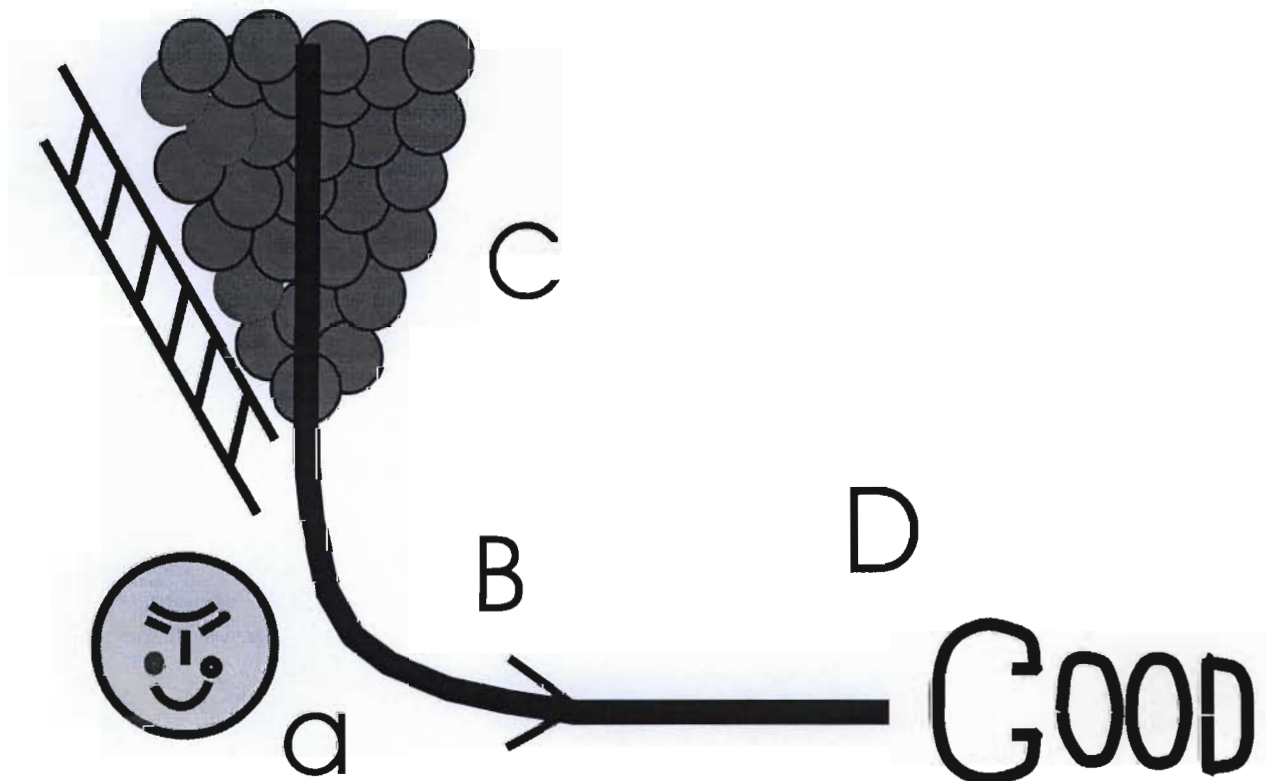
Thirdly, Nolan says that this theology is in principle non-exploitative and opposed to all forms of oppression. *"In other words the one thing we need not fear for the future is the kind of take-over whereby another group of people simply replaces the present rulers and maintains the same kind of system so that people (of whatever colour) are manipulated as objects. That possibility is gone forever. Our people will no longer let anyone of any shade of colour treat them as mere objects. Any future government will have to be answerable to all the people otherwise it will simply not be allowed to govern."* (Nolan 1988, 144)

One can question whether this is, indeed, always and necessary true: Will those who struggle against the exploitation of Apartheid in principle be non-sexist, not homophobic, and not xenophobic? The experience in South Africa proves otherwise - and it may be that such statements make one too uncritical of dangers in the struggle community.

4.7.7 Graphical representation

In contextual theologies, God is down below with those who are suffering, giving them the good news that he supports them (A). Legitimacy to those below is given gratuitously (B) - and they act on the basis of the legitimacy they receive in transforming the world (D). This, as in the case of Luther, is the picture of the oppressive society turned upside down. It is therefore not surprising that Nolan says of Jesus:

"Jesus ... and his disciples turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6)" (Nolan 1988, 173) . Like Luther's theology, which also arose in protest against an 'up and away' theology, this is a 'down and out' form of theology: God, the legitimator, is down with the poor. The aim of life is not advancement for oneself, but to join in with God's movement to the poor and to share with them their struggle in confidence of final victory. .



5 Parallels and divergences between Luther and Contextual Theologies

Having now presented both an overview of the development and an analysis of the structure of the theological responses of Luther and contextual theologies, we are ready to compare them, looking for both parallels and divergences. For ease of reference, we will refer to the paragraph numbers where, in each of the sections, the statements below are motivated, without repeating such motivations and elaborations here at length.

5.1 Parallels between medieval Roman theology and Capitalism

In the first place, we note that both Luther and contextual theologies respond to theological and social situations that were oppressive. The structural parallels between the situations they respond to are extensive. In order to better present the parallels, the results of the relevant sections above are summarized here. Often, a summary paragraph from the relevant paragraph above is repeated. Paragraph numbers of the presentation above are retained:

5.1.1 Conditional legitimation from the top

2.6.2 In medieval Roman Catholicism, legitimation, like grace and authority, flow from the top – the pope - down through the Roman church hierarchy. This legitimation is conferred in terms of a fixed set of rules - canon law - set by church authority in which the person seeking legitimation has to conform to the criteria set in order to access the legitimation of the system: *facere quod in se est*.

