University of Dublin
Trinity College

Transformational Theology in a Context of Division:

Examining Belfast's Separation Barriers
Through a Theological Lens of Idolatry

A Dissertation Submitted
For The Degree Of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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16 July 2013

Thesis 10184

Declaration

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SUMMARY

This dissertation addresses two central, interrelated questions. The first

question is: *How might a transformational theology be formulated that is*

informed equally by the legacy of Latin American liberation theology and

theologies of reconciliation?

To address the first question, this thesis first explores the legacy of Latin

American liberation theology and argues that this theological movement

emphasised social transformation by the value it placed in four specific

methodological elements: social analysis, experience and consciousness, praxis,

and an option made for the poor. This thesis argues that these values form a

credible basis to envision theological reflection on a particular social reality in

Northern Ireland. However, in such a context of deep social division, 'liberation' is

inadequate to fully address social transformation due to the complexities of

ongoing sectarianism and deep social division. Similarly, theologies of

reconciliation- which emphasise theological reflection toward the transformation

of human relationships after conflict- have not always embraced social

transformation adequately in their vision of reconciliation. Therefore, in such

contexts, liberation and reconciliation must comprehensively inform each other

to more fully embody a transformational vision.

The second question is: *How might such a theology benefit efforts to formulate*

a reflection on a specifically physical aspect of sectarianism and segregation in

Belfast, Northern Ireland: the separation barriers?

To address this question, this thesis examines the social reality of Belfast's network of separation barriers through a 'transformational' approach, informed by liberation and reconciliation. A reflection on four biblical texts is offered, focussing on the concept of idolatry as understood in the Hebrew Bible. Similarities between the demand for idols in the biblical text and physically-reinforced segregation in Belfast are posited and reflected upon. This reflection is then explored in light of both local clergy interviews and facilitated group sessions.

This thesis seeks to contribute to academic debates within theology and also within churches and faith-based communities regarding the role of theological reflection in Belfast, and how a 'transformational' approach informed by liberation (the transformation of the social structures of oppression and marginalisation) and reconciliation (the transformation of human relationships and the structures of estrangement) might benefit the ongoing process of living together well in the midst of deep social divisions and ongoing sectarianism.

Acknowledgements

Thanks with deepest love and respect to my wife Amy for her love, friendship, support and encouragement all during this academic process.

Thanks to my children Iain and Eilís for the love and inspiration they gave me over the years of this academic process.

Thanks to my mother Diana W. Hatch for instilling in me from my earliest years a love for learning, for books, for the Church and for the biblical text, as well as for all of the support and encouragement she gave me during this academic process.

Thanks to my academic advisor Dr. David Tombs for the guidance and expertise he brought to this thesis. I walked into his office at the beginning of this process with a head full of random ideas; I walked out at the end thinking like a doctor.

Thanks to Dr. Gladys Ganiel for the guidance and expertise she brought to this thesis.

Thanks to the staff and faculty of the Irish School of Ecumenics in Belfast and Dublin, especially Caroline Clarke, Bríd O'Brien, Karen Nicholson, Dr. Cathy Higgins, Rev. Dr. Johnson McMaster, Rev. Doug Baker, Christine Houlahan, Aideen Woods, Dr. Andrew Pierce, Prof. Linda Hogan, Prof. John D'Arcy May and Dr. Gillian Wylie.

Thanks to my friend and colleague Pádraig Ó Tuama for the invaluable contribution he made to this thesis, both in helping to organise and co-facilitate the social research portions of this project and for being a continual source of friendship and intellectual inspiration during the writing of this thesis.

Thanks to Dr. John Grigg, Dr. Jayme Reeves and Sarah Williamson for their help with this thesis.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my late father, Raymond Alton Hatch. My father was the son of an Irish immigrant, a factory worker his entire life, a man of simple but steadfast Christian faith and a conscientious husband and parent. Not having finished school, he was immensely proud to have a son graduate from college, complete a postgraduate degree and begin working on a doctorate. Though he did not live to see it completed, I know that he went to his rest knowing that everything I now know about hard work, I learned from him. In Pace Requiescat...

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Men hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they can't communicate with each other, and they can't communicate with each other because they are separated from each other.

- *Martin Luther King Jr.*[1]

[1] From an address delivered by King to the Highlander Folk School, 2 September 1957. See Clayborne Carson, ed. *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr., Vol. 4: Symbol of the Movement January 1957-December 1958* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 2000), 273.

Introduction

Sectarianism looks different when you are on a bicycle.

Belfast is a relatively small city- certainly to the mind of someone born and raised in the New York area like myself- and when I first moved to Belfast in 2000 with my wife and children, a bike was the perfect solution to getting around the city in lieu of a car. Over the years, I've been involved in peace, reconciliation and social justice projects all over Belfast- in schools, churches, community centres and collectives. Throughout the years, on any given day, just about every journey to and from whatever I've been involved with has been on my bike.

Urban cycling quickly gives you an intimate knowledge of a city- what routes are congested, when they are congested, what routes are longer or shorter, flatter, uphill or downhill, safe or treacherous. Landscapes and landmarks are more noticeable, and what is passed by quickly without much attention behind the wheel of a car is often given more recognition and might take several minutes to go past on a bicycle.

Most of my time in Belfast has been spent living and working in North and West Belfast, and it was here that my consciousness of Belfast's separation barriers first emerged. At one point, we lived up against a separation barrier on the Shankill Road, next to the Townsend Street gate. I gradually started to consciously notice the effect that the barriers were having, not just on my travel, but on my life as a whole. For example, if I went to a friend's house across the barrier on the Falls Road in the evening, I needed to be aware of how late I stayed. If I were to stay beyond when the gates between the Shankill and Falls were locked for the night, my cycle home would become three times as long and considerably more uphill.

I also became conscious of how the barriers affected my religious life. There were times when I wanted to attend Mass at Clonard Monastery, off the Falls Road. However, on Sunday mornings, the gates between the Shankill and Falls were locked. A cycle ride that would normally have taken me five minutes would now require cycling down the Shankill, down Peter's Hill, across Millfield, up Divis, up the Falls and up Clonard Street. This extra distance, relatively unnoticeable in a car, was significantly more awkward on a bike. The barriers certainly didn't affect if I *could*

worship, or if I *did* worship, but they did affect, in noticeable ways to me, *how* and *where* I worshipped- and naturally, how I worshipped affected my life.

Yet I noticed that when the subject of the barriers was raised at public conferences, or when I would raise it myself with colleagues working on reconciliation projects, it was often met with condescension, irritation or even hostility. Invariably- and almost word for word- the answer would be given: 'It's not the physical barriers that are the problem; it's the barriers in people's hearts and minds that are the problem.' I heard this answer given dozens of times over the years and it intrigued me because, while it was undoubtedly true, I felt it was leaving many issues related to the barriers unexplored. It was obvious that there were 'barriers' in people's hearts and minds, but there were also actual, physical, nine metre-high walls and fences with steel gates and locks running through the city- particularly those areas of the city where the beliefs and feelings in people's hearts and minds were often the most intransigent. Was it, in fact, true that the barriers in people's hearts and minds were more intractable that the physical barriers? Perhaps more importantly, were the physical barriers themselves having any affect on the 'barriers' in people's hearts and minds? Simply put, were the barriers 'doing' anything to the communities they divided? Finally, could theological reflection, which in post-conflict Northern Ireland had a good deal to say on the subjects of hearts and minds, play any role in addressing the physical separation barriers?

It was these experiences and these questions that formed the basis for this thesis and my academic work at the Irish School of Ecumenics which, incidentally, the cycle ride to and from would be a mile and a half shorter- and significantly safer- were the Flax Street gate not permanently locked.

While completing my M.Phil in reconciliation studies, an initial, casual interest in Latin American liberation theology grew and deepened. What this academic experience gave me was an introduction to the thirty years of thought and practice that constituted the bulk of that particular theological movement. What spurred my interest in liberation theology was its emphasis, as I saw it, on theological praxis, the implicit acknowledgement that theological reflection is done with attention specifically focussed on the social reality in which it is done. Moreover, I was drawn to liberation theology's belief that theological reflection leads to- or at the very least

should be leading to- a practical outworking, not *orthodoxy* ('right belief') as an end in itself, but *'ortho-praxy'* ('right acting').

These acknowledgements, to my mind, were not immediately evident in the belief and practice of the majority of the Christian churches in Ireland. It seemed to me that it would actually be quite easy to practice Christianity in the Irish context without any particular notice paid to social realities or commitment given to a practical outworking, particularly in regard to post-conflict social reconciliation. In a nation that was emerging from thirty years of civil conflict, while still exhibiting pronounced levels of sectarianism and deep social division, this apparent disconnect between theological reflection and practice and what was going on around it was striking.

These observations and beliefs served as the impetus of this academic project: exploring what the legacies of Latin American liberation theology might contribute to the development of practical and contextual theologies in the Irish context. This thesis is a culmination of that process.

Chapter 1 identifies and introduces four legacies of the thought and practice of Latin American liberation theology that serve as a basic, underlying methodology. It will be argued that Latin American liberation theology emerged as a distinctive expression of a practical theology, conceived of and done with a particular focus, priority, method, and direction. Its *focus* is the role of the immediate social reality on theological reflection. Its *priority* is acknowledging the value of the lived experience of the community involved in the theological reflection, and the community's consciousness that develops out of this theological process. Its *method* is attention to praxis, the cyclical process of reflection and action, and its *direction* is always toward the most poor and the most marginalised. These methodological elements are then explored in the work of Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the foremost proponents of Latin American liberation theology. His work demonstrates these four elements as part of the overarching theme of his theology, which he envisions as being a reflection on the God of life in contexts indicative of death. Liberation, then, is *the ongoing process of living well in the reality of ongoing structural political oppression and economic marginalisation.* Out of this comes the conclusion that these elements form an important legacy of Latin American liberation theology that might contribute to the process of theological reflection in the divided context- the

notion of transformation, a changing of shape and of form. Liberation theology's proponents saw the role of theology to be part of the process of social transformation, beyond repairing or rebuilding a social context marked by oppression and violence, but in redesigning it. Thus, because of Latin American liberation theology's emphasis on the role of social transformation in the light of faith and the method's overall emphasis on praxis, the four-point methodology proposed serves as a base for beginning to envision a practical and contextual 'transformational theology' in an alternative context to the one in which liberation theology was originally envisioned.

Chapter 2 begins to examine that alternative context: Belfast's divided context of sectarian dynamics, deep social division and a history of violent conflict. In such social conditions, a vision of transformation must encompass more than socio- political liberation. A divided context such as Northern Ireland in general and Belfast in particular demonstrates the importance of reconciliation fundamentally informing a vision of transformation. This chapter investigates the concept of post-conflict reconciliation. What emerges from looking at how reconciliation has been envisioned by thinkers and practitioners such as John Paul Lederach, Joseph Liechty, Cecelia Clegg, Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly is that a credible vision of reconciliation in the divided context must be a rigorous and creative vision that encompasses a social as well as individual vision. Recognising reconciliation as a process and a goal, reconciliation in a context such as Belfast is perhaps best understood as *the ongoing process of living together well after violent conflict and in the reality of ongoing structural sectarianism and deep social division.* Finally, this chapter investigates how conceptions of liberation and reconciliation have inter-related in contexts of division by examining self-understood liberation theologies that have emerged from three different contexts of division: the US, Israel/Palestine, and Ireland. They variously demonstrate that conceptions of liberation that are not comprehensively informed by a vision of reconciliation lack a fully transformative vision and do not benefit the process of envisioning such a theological vision in Belfast. Such a context must see any conception of liberation- transformation of socio-economic and political structures- fully informed by a comprehensive and rigorous vision of reconciliation- the transformation of human relationships. In light of this, 'transformation' is understood as *the ongoing process of exploring theological reflection in the light of*

liberation and reconciliation. Such theological reflection can be described as a 'transformational theology'.

Chapter 3 introduces one aspect of the divided social reality of Belfast to be examined: the network of separation barriers. The barriers represent a physical manifestation of deeper patterns of sectarianism and segregation that have marked the city's history; the fact that the number and type of barriers has increased- and continues to increase- since the peace agreement serves as a clear indication of this reality. What this chapter argues is that the separation barriers represent a physical manifestation of sectarianism, arising from a desire for security, a fear and a lack of trust in a perceived threatening 'other', and the desire to reinforce communal identity in the midst of the perceived threatening 'other'. Yet while the churches and para-church organizations in Northern Ireland have devoted theological reflection to peace and reconciliation, the separation barriers, their effect on both peace and reconciliation, and what role the churches might have in addressing the reality of physically reinforced segregation, is not readily apparent.

Chapter 4 introduces a theological lens through which the social reality of the barriers is to be examined: the conception of idolatry as found in the Hebrew Bible. This conception is employed because of its emphasis that an idol is specifically something built, something consciously and physically constructed. An idol was a manifestation of the human desire to control. To construct an image of Yahweh was an attempt to control, not only life's circumstances, but the divine will itself. It was an attempt to influence and bend the will of the divine to that of the human will. In the theological context, idolatry has served as a reflective mechanism involving these aspects of domination and control. To that end, Latin American liberation theology also made use of idolatry as a theological reflection on structural oppression. Idolatry was here identified as a struggle between the God of life and liberation and the idolatrous 'gods' of death, which regardless of being couched in the Christian cultural rhetoric of the National Security states of Central and South America, demanded sacrifices of freedom and life that the God of the biblical text never demanded.

In Ireland, the use of idolatry as a theological reflection has been coloured by the context of division. Three theological critiques employing the concept of 'idolatry' are

identifiable: there is an 'outward' critique of the beliefs and practices of the 'other', most readily identifiable in the fundamentalist Protestant criticism of 'idolatrous' Catholic worship and practice. There is also a more positive 'inward' critique of the beliefs and practices of one's own community, most readily identifiable in the reflections of ECONI/CCCI, an Evangelical Protestant organisation which sought to reflect on how the conceptions of British and Ulster identity might have become 'idolatrous' to their own community. Finally, there has also been a 'supernatural' critique which interprets all visible and physical aspects of conflict as indicators of an invisible, supernatural conflict that can only be effectively combated through prayer and revival. This last has been most readily identifiable in Charismatic/Pentecostal expressions of Christianity which sees 'idolatry' as lax belief and practice that gives actual demonic activity undue influence over social and political life. The separation barriers, however, have not prominently featured in any of these Irish theological reflections. What this chapter seeks to do is to move toward a new reflection on idolatry in the divided context, one that, rather than seeing idolatry as a manifestation of religious and spiritual boundary markers between the religious beliefs and practices of various parts of the community, examines idolatry as manifested in the physical boundaries themselves.

Chapter 5 introduces readings of four biblical texts relating to idolatry in light of a transformational approach. This approach is compared and contrasted to two other readings- a historical-critical reading and a liberation theology reading. The historical-critical approach to the biblical text sought to root the theological endeavour in historical scholarship and secular academic disciplines, and Latin American Liberation theology sought to root the theological endeavour in the lived experience of the most poor and the most marginalised. The purpose of identifying these approaches is, firstly, to give an overview of the contribution that each approach has made to the understanding of the biblical text and, secondly, to show how each successive approach has been informed by and expanded upon the previously-examined approach. Building on these developments, a transformational approach seeks to root the theological endeavour in the lived experience of the divided community- in this case, Belfast- and how idolatry might be used as a lens for investigation of the reality of the separation barriers.

The four biblical texts are the incident of the golden calf in Exodus 32, the demand for monarchy in 1 Samuel 8:1-22, the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9 and the injunctions against child sacrifice in Leviticus 18:21. The reflections on these texts draw attention to a number of similarities between the demand for separation barriers and the embrace of idolatry in the biblical text. In the Exodus and Genesis texts, something is being constructed as a response to fear and lack of trust, a desire for security and a desire for identity reinforcement. In 1 Samuel, the prophetic role of those in authority is reflected upon and their responsibility to warn of the likely consequences of the people's distorted desires. The Leviticus text likewise reflects on the consequences of idolatry, but specifically draws attention to those who very often bear those consequences the heaviest- the very young.

Chapter 6 presents the results of social action research done as part of this project, which served both to explore the social reality of the separation barriers in interviews of local clergy and group sessions with lay people to reflect on this theologically. The responses in the clergy interviews revealed that, although the clergy seemed to have experience in reflecting on social and sectarian division, as well as on the more expansive themes of peace, reconciliation and the three dynamics of the conflict that the barriers physically represent, the physical reality of the barriers themselves have not played a central role in that reflection. Moreover, a desire- or indeed a need- to develop theological reflections specifically on the barriers as part of their local ministry was not immediately apparent.

In contrast, the results of the group sessions indicated that a theological reflection on the barriers was deemed to be an important topic, despite initial comments regarding participants' feelings of alienation from both the topic of the barriers and the communities where barriers are most commonly present. Group sessions were designed around a hermeneutical cycle of 'Reality, Reflection, Re-imagining', based on the liberation methodology explored in chapter 1 informed by the conception of reconciliation detailed in chapter 2. Despite the initial expressions of alienation, the group sessions eventually elicited engaged and creative discussions surrounding the separation barriers in the light of a reflection on idolatry.

Drawing insights and identifying lessons from this implementation of a transformational approach is the subject of the final chapter. Four insights are drawn

and then connected to four readings from the Gospels. First, there is the phenomenon of how the separation barriers are understood in relation to the deeper, psychological and cultural barriers. The relationship is symbiotic, but the over-emphasis of theological reflection on the 'invisible' barriers in hearts and minds has resulted in them being more 'visible' than the actual physical barriers, which ironically are more or less 'invisible'. However, a transformational reflection did create a space where the physical barriers were reflected upon, building on the symbiotic relationship between the visible and the invisible aspects of sectarianism.

Secondly, when the social research process is assessed, it can be seen that the approach, when it was implemented, was 'successful', allowing theological engagement with a social reality with which, historically, theological reflection has been limited. Participants engaged both with the social reality as well as the biblical reflection honestly and thoughtfully, and creative ideas were proffered for moving the reflection forward and new ways of re-imagining the reality were contributed. However, the challenges in the process of organising the group sessions show that the results of such an approach are unpredictable.

Thirdly, much of the approach's effectiveness- and the effectiveness of the ample resources for reconciliation produced over the years- lies not only in conception and production, but in implementation. This opens up the possibility of re-evaluating how reconciliation in the Irish context is approached overall. The diverse nature of the Christian community in Northern Ireland, the divergent understandings of the definition of- as well as the importance of- reconciliation mean that even the best programmes and resources can be underutilised.

Finally, the previous observations call for persistence. Transformation of social conditions and of human relationships remains a vital component of any future vision of what is the ongoing peace process in Northern Ireland. Theological reflection dedicated to a transformational vision based on analysis of social realities in the divided context can play a significant role to play in that process.

The final months of this thesis project reinforced the notion that the process of envisioning and doing theology with integrity in a divided context like Belfast is an ongoing and challenging one. In those months, the city experienced two serious episodes of social disorder, both of which serve to illustrate that the issues of

communal and political identity and symbolism, as well as deeper issues of fear, insecurity and control of urban space remain significant issues.

The first series of events began in the summer months of 2012 and all occurred within a mile and a half of each other in North Belfast. Issues involving Orange marches on 12 July led to days of rioting at the Ardoyne interface, while in a separate but related incident earlier that day, a loyalist flute band that was part of the annual Belfast Orange parades stopped in front of a Catholic church near city centre and played a tune perceived by Catholic residents as sectarian. The church quickly became a new sectarian 'flashpoint'. On 25 August, the same band openly defied rulings handed down by the Parades Commission when marching past the same church as part of another march. Finally, there were several days of rioting in early September at Carlisle Circus in North Belfast following a republican parade and continued anger from loyalist residents regarding the Parades Commission rulings of earlier loyalist parades. Over this period, over 100 police officers were injured[1].

The following December saw another upsurge in rioting in many areas of Belfast and other urban areas of the province over the decision by Belfast City Council to fly the Union flag over city hall only on designated days rather than every day, as had been the traditional practice. The centrist Alliance Party, which had brokered the 'designated days' compromise between Unionist demands for the flag to be flown constantly and Nationalist demands that it not fly at all, sustained the majority of Unionist anger and had its property damaged and its membership threatened[2]. In the two months following the decision, roads in many loyalist areas of Belfast and other towns were blocked by protestors and police were attacked. More than 140 police officers were injured, leading to accusations from the Northern Ireland Secretary

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[1] See 'Timeline of North Belfast Trouble', BBC Northern Ireland, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-19489545, internet, accessed 19 October 2012 and Henry McDonald, 'Northern Ireland's union flag row "could undermine ceasefires"', *Guardian* newspaper, 6 December 2012.

[2] See Mark Devenport, 'National Identity Still a Source of Deep Division in Northern Ireland'. Available at BBC News, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20951202, internet accessed 1 February 2013.

Theresa Villiers that the ongoing unrest was damaging tourism, the local economy and Northern Ireland's international image[3].

The intervening months following the unrest saw political interest in the barriers re-emerge as well. In May 2013, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) unveiled their desire to see the separation barriers dismantled within ten years as part of a larger package of measures to move toward a shared future[4]. The announcement contained no specific details of how such a policy would be implemented, but it is worth noting that the International fund for Ireland (IFI), itself involved in a 12-month project surrounding the issue of the barriers, issued a statement calling the OFMDFM plans 'ambitious' and wondering at the wisdom in announcing a deadline for such a pronouncement[5]. It is also worth noting that, a month before the OFMDFM announcement Northern Ireland Secretary Theresa Villiers was understood to have privately threatened to withhold financial aid from London unless more progress toward creating 'a truly shared society' was achieved[6].

Against this reality- one of ongoing threats of erratic civil disorder surrounding issues of communal grievance and cultural identity- the desire within interface communities for the separation barriers to remain in place is, in the end, unsurprising. The unpredictable nature of living in areas of the city geographically and/or psychologically 'far' from the social or political 'centre' constantly reinforces the presumed sensibleness of leaving nothing to chance or good will. It is also in the

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[3] See Liam Clarke, 'Theresa Villiers: Loyalist rioters have damaged economy and dishonoured Union', available at: http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/theresa-villiers-loyalist-rioters-have-damaged-ecomony-and-dishonoured-union-16268380.html, internet, accessed 1 February 2013.

[4] 'Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness unveil 'shared future' plans for Northern Ireland', *Belfast Telegraph*, 9 May 2013, available at: http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/peter-robinson-and-martin-mcguinness-unveil-shared-future-plans-for-northern-ireland-29254838.html, internet, accessed 18 June 2013.

[5] 'Peace Wall plans deemed "ambitious"', *Belfast Telegraph*, 4 June 2013, http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/peace-wall-plans-deemed-ambitious-29319641.html, internet, accessed 18 June 2013.

[6] Noel McAdam, 'DUP and Sinn Fein bristle at Theresa Villiers' threat to withhold aid until they make progress on a shared future', *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 April 2013, available at: http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/dup-and-sinn-fein-bristle-at-theresa-villiers-threat-to-withhold-aid-until-they-make-progress-on-a-shared-future-29188923.html, internet, accessed 18 June 2013.

midst of this deeply-entrenched reality that theology in Belfast is done. This thesis project is part of the ongoing process of envisioning how to do theology with integrity in- and in relation to- Belfast's divided context, and how doing theology in Belfast might be transformational.

Chapter 1- An Overview of the
Liberation Theology Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to identify notable legacies of Latin American liberation theology and to locate those legacies in the work of one of the movement's primary thinkers, Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, with a view to those legacies' contribution to a transformational theology in a different context.

This chapter argues, firstly, that in the four decades and extensive body of writing and practice that represent the most productive period of Latin American liberation theology, a notable legacy is the value placed in four specific elements that can be identified as ongoing themes of liberation theological reflection and practice. These elements are social analysis, experience and consciousness, praxis, and a preferential option made for the poor. The specific attention given to these particular dynamics marked out liberation theology as a distinctive expression of practical and political theology, conceived of and done with a particular focus, priority, method, and direction. The focus was on the role of the immediate social context on theological reflection. A priority was given to announcing the presence and worth of the lived experiences of the community in the mind of God and in the priorities of the Church. A method of attention to praxis of reflection action emerged, as well as an explicit direction toward the most poor and marginalised.

Secondly, this chapter explores how these elements appear in the theological output of Gutiérrez's work and thought. What will be shown is that while the elements do not represent sequential 'steps' in a process, they rather provide a methodological underpinning for his broader theological reflection: life lived out in the midst of a reality full of death[1].

There are aspects of Gutiérrez's analysis and reflection that are somewhat dated, culturally specific or underdeveloped, such as his reliance on a class-based analysis of social conflict and his hierarchical understanding of oppression. What becomes

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[1] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 30.

evident is that the structural and hierarchical analysis of conflict and division on which Gutiérrez develops focuses attention on changing the structures and inverting the hierarchies. Gutiérrez's analysis is understandable given the context where his theology developed. Other contexts- such as Northern Ireland- would require detailed focus and emphasis on interpersonal/inter-communal reconciliation, an emphasis that Gutiérrez does not provide. However, the field of post-conflict reconciliation has developed in the intervening years, and indeed continues to develop, to address the more complex dynamics of conflict transformation that Gutiérrez does not address in detail.

Out of this analysis of Latin American liberation theology emerges its underlying emphasis on 'transformation', a vision of changing the form and the shapes of a contextual reality and the role that theological reflection plays in that vision. The conclusion drawn is that a transformational theology is one that seeks to engage with and offer critical theological reflection on social transformation within a given context in a manner that is as inclusive and complex as possible. A methodology drawn from Latin American liberation theology, comprised of the elements presented, uniquely contributes to this by providing a methodological framework that allows transformation to be at the forefront of the theological vision, embracing complex personal and social dimensions apparent in the given context.

1. Contextual Overview of Liberation Theology

Latin American liberation theology represented a particular expression of a political theology, one of what would become known comprehensively as 'practical' or 'public' theologies. These theologies broadly served as responses to conventional understandings that theology was restricted to the application of doctrine to biblical exegesis and pastoral theology[2]. Converse to what had come before, practitioners of these new theological expressions held that theological truth lies in 'the quality of relationships rather than in abstract principle, or a divine edict'[3]. Of primary concern

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[2] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, ed., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 4.
[3] Duncan Forester, *Christian Justice and Public Policy* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 209.

to these new expressions was mediation between the academy/seminary and the lay community as well as integration of both into the wider society[4].