4.6.1 In neo-colonial societies and in capitalism legitimacy is conferred in terms of criteria set by the powerful elite dominating these societies. Social and personal status and legitimacy is given to those assimilating to the norms of society. In consumerism, these norms are conveyed by the advertising industry. The underlying structure thereof is the purchase of social status through the purchase of consumer goods. Legitimacy is therefore defined by and accessible to those on top of the social hierarchy, those with economic power. The transaction in which legitimacy is obtained involves the exchange of material goods, often acquired by labour, for the immaterial result of legitimacy. Social legitimacy is measured primarily in terms of efficacy for economic growth, and therefore growth of profit.

In both cases, legitimation is conferred in a top-down manner by the ruling class of the system, according to norms this class sets, and acquired by the work of those in lower classes.

5.1.2 Orientation to personal legitimation

2.6.3 The effect of the medieval Roman Catholic legitimation process is that life is primarily directed at obtaining legitimation - it is a quest for salvation. The resources of life (energy, time, and money) are used to a considerable extent in this effort, and therefore flow to the church in return for the legitimation granted. This resulted in an effective transaction whereby immaterial legitimation is transacted for material good and worldly power.

4.6.2 In neo-colonial capitalism, life is oriented toward individual advancement within the system of norms conveyed by consumerist society. This involves primarily the acquisition of wealth and economic power in order to spend such wealth on consumer goods that demonstrate the status or legitimacy of one's person. Life is orientated toward the acquisition of wealth and the assimilation to the centers of power.

Both in Catholicism and capitalism, life is oriented to the acquisition of personal legitimation, which is dependent on performance in terms of the norms of the system. The energies of life are used for this process, and the results benefit those who control the system.

5.1.3 Articulation between legitimation and orientation

2.6.4 In medieval Roman Catholicism, the relationship between legitimation and orientation of life is that life is orientated by the necessity to obtain legitimation.

4.6.3 in capitalism, legitimation is obtained by success in achieving wealth, which is the goal toward which life is oriented. In other words, the orientation of life is in service of the quest for legitimation. Because legitimation is conditional on success in this quest, immense pressure to be successful results on individuals.

In both cases, life is oriented towards obtaining legitimation for oneself.

5.1.4 The concept of God

2.6.1 Medieval Roman Catholic theology conceives of God as stern judge to whom believers relate primarily in fear, and from whom they flee to the institutions of the church, from which they receive legitimation as protection against God's judgement.

4.6.4 The "God" of the capitalist-consumerist system is money. This idol demands sacrifice of time, work, the energies of life in order to reward these sacrifices in future with wealth and legitimacy. It has regard primarily for the successful – the failures do not count.

In both cases God, as the source of legitimation, acts primarily as stern judge of the efforts of humans in terms of the abstract norms set up by the ruling class. In both cases, sacrifice of this-worldly energy is required for promised reward.

5.1.5 Negative heuristic

2.6.5 In the Medieval Catholicism, the perceived failure of this legitimating system to work is attributed to the insufficient effort of the individual.

4.6.5 In capitalism, the question arises: if it is the best economic system possible, and if the quest for greater individual wealth should increase the wealth of everyone, why is there still so much suffering and poverty? Capitalism finds reasons for this in the backwardness of culture, the uneducatedness of the workforce, the laziness of the poor.

Both systems attribute any deficiencies in the effectiveness of this system to insufficient effort or compliance of those who experience deficiency.

5.1.6 Result: Exploitation, insecurity

2.6.7 The result of the medieval catholic system is the material exploitation of the population by transacting material goods and power for legitimation. Because the church could transact an infinite amount (the treasury of the church) of an invaluable commodity (legitimation) for allegiance, power and money, these commodities of the church grew without bounds - to the extent that relatively the populations of Europe were impoverished.

4.6.6 Because the fundamental transaction of capitalist society involves the acquisition of legitimacy by the mass of people through the expenditure of work in terms of rules set by the powerful of the society, the result is that the rich grow richer, and that the poor have to contend with both poverty and lack of self-worth.

In both cases, the ability to confer legitimation, an immaterial good, is used by the ruling classes to extract material goods and subservience from the lower classes. This results in exploitation, wealth concentration in the hands of the ruling class and lack of self-worth of the lower classes.

The pictorial representation of these systems is, indeed, identical.

5.2 Parallels between Luther's theological response and contextual theologies

Both Luther and contextual theologies effectively turn the structure presented above on its head. They both protest against a top-down and exploitative legitimisation structure. For both, legitimisation comes from a God who is down below with humans, and not from a God who is up there with the hierarchies. Again, we summarise the result of the discussion above and then compare:

5.2.1 Legitimation

3.6.1 In Luther's theology, justification is a free gift of grace received by faith. Legitimation is conferred by God and accepted in faith by the believer, without preconditions of achievement being set. The source of legitimisation is the gracious, near God in Christ, who gives it unconditionally. Legitimation can therefore be accepted as a given.

4.7.1 Contextual theologies claim the source of legitimacy to be from the underside of history. Those who join the struggle for the poor are working on the side of God in history - and therefore their life is worthwhile and legitimised. The poor may believe that God cares for them, that they are created in the image of God, and are empowered by God to act in history and become authors of their own destiny. Social structures are legitimate if they serve the interests of the poor. Legitimation is given by identification with the struggle of the suffering

In both cases, the prerogative of ruling classes to confer legitimacy is removed and re-appropriated to the base of society. Luther removes the conferral of legitimacy from the church hierarchy and places it in the individual relationship to God. Contextual theologies relocate the source of legitimacy from structures of the system to the organisations of the people.