Political theology broadly describes that branch of the practical theological endeavor seeking to explore the relationship between theological traditions and practices and public life. Despite the conventional understanding of the word 'political', it has not concerned itself primarily with party politics, although notable practitioners did engage with party politics. For example, foundational figure Reinhold Niebuhr was a leader of the Socialist Party of America, though he later broke with the party[5]. Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society: a Study of Ethics and Politics*, published in 1932 is a seminal work. More often, though, political theology initially drew attention to the role theology played in the spheres of local and global society, and the role that the institutional expression of religion played in aspects of political and socio-economic policy. This was manifested both in individual and communal faith-related activism and witness for change. Thus, practical theologies broadly seek to reflect on practical issues, to offer theological resources to the praxis of living of religious life in the public sphere[6].

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[4] Miller-McLemore, ed., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, 4.

[5] With the rise in influence of liberation theology in Latin America, the question of the role of Christians- particularly that of the clergy- in revolutionary politics became more complex. The most prominent example is that of the involvement of four Catholic priests in Nicaragua's Sandinista government in the early 80's. This put them increasingly at odds with the Church hierarchy, culminating in a public rebuke by Pope John Paul II of Ernesto Cardenal, a popular priest serving as minister of culture, as the Pope arrived at Managua airport in 1983. The Pope's sermon 'Unity and the Church' delivered in Managua on 4March 1983 re-iterated the Vatican's position that their vision of social reconciliation was implicitly predicated on clergy abstaining from party politics. See Philip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in Central American Revolutions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984, 3rd printing 1986), 260-267 and Pope John Paul II, 'Unity of the Church' in Alfred T. Hennelly ed., *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 329-334 and Teófilo Cabestrero, *Revolutionaries for the Gospel: Testimonies of Fifteen Christians in the Nicaraguan Government*, originally published as *Revolucionarios por el evangelio* (Bilbao, ES: Desclée de Brouwer, 1983), translated from the Spanish by Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986).

[6] Johann Baptist Metz' 1969 *Theology of the World* is a key text, arguing against a 'privatised' understanding of faith and for a church whose understanding of faith and society are complimentary; the 'deprivatising' of theology is the primary critical task of political theology. Likewise Jürgen Moltmann's focus on an eschatological vision in his *'Theology of Hope'* is another inherently political expression of theology; 'hope alone keeps life- including public, social life- flowing and free. See Johann Baptist Metz, *Theology of the World* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 110 and Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 324. See also William T. Cavanaugh, Jeffrey W. Bailey and Craig Hovey, eds., *An Eerdmans Reader in Contemporary Political Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge:

As the terms 'practical', 'political' and 'public' connote, these theologies took as their first point of reference a priority to be contextual, consciously informed by the lived experience of the community of believers and their social context, a locus 'where contemporary experience and the resources of the religious tradition meet in a critical dialogue that is mutually and practically transforming'[7]. Practical theology finds its primary coherence in this contextual approach, rather than the content of its output; it is a methodology, a hermeneutical approach which aims to interpret the present human reality alongside- and in relation to- the study of the biblical text.

Angie Pears, in *Doing Contextual Theology*, comprehensively details the contextual nature of theology and of liberation theology in particular. Her analysis highlights the dual critique within theologies of liberation[8]. First, they serve as a theological critique specifically of the specific dynamics of oppressive contexts. Secondly, they are a critique both of traditional theologies' lack of engagement with such contextual concerns and the lack of reflection on traditional theologies' own inherently contextual nature. In doing so, they very clearly promote and perpetuate a contextual immediacy that has re-informed and deepened theological practice[9]. Pears' analysis is clear: theology should be consciously contextual, arising as it does from 'the fluid, shifting nature of human knowledge and concepts'[10]. Although referring to theological output as 'contextual' is a relatively new phenomenon, the understanding of theology as contextual is not. Yet it is the explicit acknowledgment of a *radical* contextual nature and the commitment to that nature that marked out Latin American liberation theology as practical and contextual[11].

William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), Alister Kee, ed., *The Scope of Political Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1978) and Alister Kee, ed., *A Reader in Political Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1974).

[7] James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, eds. *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), xiii.

[8] Pears does not delineate between Latin American liberation theology and the self-described 'liberation theologies' that followed in its wake, focusing on the contextual nature. See Note 18 in this chapter.

[9] Angie Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 178.

[10] Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology*, 8.

[11] Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology*, 48.

Pattison and Woodward's use of the term 'transforming' is indicative of the implied purpose of the theological exercise in the realm of contextual, practical theologies. These theological tendencies held that theological practice is not primarily the accumulation of, or learning about, a distinctive body of information, particularly if it is detached from the understanding of the impact of theology on people's lives. Rather, theology was understood as rooted in practice. Practical theology, therefore, involves engagement with contemporary life, experience and context with the theological tradition[12].

What became implicit in practical theological expressions was a value of the cyclical hermeneutic, which Richard Osmer interprets as four key questions and tasks: what is going on? (descriptive-empirical task); why is this going on? (interpretative task); what *ought* to be going on? (normative task); and how might we respond to the practical and ethical implications of the previous questions? (pragmatic task)[13]. Thus, practical theological expressions began the process of valuing the mutual critique of both theology and ecclesial tradition with the lived experience of the people of faith. This was the nascent emergence of the value of praxis, which Latin American liberation theology would make fundamental.

The rise of Latin American liberation theology[14], like the other expressions of practical/political theologies as well as the theologies of liberation that developed in its wake, ideally sought to expand upon the traditional theological norms and served as an attempt to extend the voice and scope of the theological discipline. The Second

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[12] Christopher Rowland and Zoe Bennett, '"Action is the Life of All": New Testament Theology and Practical Theology' in Christopher Rowland and C. M. Tuckett, eds., *The Nature of New Testament Theology: Essays in Honour of Robert Morgan* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 186-206.

[13] Richard Robert Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

[14] Detailed overviews of the development and methodology of Latin American liberation theology, see Philip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: The Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987) Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, second printing, 1988), Rosino Gibellini, ed., *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America* (first English publication, Maryknoll NY: 1979; British publication, London: SCM Press, 1980), Alfred T. Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1976), Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1991), Sergio Torres and John Eagleson eds., *Theology in the Americas* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1976).

Vatican Council (popularly known as 'Vatican II'), which met from 1962 to 1965, moved the Roman Catholic Church towards an embrace of modernity in its liturgy, theology and social outlook. Three years later, at the gathering of Latin American bishops at Medellín in Columbia, the regional bishops sought to give practical, local expression to the developments of Vatican II, particularly seeking to engage with the economic oppression, political marginalisation and massive and violent abuse of human and civil rights that were endemic in the region. Since the colonial period, the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Central and South America had widely been perceived to be unduly associated with the interests of the social and political elite. The new focus and direction were therefore profound, and the documents of the Medellín conference stand as, perhaps, 'the first official, systematised articulation of the theology of liberation'[15].

Theological reflection in the light of social context, active work on behalf of temporal peace and social justice, as well as ecclesial concern for the poor predated the developments of liberation theology. Thus, while liberation theology was not the first expression of such concerns[16], and theologians of liberation in Latin America could- and did- draw on an extensive historical body of theological work[17], its innovation was to crystallize what had previously developed into a historically practical and directed vision. 'Theology', wrote Brazilian priest and author Frei Betto, 'is the reflection born from the faith of the Christian community':

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[15] Jennifer Scheper Hughes, *Biography of a Mexican Crucifix: Lived Religion and Local Faith from the Conquest to the Present* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 133.

[16] A notable example is Karl Barth's presaging the liberationists' understanding of God's position *vis a vis* the poor by declaring: 'God always takes his stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and on this side alone: against the lofty and in behalf of the lowly...' Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. II/1 (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark), 386. Also, Curt Cadorette notes that Dietrich Bonnhoeffer's assertion, 'We have learned to see the great events of the history of the world from beneath- from the viewpoint of the useless, the suspect, the abused, the powerless, the oppressed, the despised. In a word, from the viewpoint of the suffering', and notes its 'tremendous impact' on Gutiérrez over forty years later. Curt Cadorette, *From the Heart of the People: The Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 1.

[17] For an overview of Catholic Social Teaching, see Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983) and John A. Coleman, S.J., ed., *One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought* (Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 1991). For an analysis of social teaching in both Protestant and Catholic traditions as interrelated disciplines, see Philomena Cullen, Bernard Hoose, and Gerard Mannion eds., *Catholic Social Justice: Theological and Practical Explorations* (London: Continuum, 2007).

In this sense, every Christian is theologising when he reflects on this own faith, but not every Christian is a theologian. Theologians are those who have a scientific basis, the scientific knowledge necessary to theology, and at the same time, contact with the community and who are capable of practicing and systematising the reflections of the Christian people.[18]

Betto's comment about liberation theology's 'scientific' tendency underlines the specificity of this theology's practitioner's self-understanding. It broadly perceived the theological endeavour conceived of and done with a specific focus, purpose, method and direction. In analysing the work and practice that emerged from Latin America in the late 60's through to the 90's, it is possible to identify a desire to re-direct the focus of theological reflection, not toward social development or civic or political reform, but toward human liberation[19], understood as social as well as personal transformation, both in the church and wider society. The subjective focus is the poor and the marginalised as both historical subjects and, ideally, theological actors[20]. Liberation theology understood the purpose of theological reflection as

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[18] Frei Betto, *Fidel and Religion: Castro Talks on Revolution and Religion,* originally published as *Fidel y la Religión* (Cuba: *Oficina de Publiciaciones del Consejo de Estado,* 1987), translated from the Spanish by Harvey Cox (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

[19] The term 'liberation' itself served notice to a change in theological and social focus. Gutiérrez identified three distinct, but not separate, 'levels' of liberation. Thus, while traditional theological analysis would have emphasised liberation from sin, theology of liberation also gave prominence to socio-political liberation (freedom of the individual and community) and fully human and psychological liberation (freedom of the self and the spirit). See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation.* Revised UK edition (London: SCM Press, 1988), xxxviii. Liberation, then, is understood to affect all realms of human life; liberation is to work and struggle for, and to reflect upon, all aspects of human freedom in the light of faith. Virginia Fabella expands on this by noting that liberation encompasses distinct aspects for different persons. Women, for example, often suffer under multiple oppressions and might see liberation as freedom from multiple bondages: 'androcentric practices... economic inequalities, racial and ethnic discrimination and other forms of domination and oppression'. Virginia Fabella, 'Liberation', in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 122-124.

[20] This conception of the historical subjective role of the poor has been subsequently re-evaluated, most notably by Hugo Assmann, one of its earliest proponents. He admitted in 1997 that it can paradoxically be an objectification of the poor, effectively elevating 'the poor' to an idolised position, or else perhaps inelegantly equating 'the poor' with a socio-economic understanding of a 'class', responsible for both their own liberation and driver of social progress. At its most positive, this re-evaluation has served to open up the role of historical subjectivity to other examples of social marginalisation- women, LGBT identifying people, Blacks, indigenous peoples- effectively liberating the concept and broadening the idea of who a subject can be. See Michael Kirwan, 'Liberation Theology and Catholic Social Teaching', *New Blackfriars,* Vol. 93, No. 1044 (March 2012), 255 and Jung Mo Sung, 'The Human Being as

inextricably linked to both the temporal and spiritual transformation of human lives, and in the words of Leonardo Boff:

> ... if this transformation is produced from the position of and in the interests of the oppressed... and by the oppressed themselves (and their allies), this theology will be a theology of liberation.[21]

The term 'liberation' is, perhaps understandably, where Latin American liberation theology becomes particularly distinctive. Beyond a desire for theology to be contextual, theological reflection was seen as a mechanism for understanding and resisting the oppressive social and political structures that constrained, devalued and, ultimately, declared the power to end the life of the people of faith. As will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4, Latin American liberation theology drew a definitive distinction between the God of life and liberation as they exposited from the biblical text and those structures bringing oppression and death. As the underlying methodology of this thesis, 'liberation' represents *the ongoing process of living well in the reality of ongoing structural political oppression and economic marginalisation.* The full implications of such a definition must be understood, as will be shown, in the weight that Latin American liberation theology gave to the concept of 'living'. The four methodological elements to be explored, and the subsequent analysis of the elements work of Gustavo Gutiérrez, reveal the liberationists' concept of life and living, imbued with a deep conviction in the intrinsic worth of the human being in the light of Christ, particularly the life of the most poor and the most marginalised. It is this life that serves as the hub around which all of the subsequent theological thought and praxis revolves. Therefore, the ongoing process of living can never be *despite* or *regardless of* oppression and marginalisation. Indeed, liberation understood as 'living' presupposes rejection of- and resistance to- marginalisation and oppression. Liberation, embodied in the four methodological elements propounded here, presupposes confrontation of- and the transformation of- oppressive and marginalising structures.

Subject: Defending the Victims', in Ivan Petrella, ed. *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 6.

[21] Leonardo Boff, 'The Originality of the Theology of Liberation, from *Expanding the View: Gustavo Gutiérrez and the Future of Liberation Theology,* Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, eds. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 48.

In the four decades that constitute Latin American liberation theology's period of significant influence and prominence[22], the value placed in the four specific methodological elements that can be identified as ongoing themes of liberation theological reflection and practice represent an important legacy. Out of these elements and reflective points developed a new method of doing theology, the liberation theology methodology, which will now be investigated.

2. The Elements of the Liberation Theology Methodology

a. Social Analysis

Social analysis represented a distinct focus of liberation theology- a focus on the role of theological reflection with specific attention given to the immediate social context. This focus can be traced to a new language and understanding developing within the Catholic Church in the 60's with the publication of such documents as Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris*, the documents of Vatican II, particularly the document *Guadium Et Spes*, and Paul VI's *Populorum progressio*. In *Guadium et spes*, special reference is made of the Church's need to engage with the world in a spirit of social discernment, 'scrutinizing the signs of the times' and of 'interpreting them in the light of the gospel' (*GS*, 4). *Pacem in terris* similarly focused its understanding of the Gospel in the temporal affairs of humanity. Essential human rights were laid forth (para. 11), and the Pope was categorical that the role of the State was never one of domination or repression; it too was governed by reason and the law of God (para. 48).

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[22] There are different academics who contend that liberation theology continues as a cogent movement; for example, Ivan Petrella, Stacey M. Floyd and Anthony B. Pinn. As there are few that would argue that the developments of liberation theology exert no ongoing contemporary influence on the theological discipline, the question somewhat hinges on whether or not there is an effective difference between a 'movement' as opposed to a disparate but admittedly like-minded collection of authors and practitioners indebted to the legacies of Latin American liberation theology though that movement has come to an end. However, while acknowledging both the aforementioned academic voices as well as those who continue to produce work as 'liberation theology', this thesis works under the assumption that Latin American liberation theology functioned as a coherent and collective movement between 1968, the year of the *'Hacia una teología de la liberación'* ('Toward a Theology of Liberation') conference organised by Gustavo Gutiérrez in Chimbote, Peru and an indeterminate point between 1989 (the fall of the Berlin Wall and the symbolic collapse of structural socialism as an ideological alternative to Western capitalism) and 1999, the year of the death of one of the movement's most iconic figures, Brazilian bishop Dom Hélder Pessoa Câmara.

In these statements, one can discern efforts by the Catholic Church to begin a process of turning its gaze outward and engaging with the implications for the Church in what is seen. *Gaudium et spes'* discussion of economics, technology, social economics, culture and ecumenism, and *Pacem in terris'* concentration on the relationships between humankind, both emphasise the need to understand the realities of human conditions as a basis of theological reflection.

CELAM II at Medellín in 1968 was the moment when the Latin American Church gave official recognition to this new understanding[23]. The bishops explicitly declared their solidarity with the continent's poor and called for structural- not just individual- economic and political reform:

> We consider it irreconcilable with our developing situation to
> invest resources in the arms race, excessive bureaucracy, luxury,
> and ostentation, or the deficient administration of the
> community.[24]

The Third Conference of Latin American Bishops in Puebla, Mexico in 1979 further developed on this foundation, with the conference devoting much of its energies to discussion of the 'sinful structures' evident in the region[25]. This represented formal ecclesial recognition that 'the people of God in Latin America, following the example of Christ, must resist personal and collective injustice with unselfish courage and fearlessness'[26].

The focus that liberation theology gave to social analysis- 'scrutinizing the signs of the times'- was one that emphasised discovery, engagement, and participation. Because of the liberationists' commitment to human life and to engendering it through social transformation, the focus on social analysis introduced a distinctive emphasis on a multi-disciplinary approach to theological reflection. Academic understanding from fields such as economics, sociology and psychology was brought to bear on the process of theological reflection with degrees of focus and attention

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[23] Alfred T. Hennelly, ed. *Liberation* Theology: *A Documentary History* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 89.

[24] 'Message to the Peoples of Latin America' from *Liberation* Theology: *A Documentary History* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), Alfred T. Hennelly, ed., 92.

[25] See John Eagleson and Philip Scharper, eds. *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979).

[26] Alfred Heneally, ed. *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 33-34.

not previously typical. However, the process was not approached as a dispassionate collection of data or simply research conducted 'on' the poor. Rather, there was emphasis on the exploration of social conditions with the historical reality of the lived experience of poor communities given preference, as well as diagnosis of the causes of the systemic conditions of injustice and oppression and a commitment to resistance to those causes.

b. Experience and Consciousness

A new priority for theological reflection in Latin American liberation theology was a more expansive vision of the people of God. There was a renewed desire to draw attention to the life of the community, particularly that part of the community that was the most poor and most marginalised, to recognise its integrity and value and formulate theological reflection around the experiences of that community. The liberationists sought to highlight the place of God in the experience of the people, juxtaposed with the reality of institutionalised oppression, which was the reality for the majority of Christians in Latin America. By doing so, the liberationists sought to provide a theological underpinning for the denunciation of this oppression, as well as the annunciation of those experiencing oppression or marginalisation as unique subjects of God's love and liberation. 'The unity of this judgement', Brazilian archbishop Paulo Evaristo Arns concluded, 'shows that we therefore need to practice an active and militant reading of the Bible[27]. The primary locus of this activism and militancy, for Arns, echoing Gutiérrez, was the community of believers. The active participation of individuals and communities in such theological reflection on their social reality forms the priority of experience and consciousness.

Latin American liberation theology's desire to foster this kind of conscious reflection had two important antecedents: the 'See Judge Act' model of theological reflection and the pedagogy methodology pioneered by Paolo Freire.

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[27] Paolo Evaristo Arns, 'Introduction' from Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, eds., *Expanding the View: Gustavo Gutiérrez and the Future of Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1988, 1989, 1990), xiii.

The 'See Judge Act' model was developed by the Belgian priest (later Cardinal) Joseph Cardijn[28]. It served as a basic theological reflective model for the practice of the lay Catholic organisation Catholic Action[29]. Catholic Action, underpinned by Cardijn's 'See Judge Act' methodology, represented an early example of the interface between lay Catholics, the Church and conscious engagement with social context. Edward Cleary OP explains:

> The goal of Catholic Action was for lay persons to influence the secular milieu in which they worked. In small cells or groups they were to *see* and describe the situation in which they lived and worked, to *judge* the situation in the light of Christian principles (such as justice and charity) and then to *act* realistically to correct or enhance their milieu.[30]

Thus, Catholic Action served as one of the first incarnations of a 'dynamic process of reflection and action' departing from the specific social fact and inviting analysis in

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[28] Joseph Leo Cardijn (1882-1967) was born in Schaerbeek, Belgium and educated at College of Our Lady in Halle and Mechelen seminary. Ordained in 1906, Cardijn devoted the majority of his life and ministry to the evangelisation of the working classes. To this end, while also working as a teacher, he formed 'Jeunes Syndicalistes' ('Young Trade Unionists') in 1919, which was subsequently changed to 'Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne' ('Young Christian Workers') in 1924. The group initially met with resistance from the Catholic hierarchy, but the group eventually received papal blessing in 1925. By 1938, there were 500,000 members throughout Europe; in 1967, this had increased to 2,000,000 members in 69 countries. In addition to Young Christian Workers, Joseph Cardijn's 'See Judge Act' was a primary influence on the various incarnations of Catholic Action in North and South America as well as the developments of liberation theology; Clodovis Boff's *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* stands as a singular example of the model's underpinning of a comprehensive theological reflection at an academic level. See Michael de la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story: A Study of the Life of Mgr. Joseph Cardijn and the Young Christian Workers' Movement which He Founded* (White Plains NY: Longmans, 1958).

[29] Catholic Action originated in Europe in the early 20th century and gained momentum by the encouragement of Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* in 1931. Pius' intentions were for laypeople to actively engage with society for the purposes of moral reform and example. As such, it served as the Catholic Church's main vehicle for the interface of social teaching and practice and the Vatican or, as Pius chose to frame it, 'the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy'. The basic model involved small groups of laypeople meeting and reflecting on their social context in light of their Catholic faith. It was in the post-war years of the 1940's that Cardijn's 'See Judge Act' model came to form the basic theological reflective mechanism of the various incarnations of Catholic Action. See David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Teaching: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 1992, ninth printing 2002), 40-77 and Michael A. Hayes and Liam Gearon, eds., *Contemporary Catholic Theology: A Reader* (Leominster, Herefordshire, Gracewing, 1998, reprinted 2001), 261-262.

[30] Edward Cleary, *Crisis and Change: The Church in Latin America Today* (Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 1985), 4.

the light of faith, and 'See Judge Act' was a component in the 20th-century Catholic Church's embrace of the modern world[31]. However, Catholic Action was not by any means a radical organisation, nor was it necessarily progressive; rather, it served as a means to extend the moral influence of the Catholic Church in the wider society[32]. The implications for this extension, and what others would make of the reflective praxis inherent in 'See Judge Act', would develop later.

While it would be overreaching to call 'See Judge Act' the essence of liberation theology, or to imply that Catholic Action represented the 'birth' of Liberation theology, it was a critical antecedent in a number of ways: first, the network of lay cell groups- like those of the Base Communities Movement throughout Latin America that were a parallel development[33]- served as a superstructure for discussion and

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[31] Manuel Vásquez notes the model's dramatic effect on Latin American thinking, 'performing a role similar to how Feuerbach's materialist inversion of Hegelian idealism played for Marx' and represented an 'overturning of scholastic Catholicism... Rather than deducing Christian activity in the world from abstract, universal theological and doctrinal premises, Catholic activists and pastoral agents began with historical conditions' and interpreting Church doctrine and practice in their light. This brush with a Marxist analysis to which Vásquez draws analogy (and which would be resisted so strenuously by the hierarchy later) is also noted by Cleary, but Cleary prefers to trace the methodological underpinnings to Thomas Aquinas' teaching on prudence. See Manuel A. Vásquez, *The Brazilian Popular Church and the Crisis of Modernity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26-29 and Cleary's *Crisis and Change*, 4.

[32] Donal Dorr emphasises that Catholic Action was designed to ensure 'hierarchical control over all kinds of "Catholic Action" concerned with social reform' and was therefore an exercise in management and consolidation, though this fact should not underplay the Pope's genuine desire for social reform. Raúl Gómez Treto highlights this with his assertion that, in the context of pre-revolutionary Cuba, prevailing ecclesiology meant groups like Catholic Action, 'rather than being agencies for evangelising society, were in fact the church's secular forces, ecclesiastical society's way of being present in society. Through their 'Catholic influence' they enabled the church to remain stable and make progress.' See Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor- A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, revised edition, 1992), 61 and Raúl Gómez Treto, *The Church and Socialism in Cuba*, first published in Spanish as *La iglesia católica durante la construcción del socialism en Cuba*, (San José, Costa Rica, Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, 1986), translated by Philip Berryman and published in English (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1988). 12.

[33] Christian Base Communities (also referred to as 'base ecclesial communities') were autonomous laity-led cell-modelled small groups which began in Brazil in 1956 and proliferated throughout Latin America in the next two decades. The movement was designed to facilitate local, small-scale worship and reflection in the context of a severe shortage of clergy. In the development of liberation theology, the base communities represented a practical milieu for use of the 'see judge act' model and Freire's educational practices, as well as local popular organisation. See Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Reflection and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1991), 106-108 and Maragret Hebblethwaite, *Base Communities: An Introduction* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 10-22.

debate concerning the implications of Vatican II and Medellín[34]. Secondly, it provided a platform for the growth of socially-aware, middle- class and university-educated laypeople, and therefore encouraged an interface between several layers of Latin American Catholic society[35]. Finally, it is noteworthy that several leading liberationists were active within the Catholic Action structure and their thinking was directly influenced by 'See Judge Act', which they developed and expanded well beyond those ecclesiastical and theological confines under which they were nourished[36].

A second key antecedent to the development of liberation theology was the educational theories and practices of Brazilian Paolo Freire[37]. Freire's work

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[34] See Cleary, *Crisis and Change,* 4, and Vásquez, *The Brazilian Popular Church,* 26.

[35] Berryman (*Liberation Theology*, 14) notes the 50s and early 60s as a time in Latin America where 'radicalised middle-class people, particularly university students, were going to work directly with the poor... Catholic Action movements of students and workers became involved, as did significant Catholic intellectuals.' In any case, the proliferation of Catholic youth organisations throughout Latin America in the 50s and 60s such as Catholic Youth Farmers (JAC), Catholic Youth Factory Workers (JOC), Catholic Youth University Students (JUC), Catholic Youth Secondary Students (JEC) and Catholic Youth Independent Movement (JIC) fundamentally altered the social and academic landscape of the region for decades as their alumni entered the socio-political arenas.

[36] In Brazil, Dom Hélder Câmara was named National Assistant for Catholic Action in 1942; in Columbia, Camilo Torres was a student chaplain for the organisation; and both Gutiérrez and Segundo were priests in the movement, Gutiérrez serving as National Assistant for the Catholic Student Movement in Peru. See Ana María Bidegain, 'From Catholic Action to Liberation Theology: The Historical Process of the Laity in Latin America in the Twentieth Century', working paper #48, Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies , University of Notre Dame, November 1985. Regarding the movement from Catholic Action to liberation theology, Chopp and Cleary both point to the 'crisis' reached by Gutiérrez and others regarding the theological limitations of Catholic Action's analysis. The Church still believed in two planes- one temporal and one spiritual- but the planes were now understood to be differentiated rather than totally separated. Liberation theology in general (and Gutiérrez in particular) held that the spiritual and temporal constituted one history, a considerable shift in thinking. See Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990) and Cleary, *Crisis and Change*, 6.