5.2.2 Life orientation

3.6.2 Luther orientates life to service of neighbour as love growing out of faith. The orientation of life does not need to be oriented toward achieving legitimisation - life is to be oriented the grace with which legitimisation is conferred. Life is freely oriented toward service of the neighbour. 'Good works' are no longer works done with the object of legitimising or justifying the individual - rather, good works are those works in the normal sphere of life that serve the common good, and the well-being of the neighbour. The resources and energies of life are therefore not exploited for the purpose of salvation, but set into the service of life.

4.7.2 Contextual theologies orientate life to serve the community of the poor. The concrete benefit and life of those below, those marginalised by power structures, is set as the aim of actions and life. The aim of religion is not to gain salvation for oneself. God is served, not in order to obtain religious advantage for oneself, but by seeking the concrete betterment of the life of all the poor and marginalised, with whom God identifies.

Life, therefore, is not a quest to achieve personal legitimisation for oneself - as this is a given from God. To the contrary, the energies of life freed up through the trust in the gratuitous legitimisation from God are devoted to the service of neighbour. The materials and energies of this life are not utilised in the pursuit of immaterial and otherworldly - spiritual - goods, but in the improvement of the concrete well-being of persons here on earth.

5.2.3 The articulation of legitimisation and orientation

3.6.3 For Luther, justification, the gracious conferring of legitimisation by God on the undeserving human, makes the human free from pious self-concern with his salvation, and therefore gives him the ability to serve his neighbour in disinterested love, using the strength and resources, the position in society and time God has given him.

4.7.3 In contextual theologies, the legitimisation the poor and those who struggle with them receive from God serves as empowerment to orient one's life to the service of the poor. Because of God's gracious presence with the poor people are motivated, receive hope and determination for the struggle for greater justice, God's grace forms the basis for the love

which does not need to seek its own benefit, but is free to seek the benefit of all in the liberation of the oppressed. However, by identifying faith so closely with the praxis of the struggle for justice that the two are, for all intents and purposes, identical, the value of the gratuitousness of the trust in God is reduced, and the basis for hope and courage is reallocated to the activity of the struggle - and thereby the orientation of people toward the struggle becomes the basis for legitimation.

Legitimation and salvation are in both cases not granted in terms of a quest to climb a ladder of performance, but are given gratuitously by God, because of God's love for life and concern for the human being.

5.2.4 God:

3.6.4 For Luther, God is the origin of legitimacy. However, God is no remote and stern judge. Rather God is near and loving, not high up, but down with us humans, to be found in lowliness. He is not demanding, but a fount giving grace freely.

4.7.4 One of the main points of contextual theologies is the assertion that God is below and identifies with the suffering. God is identified with the struggle of those outside the system of power and oppression. The transcendence of God is identified with his location with those excluded from the privileges of the system.

God, as source of legitimation, is not conceived of as distant and enthroned ruler, but rather as present and active reality, identifying with people at the basis of society, and granting life freely and working with people toward life.

5.2.5 Results:

3.6.7 The main result of the approach of Luther was a radical re-orientation of life away from the ecclesial to the everyday. The burden of employing most energies of life to attain legitimation was removed, enabling energies to be re-channelled to this-worldly ends. The intended result was that energies channelled in selfish pursuit of salvation should be made available for selfless service of neighbour. Often, however, in the social circumstances of the time, energies freed from selfish pursuit of spiritual advancement were now directed to pursuit of social advancement.

4.7.6 Through contextual theologies, the oppressed receive dignity and self-esteem - because God is close to the poor, legitimates them and cares for them. Both poor and rich are challenged to invest their lives in the struggle of the poor, thereby creating a sense of solidarity and community amongst the participants.

In both cases, the normal people gain direct access to self-worth and legitimacy. As legitimation in both cases is gratuitously given by God in a process that is located in the personal encounter of the individual with the word of God (Luther) or the identification of the individual with the poor and oppressed community (contextual theology), the conferring of legitimation can not be used to exploit or oppress.

These parallels are so extensive that the pictorial representation of the structure of the theologies concerned are identical.

5.3 Divergences

While the theological responses of Luther and contextual theologies show remarkable similarities in their structure as far as their response to the legitimization-orientation schematic of the ruling 'theology' of their time is concerned, significant divergences are apparent as well. The first two divergences we mention are different aspects of the same underlying issue:

5.3.1 Locus and modus of legitimation

a. Luther situates the reception of legitimation in the **personal encounter** of the individual with the word of God. (3.6.1) Contextual theologies locate the legitimation in the identification of the individual with the **community** of the oppressed. (4.7.1) It is by joining the struggle that the person receives and experiences legitimation.

b. Luther emphasises the **personal faith relationship** of the individual to a personal God as the direct source of legitimacy for the individual. (3.6.1) Contextual theologies ascribe the qualities of faith to all who cooperate with the oppressed in their **struggle for freedom** (4.7.3). These differences lead to opposite consequences:

i) . Because legitimacy in Lutheran theology is granted personally and individually, independent of all action, the impetus to action of the individual is liberated from the burden of ensuring personal salvation. Luther clearly intended that the energies thus freed should be used in service of neighbour, without self-interest, and trusted the Holy Spirit - and the catechetical process of the word - to achieve this (3.6.2). However, this was not always the case. Often, the energies freed from the pursuit of own salvation were used for the pursuit of personal social advancement. Luther did speak of a process initiated by God - and true justification issuing into the process of individual transformation and service, but his concern to keep legitimation from being made dependant on this process could result, and often did result, in the transformational process, in the mind of people, becoming an 'optional extra', and not an integral part, of justification. This results in the criticism that justification, only by grace, results in social paralysis, and in this sense, justification by grace alone is attacked by contextual theologians: Both Nolan and Segundo explicitly criticise justification by grace alone: *"We know that the concept of God's grace has been misinterpreted to mean that we can do nothing about our own salvation but sit back, pray, and wait for God to send it to us as a free gift. If we could do anything about it ourselves, salvation would no longer be a grace or a free gift. But that is a distortion of the meaning of grace."* (Nolan 1988, 189)

"Too many Christians have made [Jesus] into an idol. He has become for them a kind of dictator who makes his followers into servile dependants and passive objects who escape all responsibility by leaving him to do everything for them. ... Jesus saves us not by doing everything for us but by challenging us to imitate his practice. We meet the living Christ and accept Jesus as our personal saviour when we recognise the practice of Jesus in people and especially in the struggle, and are challenged by it." (Nolan 1988, 191f)

"Catholics and Protestants both share a concern for 'the eternal, the last, the meta-historical.' (Segundo (1976) 142) But the Catholic notion of merit, for all its legalistic foibles, at least provided a link between the kingdom of God and human activity. With the dawn of the Reformation, that notion was eliminated. Salvation by faith alone meant that one was saved by the exclusive merits of Christ. The end result was that Protestant theology since Luther has undermined every possibility of a theology of history." (Segundo (1976) 142) (Hoy 1990, 250)

"The principal critical concern which Segundo has with Luther and the Reformation is that it reduces all human activity to nothing, making it valueless." (Hoy 1990, 245) *"Everything depends on what reaches the human being from above, and nothing on what the human being brings from below."* (Segundo 1973, 204) (Hoy 1990, 245)

However, this critique misinterprets Luther. It is not true that Luther makes all human activity valueless. It is true that Luther does not allow that human activity be responsible for the justification of that human - he frees human activity from the burden of legitimating human life. However, he gives human activity the dignity of being the mask behind which God hides his work of sustaining human life. In other words, humans are made free from using the world to ensure salvation in order that they may serve the world as co-workers of God. Profane activity is thereby given divine honour. (Bayer 1990, 48)

ii) In contextual theologies, the concept of faith is applied to all who identify with the struggle of the oppressed. Indeed, God himself is closely identified with the people who are active in the struggle for liberation. The life of faith is seen as a process, in which the struggle alongside the oppressed is the defining characteristic. It is in this struggle that the individual makes experiences of legitimation. These, in general, coincide with experiences of the community, the hope and the legitimacy of the struggle. It is in orienting oneself with the struggle that these experiences are obtained - though they are not 'made' by the struggle. This means that legitimation and orientation are effectively conflated into the same process: In participating in the struggle, the individual receives legitimation and orientates his life to the service of the oppressed. In this, the participation in this struggle effectively again becomes a precondition for legitimation - thereby subverting the gratuity of legitimation. (Hoy 1990, 321-324) Indeed, contextual theologians find that decoupling human responsibility from ultimate ends and legitimation would devalue human life: *"To deny all relation between the work of the human being and the judgment of God is something that profoundly dehumanizes human existence"* (Segundo 1986, 107) (Hoy 1990, 321) Because legitimation is bound to the community of struggle, and this legitimation is given the absolute character of the legitimation from God, the result is a clear division of people in a 'with us' and 'against us'. Indeed, it is often made clear that neutrality in the struggle is not possible and is synonymous with acquiescence to and support of oppression.

By way of contrast, legitimation is consciously distinguished from orientation in Luther's theology. Legitimation - Justification - is the fount from which orientation flows and the basis on which it is built. Lutheran theology consciously and explicitly reflects on the process of 'justification by grace accepted in faith'. It is from the trust in God, whose love is dependable, that freedom to serve in love should flow into the believers life. Any reversal of this flow of causality is anathema to Lutheran theologians. Indeed, the distinction between systems which derive orientation from Legitimation and those reversing this process is a central point of Lutheran theology. It is called "Distinction of Law and Gospel". On this, Luther could write: *'If you can distinguish law from gospel, thank God and know that you are a theologian'*. (WA 40, 1)

So it is understandable that contextual theologians regard this distinction as a bifurcation: *"Segundo has argued that Luther (1) bifurcates the "religious" and "secular" planes/realms; (2) does not have an antithetical parallel between Christ and Adam, or concept of qualitative disproportion; (3) has a paralyzing concern with justification of the self; (4) operates with a passive notion of faith; and (5) denies all human causality and co-operation in the Kingdom of God. The only positive concession to Luther is that Luther did rediscover the Pauline concepts of sin and faith. ... Segundo contends that Luther is ultimately anti-Pauline - that is, that Luther ... separates faith from faith's works."* (Hoy 1990, 258)

However, in the description of Luther's theology above, we have shown that the new orientation of life is an integral part, as consequence, of legitimation. Indeed, it is so integral that the absence of a new orientation of life is a sign that faith is not true. The distinction of the two aspects of the one process, which Lutherans insist on and which contextual theologians interpret as bifurcation, has as its aim the retention of the freedom of legitimation from human conditionality: *"We conclude that, for Luther and the Reformation, (1) there is no bifurcation of the two kingdoms .. (2) there is a very definite understanding of the antithetical parallel between Christ and Adam, though the qualitative disproportion is not in love for Luther, but faith; (3) there is no paralysing concern with the justification of the self, in fact, that is the very problem which Luther sought to address through the Gospel; (4) faith is fides apprehensiva, efficax, operosa - but not passive; (5) there is an explicit affirmation of human causality and cooperation in the kingdom of God."* (Hoy 1990, 291)

While it may not be true, theologically and historically, to say that Luther did separate orientation from legitimation, or did not pay sufficient attention to orientation consequences of his new approach to legitimation, one can make a case that the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Luther did have these consequences. It may be that the emphasis of Luther on serving the neighbour in everyday life through actions of common decency as the essence of the Christian life, rather than specific religious works, resulted in orientation being a matter so much taken for granted - there being no need to debate that it is good to give food to a hungry neighbour - that this part of Luther's theology

was soon forgotten. On the other hand, Luther's criticisms already attest that people were using the resources freed up by the abolition of observant piety for their own personal profit. Luther often pointed out that the wealth of monasteries should not flow to the private benefit of the princes, but be used in public service - education being his prime concern, and thereafter welfare.