[37] Paulo Regulus Neves Freire (1921-1997) was born in Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil and educated at Recife although the Freire family had previously left Recife, settling in nearby Jaboatao where Paulo spent part of his childhood and adolescence. He began Law School at the University of Recife in 1943, but didn't pursue a career in law, instead In 1946, he took over the directorship of the Pernambuco Department of Education and Culture of SESI (the Social Service of Industry), a government agency decreed by then President Eurico Gaspar Dutra, to use funds from a national confederation of factory owners to create programs for the betterment of the standard of living of their workers. This portion of his career is detailed in *Pedagogy of Hope*, where Freire details the ten years at SESI, an experience which provided the experiential basis for his doctoral dissertation (1959) and his first book, *Education as the Practice of Freedom*. As well as his academic work, Freire participated in movements for popular education in the early 1960s. The most important of these were the Movement for Popular Culture (MCP) in Recife, the Cultural Extension Service (SEC) at the University of

developing adult literacy programmes on behalf of the Brazilian government led to the development of his criticisms of conventional educational models. His criticisms involved both philosophy and practice which focussed, as he saw it, on having a specific curriculum 'deposited' into students, a process Freire saw as essentially dehumanizing[38]. This, he concluded, implied that it is the educator who is intelligent and the pupil who is unintelligent, a 'spectator, not re-creator... an empty mind passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the outside world[39]. Freire, however, held that the experiential knowledge of, for example, factory workers and peasants was considerable but unrecognised. Similarly, the material available for adult literacy education was designed for children and portrayed images and concepts alien to the experiences of his participants:

> These texts are usually illustrated with cute little houses, heart-
> warming, and well-decorated, with smiling couples face to face
> (usually white and blond), well nourished children sporting
> shoulder bags, waving goodbye to their parents on their way to
> school after a succulent breakfast. What positive view can
> peasants or urban workers gain for their role in the world? How
> can they critically understand their concrete oppressive situation

Recife (now the Federal University of Pernambuco: UFPE) and the "Bare feet can also learn to read" campaign. Early literacy programmes developed by Freire proved successful enough to convince President Joao Belchior Goulart to implement them as part of a national literacy campaign. With the coming of dictatorship, Freire lived variously in Santiago (1964-69) where he worked as an adult educator for two organizations having to do with agricultural improvement and land reform, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1969-70) where he taught for ten months at Harvard and Geneva, Switzerland (1970-79) where he worked for The World Council of Churches. In 1988, after returning to Brazil, Freire was invited to take over the position of São Paulo's Municipal Secretary of Education. He died of heart failure in 1997. See Paolo Freire and Antonio Faundez, Learning to Question: *A Pedagogy of Liberation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989) and appendix 2 in Margaret Hebblethwaite's *Base Communities: An Introduction* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 169-178.

[38] The banking model of education, according to educational consultant Colin Lankshear, refers to education systems in which 'narrating teachers deposit information into the minds of passive receiving students', and that it 'is invaluable for maintaining an oppressive social order... Consciousness does not come into active contact with the world. A wedge is driven between them.' This is so because the information given to students is de-contextualised and given piecemeal as 'abstracted fragments'; 'information to be received.' See 'Functional Literacy from a Freirean Point of View' in Peter McLaren and Peter Leonard, eds., *Paolo Freire: A Critical Encounter*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 99-100. See Paolo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 26th printing, 1987), ch. 2.

[39] Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 62.

through literacy work in which they are instructed with sweetness to learn phrases like 'the wing of the bird' or 'Eve saw the grape'?[40]

In contrast, Freire stressed that socially-transformative liberation and education were inextricably linked, a process conducted by both educator and pupil[41]. Freire grounded his educational practice in Marxist critical theory and referred to it as *conscientzação*, 'conscientisation' or 'critical consciousness', the process of the individual and the community developing historical subjectivity. For Freire, conscientisation represented 'an absolute necessity... a requirement of the human condition':

> It is one of the roads we have to follow if we are to deepen our awareness of the world, of facts, of events, of the demands of human consciousness to develop our epistemological curiosity. Far from being alien to our human condition, conscientisation is natural to 'unfinished' humanity that is aware of its unfinishedness[42].

This process was based on Freire's understanding of the value and inherent abilities, unrecognised or very often suppressed by an authoritarian *status quo*, of the

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[40] Paolo Freire, *The Politics of Education* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey, 1985), 9.

[41] Freire was, of course, not the first to postulate this. In *Education for Critical Consciousness*, he quotes Karl Mannheim from 1936: ... In a society in which the main changes are to be brought about through collective deliberation, and in which re-evaluation should be based upon intellectual insight and consent, a completely new system of education would be necessary, one which would focus its main energies on the development of our intellectual powers and bring about a frame of mind which can bear the burden of scepticism and does not panic when many of the thought habits are doomed to vanish.' Simply put, value in social stability is entrenched in what is taught and how; social transformation likewise. See Karl Mannheim, *Diagnosis of our Time* (New York & London: Routledge, 1936, reprinted 1997 and 1999), 23.

[42] Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics Democracy and Civic Courage* (New York & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 1998, translated by Patrick Clarke), 55. The Freirean education model was a process of developing four qualities: power awareness (understanding the power dynamics within a society, and understanding that they were constructs made and remade through human action); critical literacy (the process of learning with an awareness of one's own socio-political context); desocialisation (the willingness to challenge the social assumptions of one's society, particularly those aspects that were oppressive and dehumanising); and self-organisation/self education (developing initiative to transform one's social *status quo* away from authoritarian norms and undemocratic power dynamics; developing personal capacity and acting out of one's own human value). See Ira Shor, 'Education is Politics: Paolo Freire's Critical Pedagogy' in Peter McLaren and Peter Leonard, eds. *Paolo Freire: A Critical Encounter* (London & New York, Routledge, 1993.

individual and the community to personal and social transformation outside authoritarian norms and structures:

> Through their own thoughts and actions, people can see the
> conditioning of perception in their social structure, and in this way
> their perception begins to change, even though this does not yet
> mean a change in the social structure. It's important to appreciate
> that social reality can be transformed; that it is made by men and
> can be changed by men; that it is not something untouchable...[43]

Freire's work had an influential effect in the development of the liberation theological discipline. Chilean priest and theologian Pablo Richard expanded on Freire by illustrating conscientisation in three hermeneutical 'moments' of liberation: political (the poor engaged in a contextual reading of scripture); spiritual (the experience of God in the world of the poor); and the hermeneutic moment properly so-called (the struggle between the different and divergent readings of the Bible; that is, the traditional interpretation and the reality of the poor's experience). Thus, according to Richard, the moment of rupture is the dichotomy between the traditional interpretation and the poor community's contextual reading. Underlying both is the value of the experience of the community in this analysis.

For José Comblin, this moment of theological rupture is the beginning of a praxis of conscientisation, 'some form of opposing power and the state, some process of becoming autonomous'[44]. The process in the collective understanding of the community is likewise a praxis of the two moments- denunciation and annunciation- that keep the denunciation of oppression from devolving into unconstructed anger or rage but rather towards an ethical indignation[45], grounded in faith and in hope, a

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[43] Paolo Freire, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*, translated by Donaldo Macedo (South Hadley MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1985), 39. It is worth noting that Freire's usage of terminology considered sexist (in this case, the use of the word 'men') has been a source of critique. See Bell Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York & London, Routledge, 1994), 48-50.

[44] José Comblin, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 108.

[45] Jung Mo Sung describes 'ethical indignation' as 'the first moment' of liberation theology, the moment of the recognition of the essential humanity of someone 'being mistreated or reduced to a subhuman condition... Without this recognition no ethical indignation is possible, for nobody feels indignant regarding a situation in which a subhuman being is being treated as subhuman.' It is followed by a utopian desire for 'an environment where persons

prophetic vision of human emancipation in light of the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God[46].

Taken together, what 'See Judge Act' and Freire's conscientisation contributed to Latin American liberation theology was a philosophical underpinning that the intellect and daily experience of individuals and communities had theological value. Not only could the people analyse their historical context and theologically reflect upon it, this reflection could form a basis for historical transformation. The result can be understood as consciousness, an understanding of subjectivity, value and awareness, 'the experience of learning when one's experience is recognised as central and significant'[47]. Both argued that human experience had a central role to play in Christian theological reflection. Liberation theology, through Freire, took this in a radical direction by asserting human experience as an imperative for theological reflection. Freire's criticism of authoritarian theologies was that they were a-historic and inauthentic; an authentic theology of the marginalised must emerge from the historic experience of the marginalised[48]. As humans are created in the image of God, it is in becoming more human that the human more fully resembles the divine. By acknowledging the value and necessity of human experience in theological reflection, 'See Judge Act' and Freire informed Latin American liberation theology with a priority of experience and consciousness.

c. Praxis

Attention to praxis represents the methodological impulse for the focus on social analysis and the purposeful emphasis on the community's experience and developing consciousness. The concept of praxis as it existed in Marxist theory- as a practical understanding of the unity of theory and practice[49]- was well known by the

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are recognized and respected, regardless of social condition.' That vision inevitably leads to recognition of 'the prevailing situation being ethically unacceptable, that is, as a situation that must be transformed.' This praxis echoes Freire's denunciation/annunciation, and is at the heart of theology of liberation. See 'The Human Being as Subject' from *Latin American Liberation Theology- The Next Generation*, Ivan Petrella, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005).

[46] See Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 101-107.

[47] Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 37.

[48] Daniel S. Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988, 34-35.

[49] Marx envisioned praxis as a revolutionary mechanism that precipitated a move beyond both abstract philosophy/critique and undirected activism toward a historical changing of

theologians of Latin America. In this form, they initially saw the place of praxis in the theological discipline as the conscious attention paid to the life of the faith community and the reflection produced out of this attention. The key contribution made by liberation theology to praxis was two-fold. First, there was the addition of the ethical dimension, seeing the reflection as specifically occurring in the light of faith[50]. The ethical dimension extends as well to the critique of traditional theological practice; for example Hugo Assmann's critique of traditional theological practice as he saw it, whose fundamental structures he felt 'are not historical' but aimed merely at 'establishing the truth in itself without the intrinsic connection to praxis'[51].In contrast, the contextual focus of liberation theology asserted that the purpose of theological reflection was not primarily *orthodoxy* ('right belief') as an end in itself, but *'ortho-praxy'* ('right acting')[52]. Thus, Latin American liberation theology called for a social analysis of the context, critical reading of Scripture and tradition in the light of God's preferential option for the poor, and positive action toward social transformation in the light of both[53].

Secondly, while the concept of praxis is present in various examples of practical and contextual theologies[54], liberation theological methodology emphasised a

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social conditions: revolutionary praxis. As Lyon points out, Marxist theorists also saw praxis as a way to move beyond pragmatism and determine objective truth. Knowledge becomes useful because it is true, not *vise versa*. Thus, Marxists could point to the success of an action as proof of its validity. Praxis served as the confirmation of truth within theory. See David McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2nd edition, 1980), 226, David McLellan, *Karl Marx: An Assessment of His Life and Thought* (Tring, Hertfordshire: Lion Publishing plc., 1979) 144-145 and Leszeck Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism, Vol. 2: The Golden Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 455.

[50] This is the analysis of Brazilian priest and academic João Libânio, in Virginia Fabella MM and R.S. Sugirthrajah, eds. *Dictionary of Third World Theologies* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 172. This ethical dimension becomes even more pronounced in the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez, which will be explored later in this chapter.

[51] Hugo Assmann, *Teología desde la praxis de la liberación* (Salamanca: Sigueme, 2nd edition, 1973), 40.

[52] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 72.

[53] A detailed and thorough exposition of theological praxis as it pertains to the social and political commitment of theological reflection is found in Clodovis Boff's *Teologia e práctica: Teologia do politico suas mediaçõs,* (Petrópolis, Brazil: Editora Vozes Ltda, 1978), translated by Robert R. Barr and published in English as *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1987).

[54] Stephen Bevans, Robert Schreiter and Laurie Green all give prominent attention to the role of praxis in their understandings of practical, contextual or local theology. None of these examples would specifically fall into this thesis' definition of liberation theology, as liberation theology is a specific type of contextual theology (but not every contextual theology is a liberation theology). See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY:

specific contextual commitment and intentionality. There is understood to be a specific solidarity with the poor, marginalized and oppressed and a definitive intention for radical social and political change[55]. This was 'action and reflection aimed at the transformation of an oppressive situation'[56]. Jung Mo-Sung speaks of this dynamic as a specific epistemological moment, 'the praxis of liberation born out of the ethical indignation in view of the situations in which human beings are reduced to subhuman conditions'[57].

This method presupposes a cyclical process from praxis to reflection to renewed praxis, 'a bringing together of action and reflection, transformation and understanding':

> This new marriage of action and reflection depends on accepting
> human life as fundamentally practical... Christianity is understood
> as a particular religious praxis, and religion is understood as a part
> of human praxis... Christians struggle to 'live out' their faith
> through prayer, meditation, and religious discipline or through
> action, witness and prophetic testimony, or through both. [58]

The transformational aspect to which Chopp draws attention is the bringing together of reflection and action in the theological understanding of religious devotion and religious action. Latin American liberation theology developed an understanding of praxis as the Christian revelation of God's love encountering the reality of structural poverty and oppression, the way things should be as opposed to the way things are. Thus, praxis represented the underlying method of theology as a reflection on social transformation.

Orbis Books, 2005), 70-88, Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology* (London & New York: Mobray, 2009), and Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 91-93.

[55] Zoe Bennet, 'Action is the life of all': The Praxis-based Epistemology of Liberation Theology', in Christopher Rowland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 41.

[56] Sourced from the glossary of David F. Ford, ed., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century Vol.1* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 324.

[57] Jung Mo Sung, 'The Human Being as Subject: Defending the Victims', in Ivan Petrella , ed., *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation,* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 2.

[58] Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 37.

Perhaps ironically, the commitment to praxis in Latin American liberation theology is found in the way its initial expressions were analysed and criticised by other marginalised voices that began to adopt and apply its methodology. In initial meetings between Latin American liberation voices and other theological expressions, critics contended that there were significant gaps in liberation theology's analysis of oppression- what it encompassed, who it affected and how they were affected. Critics pointed out that marginalization could be, in many contexts, multi-layered and that a marginalized person might actually be marginalized in several ways with varying degrees of severity[59]. Feminist voices noted that Latin American social *machismo*, as well as male ecclesial patriarchies, were not seriously reflected upon as components of hierarchical repression[60]; African theologians noted that the Latin liberationists were over-reliant on western notions

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[59] The criticism highlighted that Latin American liberation theology had failed to adequately acknowledge that the experience of, for example, a poor man was significantly different in many contexts from the experience of a poor woman. In contrast, Elsa Tamez offered a theological reflection on the person of Hagar in the biblical text who suffers a 'threefold oppression' for her class (a slave), her race (Egyptian) and her sex (a woman). (Tamez notes that the experience of many women in Latin America suffered similarly). See 'Reflections by Elsa Tamez' in 'Worship Service: This Hour of History', in Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, eds., *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 184-185, and Mary Grey, 'The Journey is Always Home: Feminist Theology's Journey from Liberation to Reconciliation', in Patrick Claffey and Joe Egan, eds., *Movement or Moment? Assessing Liberation Theology Forty Years after Medellín* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009).

[60] An early example of a formal feminist theology in the wake of liberation theology is Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1983). In a similar vein, Marcella Althaus-Reid postulates several ideas to explain much of Latin American liberation theology's initial hesitancy to deal with gender and sexual issues: 'They were concerned not to diversify the struggle of political liberation into other fields, or divide the Church on what they thought were minor issues...' Although a conventionally-accepted notion was that 'sexuality and gender issues (including domestic violence) were not part of the discussion of a theology' primarily because it was represented by 'celibate clergymen', and while that is a credible assertion, Althaus-Reid gives another reason: 'in the end the struggles of both women and gays were seen as politically sinful... In the 1970's and early 1980's, the militant churches considered as vain those who put their energies into anything that was not the struggle for liberation... Women were thus told that, although their cause was just, there were many fronts on which to struggle and it was not possible to diversify. See Marcella Althaus-Reid, '"Let Them Talk...!" Doing Liberation Theology from Latin American Closets', in Marcella Althaus-Reid, ed. *Liberation Theology and Sexuality* (London: SCM Press, 2006, second ed. 2009), 13, Marcella Althaus-Reid, 'From Liberation Theology to Indecent Theology: The Trouble with Normality in Theology', from Ivan Petrella, ed., *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*, 31, and María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado and Jeanette Rodríguez, eds., *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002).

of anthropology and class-based socio-political interpretations[61]; from Asia, where Christians were often a small minority in a complex and religiously multi-faceted society, it was noted that the Latin Americans had not engaged with the reality of interfaith and multicultural issues that were normative in the Asian context[62]. Finally, there was the experience of those who identified as gay, lesbian and other expressions of human sexuality, advocates of which often found themselves in the position of objects of redemption and not subjects of dialogue[63].

These voices were not always initially understood or accepted, yet by the end of the 1980's, Latin American liberation theology as a movement was at least acknowledging the voices of other contexts, cultures and genders, even if, in hindsight, what was substantively produced from the interactions was fairly limited[64].

However, as limited as it was, the interactions made and concerns raised constituted reflective praxis. By the end of the 1980's, liberation theology's understandings of oppression and marginalisation- and therefore of 'liberation'- had expanded significantly, and its methodology was being incorporated into other contexts. The developments of Dalit theology in India, the work of Sabeel in Palestine, The *Kairos* Document in South Africa and other African theologies, *Minjung* theology on the Korean Peninsula, Black liberation theology in the US, Latino/a

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[61] For example, Elochukwu E. Uzukwu notes that Bartholeme Las Casas (1484-1566), the Dominican priest who championed the cause of the Amerindians of New World Spanish colonies, and is therefore seen as a foundational figure in the history of liberation theology, was (perhaps ironically in hindsight) quite willing to enslave and transport Africans to the colonies so as to save the Amerindians from slavery. For Uzukwu, Africa should be recognized as the true cradle of liberation theology. See 'From "Nobody to Somebody": The Pertinence of African Liberation Theology', from *Movement or Moment? Assessing Liberation Theology Forty Years after Medellín*, Patrick Claffey and Joe Egan, eds. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 100.

[62] The multi-layered nature of oppression is manifested differently in the Asian Context as well. For example, the Dalits of India faced a compounded marginalization by being economically poor, from a despised social grouping, and the possibility of being female in a patriarchal context. See Peniel Rajkumar, *Dalit Theology: Problems, Paradigms and Possibilities* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010) and R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed. *Asian Faces of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1993).

[63] An early example of a vision of gay sexuality and theological reflection is Malcolm Macourt, ed., *Towards a Theology of Gay Liberation* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

[64] The Ecumenical Dialogue of Third-World Theologians, held in Dar-es-Salaam in 1976, as well as the inauguration of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) was the first substantive interaction between different contexts of liberation theology. EATWOT'S conferences in São Paolo in 1980 and Oaxtepec, Mexico were significant points of contact between Latin American theologians and the wider world. However, beyond positive statements made by all parties, the corpus of Latin American theology remained relatively unaffected by the interactions.

theology in the Americas, Feminist theology, Womanism and Queer theology all represent, in various ways, legacies of Latin American liberation theology's commitment to reflective praxis. In each context, the vision of transformation is distinct, but the main thrust appears to be that continued theological development should seek to be de-limited, evolving and seeking dialogue with 'emergent (not new) subjects'. Marcella Althaus-Reid notes, liberation is for everyone or it is for no one[65].

d. The Option for the Poor

The option for the poor represents the underlying intention, direction and activity within liberation theology. Michael Kirwan states that both liberation theology and Catholic Social Teaching broadly assert- the former more explicitly but the latter still implicitly- 'a fundamental incompatibility between the priorities of a capitalist economy and the Christian Gospel' and that '*in extremis*, the needs of the poor have priority over the appropriative desires of the wealthy'[66]. Through the process of the Church- particularly the Church's most poor and marginalised constituents- examining their social context in the light of faith, they come to an understanding of their place in the Gospel of Christ. From this emerges the moment of action. This action is the expression of the Church of Christ recognizing an option that the God of scripture has given to the most poor and the most marginalized and making it their own. Hebblethwaite encapsulates the option for the poor within Latin American liberation theology as 'quite simply that the gospel calls us to put the poor first':

> And so, when other factors are equal and a choice must be made
> of where to concentrate resources, the Church chooses to give
> priority to the poor... option here means 'choice'.[67]

The first line of the preface of *Gaudium et spes* from the documents of Vatican II elucidates this option:

> The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of
> this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted,

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[65] Marcella Althaus-Reid, 'From Liberation Theology to Indecent Theology, from Ivan Petrella, ed. *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 36.

[66] Kirwan, 'Liberation Theology and Catholic Social Teaching', 248.

[67] Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Base Communities: An Introduction* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 161.

these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ[68].

The phrase '...especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted' pointed to the orientation of the new theological/evangelistic focus. The Catholic Church was recognising and engaging with a practical awareness of the global situation in which, it was noted:

> ...one person out of every four is Chinese, two out of every three have not enough to eat, one out of every three lives under a communist regime (and) one Christian out of every two is not a Catholic.[69]

Previously, these realities might have been implicitly known, perhaps even consciously acknowledged; but they had not necessarily affected the theological process one way or another[70]. Rather, the poor were 'silent' and 'unnoticed'[71]. But Latin American liberation theology ideally envisioned a relationship between the people, in light of their own experience and consciousness, and the institutional Church that was more dynamic and mutually receptive. The new relationship was envisioned as two-way. Within the new theological movement, the option of the poor was not simply the institutional Church 'taking an interest', as it were, in the affairs of the poor at a policy level, although that was certainly the case. Ideally, the people and the Church were envisioning their relationship in light of each other. Frei Betto described the relationship thus:

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[68] Walter M. Abbot S.J. ed. *The Documents of Vatican II* (London, Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 199-200.

[69] Yves Congar, *Report from Rome: The First Session of the Vatican Council* (Liverpool and London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1963), 9.

[70] This point was succinctly made by Ivan Petrella when interviewed in 2007: 'The UN Human Development Report once noted that it would take an additional yearly investment of $6 billion to assure basic education for everyone, while $8 billion is spent annually on cosmetics in the U.S. The report also noted that an additional $9 billion of investment would take care of clean water, while $11 billion a year is spent on ice cream in Europe. What does this data have to do with Christianity? Until liberation theology came along, nothing. And that's the point.' Stephen Bede Scharper, 'Born Again: Liberation Theology', *Toronto Star*, 1 December, 2007. Available at: http://www.lanternbooks.com/toc.html?id=1930051646&tocid=247, accessed 17 June 2011.

[71] Cardinal Paolo Evaristo Arns, Introduction from Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, eds. *Expanding the view: Gustavo Gutiérrez and the Future of Liberation Theology*, , xii.

> After (CELAM at Medellín in 1968)... It wasn't so much a question
> of the Church's opting for the poor as of the poor's- forced by the
> repression of the people's and trade union movements- opting for
> the Church. In other words, the poor turned to the Church in order
> to remain organised, articulate, conscious and active... the poor
> invaded the Church (and) Catholic priests and bishops began to be
> converted to Christianity.[72]

Deprived by many repressive regional states of other organisational mechanisms-
trade unions, radical student groups, independent political parties etc. - many of the
population turned to the Church as an organisational bulwark.

What the new theological movement was asserting was that, because of their
faith in Jesus Christ, the poor and the marginalized needn't simply accept their
poverty and oppression because God himself does not. 'God', wrote Elsa Tamez,' is
not indifferent to situations of injustice':

> God takes sides and comes on the scene as one who favours the
> poor, those who make up the masses of the people... God
> identifies with the poor to such an extent that their rights become
> the rights of God: 'He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker,
> but he who is kind to the needy honours him' (Prov. 14:31)...[73]

Drawing on the Beatitudes, Tamez further notes that the poor are indeed
blessed, 'not that they have resigned themselves to poverty, but, on the contrary,
that they cry out and have their mouths shut'[74]. Tamez roots the theological struggle
for liberation in a prophetic vision that God himself makes a choice; he takes a
position and a direction toward the poor and the marginalised and, by extension, so
should God's Church.

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[72] Frei Betto, *Fidel and Religion: Castro Talks on Revolution and Religion*, originally published
as *Fidel y la Religión* (Cuba: *Oficina de Publiciaciones del Consejo de Estado*, 1987), translated
from the Spanish by Harvey Cox (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 239.
[73] Elsa Tamez, 'Good News for the Poor', in Deane William Ferm, ed., *Third World Liberation
Theologies: A Reader* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 194-195.
[74] Tamez, 'Good News for the Poor', 195.

3. Locating the Methodology in the Work of Gustavo Gutiérrez

Attention can now be turned to these four methodological elements as they are approached in the thought of Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez. While Gutiérrez's terminology and emphasis might differ to a greater or lesser degree depending on the dynamic being investigated, the choice to focus on Gutiérrez's work is based on his generally being accepted as one of the earliest and foremost voices of Latin American liberation theology[75]. He is also chosen in the belief that his work represents an archetypal and comprehensive example of that theological school of thought[76]. It will be argued that the general predisposition of his work and theological understanding prominently reflect the elements as they are presented in this thesis.

Gutiérrez's theological work stresses the interdependence of the elements, focussing on their interplay in the theological process. Gutiérrez does not describe the elements (as he displays them) as progressive 'steps' or 'phases', but as a complex and interdependent interplay which has at its heart a commitment to the life of all the community.

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[75] The early contribution of Gutiérrez is noted by McGovern and Berryman- who both point to the impact of the Chimbote conference instigated by Gutiérrez- and by Gibellini, who points to Chimbote as the 'first outline' of liberation theology. Ian Linden refers to Gutiérrez as one of the 'early fathers' of liberation theology and Alistair Kee, while careful to note that all movements have roots, says that 'in an encyclopedia which allowed only one sentence to the subject, it would not be wrong to say that liberation theology began in 1969 and that its founder was Gustavo Gutiérrez'. Both Kee and Novak use the term 'founder' for Gutiérrez, with Brackely noting that Gutiérrez has been hailed, and vilified, with the term. Gutiérrez, it is fair to say, would demur from such pride of place. 'Theology is for my free time', he told *Christian Century* in 1983. 'The pastoral work is what I enjoy most. That is my primary function as a priest, I feel. I was ordained not to "do theology", but to proclaim the gospel. I consider theology a help toward that, nothing more.' Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 46-47.