In summary of the above two points:

Luther lays the emphasis on the 'vertical' process of legitimation, with the double characteristic that this is independent of human action and correlated to the personal faith relationship to Christ.

Contextual theology emphasize the horizontal orientation of identification with the struggle of the oppressed, de-emphasizing the 'vertical' and personal faith relation to Christ.

5.3.2 Negative heuristic

The negative heuristic of the two theologies is substantially different.

3.6.5 Luther's negative heuristic is formed by the theology of the cross. The experience of affliction is interpreted as being an experience of the nearness of God, hidden in the crucified. Thereby, the experience of non-salvation becomes an experience in which the believer is identified with the cross of Christ, and through this identification can receive reassurance of the redemptive nearness of God at precisely the point where no redemption is experienced.

4.7.5 The negative heuristic in contextual theologies deals with dichotomies between what should be and what is experienced by correlating these with two sets of tensions: the tension between system and struggle, and the tension between present and future. The present suffering is attributed to the evil of the system, which is to be overcome by the struggle

While Luther's negative heuristic is dialectical and, because of its effectiveness, can result in static acceptance of suffering, the negative heuristic of contextual theologies is essentially distributive and eschatological (4.7.5), and thereby an incentive for transformational action.

i. Luther's theology of the cross reinterprets negative experiences which contradict the good intention of God for the individual by seeing in these a unification with the suffering Christ on the cross - and thereby perceiving in them closeness of God and his love. The consequence is that this dialectical heuristic does not generate a strong impetus to change circumstances which cause suffering. Indeed, Luther's theology does not conceive of a fundamental change in the situation, but presupposes that the human condition - with *Anfechtung*, suffering, etc. - will remain substantially the same. The strength of this heuristic - its ability to retain belief in God's gracious nearness in spite of extreme affliction - is at the same time its weakness - because it leads to acceptance of suffering as vehicle of this nearness of the crucified. Therefore, it can paralyse people from responding to suffering by changing the structures that cause suffering.

ii. Contextual theologies interpret contrast experiences - the suffering of the poor - by ascribing this suffering to the effects of the oppressive system, and pointing to the utopian hope, in which the system will be transformed and the suffering will be overcome. Thereby, they generate impetus for transformation. Indeed, this impetus to transformation is the central point of contextual theologies. However, there is a tendency to ascribe all suffering and sin to the present system and to concentrate all hope on the proximate aim of liberation. This is markedly so in the theology of Nolan, who writes:

"An eschaton ... is a future event that is in some way final, definitive and determinative for our present time, our sins, our problems, our need for salvation. ... Our eschaton, then, is the day of liberation which is already in the air ... But at this moment our horizon, our eschaton, our salvation is the liberation of South Africa from this particular system of slavery and sin." (Nolan 1988, 184.189)

This concentration on a proximate horizon can focus energies and encourage strong commitment. However, it bears two dangers: Should the proximate aim not be achieved within a relatively short space of time, the concentration of energies and hopes on it is unlikely to be sustained - and with

the disappointment in the proximate aim, the whole of the theology propounding it may be questioned. This kind of phenomenon is well known in theological history - the delay of the *parousia*. If, however, the proximate aim is attained, it can act no longer as an orienting goal - and it will be likely that disorientation will set in. Also, if all desire for salvation is projected on a historically achievable aim, this aim, once achieved, is unlikely to fulfill the expectations it raised in the minds of people. In the consequent disillusionment, coupled with lack of orientation, people will be especially vulnerable to anomie and the reduction of the motivation of their actions to satisfaction of immediate felt needs. Crime and corruption could be the consequence. In this way, contextual theology may have contributed to the crime at present experienced in South Africa.

5.3.3 Positive heuristic

While in both Luther and contextual theologies, the **positive heuristic** is a reflection on experience in the light of scripture, the type of experience and the way scripture is used is substantially different.

- i. Luther reflects mainly on personal experience, and uses the personal experience of *Anfechtung* (Affliction of conscience) and its resolution through personal justification received from Christ as his hermeneutic key. Because he regards this experience of afflictions of conscience as tapping existential depths applicable to humans of all times and places, he regards the message he finds through this hermeneutic key as valid independent of time and situation.
- ii. Contextual theologies, in contrast, use the public experience of oppression and exploitation and the promise of liberation as their paradigmatic experience and their hermeneutic key. Because this experience is, in its shape and concrete expectation, closely linked to the particular situation, contextual theologies are also bound to the situation from which they arise. (See the Nolan quote under 5.3.2 ii above).

5.3.4 Orientation

This difference in heuristic results in a substantial difference in **orientation**:

- i. Luther's concern with existential issues orients his theology to questions that are common to humans underneath the differences of time and place - and thereby gives his theology an appeal that is both perennial, but also reduces its concern with the specific conditions of a certain time. While Luther did speak out about many issues of public life of his time, his theology has its prime point of concern in the individual's quest for salvation. His ethics therefore also concentrates on personal ethics, which presuppose the structures of society as a given constant. While criticising the behaviour of people within these structures, Luther did not expand his critique to a critique of the social and political structures (as opposed to ecclesial structures) of his time.