[76] This is due in part to publicity, notoriety, but also to longevity of output. Dean Brackley identifies three phases of Gutiérrez career: 1960-68 (focusing on ecclesial and pastoral practice), 1968-79 (the practice and process of liberation) and 1979 to the present (a maturing and synthesis of the first two phases in light of both fair and unfair critiques, as well as a deepening spirituality). See Dean Brackley, *Divine Revolution: Salvation and Liberation in Catholic Thought* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 65-68. As to notoriety, The Vatican's singling out of Gutiérrez for specific criticism drew special attention, in one sense giving weight to the presumption of his importance. See Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 41-46. However, it is interesting to notice that even critical voices of liberation theology (or at least of its analytical method or its perceived indebtedness to Marxism) such as Kee and Novak are well inclined toward Gutiérrez as a theologian and a spiritual practitioner. See Alistair Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1990), ch.7, and Michael Novak, *Will it Liberate? Questions about Liberation Theology* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), 10.

What can be seen is that Gutiérrez's understanding of both liberation and theological refection spring from his concern for life- the God of life, the life of the person and the life of the community, particularly the most poor and marginalised. Theology and liberation are both understood as reflections on life as displayed by God in Christ against a historical reality of death.

On 29 May 1985, Gustavo Gutiérrez was invited to the University of Lyons, where he had previously studied and served on the faculty, to have the corpus of his theological writing examined, and allow for him to make a defence, for the possible bestowal of a doctorate in theology. This was the culmination of several years of conflict and critique with Vatican authorities regarding their serious questioning of his theological output. The day's proceedings were collected and published the following year as *La Verdad los hará libres: confrontationes,* and the volume serves as an overview of Gutiérrez theological position. It is therefore notable that it is within the opening three paragraphs that we encounter a central tenant of Gutiérrez's theology: that though (in the words of Aquinas) 'we cannot know what God is, but only what God is not', this essential mystery that is God must be communicated and not hidden for (in the words of Gutiérrez), 'it means life for every human being'[77]. For Gutiérrez, it is this concern for 'life' that underpins all of his theology and thought.

Gutiérrez proceeds to draw attention to the God of life who is made known in the person of Christ. Christ is revealed as the 'the king of a kingdom of life' who suffers persecution specifically for his proclamation of this kingdom of life, and yet 'the reality of this kingdom is confirmed by the Father who bestows victory over death in the resurrection of Jesus'[78]. This is the final transcendent victory of life over death.

However, the transcendent and victorious kingdom of life must be assessed in the midst of the parallel reality of 'life' in Latin America:

> The assessment will make clear to us that the deeper meaning of
> what we call 'integral liberation' (a theme present in liberation

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[77] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations*, originally published as *La Verdad los hará libres: confrontationes* (Lima Peru: Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas, Ricardo Bentí and Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1986. Translated from the Spanish by Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 3. l.

[78] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 12.

theology from its beginnings) is, in the final analysis, the acceptance of the kingdom of life. In this context, 'life' includes all dimensions of the human, in keeping with the all-embracing will of God; it is therefore contrary to the situation of unjust death in which the poor and oppressed are living. It is contrary to the state of affairs that Medellín and Puebla described as being, from the theological point of view, a 'sinful situation'.[79]

This, for Gutiérrez, is the essence of a theology of liberation: it is, 'in a sense, a theology of life confronted with a reality full of death'[80].

Gutiérrez identifies 'death' in four distinct ways. There is, firstly and most obviously, that which brings an immediate, 'premature and unjust' end to life, by torture or execution[81]. Beyond this, Gutiérrez identifies death as that which follows on from a life lived in poverty: lack of food, housing, jobs, health care and education[82]. He also identifies 'cultural death' experienced by those whose life is not adequately valued; for example, women, blacks and indigenous cultures. Finally, there is the spiritual death of sin, which is the starting point of all the aforementioned social ills[83].

In sum, what we can broadly surmise from Gutiérrez is that death is that which immediately ends life or, beyond this, makes a reasonable life un-liveable and any aspiration for a better life unrealistic.

It is at this point that Gutiérrez's theology makes an added demand in the light of his commitment to liberation: the twin realities of Christ's kingdom of life and the reality full of death are not simply to be acknowledged, but to serve as a call to

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[79] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 12. Gutiérrez' citation of two official Church conferences to reinforce his argument, in light of the stringent critiques of his work by the Vatican, can perhaps be understood in light of the purpose of the occasion.

[80] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 30.

[81] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the poor in History* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books and London SCM Press, 1983), 89-90. Gutiérrez refers to 'premature and unjust' death on several occasions. See *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (12, 158-159), *The Density of the Present* (98) and *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (100). The descriptive terms go to the heart of his critique of the social conditions under which the poor experience in Latin America and to the value placed on their lives by the authorities.

[82] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation.* Revised UK edition (London: SCM Press, 1988), xxi.

[83] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 14-15.

witness and to action. However, the action is not to be understood as merely charity or political concern, 'simply a question of sensitivity to social wretchedness or of a struggle for social justice and the building of a new social and political order'[84]. Rather, it is a commitment to place the legitimate demands of the poor and the oppressed in their 'true context: at the heart of the Christian message- that is, in relation to the God of Life'[85].

The twin realities of life and death always involve a decision, 'a radical choice'[86]. The choice to announce and embrace the kingdom of life is played out in the historical reality of death as witnessed and experienced in the structures of institutionalised violence[87]. It is with this that, as he began his defence of his theology with the God of life, he concludes:

> The various forms of violence (structural, terrorist, and repressive) sow death where we as Christians must bear witness to the kingdom of life. This is the great challenge facing the church today. The responsibility laid on it is a source of great tension but also, despite everything, of deep joy, because it can respond to the challenge only by getting down to what is essential: its hope in the Lord who conquered death by rising to new life.[88]

This is the fundamental underpinning for Gutiérrez's thought. As we investigate how his theological understanding reflects the various dynamics of liberation

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[84] Gutiérrez had earlier in his career displayed caution regarding what he felt were 'ideological uses of Christianity'. Though he admitted that 'the Gospel message not only had no quarrel with revolution but actually demanded one', he nonetheless critiqued 'theology of revolution' when this theological expression served, in his estimation, 'to "baptize" revolution'. Such theological endeavours served only to provide a new field of application for theological reflection rather than being new theological reflections. 'It was not theological reflection from within the context of the liberation process; nor was it critical reflection flowing from and dealing with, the historical praxis of liberation and faith itself as liberation-praxis.' See Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith', in Rosino Gibellini, ed., *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, first published as *La nuova frontier della teologia in America Latina* (Brescia, Italy: Editrice Queriniana, 1975), English translation by John Drury (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1979), first British edition (London: SCM Press, 1980), 5-7.
[85] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 158.
[86] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1990), 8.
[87] Gutiérrez identifies 'institutional violence' as the structured violence used by the used by the state to maintain 'order'. See his discussion of the relationship between institutionalised violence and the arguments regarding a violent reaction to it in *A Theology of Liberation*, 64.
[88] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 174.

methodology, we encounter, implicitly or explicitly, the context of the declaration of life in the reality of that which would deny or suppress it, with the implication that this dichotomy calls for an active decision.

a. Social Analysis: Life as Discovery and Understanding

Fundamental to Gutiérrez's thought is the notion that theology is a 'progressive and continuous understanding' of the truth of historical reality rather than the understanding of truth in the abstract. Indeed, he stresses that truth understood merely in the abstract 'would not be true'[89]. Rather, theology follows on from the 'first act': action; it is a 'second act':

> Theology is not first; the commitment is first. Theology is the understanding of the commitment, and the commitment is action. The central element is charity, which involves commitment, while theology arrives later on.[90]

This starting point, this 'commitment' ('*comprometerse*') is understood as a commitment to God and the neighbour. Thus, from the outset, Gutiérrez roots his understanding of theology- and his understanding of the importance of social analysis- in the life of the one's neighbour. As we shall see, it is not necessarily in the one *understood* to be the neighbour, but in the one *discovered* to be the neighbour.

The analysis proper- the understanding of one's neighbour and the communal life that such relationships assume- is likewise a communal endeavour. Speaking in 1968 and using the language of Vatican II, Gutiérrez describes the process of liberation as a 'sign of the times' and stresses that the new understanding of the theological process:

> ... will have to be much more concrete, but we will also be dependent on the progress of the science of economics for a more precise knowledge regarding the national and Latin American

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[89] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Toward a Theology of Liberation' (*Hacia una teología de la liberación*), a talk delivered in July 1968 in Chimbote, Peru, translated by Alfred T. Hennelly S.J. and first published in Liberation Theology: A Documentary History, Alfred T. Hennelly S.J., ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 63.

[90] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Toward a Theology of Liberation', 63.

reality. A genuine theology of liberation can only be a team effort,

a task which has not yet been attempted.[91]

It is notable that, even at this early stage in Gutiérrez's thought, he stresses the importance of theology done with a focus specifically on more fully understanding the life of the community. This was to be a focal point throughout his career; writing in 1973, he again stressed that 'a scientific line of reasoning is absolutely necessary'. Because of this new reality, Gutiérrez states:

> ... people today have begun to take cognizance of the socio-
> cultural and economic factors that condition their lives; and they
> have also begun to glimpse the underlying causes of the situation
> that characterizes those countries that are the poorest and most
> plundered.[92]

Over time, his emphasis on analysis of these causes and conditions endured and evolved but, as we shall see in the next section, always with the understated purpose of better understanding the life and struggles of the community and building up the faith of the people[93]. Social analysis then, for Gutiérrez, is not simply the collection of analytical data, though it is obvious that Gutiérrez believes that has its role to play. It is the entrance into- and the experiencing of- the life of one's neighbour. For it is here- in the life of one's neighbour, in the intimacy of human relationships- that one meets God:

> The encounter with God takes place in the encounter with our
> neighbour; it is in the encounters with human beings that I
> encounter God... Christ is the place of interchange, for in him a

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[91] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Toward a Theology of Liberation', 63.

[92] Gutiérrez, 'Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith', in Gibellini, ed., *Frontiers*, 11.

[93] Reflecting on the 15th anniversary of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez expounded on his text and contemplated what had transpired since its publication. Dependency theory, he noted in particular, was 'now an antiquated tool'. The problem of unpayable foreign debt was one example of an issue that he now found to be much more pressing. Overall, he does make the point that the progressive nature of social analysis requires that 'we refine our analytical tools and develop new ones... Responsiveness to new challenges requires changes in our approach to the paths to be followed...' Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View', from the 1988 edition of *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books and London: SCM Press Ltd.), xxiv-xxv.

human person gives a human face to God and God gives a divine

face to human beings.[94]

It is in this human encounter, and the encounter of Christ in the neighbour, that we

arrive at the heart of Gutiérrez's understanding of social analysis: it is in the question

'who is my neighbour?' It is the 'search' for the neighbour that social analysis finds its

ultimate purpose, and the constant asking and re-asking of the question is the growth

of solidarity between the people of God and the most marginalised[95]. In the asking

and re-asking, in the light of experience, we are forced to continually expand our

definition of 'neighbour'; if our neighbour is only those closest to us- those initially

and obviously understood to be our neighbour- our world remains unchanged.

However, in the seeking out of the neighbour, in the place far from us, to which we

are unaccustomed, our perception is broadened and our world is changed. In Christ,

God came to us. In the same way, we must go out. The neighbour is one to whom we

discover, to whom we go rather than one for whom we wait[96]. This act of questioning

and discovery is the heart of social analysis.

b. Experience and Consciousness: Life as Irruption and 'Becoming'

For Gutiérrez, social analysis is the ongoing discovery and understanding of the

God of life through the continual asking and re-asking of the question, 'who is my

neighbour?' Gutiérrez' understanding of experience and consciousness is imbued

with the same concern for the question of life and death and the choice that it

presents. In this case, it is the discovery of life by the community themselves, their

'irruption' into the historical process and annunciation of their intention to 'become'

visible and alive.

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[94] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Toward a Theology of Liberation', 74.

[95] This theme was comprehensively developed as a theological reflection in *Sharing the Word through the Liturgical Year* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books and London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1997). Originally published as *Compartir la Palabra: A lo largo del Año Litúrgico* (Lima, Peru: Instituto Bartholomé de Las Casas-Rimac and the Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1995), 183-185.

[96] Robert McAfee Brown explores this in his book *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 32. Gutiérrez lays out this idea in depth in chapters 5 and 7 of *The God of Life* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books and London: SCM Press Ltd., 1991), first published as El Dios de la Vida (Lima, Peru: Instituto Bartholomé de Las Casas-Rimac and the Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1989), translated by Matthew J O'Connell.

Gutiérrez is continually adamant that theology, as he defines it, is not to be the servant of an ideology, a political programme or even social development[97]. The 'true face of Latin America... in all its naked ugliness' is far deeper than various social ills such as 'low educational standards, a limited economy, an unsatisfactory legal system, or inadequate legal institutions':

> What we are faced with is a situation that takes no account of the
> dignity of human beings, or their most basic needs, that does not
> provide for their biological survival, or their basic right to be free
> and autonomous.[98]

The ultimate need of the poor, then, is survival and freedom or, as Gutiérrez frames it, 'the right to exist and think':

> What do we mean by the right to think? We mean the right to
> express- to plumb, comprehend, come to appreciate, and then
> insist upon- that other right that an oppressive system denies
> them: the right to a human life.[99]

Regarding Freire's specific conception of conscientisation, Gutiérrez's understanding rests in the struggle for life. Gutiérrez draws on several examples of the concept as he sees it from other sources it in his 1968 talk at Chimbote. The first is to pay tribute to Hegel's foundational understanding that the human person is the agent of history and human history is the process of liberation. He then relates a parable from Father Teilhard de Chardin where people in the hold of a ship progressively realize that they are indeed on a ship adrift on the current and that it is possible- indeed necessary- to pilot the ship. He cites Barth: 'From the moment God became man, the human race is the measure of all things'. Finally, he draws on Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*: 'In the design of God, all human beings are called upon to develop and fulfil themselves, for every life is a vocation.' This, for Gutiérrez, draws attention to the word 'all':

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[97] Again, this is explored by Gutiérrez in 'Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith', 5-7. See footnote 8.

[98] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983), 28.

[99] Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 90.

> (T)he pope is careful to say that it is not a question of an individual
> vocation... Rather, all human beings are called to this full
> development which in the strong biblical sense we call
> convocation. Human beings are convoked and the process of
> development lies within that convocation. 'All are called to this
> fullness of development'.[100]

When Gutiérrez discusses Freire's concept of conscientisation specifically, he does so by stressing conscientisation as the oppressed progressively developing awareness of their relationships with the world and other persons:

> The oppressed reject the oppressive consciousness which dwells in
> them, become aware of their situation, and find their own
> language. They become, by themselves, less dependent and freer,
> as they commit themselves to the transformation and the building
> up of society.[101]

Conscientisation then, for Gutiérrez, is discovery and development of previously unrecognised or undervalued life, humanity and community, 'the creation of a new humankind and a qualitatively different society'[102]. Writing in 1988, he referred to this historical event as the 'the irruption of the poor':

> Our time bears the imprint of the new presence of those who in
> fact used to be 'absent' from our society and from the church. By
> 'absent' I mean: of little or no importance, and without the
> opportunity to give expression themselves to their sufferings, their
> comraderies, their plans, their hopes.[103]

Gutiérrez's specific use of the term 'irruption' (*irrupción*) is worthy of notice and is an expression of his understanding of life, will and purpose. The dictionary defines 'irruption' as 'a breaking or bursting in', or as 'a violent incursion or invasion'. With

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[100] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Toward a Theology of Liberation', 69.

[101] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*. Revised UK edition (London: SCM Ltd., 1988), 57.

[102] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 25.

[103] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View', from the 1988 edition of *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books and London: SCM Press Ltd.), xx.

the use of the term, Gutiérrez emphasises that the 'new presence' of those previously 'absent' is not accomplished by accident or at random. The new presence is achieved through conscious and concerted effort, an act of life and will. Critically, the action is announced by the efforts of the 'absent' themselves, becoming 'active agents... beginning a resolute process that is changing the condition of the poor and oppressed of this world'[104].

Gutiérrez describes Freire's dialectic of denunciation/annunciation as the denunciation- the ongoing critique in both word and deed- of 'every dehumanizing situation' and a subsequent announcing of the love of God in Christ present 'in the historical becoming of humankind'[105]. What Gutiérrez uniquely brings to the understanding is the parallel between 'irruption' and the Christian understanding of the incarnation of Christ. Gutierrez uses the term explicitly:

> The great hermeneutical principle of the faith, and hence the
> basis and foundation of all theological reasoning, is Jesus Christ, In
> Jesus we encounter God... Jesus is the 'irruption' into history of
> the one by whom everything was made and everything was
> saved.[106]

As a living Christ 'broke in' to human history through his incarnation, the poor 'break in' to human history through their own incarnation and the declaration of their experience; they literally 'become', in all that the term essentially entails[107]. The process of conscientisation is the process of the poor 'becoming' human, 'becoming' alive, and, through organisation and an emphasis on praxis, becoming community:

> ...we saw the first steps being taken in conscientisation, and we
> saw the poor beginning to organise themselves in the defence of

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[104] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View', xxi.

[105] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 152-153.

[106] Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 61.

[107] Gutiérrez' exact phrase, 'el devenir histórico', translated as 'the historical becoming'. The allusion to the incarnation, however, can only be carried so far. The poor do not 'become' in the same way as Christ 'became', as it is obvious that Christ's incarnation is not theologically understood as a gradual and ongoing process initiated by himself. However, the term in the context of humanity is best understood as a progression, a process, as opposed to the actions of God that the incarnation is understood to exhibit.

their right to life, in the struggle for dignity and social justice, and in a commitment to their own liberation.[108]

For Gutiérrez, then, the process of experience and consciousness transcends socio-political development and embraces the spiritual life as well. While he obviously sees the immanent benefits of the process, it has its roots in the transcendent. For if Christ is who he says he is and accomplished what the Church says he did, the implications for the poor and the marginalised are profound. The effects of this understanding on the life of the community in a historical and concrete understanding bring us to his understanding of praxis.

c.   Praxis: Life as Commitment and Reflection

Gutiérrez describes a theology of liberation as 'a critical reflection on Christian praxis in light of the word of God'. This description is what prevents liberation theology, in his understanding, from two manifestations of 'reductionism': simply concerned with the physical manifestations of poverty among the poor with no thought to their Christian faith; or spiritualism that neglects material concerns in favour of a future heavenly relief[109]. Theology is reflection, a reflection of Christian praxis.

We here find Gutiérrez's understanding of praxis. Gutiérrez makes clear that Christ is the hermeneutical centre of the Christian faith, and Christians live out their faith by following the life and actions of Christ within history. As Christ makes clear that the central concern of God is love of God made manifest in the love of one's neighbour, it is here that one is confronted by what Gutiérrez identifies as 'the foundation of the praxis of Christians, of their active presence in history'[110]. Praxis is the committed life of faith in the light of the God of love, and the commitment of this faith to the life of the community.

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[108] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxix.

[109] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 9. While much attention has been paid to the critiques of liberation theology to a ritualistic and pietistic spirituality divorced from material concerns, Gutiérrez was, as early as 1968, insisting that action by or on behalf of the poor must be accompanied by reflection in order to 'order it, to make it coherent, so that it does not lapse into a sterile and superficial activism.' See Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Toward a Theology of Liberation', in Hennelly, ed., 63.

[110] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 6.

Thus, Gutiérrez identifies the commitment to 'a faith which works through charity (*caridad*)... real charity, action, and commitment to the service of others'- as the *locus theologicus* for the 'life, preaching and historical commitment of the Church'[111]. This historical commitment, lived out in the life of the community is, for Gutiérrez, Christian praxis.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the subsequent reflection- Gutierrez's 'second act'- is in fact a second reflection 'about what has already been going on- that is, the commitments we have made and the reflections we have engaged in about them'. But the second reflection is a specifically theological reflection; reflection 'in the light of the word of God'[112].

Again, Gutiérrez envisions the initial commitment to praxis, as with other aspects of liberation, as finally a commitment to life. Writing in 1988, he identifies praxis as the activity of the 'peacemakers' mentioned by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, but specifically uses the word 'peace' with the Hebrew understanding of 'Shalom':

> (Shalom)... in fact refers to the whole of life and, as part of this, to
> the need to establish peace and justice. Consequently, a praxis
> motivated by evangelical values embraces to some extent every
> effort to bring about authentic fellowship and authentic justice. [113]

Once again, the implication is that this commitment to fellowship and to justice is worked out in the concrete experience of humanity in history and community; understanding the world of the poor is, once again, not primarily 'theoretical knowledge' as much as a 'greater awareness of simple but profoundly human aspects of it, apart from which there is no truly liberating commitment'[114]. Finally, in light of Gutiérrez's context of Latin America, he indicates that the commitment to the life of faith in the praxis of history involves struggle, one in which 'human beings fight in order to live as human beings'[115].

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[111] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 9.

[112] Robert McAfee Brown: *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 76.

[113] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxx.

[114] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxx.

[115] Gutiérrez, 'Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith' in Gibellini, ed., 19.

The intimation is that the commitment both to praxis and the resultant reflection is a commitment to life, one accepted in a sustained and ongoing sense of Christian conversion, which we will now explore.

d. The Option for the Poor: Life as Choice and Conversion

If Gutiérrez understands the Christian faith as a historical commitment to life in the midst of a context marked by death, with a clear implication that a choice needs to be made, then the option made for the poor is the choice. In several instances, he cites the commitment to this choice in the statements of Medellín, Puebla and John Paul II[116], grounding his argument in the official life of the Church. He then expands on the ideas in his own theological work. However, to understand Gutiérrez commitment to the option for the poor in light of his commitment to the God of life, it is helpful first to examine his understanding of Christian conversion.

'All Christian life', he stated in his doctoral defence, 'begins with a conversion':

> This means a break with personal and social sin and a launching
> out on a new path... Conversion means leaving one's own way (see
> Lk. 10:25-37) and entering upon the way of the other, the
> neighbour, and especially of the poor in whom we encounter the
> Lord.[117]

Conversion then, is commitment and action, with a specific focus and direction. In addition, it is the logical result of commitment 'with an analysis of the situation and a strategy for action'[118]; it follows on from the life lived with the neighbour (the heart of social analysis). Moreover, conversion is a permanent process of spiritual awakening rather than a one-time event[119].

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[116] See *The Truth Shall Make you free* (14), *A Theology of Liberation* (xxv), and *We Drink from our Own Wells* (101, 123-124).

[117] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 5.

[118] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 118.

[119] This permanent process is framed in the language of the willingness to lose all and begin anew. Each time we are renewed, for Gutiérrez, a fundamental transformation occurs and all becomes new. 'The fruitfulness of our conversion depends on our openness to doing this, our spiritual childhood.' Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 118.

Finally, the process of conversion, like other aspects of Gutiérrez's spirituality always has the focus and direction outward, toward the social context, the community, and this is the final litmus test of its efficacy:

> Our conversion process is affected by the socio-economic, political, cultural, and human environment in which it occurs. Without a change in these structures, there is no authentic conversion... Only thus, and not through purely internal and spiritual attitudes will the 'new person' arise out of the ashes of the 'old'. [120]

By linking conversion with social transformation, Gutiérrez locates the evidence of conversion outside of the personal self and within the realm of the neighbour. 'Conversion to the neighbour, to social justice, to history' is this evidence. To be converted to Christ is to be converted to those for whom Christ was 'converted', i.e., became human. Gutiérrez makes clear that 'opting' explicitly requires both choice and movement; to only care for the welfare of those who are close or who would normally cross your path does not result in either personal or corporate transformation. However, our world is transformed if we go out to 'meet people on *their* path and consider them as my neighbour... that is precisely what is entailed in "opting for the poor"'[121].

Thus, the option for the poor, like Gutiérrez's understanding of social analysis, is not so much about 'knowing about' but 'living with' and 'living for'. It is communal conversion and communal commitment as the church is a community:

> This Gospel proclamation that convenes a church flows out of a decision to side with the poor and exploited classes in a real and active way... (It) represents a radical break with today's way of pondering, living and communicating the faith of the church. It entails a conversion to the world of the other, a new kind of

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[120] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 118.
[121] Gutiérrez, 'Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith' in Gibellini, ed., 8.

understanding of the faith, and ultimately a radical reformulation of the message.[122]

Finally, it is important to stress that Gutiérrez also asserts that opting for the poor means active struggle and resistance:

> ... recognition of the fact of the class struggle means taking a position, opposing certain groups of persons, rejecting certain activities and facing hostilities... our active participation on the side of justice and in defence of the weakest members of society does not mean that we are encouraging conflict (but) that we are trying to eliminate its deepest root, which is the absence of love.[123]

With this in mind we can now turn our attention to Gutiérrez's understanding of the dynamics of conflict and division and his analysis of how both can be alleviated.

4. Conflict and Division in the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez

Throughout his work it is evident that Gutiérrez views life in Latin America as one lived in a context of conflict and social division. We now turn to examine Gutiérrez on this topic, as the analysis he brings to bear on the nature of this conflict and division illuminates his thoughts on this situation should be alleviated.

a. The Class Struggle

Gutiérrez frames his understanding of conflict and division in terms of class-based analysis informed by Marxist critique[124] and developmentalist theory[125]. In *A*

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[122] Gutiérrez, 'Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith' in Gibellini, ed., 26-27.

[123] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, 159.

[124] The place of Marxism in liberation theology is contested and its relation to Christianity in general is complex. To a greater or lesser degree depending on the context, Marxism within liberation theology served as either a social analytic tool, a critique of ideology's role in social control, or as a vehicle for radical social change. However, Marx's atheism and materialism were uniformly rejected, as were any specific allegiances to existing Socialist regimes. In fact, the very rejection of these elements is Kee's fundamental critique of liberation theology, even though in many other aspects he is supportive. See Alistair Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1990) and José Bonino, 'Marxism', in Virginia Fabella, MM and R.S. Sujirthrajah, eds., *Dictionary of Third World Theologies* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 137-138.

[125] Developmentalism (or modernisation) is a collection of interrelated economic theories concerning the stimulation of economic growth in underdeveloped economies. Though Gutiérrez is critical of developmentalism, it informs his work by the very nature of the impact

Theology of Liberation, Gutiérrez draws attention to Latin America's social context of domination and oppression, aided and perpetuated from the northern hemisphere and particularly from the economic interests and foreign policy of the US. He further makes clear his view that the structural and institutionalised nature of the situation renders efforts at reformism inadequate. The only way forward is through the language, not of reformation, but of liberation 'by means of a profound transformation, *a social revolution*':

> The oppressed sectors within each country are becoming
> aware- slowly, it is true- of their class interests and of the painful
> road which must be followed to accomplish the breakup of the
> status quo.[126]

Gutiérrez later details that social conflict, 'including one of its most acute forms- the struggle between social classes', is a 'painful historical fact'; he quotes the Catholic hierarchy (Pius XI, John Paul II and the French Episcopal commission) to bolster this assertion as well as to point out their criticism of the dominant classes for exacerbating it.

Perhaps Gutiérrez' clearest explanation of the conflict he addresses as class-based came in 'Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith', published in 1980. Here he stated again his belief in the reality of 'the domination of one class over another', explicitly identifies the poor as 'the proletarian class' and explained that it is specifically because of this dynamic that only a fundamental reforming of the social order would alleviate the situation:

> Poor and oppressed people are members of a social class which is
> overtly or covertly exploited by another social class... To opt for
> the poor is to opt for one social class over and against the other; to
> take cognizance of the fact of class confrontation and side with the
> oppressed...[127]

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that the discipline had on modernisation in Latin America. See Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, second printing, 1990), 105-131.

[126] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, 54.

[127] Gutiérrez, 'Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith' in Gibellini, ed., 8-9.

What we see is Gutierrez, at this stage in the development of his theology, relying significantly on class analysis to approach the conditions in Latin America, conditions marked by 'external dependency and internal domination' which 'only class analysis will show what is really at stake between oppressed lands and dominant peoples'[128]. In the subsequent years of his career he moderated his tone[129], not retracting this analysis but restating it in the light of the Vatican's criticisms of his and others' work[130]. In his doctoral defence, he defended his usage of certain elements of a Marxist analysis and the terminology of class struggle, but made clear that this was not an invitation to class enmity or atheism. 'For me', he states, 'the class struggle was a matter of pastoral concern, and that is how I dealt with it...:

> I though it expedient to take the case that seemed the most difficult from the pastoral viewpoint, that of confrontation between the classes... The answer I developed in those pages... was that social conflict cannot be allowed to justify a denial of, or an exception to, the universality of Christian love... the theological formulations arrived at in these areas can always be improved- and I think I made improvement s in my later writings- but I believe, in all conscience that the spirit of faith and pastoral concern was clearly present from the outset. [131]

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[128] Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 45. The quoted portion is from chapter 3, which is another incarnation of 'Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith', which appeared as the introduction of *Signos de liberación: Testimonion de la Iglesia en América Latina* (Lima CEP, 1973).

[129] The introduction to the 15th anniversary edition of *A Theology of Liberation,* 'Expanding the View', was one such important reappraisal, one that acknowledged and displayed an embrace of complexity in the analysis into the world of poverty and marginalisation.

[130] See 'Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez (March 1983)', published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, from *Liberation Theology- A Documentary History*, Alfred T. Hennelly, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, fourth printing, 1997), 349. For an in-depth analysis of Vatican instructions involving the disciplining of prominent liberation theological voices Leonardo Boff and Jon Sobrino see chapter 3 of Rosino Gibellini's *The Liberation Theology Debate* (London: SCM Press, 1987).

[131] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 38-39.

b. Weakness of the Class Struggle Rhetoric

Gutiérrez's explanation goes some way to explaining his use of class analysis as a specific social tool within the context that he addressed[132]. The language he employed reflected not only social realities within Latin America as he saw them but also the depth of his belief in just how unjust this *status quo* was and how thorough was the social transformation he envisioned. The general thrust of social commentary in the time period which saw the bulk of Gutiérrez's early writing was one which sought decisive and radical solutions to endemic conditions which conventional analysis, he felt, tended to overlook. Gutiérrez mentions that different social contexts would require different social analytic tools to more fully understand the factors that play a part in the 'opposition of social groups'[133]. The challenge for developing practical and contextual theologies in a context such as Belfast is to broaden further the social analysis and attention to praxis to include the specific dynamics of division present in that context.

Ultimately, it is reasonable to assert that since the collapse of Cold War-era state socialism, class struggle language and analysis, as well as the terminology of 'liberation', has been judged to be somewhat deficient in more contemporary social commentary and academic scholarship[134]. What can be drawn from Gutiérrez's

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[132] Gutiérrez biographer Curt Cadorette admits to the rigidly stratified nature of Peruvian society, and thus lends credence to Gutiérrez' assertion that he was merely stating the very obvious. He further opines that attempts to find justifications for violent upheaval in Gutiérrez' works are 'inaccurate and unjustified'. His interpretation of Gutiérrez is that the acknowledgement of such divisions adheres to Gutiérrez' desire to be both honest and realistic; hope and optimism for social change are the underlying dynamics of the exposition of historic realities. Curt Cadorette, *From the Heart of the People: The Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Oak Park, Il: Meyer Stone Books, 1988).

[133] Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History*, 157. This phrase is from the section of the work originally headed 'Christian Fellowship and the Class Struggle', subsequently revised with the heading 'Faith and Social Conflict', displaying the evolving understanding of Gutiérrez on the issue.

[134] This is the certainly the judgement of Alfred T. Hennelly, S.J., who in all other respects is a sympathetic Gutiérrez biographer. While not mentioning Gutiérrez or liberation theology specifically, Bob Jessop has noted that Marxist critique, by privileging class domination in its analysis, tends to overlook or ignore other forms of social domination that might be present in the social context- patriarchal, ethnic, 'racial', hegemonic masculinities, inter-state, regional or territorial, etc. Michael Novak, while acknowledging the debt of gratitude that North American theologians owe to the Latin American liberationists for 'the intellectual challenge to make them articulate the self-consciousness of the Americas', faults the Latin Americans for their anti-capitalism, arguing that what was passing for capitalism in Latin America was actually closer to feudalism; the liberationists' social analysis is therefore flawed, and the shape of economic liberation they seek is ill-judged. On the subject of Gutiérrez

analysis is that a.) the world is indeed a deeply divided place; and b.) once recognised, the people of God have a role to play in the struggle against the causes of these divisions, using the understanding gained from effective social analysis.

5. Gutiérrez on Reconciliation

a. Restructuring and Inversion

The analysis given to the causes and nature of conflict and division naturally affects the vision of the alleviation of conflict, the nature of the post-conflict situation and, presumably, the relationships between former enemies. Gutiérrez focused the majority of his time and attention to a context of structured and hierarchical social inequality, hegemonic foreign and economic policies of the USA such as their active support for repressive regimes, a lack of economic diversity, a rigid and immobile social hierarchy, an authoritarian political *status quo* and a conservative Catholic Church with a clergy of nearly- exclusive European ancestry which exerted considerable influence over all aspects of civic life[135]. Thus, his vision of what will ultimately constitute liberation develops out of this context and focuses on structures and social hierarchies.

Regarding oppressive structures, because of his class-based analysis, Gutiérrez gives primacy to naming these oppressive social structures that keep people poor and marginalised. These are identified as the 'social situations of oppression and

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specifically, he writes, 'On conversion, gratuitousness, joy, spiritual childhood, solitude and community, Gutiérrez is quite eloquent. His spirituality is classic (and) rings true... it is not in its spirituality that one has difficulties with liberation theology (but) in its interpretation of economic and social realities.' See Bob Jessop, Developments in Marxist Theory' in Kate Nash and Alan Scott, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology* (Malden MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001, 2004), 15 and Michael Novak, *Will It Liberate? Questions about Liberation Theology* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), 10.

[135] Examination of the rise, development and the perpetuation the dynamics of structured and hierarchical oppression in civil society in Latin America is beneficial to understanding Gutiérrez' analysis. A notable analysis of the conquest of the Americas is Tzvatan Todorov's *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), first published in French as *La Conquête de l'Amérique* (Editiones de Seuil, 1982), first published in English 1984 by Harper & Row. See also Lee M. Penyak and Walter J. Petry, eds., *Religion and Society in Latin America: Interpretive Essays from Conquest to Present* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2009) and Edward L. Cleary, *The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America*. (Westport Conn: Praeger Publishers, 1997). For a detailed overview of Spanish colonial policy in the region, see Jacques Barbier and Allan J. Kuethe, *The North American Role in the Spanish Imperial Economy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) and Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, originally published as *Las Venas abiertas de América Latina* (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1971), translated by Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997).

marginalisation that force many... to live in conditions contrary to God's will for their life'[136]. Likewise, he speaks of state violence that is not simply arbitrary or responsive but 'institutionalised'[137]. Finally, he cites official Church documents from Puebla[138] and Medellín[139] that refer specifically to a structured and institutional nature of injustice and that the social authorities should not depend on the Church to remain neutral regarding this fact.

Regarding social hierarchies, Gutiérrez's analysis accepts the existence of social hierarchies but with the innovative twist of assigning prime importance to those traditionally thought of as the bottom. Even in his vision of a 'new Christendom' there are ways of seeing hierarchical inversion; he speaks first of the laity, then the clergy and finally bishops[140], thus emphasising a desire toward transformation of the traditional power dynamic.

What we see is conflict transformation in Gutiérrez's vision as one where oppressive structures are re-structured and traditional hierarchies are inverted. What is notable in both cases is that, while the building of liberation, justice and peace are ultimately ongoing and beyond one or another social reality, temporal progress towards liberation-particularly regarding Gutiérrez's first level of liberation, that which addresses oppressive social structures- is nevertheless, in some sense, tangible, historical and quantifiable[141]. Gutiérrez states:

> ... defence of the rights of the poor, punishment of the oppressors, a life free from the fear of being enslaved by others, the liberation of the oppressed. Peace, justice, love and freedom are not private realities...They are social realities, implying a historical liberation.[142]

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[136] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxxviii.

[137] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 64.

[138] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 139-140.

[139] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxi.

[140] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 58-62.

[141] See the analysis given by Dean Brackley in *Divine Revolution: Salvation & Liberation in Catholic Thought* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 72. Brackley acknowledges that the other levels- that of the liberation of the inner freedom of the human spirit and that of liberation from sin- are, respectively, less quantitative and more qualitative.

[142] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 97.

b. 'Gratuitousness'

The other aspect of the aftermath of conflict and division regards repairing and envisioning anew the ongoing relations between former enemies, the realm of post-conflict social reconciliation. This aspect is not specifically addressed by Gutiérrez in great depth, which does not mean that he has nothing to say on the matter. Gutiérrez, as we have seen in regards to social analysis, devotes considerable thought to human relationships, and human interaction is at the heart of his understanding of both liberation indeed of salvation:[143]

> Salvation embraces all persons and the whole person; the
> liberation action of Christ... is at the heart of the historical current
> of humanity; the struggle for a just society is in its own right very
> much a part of salvation history.[144]

Again, Gutiérrez states:

> Salvation embraces all... Concretely, this involvement (in history)
> means solidarity with the oppressed in Latin America and
> participation in their struggle for emancipation[145].

A corollary to reconciliation in Gutiérrez's work is the concept of *gratuitousness*, the unlimited and unmerited grace of God that accompanies his justice. Gutiérrez devoted considerable scholarship to this in his noteworthy treatise on unmerited grace, *On Job*. This is grace that is 'not opposed to the quest for justice nor does it play it down' but one that 'gives it its full meaning':

> God's love, like all true love, operates in a world not of cause and
> effect but of freedom and gratuitousness... (T)he issue is not to
> discover gratuitousness and forget the demands of justice, but to
> situate justice within the framework of God's gratuitous love.[146]

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[143] Brackley rightly notes that the three-fold liberation process presupposes a relational understanding of human relations, 'human beings related to nature, to other human beings and to God'. Dean Brackley in *Divine Revolution*, 77.

[144] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 97.

[145] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983), 32-33.

[146] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, fourth printing, 1991), 87-88.

There is the implication that this is to be the attitude of the innocent toward their tormentors. Obviously, in Gutiérrez's vision of post-conflict reconciliation, there is no place for hatred or vengeance. However, he does not allow the implications of forgiveness to in any way supersede the demands of justice.

c. The Primacy of Justice

Overall, the hierarchical and institutional- what we might call 'vertical'- nature of oppression implies that reconciliation is somewhat inherent in the process of the restructuring and inversion. Of course, the full prophetic, a biblical understanding of peace and justice implies a restoration of relationships between former oppressors and the previously oppressed. However, neither Gutiérrez's considerable attention to both salvation and gratuitousness fully address what is to be made of social situations where, in addition to the oppression from above, there is the presence of ongoing communal antagonism and violence as well as social and cultural divisions as contributing factors to ongoing political instability. This concern comes to the fore not only in the Latin American but in other contexts of conflict and division quite distinct from the Latin American one. The hierarchical power dynamics of the National Security states in the Latin American context which Gutiérrez addressed are in many ways distinct from contexts such as Northern Ireland[147]. While the hierarchical dynamics are present in that context, both the lack of a shared narrative of the causes of the conflict, as well as contested identities within the divided community make issues of justice, perpetration and victimhood more complex, particularly at ground level. In light of the primacy that Gutiérrez and Latin American liberation theology gave to the primacy of justice, it is here that their analysis might benefit from expansion. Liberation and justice in and of themselves are not relative, but what will constitute liberation and justice- how they will be understood, addressed and implemented-must be analysed with a contextual lens. In chapter 2 of this thesis, this issue becomes acute, and the analysis of the thinking of James Cone illustrates the notable weaknesses of a liberation analysis not fully informed by an emphasis on reconciliation.

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[147] It is interesting that, in his revision of *A Theology of Liberation*, in the section renamed 'Faith and Social Conflict' from 'Christian Fellowship and Class Struggle', Gutiérrez mentions Northern Ireland in his list of contexts that 'in addition to economic factors others of a different character play a part in oppositions between social groups.'

6. Focusing on Transformation

When seeking to assess the prospect of using liberation theological methodology in contexts with dynamics distinct from those of Latin America, as well as the place of liberation theology's methodology in the broader theological discipline, two points can be kept in mind: first, Latin American liberation theology embodied a practical and prophetic articulation of the failure of the civil authorities to maintain any semblance of a just social order. In light of this extraordinary situation, the movement can be seen, in some ways, as a pre-political vision, envisioning a socially equitable order so exceptionally unknown in Central and South America at the time of its conception as to be non-existent. In light of this Kirwan asks rhetorically:

> was it ever fair to ask Liberation Theology to yield an alternative
> political and social vision; or does it rather address, in the name of
> the Gospel imperative, *aporias* within our understanding of the
> political as such?[148]

This opens up an alternative interpretation of the relative decline in popular engagement with the liberation theological movement over the subsequent years as democratic and economic reforms have spread across the region, as well as a partial defence against some of the movement's critics such as Novak and Kee. If liberation theology in the region emerged as a prophetic denunciation- an essential theological criterion for any and all political progress to follow- it serves as the precursor to ongoing attempts toward 'renewed attempts to formulate principles of cosmopolitan justice'[149].

Secondly, the Latin American church was significantly affected by the liberation theological movement as has also been the theological endeavour in the decades since the movement's emergence. It has proven not to be the passing fad that its earliest critics believed it to be[150], but has left a considerable legacy of theological

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[148] Kirwan, 'Liberation Theology and Catholic Social Teaching', 252.
[149] Kirwan, 'Liberation Theology and Catholic Social Teaching', 254.
[150] Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 227. McGovern also notes in the same place that the Church acknowledged 'liberation' as 'a valid and even essential theme of Christian revelation' and has in practice devoted much greater efforts toward the poor than it did in ages past. Taking this fact into account with the aforementioned critiques of the Church toward the analysis and

reflection and a rich spirituality around the biblical themes of life, justice and the value of the weak and the poor in the eyes of God.

Even so, the terminology of 'liberation' carries strengths and limitations. On the one hand, there is the etymologically definitive and comprehensive nature of the term 'liberation' which lends itself to praxis; Gutiérrez:

> From the outset, liberation was seen as something comprehensive,
> an integral reality from which nothing was excluded, because only
> such an idea of it explains the work of him in whom all promises
> were fulfilled (see 2 Cor. 1:20)... there is liberation from social
> situations of oppression and marginalisation that force many... to
> live in conditions contrary to God's will for their life. But it is not
> enough... also needed is a personal transformation by which we
> live with profound inner freedom... Finally, there is liberation from
> sin, which attacks the deepest root of all servitude; for sin is the
> breaking of friendship with God and with other human beings...[151]

Conversely, depending on the context, the term might carry unintended 'baggage'. A context with a legacy of deep divisions, sectarianism and violent social conflict such as the one in Northern Ireland, caution is particularly warranted. It is notable that one side of Northern Ireland's deeply divided community (the Republican movement within the broader Nationalist tradition) has employed the terminology of 'liberation' to its political aspirations while the other (the Unionist tradition) did not[152]. For this reason, as social transformation in the Irish context is so closely predicated on a significant focus on reconciliation between individuals and communities, the use of the specific terminology of 'liberation theology' could be problematic. Envisioning a process where both sides of the divided community explore the conceptions of

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practice of liberationist methodology, one might be tempted to say that the liberationists lost many crucial battles but can claim to have won the war.

[151] Gutiérrez, 'Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View' from *A Theology of Liberation*, xxxviii.

[152] The existence of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), a republican socialist paramilitary faction, formed in 1974 and only officially ending its campaign in 2009, is the most relevant example. According to the University of Ulster's Sutton database, which records the deaths during the conflict 1969-2001, the INLA was responsible for 113 deaths. See: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/tables/Organisation_Responsible.html, accessed 10 January 2011.

liberation and reconciliation together- finding a new language for their shared experience- moves to the fore.

Gutiérrez himself felt no great indebtedness to the term. He emphasised that the term never came up in his ministry as a parish priest: 'I preach Jesus Christ', he stated, 'I do not preach liberation theology'[153].

The survival or otherwise of the specific terminology is not of prime importance. Ivan Petrella gives primacy to liberation theology's focus on social transformation on which the methodology focuses. Theology, he argues, might be 'done' under the guise of other disciplines such as law, economics, or medical research, but with a clear transformative focus. 'Perhaps the future of liberation theology requires its dissolution as an identifiable body of production'[154]. Both process and results are more important than the 'branding', as it were.

Likewise, Brown noted in 1976:

> We can be sure that the phenomenon of 'liberation theology' (by whatever name) will not disappear until oppression has disappeared, and that, unfortunately, will not be for a long, long time. Concern for liberation... arises from the reality of grinding poverty... starving children, the brutality of political repression, and from the recognition that the Christian Gospel announces the possibility of liberation from these evils.[155]

More recently, Sung chooses to emphasis the ethical indignation that leads to praxis as foundational to the theological process; so important in fact, that it outweighs the arguments about the language we use, the term 'liberation' especially:

> ...we must pursue the formulation of religious and theological languages that enhance a better expression as well as a critical

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[153] Alfred Hennelly, S.J., *Liberation Theologies: The Global Pursuit of Justice* (Mystic, CN: Twenty-Third Publications, 1995), 10.
[154] Ivan Petrella, "Theology and Liberation" in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation* Ivan Petrella, ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2005),177.
[155] Robert McAfee Brown, 'A Preface and a Conclusion', in *Theology in the Americas*, Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, eds. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1976), xv.

understanding of the experience of faith, of ethical indignation, and of commitment in defence of the lives of victims[156].

Sung's 'ethical indignation', with its allusions to righteous anger, gives an indication of a yearning for transformation- the way things are as opposed to the way they should be- that forms a theological focus and emerges as a key factor from the legacy of liberation theology.

Brown echoes this emphasis of attention paid to social inequities at the heart of liberation theology's emphasis on social analysis:

> We will discover much- in our own domestic life, in our country's international relations, in the ugliness of dictatorships, in the frightful ubiquity of torture- that should fill us with anger, revulsion, righteous indignation, and *should* be angered by the spectre of hungry children, by the destructiveness of war, by the way the economic system sucks the lifeblood out of the poor...[157]

a. Liberation as Transformation

In light of Petrella, Brown and Sung, a possible way forward to be explored in this thesis is to re-focus on the aspects of theological reflection and methodology that have at their root the idea of transformation. The term 'transformation' is chosen for the understanding of change that this theological methodology seeks to embody. 'Transformation' made its way to the English language in the 12th century via Old French, which directly adopted the Latin *trānsfōrmāre*, meaning to change the shape or the form of something. This understanding derives from the Greek antecedent, εταμορφόω (*metamorphoō*) from which English receives the term 'metamorphosis' and, via the Latin, 'transformed': to change or to transfigure.

The term occurs four times in the biblical text, twice in the Gospels and twice in the letters of St. Paul. In the Gospel examples, it is used in the accounts of the Transfiguration, where the Greek term is translated 'transfigured':

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[156] Jung Mo Sung, 'The Human Being as Subject: Defending the Victims', in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation,* Ivan Petrella, ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 4.
[157] Robert McAfee Brown, *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 113.

> Matt. 17:2 And he was **transfigured** before them, and his face
> shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white
> (Matthew 17:2).

> Mark 9:2   Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and
> John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And
> he was **transfigured** before them (Mark 9:2).

In Paul's letters, the Greek is translated 'transformed':

> Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the
> renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of
> God; what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).

> And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as
> though reflected in a mirror, are being **transformed** into the same
> image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from
> the Lord, the Spirit (II Corinthians 3:18)

Conversely, the Greek term in Romans 12:2 translated 'conformed', ονσχηματίζω
(*syschēmatizō*: 'conformed') means, figuratively, to fashion from an identical same
pattern- an archetype (*archétypon*)- or to copy what had been fashioned before.
εταμορφόω (*metamorphoō*) carries an implication of a disregard for the archetype, a
change in the shape of form of what was before into something new.

b.   A Methodology of Transformation

In terms of both the liberation project, the reconciliation project and their inter-
relation, the term 'transformation' embodies an understanding of a definitive
movement from one structural shape of things to a new structural shape of things;
things as they are giving way to things as they might be. 'Transformation' alludes to a
course of thought and action regarding a contextual state that, in some sense,
transcends reforming, repairing or, for that matter, rebuilding; 'transformation'
embodies redesigning.

In his extensive work in the realm of the interpretation of science, Kuhn postulated that scientific revolutions were fundamental social and historical paradigm shifts by virtue of their transformational natures:

> Each (scientific revolution) necessitated the community's rejection of one time-honoured scientific theory in favour of another incompatible with it... And each transformed the scientific imagination in ways that we shall ultimately need to describe as a transformation of the world in which scientific work is done... That is why the unexpected discovery is not simply factual in its import and why the scientist's world is qualitatively transformed as well as quantitatively enriched by fundamental novelties of either fact or theory.[158]

Theologian Paul Lehmann extrapolated that Kuhn's scientific revolution and a political revolution encompassed the same radical paradigm shift, for which he assigns the term 'transfiguration'. For Lehmann, science and politics are not identical, just as theology and politics are not. They are, however, congruent through the nature of transformation:

> It means that (each of the) spheres, perspectives and commitments are as decisive as are data when it comes to seeing the world and acting toward and in it... As the transfiguration of Jesus was the prelude to his death and resurrection to free and fulfilled human life at the right hand of God in a world born anew in the power and presence of God, so the transfiguration of revolution is the prelude to the general resurrection of 'the whole human running race' to life in freedom and fulfilment in a world of God's new beginning and *in secula seculorum*.[159]

It is this understanding of the decisive and profound paradigm shift that undergirds much of Latin American liberation theology's methodological direction

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[158] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1962, 3rd edition 1996), 6-7.
[159] Paul Lehmann, *The Transfiguration of Politics: Jesus Christ and the Questions of Revolution* (London: SCM Press, 1974, British edition 1975), 287-290.

and the reason that it serves as a methodological underpinning of this research. Ultimately, liberation concerns itself with 'an approach to the transformation of history from the viewpoint of the dominated people and marginalised persons, from the viewpoint of the poor of this world'[160]. The proposition that the purpose of theological reflection was to be part of the broader historical process of social transformation through attention to praxis of reflection and action was its main premise.

This commitment was summed up by Juan Luis Segundo when he stated that, for the poor and the marginalised, the world should not be the way it is[161]. Segundo alludes to a world in need of transformation. Liberation theology's distinct focus, purpose, method and direction sought to transform theological discourse; it posited that social transformation should be a theological priority. The social situations highlighted by Gutiérrez and other Latin American liberation theologians in Central and South America were not new; the emphasis on how those social factors affected how theology was done, and to stress that there was a role for theological reflection in the transformation of history, was new. That emphasis was their notable contribution.

Furthermore, current historical conditions show that oppressive structures- as well as destructive social dynamics such as sectarianism- can transform themselves and continue in newer forms in spite of historical moments of reform or positive socio-political change[162]. In the face of this 'negative' transformation, the task of envisioning new theologies with a specific hermeneutic of transformation might draw on the legacy of Latin American liberation theologians. As will be explored in later chapters on the context of Belfast's separation barriers, theology and transformation are envisioned in a context where some social structures of marginalisation and

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[160] Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 50.

[161] Quoted by Robert McAfee Brown in *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 51.

[162] In the case of Northern Ireland, aside from the deeply entrenched dynamics of segregation and sectarianism which persist despite the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (and will be explored later in this work), the constitutional position of Northern Ireland is still deeply contested, the British state maintains a significant military and covert intelligence presence, Loyalist paramilitary groups retain an influence in many areas, and there remains the small but significant presence of elements of the Republican movement who retain a commitment to the establishment- through physical force if they deem necessary- of their vision of an Irish Republic. See Martyn Frampton in *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism* (Dublin and Portland OR: Irish Academic Press, 2011), 6-7.

estrangement are actual physical structures. Liberation theology's emphasis on structural marginalisation makes it beneficial for envisioning social transformation in the divided context marked by such structural estrangement. Such an ongoing commitment to theology's role in the transformation of social conditions and human relationships, identifiable in the former contexts, could be a significant benefit to present contexts, while at the same time showing an ongoing willingness to adapt, expand and nurture the theological critique that liberation theology produced. When one begins to encounter specific characteristics of conflict, such as those found in Northern Ireland, the focus, purpose, method and direction of liberation are best approached and understood with an overarching, comprehensive *emphasis* on reconciliation. This emphasis serves not as an additional 'fifth' element to the methodology but as a spirit which would inhabit and inform the understanding of the previously-identified four.