The concentration on personal and individual justification is at the same time a strength and a danger: It is a strength, because church history has shown Martin Luther's writings to be able to address and influence people deeply in all centuries since he worked. Because the concern for personal legitimation is perennial (Bayer 1990, 13-15), a theology that bases itself on this concern has the foundation for a long term productivity. However, this strength incorporates a weakness: A theology that finds success because it concentrates on the perennial and personal may invest too little effort in addressing those issues that are time-bound and social-structural.

- ii. The concern of contextual theologies with the specific social issues of their particular context and time makes this theology very relevant to one time - at the cost of needing a total re-working if the context changes substantially. This came to pass in South Africa.

The strong orientation to liberation of the poor by the poor, because God works in them, with them and through them is a powerful impetus and gives deep self-worth to the oppressed. On the other hand, struggling for one's own liberation has elements of selfishness in it. It demands great wisdom to keep this selfish motivation subordinated to the desire to serve the others who are in the same situation. That the selfish desire for own advancement can grow under the cloak of the common struggle is a fundamental criticism of Luther against the peasant uprising. The applicability of such

criticism to the South African struggle can be seen in the instances of corrupt self enrichment in the time of the struggle (Boesak), in the rapid transition of the policies of the liberation movements to the enrichment of a small inner circle⁷, and statements such as 'I did not join the struggle to remain poor' (Smuts Ngonyama, ANC spokesperson). The fundamental issue is whether the orientation to liberation remains continuously a decision to serve the other - or whether it is a phase in a struggle for the advancement of one's own people - and therefore oneself. In the latter case, the actual aim, as in consumerist ideology, is advancement and ultimately is selfish. In this sense, contextual theology may become an 'up and away' theology relatively easily.

5.3.5 Transcendence

While both theologies regard God as being 'below', close to those who are suffering and distant from power, both also continue to regard God as **transcendent**. However, the type of transcendence is different:

i. Luther regards God's transcendence as being his hiddenness to any human attempts to attain relationship to or knowledge of God by own power - in order to confound all natural theology and self-righteousness, God hides himself under the opposite. (3.6.3) For Luther, God's transcendence is relational to us as individual persons: God is always the active and giving, in opposition to us humans, who always receive and are passive in this relation.

ii. Contextual theologies interpret God's transcendence as being outside of the system of exploitative power. (4.7.4) God's transcendence is in relation to the oppressive systems, in that he is beyond these, and identified, almost without residue, with the poor and oppressed in their struggle. The danger inherent in this is that God does not retain independence vis-a-vis the proponents of struggle. This close identification of the origin of legitimacy with one social group can result in a dearth of legitimate bases from which to critique the social group concerned - and the absence of a basis of legitimacy should this group disperse.

The fruition of this danger is seen in both the address of President Thabo Mbeki to the SACC in 2004 and the debate between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the ANC in November 2004: If there is no transcendence over and against those who struggle for liberation, where would legitimacy for critique of the struggle come from? And, if this group attains power, is the identification of the source of legitimacy with the group engaged in the struggle easily transmuted into a situation in which the powerful - those on top - again are source of legitimacy - and thereby control and are able to exploit the masses.

5.3.6 Summary

Having described the parallels and divergences between the theological responses of Luther and contextual theologies, we note that, though they are structurally parallel in turning an exploitative and conditional system of legitimation and control on its head, yet, in their distinctive emphases, they are also in some ways **mirror images**:

Luther's theology emphasises the personal experience of *Anfechtung* as the permanent hermeneutic key to theology, and therefore concentrates theology on the reception of grace in the personal relationship to God.

Contextual theologies lay stress on the social situation of their particular place and time as their key to understanding faith, and therefore concentrate on joining the groupings of the oppressed in a struggle for the transformation of this situation.

While Luther, therefore, stresses the perpetual 'vertical' process of legitimation (justification by faith), out of which life orientation in service of love issues, contextual theologies emphasise the particular process of social transformation as the necessary orientation of life now, in which legitimation is received.

⁷This criticism has been the subject of an extensive public debate between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the ANC government during November 2004.

So it appears that the mirror image of the introduction - Luther's theology being perennial and conservative, contextual theologies transformational, but short-lived - is accompanied by a mirror image of emphases in a theological structure that is parallel - and yet distinct.

With this summary in hand, we can proceed to an attempt at answering the questions posed in the introduction to this thesis:

5.4 Why is Lutheranism so perennial and conservative?

It seems that the weakness of Lutheran theology is that it is the victim of its success:

Because of the personal existential depths in which Luther plumbed, people throughout centuries have found in his discovery of justification received in faith and his message of a gracious God in Christ a source of legitimation for their lives. Maybe this success made Lutheranism so reluctant to change a winning formula. This was bought at a price: The existential depths at which this legitimation occurs, and at which people remain the same over centuries, constrain the theology to concentrate on the personal and individual. This concentration can easily become a reduction to the 'religious sphere'.

This danger is enhanced by the approach Luther's theology took to both the relationship to public institutions and ethics:

While the 'two administrations' doctrine did not intend to lead to the autonomy of the secular authority from church critique, it could, and has, easily be interpreted with this result. Maybe the pragmatic need of Luther for some institution - and his close association with the class of administrators of the princes - also contributed to Luther's blind spots in this regard.