The commitment of Latin American liberation theology, illustrated in Gutiérrez's commitment to life, conversion and the conscious choice to live with and for one's neighbour, is perhaps what can explicitly be drawn when envisioning a transformational theology informed by liberation. Drawing on Gutiérrez, liberation encompasses transformation of self, of others, of relationships, and of social structures. A methodology that focuses on the socially transformative role of theological reflection in the light of faith, culminating in a choice made for life and not for death represents the notable contribution of Latin American liberation theology to subsequent socially-focused theological endeavours.

Conclusion

Latin American liberation theology represented a specifically practical and contextual attempt to 'do' theological reflection in a new way, theology with a distinct focus, priority, method and direction. There was a focus on doing theology with the immediate social context in mind. There was an understood priority of placing theological reflection at the heart of the experience and consciousness of the people of faith, announcing the presence and worth of the poor in history. There was a specific method rooted in attention to praxis: theological reflection on a specific commitment to social transformation. And, when the moments of choice and action appear, those choices and actions were purposely made with a direction oriented

toward the most poor and the most marginalised. In sum, Latin American liberation theology attempted to envision theological reflection as being done with a focus on the historical realities of the poor and a method that saw the value of that refection on social transformation.

The work of Gustavo Gutiérrez shows how this new method contributes to his understanding of theological reflection being a reflection on the biblical God of life, revealed in the person of Christ, but being done in a reality full of death. Gutiérrez shows theology as a natural and inclusively communal process of asking and re-asking the question, 'who is my neighbour?' The answer to this question is to be found in the discovery of one's relationship with those previously absent from our lives, those lives and situations that we have ignored. As these ignored make themselves known- as they 'become'- previously ignored connections are revealed in the light of the Gospel. The church is then converted; it directs itself toward the poor.

The theology of Gutiérrez, like other expressions of liberation theology, was a product of a specifically contextual time and place. The analytic methods, language, as well as the conclusions reached are subject to change and growth. Gutiérrez's reliance on a class-based and hierarchical analysis is indicative of his historic time and place, and the theological reflection done now in the same location would undoubtedly reveal a new set of conclusions- some very new, some very similar- but all contextually distinct. Likewise, his views of the causes of conflict, the nature of division and how to ameliorate it would need to be expanded and reflected upon anew. This will become clear when attention is turned to the context of Northern Ireland, a conflicted and divided context with very different dynamics than those of Gutiérrez's.

However, the overall strength of a methodology such as the one presented here is its overall emphasis on the role of social transformation in the light of faith and the method's overall emphasis on praxis, which is interpreted as ongoing. The focus on ongoing social analysis and praxis gives it flexibility to experience, interpret and reflect upon historical realities as they are progressively discovered. Overall, the methodological elements of liberation theology serve as important legacies in the task of envisioning transformational theologies outside the context in which it was originally envisioned.

Chapter 2- Expanding the View of Transformation:
The Interrelationship of Liberation and Reconciliation

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that, in light of the specific conditions of the divided context, like that found in Northern Ireland, a vision of transformation requires expanding the view of 'liberation'. In such a context, a transformational theology informed a methodology drawn from the legacy of Latin American liberation theology requires an overarching, comprehensive informing by reconciliation.

While Latin American liberation theology acknowledged the ultimate need for reconciliation, this acknowledgement was not always reflected in an overarching emphasis or it was described in contextually specific manners. The caution with which reconciliation was often approached in the initial Latin American liberation theology was perhaps understandable due to the perceived usage of the language of reconciliation by both state and ecclesial authorities at the expense of social transformation. It is precisely because of this reality that there is such a need to develop a conception of reconciliation that is comprehensive and complimentary to the methodology of liberation. Such a conception must then serve as a parallel emphasis that informs all elements of the methodology.

This chapter argues that the dynamics of the divided context (sectarianism, contested identities, contested space and cyclical patterns of violence) make the development of such an understanding of reconciliation a complex process. A broad and flexible definition of reconciliation must be found that compliments the concept of liberation as an ongoing process of fundamental social/structural transformation. Beginning with the theoretical underpinnings in the work of John Paul Lederach and others, then exploring the specifically detailed framework employed in the five-point working definition of reconciliation by Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, this thesis argues that reconciliation in the divided context is the ongoing process of living together well after violent conflict and in the midst of deep social and cultural divisions through the transformation of social structures and human relationships.

Finally, this chapter explores the work of theologians and practitioners who have sought to conceive of liberation theologies in contexts of ongoing conflict and division (specifically the US, Israel/Palestine and Ireland). These divided contexts collectively demonstrate the need to address the transformation of human relationships as much as the need for social/structural transformation.

In analysing these theological reflections, this thesis argues that James Cone's theology of black liberation, which coincided with the initial expressions of Latin American liberation theology, mirrors the Latin American expression's fairly limited definition of reconciliation. Its vision of transformation therefore must be considered deficient. Likewise, Fr. Joe McVeigh's Irish incarnation fails to embrace the full relational complexities of the divided context, leaving it little more than a manifestation of political aspiration for one facet of one side of a divided community.

It is in the theologies of Dr. Marc Ellis and Naim Ateek that one begins to see a more credible methodological manifestation of transformation informed by liberation and reconciliation. Their theologies reflect an overarching emphasis on reconciliation that suggests that, in the divided context, the methodology of liberation can only be critically reflected upon in the reality of reconciliation with the 'other'.

This understanding of liberation- social and structural transformation- and reconciliation- the transformation of human relationships- forms a conceptual platform for the vision of a transformational theology in a context of division.

1. Specific Characteristics of the Divided Context

Latin American liberation theology was formulated in the context of the structured and rigidly-stratified social contexts of Latin America. When one expands the analysis to include the American Civil Rights movement, with local and regional segregation maintained both through legislation and social convention, both contexts reflect a basic reality of power imbalances: power was vested in the upper strata of a social hierarchy. This might be referred to as 'vertical' oppression and an understanding of the relationship between liberation in these situations, while certainly not without its

complexities, was weighted toward the pursuit of substantial social, economic and political change through an essential corrective of power imbalances[1].

However, the divided context often is specifically exacerbated by inter-communal and sectarian dynamics which cut across all social levels. These dynamics produce what might be identified as a 'horizontal' type of oppression. In situations such as the context of Northern Ireland explored by this thesis, identity politics, sectarianism, the use of paramilitary groups and irregular warfare in a relatively small geographical area marked both the conflict and the ongoing peacemaking process.

The use of the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' terminology should in no way infer that the analysis applies comprehensively to British-Irish relations uniformly across the centuries, nor that it infers that, over the course of that history, both parties inflicted equal damage on each other[2]. Nor indeed does it infer that the majority of Irish

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[1] If one looks at seminal interaction between theologians from North, Central and South America, such as 'Theology in the Americas: 1975' and in Mexico City that same year, discourse was weighted toward defining and addressing the power imbalances between US cultural and political influence and the Southern hemisphere and, theologically, the imbalances between what the conference decided to call 'European' theology and those 'theologies of the periphery' (Asian, black, Hispanic, feminist, etc.). In regards to the US civil rights movement, sociologist Doug McAdam's work on the American civil rights movement gives prominence to the understanding that segregation and racism in the US was structured power; to combat it, activists developed resistance through the mediums of church, education and activist groups that was equally disciplined, detailed and methodical. And Martin Luther King stressed the 'untapped power for the Negro is in the political arena... the new task of the liberation movement... is the development of a strong voice in the smoke-filled back rooms where party debating and bargaining proceed... the ability to be independent, assertive and respected when the final decisions are made are indispensible for an authentic expression of power.' Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, eds. *Theology in the Americas* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 433-436, Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1982), and Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Originally published 1967, published in Great Britain by Hodder & Stoughton, 1968, Penguin edition, 1969), 143.
[2] Even if one discounts the ideological narrative of Irish Republicanism, there are certainly no credible historical analyses that do not hold that Ireland was conquered, subjugated and administered by its much more powerful neighbor, and that the administration of successive British governments in Ireland existed along a spectrum from the clumsy and thoughtless through to the cruel and oppressive. The arc of Irish history- and Ireland's complicated and often antagonistic relations with Britain- is succinctly and well detailed in A.T.Q. Stewart's *The Shape of Irish History* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2001) and in Taylor Downing, ed. *The Troubles* (London: Thames Television, 1980), Ch. 3. The dynamics of conflict between Britain and Ireland are comprehensively dealt with- with particular emphasis to how these dynamics are played out in Northern Ireland- in Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict*

people did not have credible grounds for their aspirations to remove themselves from the cultural influence and political administration of the British government. Nor does it imply that the Nationalist population of Northern Ireland did not experience systemic discrimination and inequality at the hands of a Unionist-dominated administration between 1921 and the imposition of Direct Rule in 1972[3]. Finally, it does not imply that the British government's Post-1972 direct administration was not very often unfair, unjust, and made the subject of scrutiny and condemnation[4].

Rather, the 'horizontal' analysis first and foremost concerns itself, in keeping with the scope of this thesis, with the dynamics of the historic British and Irish 'macro' conflict as they are often played out in the 'micro' lived experiences of communities located at interface areas of Belfast where the separation barriers are most often found. In such environments, those large-scale dynamics of conflict are often manifested in localised animosities, mutual antagonisms, low-level provocations, often-wilful misunderstanding and lack of meaningful communication, all exacerbated by the lack of a shared narrative concerning the broad history of the conflict and in divergent cultural symbolism and display (flags, murals, painted kerbstones, parades, the Irish language, etc.)[5]. It should also be noted that within these areas, there is every possibility that, due to any number of factors and the context of events on the ground at any given time, one community or the other is on the receiving end of more acute and sustained intimidation and antagonism than the

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in *Northern Ireland: Power, Conflict and Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[3] See David McKittrick and David Mc Vea, *Making sense of the Troubles* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002), 1-25, Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland 1921-2001: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London. Serif, 1995, revised edition 2002) and Brian M. Walker, *A Political History of the Two Irelands: From Partition to Peace* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[4] See Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, *The Politics of Force: Conflict Management and State Violence in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2000) and Dermot P.J. Walsh, *Bloody Sunday and the Rule of Law in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2000).

[5] See Pioinsias Ó Drisceoil, ed., *Culture in Ireland- Regions: Identity and Power* (Belfast: Institute for Irish Studies, Queens University of Belfast, 1993), Marie Smyth and Marie-Therese Fay, eds., *Personal Accounts of from Northern Ireland's Troubles: Public Conflict, Private Loss* (London: Pluto Press, 2000) and Jonny Byrne, *Interface Violence in East Belfast during 2002: The Impact on Residents of Short Strand and Inner East Belfast* (Belfast: Institute for Conflict Research, 2005).

other. However, even with these reservations, the terminology- particularly that of the 'horizontal' dynamics- is worthwhile when seeking to compare and contrast the contexts of Latin America under the National Security State dictatorships and the localised context of interface communities in Belfast.

a. Sectarianism

In the 'horizontal' situation, analysis and understanding of sectarianism moves to the fore. Sectarianism is a complex structural social phenomenon- most commonly arising from a historical legacy of communal or group antagonism- made up of behaviours and attitudes that in the present mediates the relationships between estranged groups. In this type of context, Joe Liechty and Cecilia Clegg's analysis and definition of sectarianism is unparalleled in its detail. Broadly, their analysis focuses on two points: that sectarianism is structural, systemic and cuts across all social strata; and secondly, that sectarianism occurs when healthy and normal patterns of relating with others, identity formation, community cohesion and the desire for security become distorted through fear, prejudice or cyclical patterns of grievance. How those processes deviate and lead to division, very often with the destructive conflation of religious difference and political aspiration is the focus of their work[6].

Sectarianism appears as a spectrum of 'attitudes, actions, beliefs and structures'. These run from the most visible and recognizable (physical violence and intimidation) to less obvious, but equally destructive 'patterns of relating' over the long term ('hardening the boundaries between groups; overlooking others; belittling, dehumanizing, or demonizing others'[7]). Sectarianism also encompasses what might be called 'boundary maintenance' along religious and political lines, the unhealthy interaction of those two factors and their use in the process of reifying division and conflict. In the divided context, sectarian understandings form the grid through which

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[6] Additionally, sociologist John Brewer also has commented the processes that lead to the growth of sectarianism, focusing on the interplay of ethno-political understandings of the communal self and religious identity that then come to be definitive boundary markers in the divided context. J. Brewer, 'Sectarian and Racism and Their Parallels and Differences', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 15 (3), 359. See also John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 212.

[7] Joe Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2001), 102-103.

issue decisions about how much- or how little-interaction is safe or desirable with the 'other' are formed.

Sectarianism can be extremely nuanced, making it both difficult to diagnose and easy to rationalise or dismiss. Leichty and Clegg note the importance of stressing that boundary *definition* and indeed boundary *maintenance* can be considered normal, indeed healthy, societal mechanisms. '*Hardening*' boundaries is less so. Hardening boundaries involves direct or indirect action of making existing divisions between people and groups more pronounced, efforts for understanding and dialogue more difficult and frustrating existing networks of dialogue and communication[8].

Furthermore, sectarianism has a tendency to become a self-perpetuating cycle; all that is necessary to perpetuate the cycle is to do little to stop it. Primarily, this is most commonly achieved through a lack of sustained, meaningful interaction between groups. Sectarian dynamics, ironically, render this interaction superfluous in the minds of the people within the system, as the system ensures that '"we" know what "they" think without ever having to engage "them" in a relationship of dialogue"'[9]. The 'other' tends to remain 'wholly other'- nothing like one's selves- in order to maintain one's own positively constructed identity.

These 'invisible' psychological elements- what divided communities think and/or believe about each other- very often form a damaging pattern of relationships that are as destructive as more 'visible', physical and violent incarnations of sectarianism. However, neither the visible or invisible elements are more important than the other; indeed, as will be examined in the next chapter regarding the network of separation barriers in Belfast, both the physical and the psychological elements of sectarianism tend to form a self-perpetuating reinforcement for each other.

b. Contested Identities

Interwoven into sectarianism is identity formation which, when approached negatively, becomes a process of constructing individual and communal identity in

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[8] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 128-137.
[9] Andrew Pierce, 'Eucharist and the Search for Christian Unity', unpublished paper used with permission of the author, 2.

oppositional terms. In the divided context, the communal identities of the conflicting groups often develop in a divergent and antagonistic manner. Conflict theorist Marc Gopin refers to this as a 'negative identity':

> ... the need for identity is so powerful a force in human life that millions of people over the millennia of human civilization have been willing to die for this negative identity, or kill for it, or both. If identity is essentially negative, if there is a deep doubt or lack of vision for conceiving of a substantive identity without the enemy, then there is no choice but to recreate the circumstances in which conflict with an enemy are necessary.[10]

And, as elaborated upon by Cecelia Clegg:

> This is identity which is formed over against the 'other' in such a way that the other becomes a 'threatening other'. One of the tragedies of this type of identity formation is that it generates a need to maintain the other as threat in order to keep a stable sense of identity.[11]

Thus, in the divided context, in order to maintain one's own positive self-identity, where there is *any* division, that division must remain total, with no 'unity' to build upon[12]. Moreover, the identity of the 'other' must be diminished in order for ones'

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[10] Marc Gopin, 'The Heart of the Stranger', in David Tombs and Joseph Liechty, eds., *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology* (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 15.

[11] Cecelia Clegg, 'Embracing a Threatening Other: Identity and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland', in Sebastian C.H. Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Greg Hoyland, eds., *Peace and Reconciliation: In Search of Shared Identity* (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 86.

[12] Sociologists and anthropologists classify this as 'essentialism' which they define as the idea that social groups have a single, homogenous culture, which can thus be popularly understood as the tendency to 'freeze cultural differences between groups.' In reference to Northern Ireland, Máiréad Nic Craith notes that 'identity... is often perceived in a two-dimensional framework, as Orange and Green, unionist or nationalist, Protestant or Catholic, but that is false and limiting.' Nic Craith makes the comment in reference to outside observers of the conflict. However, the fact that it is often the protagonists of the conflict that persist, for reasons *of* that conflict, in perpetuating the notion of static identity, very often unconsciously, that tends to confirm the complexity of the issue of identity in a context of division. See Tariq Modood and Pnina Werbner, eds., *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community* (London: Zed Books, 1997), 169-171 and

own identity to be reinforced[13]. In Northern Ireland, contested identity is manifested

and reinforced in a several ways: the two main community blocs have significantly

divergent cultural grids for interpreting their own identities and those of their rivals,

politics, social issues, etc; they attend different churches, attend different schools,

read different newspapers and- in certain specific ways- follow different sports[14].

They mark the changes in their lives (births, coming of age, marriage, death) in near-

isolation from the other[15].

c. Contested Space

Urwin and Rokkam note that the concept of 'territory' is neutral:

> ...territory becomes politically significant because of the
>
> interpretation placed on it by people; it becomes a concept
>
> generated by people organising space for their own ends.[16]

Máiréad Nic Craith, *Culture and Identity Politics in Northern Ireland* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 5.

[13] Referring to Northern Ireland's Unionist political culture, Cathal McCall notes: 'repudiation of Irish Nationalist culture remains essential to the political manifestation of some Unionist identities. Such repudiation is emphasised by the tone and content of a comment by the DUP's Sammy Wilson: "It is not my job to promote fiddley-dee music, dancing at the crossroads and a leprechaun language" (*South Belfast Herald and Post*, 11 January 1996). See Cathal McCall, *Identity in Northern Ireland: Communities, Politics and Change* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 1999), 90.

[14] The Gaelic Athletic Association, (GAA), or *Cumann Lúthchleas Gael*, is an amateur Irish cultural and sporting organisation focused primarily on promoting traditional Irish sports such as hurling, camogie and Gaelic football, as well as other aspects of Irish culture such as language, music and dance. In Northern Ireland, Gaelic games are played almost exclusively by the Catholic/Nationalist community. Even in the more universally appreciated sport of football (soccer), support for teams in Northern Ireland tend to divide along community lines, with Belfast sides Linfield, Glentoran and Crusaders being predominantly supported by Protestant/Unionists and North Belfast side Cliftonville and West Belfast side Donegal Celtic predominantly supported by Catholic/Nationalists. Northern Ireland's international team draws the majority of its support from the Protestant/Unionist community, with most Catholic/Nationalists opting to support the Republic of Ireland. Similarly, the two Glasgow football clubs, Rangers and Celtic, draw significant support from Northern Ireland with support coming from, respectively, Unionist/Protestants and Catholic/Nationalists. The logos, scarves, team shirts and other accessories of all these various teams and sports serve as prominent ethno-political-religious symbolic identifiers.

[15] See Claire Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief* (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006).

[16] Derek Urwin and Stein Rokkan, *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of Western European Peripheries* (London: Sage, 1983), 123.

However, as the chapter 3 will address, the issue of organising space for ones' own ends because of a real or perceived threatening 'other' is often present in the divided situation, with communities or groups investing their collective identity in a physical location or territory over and against that of a rival community. The place of 'Ulster' in the United Kingdom in the psyches of many Protestant/Unionists[17], specifically the right to march unimpeded in the Loyal Orders[18]; the place of a 'united Ireland' in the minds of the majority of Catholic/Nationalist/Republicans[19]; and the conflict over the West Bank between Palestinians and Israeli settlers; these are examples of divided contexts with issues involving contested space. As can be seen, issues run from the international to the localised.

d. Cyclical Patterns of Violence

Finally, divided situations with protracted inter-communal conflicts manifest cycles of violence that, similarly to sectarian elements, cut across all social levels. In contexts of division, violence itself is 'a main force behind the formation or transformation of ethnic and national identities'[20]; it has the allure of expediency in

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[17] See Cathal McCall, *Identity in Northern Ireland: Communities, Politics and Change* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 1999), 80-86, and B.M. Walker, *Ulster Politics: The Formative Years,* 1868-86 (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation and Queens University Belfast, Institute of Irish Studies, 1989).

[18] A comprehensive analysis of the issue of parading in one of its most contested settings can be found in Chris Ryder and Vincent Kearney, *Drumcree: The Orange Order's Last Stand* (London: Methuen, 2001). The issue also serves as a main point of analysis of communal relationships in Susan McKay, *Northern Protestants: An Unsettled People* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2000). For an overview of the Orange Order and its place in the life of Northern Ireland's Protestant community, see Earl Storey, *Traditional Roots: Towards an Appropriate Relationship between the Church of Ireland and the Orange Order* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2002).

[19] The IRA declared itself to have jurisdiction over '*the whole geographical fragment of Ireland, its maritime territory, air space* (italics added) mineral resources means of production, distribution and exchange and all its people regardless of creed or loyalty', Brendan O'Brien, *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Féin* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, updated edition, 1999, first published 1993), 401. The emphasis on territory is explicit. Kevin Toolis similarly implicitly implies the territorial dimension of Irish Republican ideology by defining Irish Republicanism, first and foremost, as 'the unqualified belief that a United Ireland is an intrinsic good'. Kevin Toolis, *Rebel Hearts: Journeys Within the IRA's Soul* (London: Picador, 1995), 24.

[20] Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics and Identity of Kosovo* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), 32.

that 'violence may achieve results that cannot otherwise be achieved'[21]; and as Martha Minow acknowledges, violence becomes a cyclical process that 'can be excessive and unquenchable... preoccupation with harms of the past can be debilitating for victims and bystanders'[22].

Political lecturer Frank Wright explains cyclical violence as an outgrowth of what he refers to as 'representative violence'. For example, during the conflict in Northern Ireland, he notes that rarely were victims chosen for their individual identity or for what they had personally done, but rather for the political understanding either they or their employment represented or simply as representatives of their respective communities as a whole. This aided the progressive spread of violence, for since the actual perpetrators of violent acts were often anonymous, the ability for any one member of the community from which the perpetrator came to be punished for that action made retribution easier to achieve:

> If anyone of a great number of people can be punished for
> something done by the community they come from, and if the
> communities are sufficiently defined, there is a risk that anyone
> attacking a member of the other community can set in motion an
> endless chain of violence[23].

Furthermore, over time, this cyclical violence leads to cyclical and inherited victimhood, where the actual identity of 'victim' might be overstepping a social norm, but the appropriation of victimhood is considered acceptable, which is in itself an outgrowth of the ambiguity of the role of victim and perpetrator[24].

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[21] Cornelia Sorabji, 'A Very Modern War: Terror and Territory in Bosnia-Hercegovina', in Robert A. Hinde and Helen E. Watson, eds., *War: A Cruel Necessity? The bases of Institutionalised Violence* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 80-95.

[22] Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 15.

[23] Frank Wright, *Northern Ireland: A Comparative Analysis* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987, published in the US, Totowa NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1988), 11.

[24] The scenes of disorder and rancour at the Belfast launch of the report of the Consultative Group on the Past are an example of the level of ambiguity over the issue. Noel McAdam, 'Anger and Hurt on a Day Aimed at Healing', *Belfast Telegraph*, 29 January 2009. Of particular relevance to this topic is Janie Leatherman, William DeMars, Patrick D. Gallney and Raimo Väyrynen, eds., *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Conflict: Conflict Prevention in Intrastate Crises* (West Hartford, Conn: Kumarian Press, 1999). See also John F. Galliher and Jerry L. DeGregory,

If, as was discussed in the previous chapter, liberation involves the ongoing process of living well, these four dynamics of the divided context begin to detail how reconciliation involves living *together* well. In the broadest sense, individuals and communities in divided contexts live together- the *manner* in which they live together is another matter. Living together in such contexts is distorted and negatively impinged upon primarily by the four dynamics of sectarianism, distorted identities, contested space, and violence. Living together well involves the emphasis of liberation's recognising and resisting structures of marginalisation and oppression, yet expanding the understanding to include those structures that impede meaningful reconciliation. It is the ongoing process of acknowledging and attempting to move beyond these distorted dynamics, moving toward more positive methods of relating. This understanding begins the process of moving towards a definition of reconciliation.

2. Towards a Definition of Reconciliation

Defining 'reconciliation' in contexts of division is complex because of the dynamics just described. Susan Dwyer notes that there is often a 'notable lack of any clear account of what reconciliation is, and what it requires (and) until we have a clearer idea of what reconciliation is, we cannot know whether it is right- or even morally desirable- to pursue it'[25]. Similarly, Michelle LeBaron notes that in post-conflict work, 'everything takes place in cultural contexts':

> No strategies are universally applicable because every strategy
> issues from a set of cultural assumptions and understandings...
> conflicts take different courses and unfold in a variety of ways
> depending on the cultures of those involved.[26]

Dwyer notes this preoccupation with replicable processes:

Violence in Northern Ireland: Understanding Protestant Perspectives (Dubllin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), 63-68. On the ambiguity of victimhood and its political use, see Michael Humphrey, *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma* (London and New York: Routledge), 118-123.
[25] Susan Dwyer, *'Reconciliation for Realists'*, *Ethics & International Affairs*, vol. 13 no.1 (March 1999), 2.
[26] Michelle LeBaron, *Bridging Cultural Conflicts: A New Approach for a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 202.

> ...too much of the emphasis of conflict resolution has been on
> process, replicable processes for use in all contexts, as if
> peacemaking were a General Motors car to be disassembled...
> shipped...and reassembled regardless of circumstances. Not only
> does this approach not work, but it is barbaric, for it ignores the
> cultural context.[27]

With regard to Northern Ireland, Maria Power in some ways states the obvious when she observes that the terms 'reconcile' and 'reconciliation' are incredibly problematic within the Northern Irish context and a definitive definition has yet to emerge. [28]Moreover, as reconciliation means different things to different people, the term itself in the post-conflict Northern Irish context is divisive[29]. The full implications of this fact will be explored later in this thesis.

Therefore, a definition of reconciliation remains a challenge. In the broadest sense, reconciliation involves human relationships in the wake of conflict. Moving beyond conflict involves some form of restructuring, repairing or rebuilding of human relationships. In many cases, it is the conscious beginning of a process 'to overcome personal, social, or political, alienation that has the capacity to destroy'[30]. This process concerns itself with '...the repairing or building of relationships in terms of trust between parties in a relationship'[31]. Finally, reconciliation represents and ongoing process, one that becomes about '... learning to live non-violently with radical differences'[32].

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[27] Martha Minow and Antonia Chayes, eds. *Imagine Coexistence, Restoring Humanity After Violent Conflict* (Jossey-Bass, 2003), 259.

[28] Maria Power, 'Preparing Evangelical Protestants for Peace: The Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland (ECONI) and Peace Building 1987-2005', *Journal of Contemporary Relations*, 26(1), 57-72.

[29] John D. Brewer, Gareth I. Higgins and Francis Teeney, *Religion Civil Society and Peace in Northern Ireland* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 185.

[30] Fanie Du Toit, *Learning to Live Together: Practices of Social Reconciliation* (Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2002), 300.

[31] Trudie Glover and Wilhelm Verwoerd, *Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation*. Philosophy of the Social Sciences, SAGE Publications, June 2002, 188.

[32] Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (Cambridge, UK and Malden MA: Polity, 2011), 246.

The assumption of 'process' should be considered a critical aspect of reconciliation; there is the tension of reconciliation being both a process and a goal[33]; it encompasses the 'final destination' and every point on the road to the final destination. But emphasising a final 'goal' is problematic for two reasons: realistically, reconciliation is *more* of a process than a goal and, in a very real sense, the process *is* the goal. Reconciliation is this ongoing process of living together well after conflict.

The understanding of reconciliation used in this thesis is drawn, moving from the most conceptual to the most contextually specific, from the work of conflict resolution theorist and practitioner John Paul Lederach, researchers and scholars Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg for the Irish School of Ecumenics and the work of Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly as part of the work in Northern Ireland of the think tank Democratic Dialogue.

a. John Paul Lederach

Lederach's theological framing of reconciliation around four biblical 'coordinates' from Psalm 85:10- 'Truth and mercy have met together; peace and justice have kissed'- emphasises his belief that a credible understanding of reconciliation, and any stable and proactive reconciliation process, will necessarily address, in some way and to some degree, the issues of peace, justice, truth and mercy[34]. When the four coordinates are developed beyond the abstract, Lederach draws attention to the need to embrace the complexity of reconciliation:

> ...multiple actors, pursuing a multiplicity of actions and initiatives,
> at numerous levels of social relationships in an interdependent
> setting, at the same time. Complexity emerges from multiplicity,
> interdependency, and simultaneity. In many regards, this is *the*
> great challenge of peacebuilding: how to build creative responses
> to patterns of self-perpetuating violence in a complex system

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[33] 'Reconciliation is both a goal and a process'; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Truth and Reconciliation Report* (Cape Town: Juta and Co, 1998; London: Macmillan, 1999), 104.
[34] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington DC:US Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 28-31.

made up of multiple actors, with activities that are happening at the same time.[35]

Lederach proposes that simplicity precedes complexity, and must be recognised as 'a source of energy rather than as the choice of reductionism'[36]. Simplicity manifests first in the centrality of relationships, in seeing the interconnected and interdependent nature of human interaction, that 'the well-being of our grandchildren is directly tied to the well-being of our enemy's grandchildren'. Furthermore, there is the fostering of curiosity; creating creative space; and willingness to risk[37]. Out of these simple guidelines, complex peacebuilding structures are envisioned and can take shape. Of primary importance throughout is both an underlying understanding of the full scale of personal and social transformation that is being called for when reconciliation is discussed and the importance of the 'moral imagination'- creativity and flexibility of thinking as the full context unfolds.

b.   Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg

Proceeding onward from Lederach's conceptuality, Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg's work developing the *Moving Beyond Sectarianism* project for the Irish School of Ecumenics begins the process of situating reconciliation into the localised context. As has been shown earlier, Liechty and Clegg's line of enquiry has led to a broad definition of sectarianism in the context of Northern Ireland, emphasising its systemic qualities that arise when healthy patterns of social relationships and communal interaction become distorted through lack of meaningful contact.

Drawing on the work of theologians such as Miroslav Volf and Robert Schreiter, as well as Irish Jesuit theologian Gerry O'Hanlon, their broadest understanding of reconciliation is the Christian understanding of all the elements of the cosmos in right relationship with God and with one another, based on a Pauline biblical vision and an eco-feminist academic approach. Becoming more focused on interpersonal relationships, they conclude that 'reconciliation means the movement from enmity or domination/subjugation to positive, life-giving relationship, both individually and

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[35] John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Making Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 33.
[36] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination,* 33.
[37] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination,* 34-39.

collectively'[38]. This is an important focus, as it begins to draw attention, with the same commitment they give to their main academic focus on sectarian dynamics, to the systemic and structural aspects of the reconciliation process. By acknowledging issues of collective and systemic enmity, reconciliation is shown to have an 'inalienable social dimension, and not just social implications'[39]. However, while they acknowledge the issues of social reconciliation on a larger scale, as their focus is on relationships between churches, it is not their main focus. They maintain the healthy tension between personal and social reconciliation, on the one hand acknowledging that their own work is focused somewhat on a small-group dynamic but without sacrificing the 'macro' understandings on the other. By doing so, and without falling victim to over-emphasising one or the other, they keep open an understanding that both visions are interdependent:

> The vision of Christian reconciliation that we are describing here pertains most obviously to individuals and small groups. Issues of forgiveness and repentance, however, become much less clear when people think in large group or societal terms. In moving beyond sectarianism in Northern Ireland, there will be a need for much individual and small group forgiveness, repentance and justice. There will be a need also for reconciliation on a much wider scale.[40]

c.   Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly

Finally, the full scale of what reconciliation entails in the wake of violent conflict is developed by Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly's working definition of reconciliation from their research compiled for the Belfast-based Democratic Dialogue, which sought to analyze the usages and understandings of the term

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[38] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 293.

[39] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 293.

[40] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 295. For a comprehensive analysis of the role of reconciliation structures on national-level relationships in the context of South Africa, such as national apologies, reparations and restitution, see Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd. 'Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2002), 178-205, and Wilhelm J. Voerward, 'Individual and/or Social Justice: Hard choices faced by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *European Journal of Development Research*, 11 (2) 1999, 115-140.

'reconciliation' by community workers, the general public and government agencies in Northern Ireland. Having found in their initial research that attitudes amongst communities in Belfast to the concept of reconciliation were, while generally positive, '...often too vague or too weakly held'[41], they proceeded to propose a series of five mutually-related components:

- Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society;

- Acknowledging and dealing with the past;

- Significant cultural and attitudinal change;

- Building positive relationships;

- Substantial social, economic and political change.[42]

These components build upon Lederach's understanding by beginning to 'locate' his concepts of peace, justice, truth and mercy into the specific reality of the post-conflict, socially-divided context. This is beneficial for conveying a sense of the scale and scope of the process; reconciliation is understood to be both the process and the goal of the process. Realistically though, it is understood as more of a process than a goal or a process that is understood as the goal. Hamber notes:

> Reconciliation... is the *process* of addressing these five strands, and not solely the outcome of doing so. Reconciliation, by their nature, contains paradoxes and tensions, not least because the social, interpersonal and political context is in constant flux. It is neither neat, easy, nor necessarily a linear process... We believe, therefore, that reconciliation is both about trying to address the five strands outlined, and the complex paradoxes and tensions between them. Reconciliation can be measured not as an outcome

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[41] Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, *A Place for Reconciliation, Conflict and Locality in Northern Ireland*, Democratic Dialogue, 2005. p.59. This information is also included in Brandon Hamber, *Transforming Societies after Political Violence: Truth, Reconciliation and Mental Health* (Dordrecht, Hedelberg, London, New York: Springer, 2009), 159-160.
[42] Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, *A Place for Reconciliation? Conflict and Locality in Northern Ireland*. Democratic Dialogue Report 18. Belfast, September 2005, 49.

but as the capacity to manage the tensions inherent in the process.[43]

Hamber and Kelly's five points are in some senses echoed by Hizkias Assefa's seven: acknowledgment of harm done by each party to the other; genuine expression of remorse for the injury done; a readiness to apologise and the granting of pardon; a readiness by all parties to move beyond anger and bitterness; commitment by the offender (or offenders) not to repeat the injury; redressing of grievances that caused the conflict and remedying the consequences of the conflict itself; and entering into a new and mutually enriching relationship[44].

Again, Lederach's themes of peace, truth, justice and mercy underlie all the facets mentioned and the various facets must be broadened and fleshed out in the specific social context. What can be taken away from all of the various conceptions of reconciliation described here, however, is that any conception of reconciliation should ideally acknowledge that the process will be multi-faceted, is implicitly committed to trying to solve the underlying causes of the conflict and has as its goal some form of transformational vision.

At all levels, though, the process of reconciliation involves individuals and groups living together in the best possible manner- despite what has occurred and in the midst of ongoing dynamics of the divided context. Thus, in the Northern Ireland context, in light of the dynamics of conflict and the analysis of the scholars and practitioners mentioned here, 'reconciliation', is best understood as *the ongoing process of living together well after violent conflict and in the reality of ongoing structural sectarianism and social division*. Social transformation is implicit, as is the transformation of human relationships, both of which are ongoing processes within the post-conflict context. Conceiving of reconciliation in such a comprehensive, rigorous, but hopefully flexible manner implicitly communicates that, ultimately, reconciliation entails taking appropriate measures to ensure that the conflict does

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[43] Brandon Hamber, *Transforming Societies after Political Violence: Truth, Reconciliation and Mental Health* (Dordrecht, Hedelberg, London, New York: Springer, 2009), 159.
[44] Hizkias Assefa, 'Reconciliation', in Luc Reychler and Thania Paffenholz, *Peace-Building: A Field Guide* (Boulder, Co and London: Lynn Rienner Publishing, 2001), 336-342.

not re-occur, which necessarily means addressing the structural conditions that led to the conflict:

> If, as we argue, the conflict is the product of a system of relationship which constitutes two communities with radically conflicting interests, aspirations and identities, then the solution lies in dismantling that system.[45]

Two points must be acknowledged: first, that a definition of such rigour and flexibility is admittedly substantially more rigorous and flexible than the understandings of reconciliation that, as will be shown, are common in the lived experience of individuals, communities and clergies of Northern Ireland. What Hamber and Kelly envision corresponds to what Norman Porter defines 'strong reconciliation' and proposes three purposes for it:

> ... to spell out an ideal that shapes what our priorities should be in Northern society... to show how the ideal (or something like it) is implicit in important things we say about ourselves and what we stand for... (and) to indicate why it should not be allowed to slide into the background by other things we say or stand for, particularly those things that create sharp differences between us and play to our narrow cultural and political self-interests.[46]

In this regard, Porter's 'strong reconciliation' serves as a philosophical underpinning to Hamber and Kelly's five points, creating a directional focus that establishes, not simply the value of reconciliation as a social concept, but the value of its pursuit, demanding though it may be, as well as implicitly warning of the dangers of neglecting it[47].

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[45] Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland: Power, Conflict and Emancipation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14.

[46] Norman Porter, *The Elusive Quest: Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2003), 266-267.

[47] From the perspective of his writing in 2003, Porter tacitly acknowledges that 'strong reconciliation' was indeed being neglected, in favour of 'simply a matter of sticking to the property claims of our particular tribe, which most of us have learned from birth.' Yet in the midst of realism, he cultivates optimism, affirming that 'strong reconciliation, however odd or demanding it appears, matters enormously.' Porter, *The Elusive Quest*, 267-268.

Secondly, in light of this and the history of antagonistic division, the ongoing process of reconciliation will not happen without conscious action to foster it. Irish academic and community relations professional Duncan Morrow makes this clear:

> The real weakness in (Northern Ireland) is a social capital deficit...
> (community relations) has to be fostered. It won't happen by itself
> or under pressure of violence. You have to foster this... without
> protected development, (commitment to community relations)
> won't happen at all; that the pressures of antagonism are simply
> so deep, it's not about having to persuade anybody else. The
> actual achievement of doing this is like putting a greenhouse
> around a fragile plant in the middle of a cold wind.[48]

However, in keeping with Lederach's vision of the moral imagination in the reconciliation process, it is profitable to begin from the place of hope and aspiration. Additionally, the relationship between envisioning reconciliation within the methodology of liberation- with its emphasis on praxis toward social transformation- is at the heart of the definition, as it emphasises that both liberation and reconciliation are broadly focussed on ongoing transformation; both inherently recognise the need for change in both attitudes and actions and the re-imagining of what has been a destructive *status quo*. Thus, liberation is concerned with social transformation; reconciliation is concerned with the transformation of human relationships. Liberation proclaims the desire of the marginalised for the transformation of society toward equity and justice; reconciliation understands that inequity, injustice and conflict leave human relationships damaged and in need of spiritual healing and social re-structuring. And just as foundational voices in Latin American liberation theology saw the ultimate task as 'social emancipation of the oppressed'[49] and 'a society of free men and women[50]', so also was their realization

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[48] Duncan Morrow, 'The Practice, progress and failings of community relations work in NI since 1990', a lecture given at the University of Ulster as part of the IPAC seminar series, 23 May 2012.

[49] Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Salvation and Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, third printing, 1998), 116.

[50] Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates, 1987), 93.

that this was a human process[51], humanity's ongoing historical project in the light of the word of God[52]. The process of envisioning a theology of transformation will necessarily return to this: that liberation requires a process of transforming destructive structures and patterns of domination and marginalisation, and that process will invariably involve social- as well as individual- reconciliation.

3. The Understanding of Reconciliation in Latin American Liberation Theology

The process of envisioning a transformational theology informed by liberation and reconciliation now turns to an investigation into how reconciliation has been framed by both proponents and critics of Latin American liberation theology, whether reconciliation is subservient to liberation and where, in the process of liberation, reconciliation is ideally addressed.

a. The Latin American Catholic Church's Definition of Reconciliation

To understand the conception of 'reconciliation'- and, for that matter, 'liberation'- in Latin America from an ecclesial point of view, it is important to understand the self- perception that the Catholic Church in the region had. The Catholic Church- in the region and globally- predated the modern conception of the state by centuries. For this reason, as well as its own self-understanding of its unity and its mission, the Church saw itself as a mechanism of stability and social equilibrium. As such, the Church saw the care and oversight of the whole of society- from top to bottom and in every quarter- as its natural remit. Its actual practice in this regard has, of course, often fallen short of this vision, and its social position and understanding of its responsibility to be at the heart of civic life, particularly in its upper echelons, has led

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[51] Freire sees the dialectical process of 'denunciation' of an intolerable present and the 'annunciation' of a better future as necessarily ongoing: 'Utopia implies this denunciation and proclamation, but it does not permit the tension between the two to die away with the production of the future previously announced. Now the erstwhile future is the new present, and a new dream experience is forged. History does not die. On the contrary, it goes on.' Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope* (London: Continuum Books, 1992), 77.

[52] 'The gospel does not provide a utopia for us; this is a human work... But the gospel is not alien to the historical project; on the contrary, the human project and the gift of God imply each other. The Word is the foundation and the meaning of all human existence' this foundation is attested to and this meaning is concretized historically through human actions.' Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Eschatology and Politics', from *Gustavo Gutiérrez- Essential Writings,* Ames B, Nickoloff ed. (London: SCM Press, 1996), 205-206.

to a situation where, in time of crisis, the Church's natural instinct was, and is, to be cautious[53].

Thus, it is perhaps natural that many clerics and hierarchs, whether explicitly opponents of liberation theology or not, stressed a spiritual and sacramental reconciliation as the natural amelioration of the region's social inequalities. For example, in 1984, in the wake of the Nicaraguan Sandinista revolution, the bishops of Nicaragua issued a pastoral letter laying forth their hopes for dialogue between supporters of the socialist Sandinista government and their right-wing opponents. They lamented civil violence, but pointedly placed blame on the sins of 'each and every one'. They highlighted 'injustice and oppression... exploitative greed, in political ambition and abuse of power... disregard for moral and religious values, in forgetting, abandoning and denying God'. Their solution was to stress an essentially spiritual rather than a structural vision of reconciliation, from which social justice would presumably flow:

> We must all turn our eyes toward God, our Father who through
> Christ offers us the true path to reconciliation, forgiveness and
> peace... To assist such conversion, the Lord instituted the
> sacrament of reconciliation (confession).[54]

Similarly, in the 'Declaration of Los Andes' in 1985, many of the region's most outspoken critics of liberation theology asserted that, far from what had been put forth by the liberation proponents, a 'true' liberation theology:

> ...supposes the reconciliation of the human person with God, with
> himself or herself, with others and with the entire creation... there
> is no true liberation without reconciliation or any true

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[53] See David Tombs, 'Archbishop Romero and Reconciliation in El Salvador' in Martin Leiner and Susan Fläming, eds., *Latin America between Conflict and Reconciliation* (Göttingen and Bristol, CT: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 43-46.

[54] Bishops of Nicaragua 'Call to Dialogue', from *Liberation Theology- A Documentary History*, Alfred T. Hennelly, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, fourth printing, 1997), 378.

reconciliation without a longing for liberation. In this spirit we wish

to encourage dialogue at the service of unity in the church.[55]

These examples highlight the Church's self-understanding of universality, the Church of all parties in conflict[56]. They also show the Church's self-understanding as the source of reconciliation and social justice. They also highlight the Catholic hierarchy's aversion to appear to be taking one side or another, or to be seen to just be criticising the ruling elite. This aversion, however, limited the church's ability to prophetically critique structural oppression in their context and their possible complicity in it.

b.   Liberation Proponents on Justice and Reconciliation

Critics, however, highlighted the limitations to this view while drawing attention to complexities on the ground. Maryknoll lay missionary Patricia Hynds' rebuttal stated that there was no point in the bishops' call for reconciliation or dialogue in light of their failure to acknowledge that:

...the suffering and violent death of so many Nicaraguans is a

direct consequence of US support for the ('Contra') counter-

revolutionary movement and its persistent efforts... to destabilize

the Sandinista government.[57]

By sidestepping the hierarchy's emphasis on its 'catholicity' and accusing the bishops of political bias and selectiveness in their condemnation of violence, Hynds highlighted an accusation similarly levelled by Daniel Bell in his analysis of liberation theology in Latin America: that 'too often, peace and reconciliation and forgiveness

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[55] 'Declaration of Los Andes', from *Liberation Theology- A Documentary History*, Alfred T. Hennelly, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, fourth printing, 1997), 449.

[56] Again, at the heart of the Catholic Church is its self understanding of its own unity- of liturgy, doctrine, sacrament and authority. The maintenance of that unity, embodied uniquely from other world religious expressions in the person of one individual, the pope, is central to the hierarchy's criticisms of notions of a 'people's church', class consciousness etc. See Philip Hughes, *A Short History of the Catholic Church* (London: Burns &Oates Ltd., 1974, 3rd impression 1978), 26-28, Gerald O'Collins, *Catholicism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Harvey Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity* (London: Collins Religious Publishing, 1988), 106-110.

[57] Patricia Hynds, 'Bishops' Letter Deepens Church-State Estrangement', from *Liberation Theology- A Documentary History*, Alfred T. Hennelly, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, fourth printing, 1997), 381.

have been invoked by the dominant powers of this world in an effort to squelch resistance and change'[58].

Hynds points to an invariable suspicion of those definitions or visions of reconciliation that would put social stability above justice, or the understanding of justice of the centralised security state as opposed to those further down the social spectrum. The vision of reconciliation proposed by the Nicaraguan bishops and the signatories of the Los Andes declaration is by no means a false vision- there is ample room within a reconciliation framework for their spiritual understanding- but she concludes that it is a deficient one for not acknowledging both specific problems and, in her mind, root causes.

Writing in 1976, professor of theology at the University of Birmingham J.G. Davies noted that oppressive systems lead to the dehumanisation of both the oppressor and the oppressed. In such a situation, empathy for the oppressors is manifest in 'struggling against them to save them from themselves and from the structures they subserve'. Therefore, the structures of oppression must be dismantled before the human relationships can be repaired:

> ... liberation... has to take place before reconciliation of the two
> sides is possible- without liberation there is not reconciliation but
> conciliation... Reconciliation means the bringing again into
> harmonious relationship after estrangement, while conciliation
> refers to the gaining of good will by acts which induce friendly
> feeling- to conciliate can mean to placate or soothe.[59]

Davies' analysis is typical of many of the original proponents of liberation and underscores their frequent assertion that what was often held up as reconciliation was, for them, too limited in conception. Reconciliation, however, is not dismissed by any means:

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[58] Daniel M. Bell, Jr., *Liberation Theology After the End of History* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 161 .
[59] J.G. Davies, *Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 184-185.

> ...indeed a theology of revolution demands reconciliation as one of
> its themes, and in certain circumstances, if it is to be actualized,
> may demand a revolution.[60]

Similarly, Chilean priest and author Segundo Galilea asserted that, properly understood, liberation and reconciliation were inter-related because both have at their foundation right relationship. Reconciliation, for Galilea, 'presupposes pardon', which in turn hopefully facilitates the exposure of injustice and a process 'invariably marked by confrontation and conflict'. Yet it is through this process that justice moves from being 'formal and juridical' to being fraternal[61]. Thus, liberation can only be authentic if this process of the transformation of human relationships begins.

As an initial practical example of this in the social context, we can perhaps see the deficiency in the vision of reconciliation put forward by the Salvadoran bishops, at least as Hynds and Galilea sought to highlight it. Approached from the perspective of Ledarach's four coordinates, it emphasised peace and mercy, but at the expense of justice and truth. Using Hamber and Kelly's five-point model, it emphasised attitudinal change and a shared future while marginalizing acknowledgment of the past and the desire on the population's part for significant political change. The bishops' definition remains credible- reconciliation of an individual or sacramental character is a positive manifestation within a multispectral understanding of reconciliation. However, the critiques of Latin American liberationists and the proponents are equally credible; the liberation methodology works on the assumption that such personal and religious understandings must, through a praxis of reflection and action, be continually affecting the social context in a transformative manner.

4. Conceptions of Liberation in Contexts of Division

As practical examples of this interaction, we will now turn our focus to specific theologians and practitioners who have sought to envision theologies with a liberation focus in contexts of division, with specific attention given to their vision of

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[60] J.G. Davies, *Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution*, 186.
[61] Segundo Galilea, 'Liberation Theology and the New Tasks Facing Christians', in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America,* Rosino Gibellini, ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 176.

reconciliation and relationship with the 'other' in the context of a methodology of liberation. While each of these examples exists within a self-understanding of liberation theology, the relationship with the methodology as presented here, as well as the understanding of the definition of- and therefore the place of-reconciliation varies on a case by case basis. However, from each of these examples emerges a pattern that recognises that living together well in the wake of repression and/or conflict should be an integral part of the liberation process.

a. The USA- Exploring Two Understandings of Black Theology

Black theology arose as a contextual theological expression of black consciousness and 'black power' in the USA and sought to address the imbalance of power between blacks and whites and the re-structuring of these relationships through a revision of these power relationships in the face of white racism[62]. Two foundational voices of Black theology are investigated here: James Cone and J. Deotis Roberts, both of whom attempted to locate theological reflection at the intersection of the American civil rights movement and the emergent 'black power' ideology of the 60's and 70's[63].

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[62] Dwight N. Hopkins, *Black Theology USA and South Africa: Politics, Culture and Liberation* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 16.

[63] 'Black Power' represented a socio-political movement within the African-American community of the 1960's and 1970's which gave expression to black consciousness and advocated engendering specifically black expressions of culture, politics, arts and literature. The earliest known usage of the term is accepted to be Richard Wright's book titled *Black Power* from 1954; the term came to prominence after being used, first by New York politician Adam Clayton Powell Jr. on 29 May, 1966 during an address at Howard University where he said, 'To demand these God-given rights is to seek black power'; and most prominently in the text *Black Power* by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967). 'Black Power' is distinct from the mainstream and integrationist Civil Rights movement for a.) advocating more confrontational and militant tendencies such as black nationalism and separatism; and b.) refusing to rule out the use of violence (Carmichael and Hamilton summerised Black Power as representing 'a political framework and ideology which represents the last reasonable opportunity for (US) society to work out its racial problems short of prolonged, destructive guerrilla warfare.'). See Carmichael and Hamilton cited above, Philip S. Foner, ed. *The Black Panthers Speak* (Cambridge MA: De Capo Press, 1970), Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006) and Jeffrey Ogbonna Green Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African-American Identity* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

i. James Cone

Cone seeks theological reflection 'derived from both Malcolm and Martin'- the integrationist and pacifist vision of Martin Luther King with the militant, less compromising narrative of Malcolm X:

> The term 'black' in the phrase refers to Malcolm's influence... the word 'theology' points to my solidarity with Martin. Black theology seeks to bring Malcolm and Martin together and thereby to demonstrate the gospel of Jesus Christ is not alien to black people but rather empowers them in their fight against racism.[64]

Cone's social analysis has at its staring point the reality, as he envisions it, of historical black repression in the US. His theological reflection on that reality begins with the question: historically, who was Jesus? His answer: 'he is who he was', i.e. Jesus is known through a historical-critical historical investigation of the New Testament. The implicit point is that Jesus knew precisely who he was, and this is the catalyst for the oppressed community asking the question: who are we? Cone's answer- the answer of the black community in Cone's reflection- is 'we are black'. Just as Jesus was who he was, it is necessary for the black community to be who they are: black. And if the incarnation is understood as Christ becoming 'as we are', Christ is understood by the black community to be as they are: black.

Cone's theological reflection revolves around this vision of 'blackness', not merely as an ethnicity but an experiential locus, e.g., reality is experienced, scripture is read and spirituality develops in a 'black' way. The underlying message of the incarnation is that Christ himself is a 'black' messiah and must be understood as such, both by the black worshipping community and their white oppressors. To be 'black is to be (as Christ was) despised and rejected, yet conscious and blessed'. Cone states that 'black is beautiful'; 'until white America is able to come to terms with the beauty of blackness... there can be no peace, not integration in the higher sense'[65].

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[64] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 199.
[65] James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 18.

What Cone surmises is that 'blackness' is the primary code for God's presence'[66] and the New Testament gospel must be stripped of it 'whiteness'[67].