Automatism of the resultant practice of disinterested love is not always - or even mostly - achieved. To the contrary - the passivity inherent in the receipt of justification can become passivity in living out justification. Self-interest can take the gratuity with which legitimation is granted as license to live in selfish pursuit of worldly interest. This danger in justification by grace has been inherent in the theological discussion at least since the time of Paul (Romans 5), and probably since the ministry of Jesus.

In a similar way, the success of Luther's negative heuristic is also its danger: Because the theology of the cross can 'digest' anomalies like suffering and continued sin so readily, the impetus to change conditions that cause suffering and lead to sin is emasculated. Coupled with the 'passivity' in reception of justification, this can lead to passivity in accepting suffering. While there is need in theological discourse for a way to interpret unavoidable suffering and affliction of conscience in a way that retains the confidence of personal legitimacy, this may not be used to legitimate removable causes of suffering.

It may be instructive to see how this developed in regard to ecclesiology. As stated under 3.5.2, Luther regarded the empirical church as '*corpus permixtum*', in which both good and bad were present. As such, the church was a 'site of struggle', and in need of constant reformation. Luther opposed attempts by radical reformers to establish a perfectly cleansed church. Just like the individual sinner is perpetually *simul iustus et peccator*, the church is perpetually not what it should be. Yet - and this is essential - Luther did not take this as occasion to allow abuses to continue, but as reason to reform abuses as and when these are apparent. The difference between Luther's concept of the perpetually reforming church and expression in contextual theology of the church as site of the struggle seems to lie in focus and horizon: Contextual theology focuses its concept of struggle on one struggle that is now of absolute importance : the struggle against oppression. The result is that all energies must be focussed on this issue. The danger inherent is that, once this particular issue is overcome, no orientation for further critique is in place. Luther conceives of

a perpetual struggle – not so much of ever improving, but rather of ever resisting deterioration and assaults of Satan⁸.

These criticisms of Lutheran theology certainly are not new. However, attention to the structure and inner dynamic of Luther's theology in its relation to the theology he protested against can sensitise us to the danger of making a 'down and out' theology into an 'up and away' theology, or of emasculating it to the extent that it cohabits easily with an 'up and away' ideology (Kelly 2000, 197). Therefore, attention to the structure of Luther's theology can assist in a process of internal critique that maintains the impetus of the intention of the Gospel, so central to Luther, to liberate people from pious self-concern and enable them to joyfully serve their neighbour, knowing that God is near to them even in suffering that may occur.

5.5 Why did South African Contextual Theology subside so quickly after liberation?

It seems that again the strengths of South African contextual theology were also the greatest reason for its weakness and sudden decline.

In the theory and practice of contextual theologians, who were an important part of the struggle for democracy in South Africa, the personal experience of legitimation comes directly out of the experience of solidarity in the struggle for transformation. The intensity and legitimacy of this struggle - and the strength of the experience of personal legitimation in the solidarity of the struggle - were heightened by absolute concentration of all evil in the system, and all hope on the victory over it. Through this intensity contextual theology generated, it played a significant part in the demise of apartheid.

However, exactly these strengths were the reason why contextual theology, its proponents and institutions, were in crisis after the democratic transition.

Because the struggle for transformation is concentrated on the proximate goal - overcoming apartheid - the struggle, in the encompassing sense, all but ceased after the transition. As the experience of personal legitimation came out of the participation in the struggle, this personal legitimation is lost with the end of the struggle.

"The struggle has a kind of religious aura about it. The celebration of hope, the experience of community, the self-sacrifice, the total commitment, the courage, the discipline and the willingness to live and die for the struggle, are things that we would normally associate with religion. ...Would it be an exaggeration to say of the struggle in South Africa today: 'Nowhere in the Church have I found faith like this?'"
(Nolan 1988, 160f)

All of this is lost to the person who depended on the struggle for legitimation. At the same time, the orientation contextual theology provided - the overcoming of apartheid - is lost as well. The adherent of contextual theology was suddenly left without either legitimation or orientation. This constitutes a major crisis of faith. He or she needed to re-evaluate, almost ab initio, the whole theological system.

At the same time, the community of the struggle, which was the locus of theological reflection and source of affirmation, was shattered, because those in this community went very different ways and into very different roles after the transition to democracy: Into government, commerce, academia, civil society...

Where is God now? Is he still beyond the system? But what is the system? Is it still the adherents

⁸Luther often talked about the need to resist Satan and struggle against him. It may be that the complacency and passivity in Lutheranism as from the 18th Century also results from an exclusion of the reality and possibility of evil from the realm of acceptable discourse with the suppression of the symbol of Satan by the enlightenment.

of the previous regime and their allies - or is the new government now "system" to which God is transcendent? Should the alliance of the struggle with the ANC continue unbroken⁹? But is God not beyond established power? Where does legitimation now come from? Still only from those excluded from the system? But who are they?

It seems that in many cases, the strong identification with the disadvantaged continued beyond liberation in opposite ways: Either in solidarity with the new left, such as the Treatment Action Campaign, Landless Peoples' Movement, South African Non Governmental Organisations Cooperative or in identification with the 'previously disadvantaged' - but now socially rising - class of black leaders. In the latter case, the identification with the interests of this class subverts critique, just as the interests of the class of princely advisers subverted Luther's capacity for social critique. However, since social critique is the essence of contextual theology, those contextual theologians taking roles in centres of power quickly lose credibility - and maybe even a sense of personal legitimation.

It may be that the perceived need of an alternative source of personal legitimation - a source that is compatible with new roles in the leadership of society - led many prominent people in the liberation movements into new churches, such as Rhema, which were regarded as suspect, due to their 'prosperity theology', during the time of struggle.