> The definition of Christ as black is crucial for Christology if we truly
> believe in his continued presence today... Any statement about
> Jesus today that fails to consider blackness as the *decisive* factor
> about his person is a denial of the New Testament message...
> Blackness is a manifestation of the being of God in that it reveals
> that neither divinity or humanity reside in white definitions but in
> liberation from captivity.[68]

'Blackness' is not only the key to Cone's Christology but his soteriology; if whites want relationship with God, they must 'enter by means of their black brothers'. Moreover, to assume that 'one can know God without knowing blackness', Cone states, 'is the basic heresy of the white church... God's revelation (in America) has always been black, red, or some other shocking colour, but never white'. In fact, for Cone, 'whiteness' equates with the New Testament's understanding of the demonic, of the principalities and powers[69].

Given such an uncompromising vision of the Gospel and how one enters into a relationship with God, Cone's vision of reconciliation within it is equally uncompromising. He asserts two points: the first is that reconciliation proceeds from liberation; reconciliation is the result of God's liberation of the oppressed:

> According to the Bible, reconciliation is primarily an act of God
> (and) the objective reality of reconciliation is connected with
> divine liberation... Israel's covenant relationship with God is made
> possible because of God's liberating activity... There could have
> been no covenant at Sinai without the exodus from Egypt, no
> reconciliation without liberation. Liberation is what God does to

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[66] Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, vii.
[67] Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 33.
[68] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 120-121.
[69] Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 150.

affect reconciliation and without the former the latter is impossible.[70]

Secondly, only the oppressed can define and enact the parameters of what constitutes reconciliation:

> We must not let whites define the terms of reconciliation... To be reconciled with white people means fighting against their power to enslave, reducing masters to the human level, thereby making them accountable to black liberation... White people must be made to understand that reconciliation is a costly experience. It is not holding hands and singing 'Black and white together' and 'We shall overcome'. Reconciliation means *death*, and only those who are prepared to die in the struggle for freedom will experience new life in God. [71]

Thus, Cone's view of the inter-relationship of liberation and reconciliation is that they are both brought about by God wresting power from one group and giving it to another:

> Black Power... is God's new way of acting in America. It is his way of saying to blacks that they are human beings; he is saying to whites: 'Get used to it!' Whites, as well as some blacks will find the encounter of Black Power a terrible experience[72].

ii. J. Deotis Roberts

In contrast to Cone, Roberts articulates a more nuanced view of reconciliation by presenting a different emphasis. As with Cone, Roberts articulates the inter-relationship of liberation and reconciliation, the 'two main poles of Black Theology'[73]. But if Cone sees the primary end of theology as liberation, Roberts sees the primary end as reconciliation. Redemption is Roberts' transcendent goal for both blacks and

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[70] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (San Francisco: Harper &Row, 1975), 228-229.
[71] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 238. 239.
[72] *Black Theology and Black Power*, 61.
[73] J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 8.

for whites, which will be brought about by revolution and through reconciliation achieved between equals[74].

Roberts does not repudiate Cone. Rather, he interprets Cone as 'necessary demolition work'[75]. He is, however, critical of Cone, emphasising an understanding of reconciliation, not at the expense of liberation, but one that has 'come to terms with liberation[76]. Roberts' view of reconciliation echoes earlier assertions that, in contexts of division, a focus on reconciliation is pragmatic[77]. As there is no realistic chance of blacks returning to a pre-slavery Africa[78], reconciliation represents 'the more excellent way', 'costly grace... beyond liberation, beyond confrontation[79]'. Roberts points out that God cares for the oppressed but emphasises that God nonetheless also has a 'salvific concern' for those that oppress, particularly as it is quite possible for oppressed to subsequently oppress. 'Theology', then, 'has an ethical task to be concerned about liberation, humanization and reconciliation'[80].

Thus, reconciliation is the practical lens for envisioning liberation in an interracial society, and mutual communication is the only way forward:

> A Black Theology that takes reconciliation seriously must work at
>
> the task of inter-communication between blacks and whites under

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[74] Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation,* 7.

[75] J. Deotis Roberts, 'Black Theology in the Making', in James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History Vol. 1, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 118.

[76] J. Deotis Roberts, 'Black Theology in the Making', 119.

[77] The essentially pragmatic nature of processes of conflict resolution in a shared yet conflicted space is explored in detail by Sumantra Bose in *Contested Land: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus and Sri Lanka* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007). It was personally reinforced for me in 2004 on a trip to Israel/Palestine to meet with Jewish, Christian and Muslim peacemakers. As mentioned earlier, Rami Elhannan, a 52 year-old Israeli architect who was the coordinator of the Parents' Circle, a group of Israelis and Palestinians who had lost family members in Israeli/Palestinian violence, and who now used their influence to work for a negotiated settlement, Elhannan said, 'You know, we (Israelis and Palestinians) are not doomed to fight each other forever. But we *are* doomed to live together. So there must be peace.' Bose frames it in three factors: the role of a powerful third party (in his case, the US); and avoidance of gradual incrementalism, which might lead to avoidance of the main issues of antagonism and eventual fatigue with the process. Overall though, he holds out the hopeful statement: 'Contested lands do not need to remain contested.'

[78] Deotis Roberts, 'Black Theology in the Making', in *Black Theology: A Documentary History Vol. 1, 1966-1979*, James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, eds. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 119.

[79] Roberts, 'Black Theology in the Making', 120.

[80] J. Deotis Roberts, *Black Theology in Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 18.

the assumption that for those who are open to the truth, there may be communication from the inside out but at the same time there may be communication from the outside in. In the latter sense, white Christians may be led to understand and work with blacks for liberation and reconciliation on an interracial basis.[81]

Cone responded to Roberts directly on this point, stating 'I simply cannot accept either the theological or the sociological basis of Roberts' analysis of reconciliation'[82]. All white attitudes and actions are to be evaluated from the black perspective:

> ... It must be made absolutely clear that it is the black community that decides both the *authenticity* of white conversion and also the place of these converts will play in the struggle for black freedom. The converts can have nothing to say about the validity of their conversion or their place in it, *except* as permitted by the oppressed community itself... White converts, if they can be found, must be *made* to realize that they are like babies who have barely learned how to walk and talk. They must be told when to speak and what to say; otherwise they will be excluded from our struggle. [83]

Since, in his estimation, the white community has not come to terms with the depth of blacks' anger and hurt over systematised oppression, Cone believes that as long as violence against blacks is ongoing- even in the broadest sense- speaking of reconciliation is unacceptable:

> We must inform (liberal oppressors) as calmly and clearly as possible that black people cannot talk about the possibilities of reconciliation until *full* emancipation has become a reality for all black people. We cannot talk about living together as brothers (the

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[81] J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 7.
[82] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (San Francisco: Harper &Row, 1975), 239.
[83] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 242.

'black and white together' attitude) as long as they do everything they can to destroy us.[84]

Unless whites can get every single black person to agree that reconciliation is realized, there is no place whatsoever for white rhetoric about the reconciling love of blacks and whites.[85]

In the final analysis, Cone's desire to empower the black community and to impress upon them their beauty and worth in the eyes of God is admirable[86]. Moreover, the acknowledgement of- and the expression of- anger, hurt and loss is a natural part of the process of an oppressed individual or community's desire to be heard by those perceived as the oppressors:

...since the specific reasons for the anger are finally clustered around the destructive indignities that whites have visited on blacks, it may be that the only way to get whites to start listening is by speech that to untrained white ears will sound raucous and ungenteel- fair enough when the events being referred to are ugly

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[84] Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 145-146.

[85] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 242.

[86] The intrinsic value of all human life in the eyes of God, particularly the popularly demeaned, is foundational in liberation theology. It is the central argument of Gutiérrez' biography of 16th century Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas who controversially affirmed the full humanity of the Amerindians, evidenced by the fact that Christ died for all without distinction; for Las Casas, to deny justice is to deny salvation. In light of this, Sobrino speaks of the 'Divine element in the struggle for human rights... God and the struggle for human rights stand in correlation (and) with God in mind this struggle can be better understood and better waged.' For Sobrino, there is a 'self-evident goodness' in the hope and struggle of those denied human rights by structured oppression: 'Who can doubt that this affirmation of hope in life, with its self-evident and radiant goodness, is good in itself and worthy of a response in solidarity?' Of course, the institutional framework of Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* was unequivocal in its respect for the dignity of the human person, made concrete by concern for their social condition. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, originally published as *En Busca de las Pobres de Jesucristo* (Lima, Peru: Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas, 1992), translated by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993)218-240, Jon Sobrino and Juan Hernández Pico, *Theology of Christian Solidarity*, originally published as *Teológico de la solidaridad cristiana* (Managua, Nicaragua: Instituto Histórico Centroamericano, 1983), translated by Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 69 and Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, originally published as Liberación con espíritu (San Salvador: Jon Sobrino, 1985), translated by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 103.

and vicious. One is not permitted to employ the criterion of gentility to describe abysmal evil.[87]

However, if the ultimate perceived goal is a healthy, fulfilled life for both parties, the positive aspects of anger in the face of injustice must not overwhelm the necessity of divided communities to critically reflect on the process of living together well[88].

Cone's amalgamation of theology and ethnicity is perhaps understandable, as the most immediate and recognisable feature of inequality, oppression and conflict in the American context which Cone wishes to address is the racial one- blacks are physically black and whites are physically white. However, Cone's assigning specific *theological* significance to 'blackness' and 'whiteness' is problematic. Cone demands that whites acknowledge (theological) 'black' as beautiful, while at the same time demanding they reject their (theological) 'whiteness'. However, he likewise stresses the need for blacks to reject whites' negativity toward black appearance (lighter skin or darker skin, black hair, etc.) and for blacks and whites to find beauty and worth in physical blackness[89]. Cone does not offer a positive symbolic, specifically physical idea of 'whiteness', just the negative theological one. He makes no effort to acknowledge beauty, value or worth in what is physically white. While Cone does not equate all white people with theological 'whiteness', his continual reference to the collective attitudes and actions of 'whites' in America makes the distinction perhaps a too delicate and nuanced one to immediately recognise. Similarly, Cone's equating

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[87] Robert McAfee Brown, 'Learning from James Cone', in *A Black Theology of Liberation*, James H. Cone (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 165.

[88] Dr. Robert Enright has written extensively on the recognition of anger as the first step in the process of forgiveness: 'Remember anger can be healthy. Anger can motivate us to take action, to right wrongs, to stand up and face problems, to fight for our self-esteem... Anger becomes a problem when, instead of taking action, you let your anger settle into an ongoing resentment... seek revenge rather than justice (or) when you are too afraid to act and fall into denial, suppression or repression.' Dr. Robert Enright, *Forgiveness is a Choice* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2001), 104.

[89] Cone quotes Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad's critiques of blacks who physically appropriated white fashion and physical traits, such as hair-straightening. Thus, self-affirmation in the physical sense, finding beauty in one's physical appearance, forms a basis of Cone's theology as well. See Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 18-19.

of 'whiteness' with the demonic and the white church with the Antichrist[90] runs the risk of being interpreted as dehumanisation and racism[91].

All this leads to the perhaps unintended consequence of equating 'blackness' with a presupposition of inherent righteousness which, in Cone's context, then raises the issue about who decides the qualifications for either descriptor 'oppressed' or 'oppressor'. As James Ellis has argued in a critique of Cone:

> What then does this mean for the non-oppressive white Christian; that he/she is incapable of responsibly representing Christ because of the inherited social privilege that their skin colour provides or that doing so outside of an ultra liberal theology is somehow less valuable before the Lord? What does it mean for the black Christian whose racialised social position renders him or her oppressed, but whose lifestyle and behaviour nonetheless classifies them as an oppressor just the same? Are we to neglect that within all oppressed communities there exist those who also oppress?[92]

What Cone's theological refection, perhaps unwittingly, contributes to the understanding of a transformational theology is that, in a context of division, a vision of liberation that disregards reconciliation- and reconciliation as a *process*- to the extent that his appears to do is deficient. His analysis is so biased toward the desires and concerns of one community, and his tone and language so dismissive toward the 'other', that they constitute an almost-complete exclusion of the 'other' with whom a reconciled relationship must be found. Furthermore, it is impractical to disregard

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[90] 'If there is any contemporary meaning of the Antichrist (or the 'principalities and powers'), the white church seems to be a manifestation of it. It is the enemy of Christ.' James H. Cone, 'The White Church and Black Power' in *Black Theology: A Documentary History Vol. 1, 1966-1979*, 73.

[91] Liechty and Clegg describe such attitudes ('You are less than human', 'you are evil' and 'you are demonic') as the practical quintessence of sectarianism. 'To say that a particular action is was evil, inhuman or demonic might be warranted; to extend this judgement to the group or person as a whole is not'. Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001), 275.

[92] The Rev. James Ellis III, 'A Critique of Cone's Black Liberation Theology', http://day1.org/3145-faith_seeking_understanding_a_critique_of_cones_black_liberation_theology, internet, accessed 13 March 2012.

dialogue or interaction with the 'other' until ones' own desires are met in full. To be sure, one cannot underestimate how difficult it can be to engage in dialogue and interaction with those perceived as oppressors or abusers. But in a context of division, particularly where there is no alternative other than to share space, acknowledgement of the needs and the desires of the 'other' is perhaps a fundamental concern. Cone has recently tacked in this direction:

> Blacks and whites are bound together in Christ by their brutal and beautiful encounter in (America)... Whites may be bad brothers and sisters, murderers of their own black kin, but they are still our brothers and sisters. We are bound together in America by faith and tragedy.[93]

From this analysis of Cone's theology, the conclusion can be drawn that it is so contextually specific it is difficult to see how it would translate into another, particularly one such as Northern Ireland where the dynamics of conflict are more complex than Cone's interpretation of the experience of US blacks[94]. South African black theologian Alan Boesack voices this concern from his own context:

> Cone's mistake is that he has taken Black Theology out of the framework of theology of liberation, thereby making his own situation (black in America) and his own movement (liberation from white racism) the ultimate criterion for all theology. By doing this, Cone makes of a contextual theology a regional theology, which is not the same thing at all.[95]

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[93] James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 165.

[94] The contextual specificity of Cone's work extends to time as well as place. Alistair Kee notes that the social, economic and political culture of globalisation in the 21st century has made the racially-specific analysis of Cone's theology- as well as that of much of Black Theology in general- significantly antiquated. Kee opines that Black theology, a contextual product of the 60s, was exhausted by the 90s: 'By the 90s the context had entirely changed, but this contextual theology did not reposition itself. Far from exhibiting a new flourishing of creativity, commitment and imagination, it had been content to repeat the mantras of a previous period.' See Alistair Kee, *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology* (London SCM Press, 2008), xiii.

[95] Alan Aubrey Boesak, *Black Theology, Black Power* (Kok, Holland: Uitgeversmaatachappij, 1976; London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1978), 143.

Boesack's use of the African phrase *Motho ke motho ka batho babang* ('one is only human because of others, with others, for others') expands Cone's ethnocentric theology to one that embraces reconciliation expressly[96]. It points toward a more holistic vision of liberation and reconciliation, one that might better inform a theology of transformation in a different context of division.

b. Israel/Palestine- Exploring Jewish and Palestinian Liberation Theologies

Dr. Marc Ellis' And Dr. Naim Ateek's theologies also address liberation of the community in cultural/ethnic contextual terms[97]. Their contribution to the interaction between liberation and reconciliation involves visions of empowerment of the oppressed community through (in the case of Ellis) an analysis of how overcoming dehumanisation specifically affects relationships with others and (in the case of Ateek) a theological praxis around the issues of justice and peace in the context of a people oppressed by a formerly oppressed people now in the place to oppress[98].

i. Marc Ellis

Ellis' approach, like Cone's and Roberts', also deals with relationships to violent power and addresses the Jewish experience of powerlessness in the form of historic anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and the subsequent shift to empowerment in the form of Zionism and the state of Israel[99]. This shift, in Ellis' estimation, has profoundly

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[96] Boesak, *Black Theology, Black Power*, 152.

[97] Ellis serves as University Professor of Jewish Studies Professor of History and the director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Baylor University in Waco TX.

[98] See 'Sabeel- About Us', http://www.sabeel.org/etemplate.php?id=2, internet, accessed 23 August 2010.

[99] A definitive text dealing with the history and development of European anti-Semitism is Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews* (London Penguin, 1977), which gives a comprehensive and detailed reading of the development of Hitler's thought and practice. The reality of the Holocaust as a meta-event in human history (i.e. the event through which with all events are understood, and which calls all other existence into question), e.g., Arendt, Levi, Wiesel Bauman, is explored in Michael D. Ryan, *Human Responses to the Holocaust: Perpetrators and Victims, Bystanders and Resisters* (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1981). More recently (and regarding connections made by Ellis) Idith Zertal's *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) notes that 'Israeli society has defined itself in relation to the Holocaust...', exemplified perfectly in the 'bestowal of Israeli citizenship on the 6 million murdered Jews in the early days of statehood... their symbolic ingathering into the Israeli body politic' which reflected '(the victims') historical, material, political, psychological and metaphysical presence in the

affected both the Jewish people and their relationships with others. His theology explores how both the legacy of trauma and the acquisition of power have affected the Jewish people, and subsequently addresses the relationship between liberation and reconciliation.

The place of reconciliation in Ellis' work is three-fold: the Jewish peoples' reconciliation with the Hebrew prophetic tradition based on God's justice; their reconciliation with the principle victims of Jewish power, the Palestinians; and their reconciliation with the Christian church.

Ellis builds on the developments of Holocaust Theology[100], which understands the Holocaust as the central narrative of Jewish experience:

> ... To be a Jew is to stand within the event of the Holocaust, to see this as the orienting event in our lives... That which stood at the centre previous to the Holocaust- the synagogue, liberalism, radical politics- ultimately recedes to secondary positions. According to Holocaust Theology, the future of the Jewish people

Israeli collectivity.' In Ronit Lentin's feminist/gendered reading, *Israel and the Daughters of the Shoah* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), this has given rise to a 'masculinised' view of Israel and a 'feminised' view of both the victims of the Holocaust and the Jewish Diaspora. In all the above cases, the Holocaust remains a defining meta-narrative for Israeli/Jewish existence, and by extension to their relationships with others.

[100] Holocaust Theology, sometimes referred to as 'Theologie nach Auschwitz' (German: 'Theology after Auschwitz' due to the common practice of using 'Auschwitz' to represent the Holocaust as a whole), is a theological line of enquiry, primarily within Judaism but also found in Christianity, engaged in the investigation of the nature of God, the nature of evil and their inter-relation. As the Abrahamic faiths have traditionally taught that God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent, holocaust theology seeks to grapple with the dichotomy of such an understanding in relation to acts of human evil manifested in the Holocaust of the 1930s and 1940s when approximately 11 million people, including 6 million Jews, were subjected to genocide by the German Nazi regime and its allies. The central theme of holocaust theology is if and how one can reconcile the traditional view of God with the existence of such evil and suffering is view of God with the existence of evil and suffering. Ellis mentions the work of Elie Wiesel, Emil Fackenheim, Richard Rubenstein and Irving Greenberg specifically.

is found in remembrance and self-empowerment rather than prayer or politics.[101]

Holocaust theology, in essence, elucidates that the historical moment of the Holocaust- ultimate powerlessness- is the Jewish peoples' central experience. This historical moment of powerlessness necessitated a new Jewish reality: empowerment, which finds its ultimate expression in the form of the state of Israel. In Holocaust theology, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust was, and is, the 'question' of Jewish reality: what is to be done in the face of objectification at such an essential level that it is prepared to enact mass extermination? Ellis postulates that the acquisition of power- in the form of the Jewish state- and an abiding memory of Holocaust and survival provide that theology's 'answer'. Thus, Ellis posits that holocaust theology has led to a context in which the Holocaust and the state of Israel are inextricably connected, with the former perpetually informing the latter[102].

Ellis, however, finds this 'answer' is deficient. While acknowledging the debt owed to Holocaust theology, he envisions a new generation of Jewish theology that is generous to other faith traditions and fosters a critical discourse *vis-a-vis* the Jewish peoples' ongoing ontological narrative. Practically, the theology Ellis envisions must in its essence be a call to 'commitment and solidarity in all their pain and possibility, as well as a critical understanding of the history we are creating and the courage it takes to change the course of that history[103]. He demands theological reflection on 'that which Holocaust theology has been unable to articulate- the cost of our empowerment'[104]. Without denying the Holocaust's exceptional character in both world history and in the history of the Jews, he wishes it to be a point, not simply of

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[101] Marc Ellis, 'Critical Thought and Messianic Trust: Reflections on a Jewish Liberation Theology', from *The Future of Liberation Theology*, Marc Ellis and Otto Maduro, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2nd printing, 1989), 376-77.

[102] Marc H. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation* (UK ed. London: SCM Press, 2002), 90.
Ellis does not mention it, but it is worth noting that it is within six paragraphs of the document founding the state of Israel that the first mention of the Holocaust appears. See 'The Proclamation of Independence of 14 May 1948', from *The Israeli-Arab Reader*, US ed., Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin eds. (New York: Penguin Books, 4th ed., 1984), 126.

[103] Marc H. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation* (UK ed. London: SCM Press, 2002), 108.

[104] Marc Ellis, 'Critical Thought and Messianic Trust: Reflections on a Jewish Liberation Theology', from *The Future of Liberation Theology*, Marc Ellis and Otto Maduro, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2nd printing, 1989), 379.

remembrance, but of critical reflection; 'The desire to remain a victim is evidence of disease; yet to become a conqueror after having been a victim is a recipe for moral suicide'[105]. The Jewish community faces the dichotomy between 'empire' (an expansionist state of Israel at the expense of others) and 'community' (The Jewish people in relation with others), a dichotomy present throughout human history. Though neither is ever perfectly realized, they represent the tension of human existence: to be generous or to horde; to seek inclusivity or to dominate; to coexist or to conquer.

Ellis sees his contribution to Jewish theology as his demand for a reflective stage that examines the policies of the state of Israel and the Jewish people as objects of oppression. The reflective commitment to praxis on the part of the Jews would encapsulate 'the dialectic of the Holocaust and political empowerment, by renewal and solidarity as the way to recover our history and witness, is the path of liberation[106]. It is here that Ellis' vision of a new Jewish theology addresses transformation. He brings the understanding that justice and liberation has not been- and cannot be-accomplished through the acquisition of power, as that empowerment has visited injustice on another people; ones' own subjectivity cannot be achieved by objectifying another. Thus, Ellis' theology states that the fate of the Jews as an oppressed people and that of the Palestinians- as an oppressed people by another oppressed people newly empowered- is inextricably interdependent:

> A Jewish theology of liberation is unequivocal in this regard: the
> Palestinian people have been deeply wronged in the creation of
> Israel and the occupation of the territories. As we celebrate our
> empowerment, we must repent our transgressions and stop them
> immediately[107]... Fidelity to our own values and history is
> intimately connected to the struggles for liberation of others; the
> brokenness of our past is betrayed, our political empowerment
> made suspect, when others become our victims.[108]

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[105] Marc H. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*, 25.
[106] Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*, 5.
[107] Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*, 111.
[108] Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*, 2.

Ellis conceives of the purpose of his Jewish theology of liberation to be a key component of breaking the cycle of violence between the estranged communities of the Jews and the plight of the objects of Jewish power, the Palestinians. As such, he conceives of liberation not merely as the survival or security of the Jewish people (the cornerstones of the foundation of the state of Israel), but Jews living together well with the 'other'. It is here that liberation and reconciliation coexist in Ellis' work. This extends to the relationship between Jews and Christians. Ellis sees a key factor of his work relating to the Jewish experience with the Christian tradition, especially as it relates to biblical justice and the place of prominence it holds for Christians. Latin American liberation theology spoke to the propensity for domination within Christianity and prophetically re-asserted the Christian narrative of God's call for justice and solidarity with the suffering. Ellis draws attention to the fact that much of the source material of this Christian understanding of God's justice for the poor and the marginalized springs from the prophetic literature tradition of the objects of centuries of Christian domination and marginalization: the Jews. 'Liberation theologians', he concludes, 'often miss an element crucial to the Exodus story itself: that it has a history of interpretation by the people who lived the story and who live today'[109]. Since liberation theology owes a great debt to the biblical prophetic tradition, there is both a reconciliation element and a re-balancing of power at work. Through liberation theology, the Christian tradition finds a source of renewal and liberation in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Thus, Ellis' theology sees a reclaiming of the prophetic liberation inheritance, healing a past rift with the Christian tradition, and then makes that prophetic tradition of justice, liberation and reconciliation the focus for healing the new rift- that with the Palestinian community who have been oppressed and marginalized by a Jewish state that was a direct product of the devastation of the Holocaust.

As Ellis' liberation theology speaks directly to the Jewish people's narrative of trauma and the need to critically reflect how that narrative has affected their own subjectivity and that of others, it is perhaps no surprise that Ellis is a figure of

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[109] Marc H. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation* (UK ed. London: SCM Press, 2002), 72.

controversy in the Jewish community[110]. This controversy is to be expected; even if political beliefs and biases are laid aside, the ontological shift that Ellis' theology requires of his community is extraordinary. Ultimately, though, what Ellis' theological refection contributes to the understanding of a transformational theology is an explicit declaration that, in a context of division, one community's conception of liberation directly impinges on its relationships with others. More fundamentally, liberation of one cannot lead to the subjugation of another. Ultimately, for Ellis, liberation occurs for one *by way of* reconciliation with the 'other'.

ii. Naim Ateek

Turning attention to the other side of the Israeli-Palestinian divide, Palestinian Anglican priest and theologian Naim Ateek's contribution to the theology of liberation is in his emphasis that justice in this context, where the complexities of the situation include deep social, political, religious and cultural divisions, contested space, as well as an imbalance of power between protagonists, can never be solely about the demands of one group or the other and must be defined in an interdependent manner.

His starting place is the Palestinian people as the historical subject, but as the contextual issues involve interpretation of scripture by both communities, he does so by first framing the Palestinian people as theological subjects, overcoming their 'invisibility' in the theological discourse[111] by locating themselves in the scriptural record. As well as stressing that the biblical promise to Abraham was to all his

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[110] American conservative activist David Horowitz profiled Ellis in his book, *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America* (Wash. DC: Regery Publishing, 2006), prominently noting that Ellis holds a chair at a Baptist university and a doctorate from the