5.6 What have we learnt in the process of this analyses?

I believe this analyses has demonstrated the usefulness of the scheme employed to analyse the theologies concerned. I believe it showed that a thorough analysis of the structures of legitimation and orientation, and especially the interrelationship of legitimation and orientation seems to be a defining aspect of a theology. Maybe this is another way of defining the law/ gospel distinction so important to Lutheran theology. Also, the form the negative heuristic takes is of great importance to the operation of a theology and its ability to achieve stability.

We have seen that the greatest strength of theologies are also their greatest dangers. Lutherans need to recognise the transformational aspect of justification by faith. They need to temper the theology of the cross with a theology of history - that God wants to act through us to change history for the better. Working with God (Synergism) - not in matters pertaining to eternal salvation, but in those pertaining to present improvement - should form part of Lutheran teaching. Indeed, this is part of what Luther wrote, and part of the Pauline heritage.

The analyses reminds Lutheran theology that it should not use its negative heuristic to block off reality, but apply the wisdom to accept the unchangeable and change the unacceptable. It should apply the same legitimating principle in social as in personal - and sit uncomfortably with top-down legitimation structures in society. It has the capacity to utilise the definition of faith and gods for an ideology critique of new 'gods' as part of its theological heritage and its duty. The structural parallel shown between the exploitative Roman church Martin Luther protested against, and exploitative power and legitimation structures of our times should awaken in Lutherans the need for continuous social analyses and theological critique of current structures of legitimation. The continued relevance of Lutheran theology lies today lies in its basic structure and form, which exposes and opposes structures of legitimation and orientation that seek own power and thereby promote exploitation (Mortensen 2000, 44).

The dereliction of this duty by the Lutheran church over many years shows the need to be careful as well of blind spots developing through its own identification with social groups. It was argued above that Luther identified most strongly with the social group of princely advisors. It was this group that was the socially advancing, progressive class in Luther's time. However, this class soon became an established elite. By entrusting Church governance to princely governments, it was to this group that Luther entrusted decision-making in the church. The result was Lutheran Orthodoxy under princely tutelage - and the conservatism of Lutheran churches is arguably linked to the

⁹This is the suggestion of Thabo Mbeki in his address to the SACC in 2004 - and the practice of many contextual theologians who entered Government service

influence of the bureaucratic governance of the bureaucratic aristocracy leading the church. The Lutheran Church therefore needs to critique its own structure to mirror its legitimating principle - and can learn from Base Ecclesial Communities in this regard. For the Lutheran church quickly became a magisterial reformation. In the pursuance of theological purity, lay people were not given voice nor space to interrogate the theology propounded by church leadership and academic theologians - reducing them to passive recipients and audience in the church. It is arguably this reduction of congregation to audience of the pastor which has had more impact on the passivity in faith in Lutheran churches than purely the doctrine of justification.

Contextual theology needs to learn from the South African experience that it is necessary to work towards a rootedness in existential experience of people that goes deeper and is more perennial than the specific issue of urgency. This implies that, at an existential level, the personal has a continuity across different social situations. It also implies that the personal relationship to God needs to be integrated in contextual piety. This would include distinguishing the reception of legitimation from God in such direct relationship from the practice of solidarity in struggle. The integration into piety & worshipping community essential for long-term stability. All of this emphasises the importance of Base Ecclesial communities as prime locus of a viable and stable contextual theology. It is may be because South African contextual theology was practised mainly in association with revolutionary groups, and not so much church or base community based, that it lost ground so quickly¹⁰. In a community of faith, the multiplicity of issues in which people are in need of legitimation and orientation become apparent: Illness, death, hurts and forgiveness ... Ministering to each other in such a situation, the need for a personal and existentially deep basis of theology may prevent a reduction of all problems to the one of oppression - and lay a basis for a theological grounding of legitimation and orientation that outlasts a particular conflict. The analysis showed the danger of utilising the content of a theology that is directed to the liberation of many to, in the end, serve one's own interest.

Both Luther's theology and South African contextual theology showed weaknesses. Both began as protest and both seemed to be captured by the self-interest of ruling groups soon after their success. Is there a theology that will, in principle, avoid the danger of being captured and used by the self-interest of the powerful? Maybe the experience shows that no theology is, *ab initio*, immune to this. Therefore, the only solution is constant vigilance and debate. *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est.*: The church, once reformed, is always to be reformed again.

I believe that the model of structurally depicting the source of legitimation, the direction of orientation and the interrelationship between them, presented in this model, is a novel and helpful way in which the distinction of law and gospel, and the doctrine of justification, can continue to be a relevant central theological criterion. It shows up whether a theology is in essence a 'up and away' theology - which will serve the interests of the upper class and can legitimate exploitation - or a 'down and out' theology, in which the life and legitimation are received from the one source - God - in faith and the energies of life are liberated and directed for service of neighbour.

¹⁰McGovern(1989, xvff) describes Segundo who distinguishes two phases or forms in Liberation Theology: academic, social analysis based - and based on broad movement of Base Ecclesial Communities. Scannone (in McGovern 1989, xvif) distinguishes four tendencies: Institutional church based, revolutionary group based, Base Community based, people based. The primacy of the revolutionary group base of South African contextual theology is indicated by Nolan: "The question then is not, 'What must I do?' but 'Which organisation or group must I join?'" (Nolan 1988, 202)

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- WA Tr: Abbreviation for "Tischreden der Weimarer Ausgabe". Weimarer Ausgabe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke D. Martin Luthers. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger.
- WAB: Abbreviation for "Briefe der Weimarer Ausgabe". Weimarer Ausgabe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke D. Martin Luthers. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger.
- WA: Abbreviation for "Weimarer Ausgabe": Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke D. Martin Luthers. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger.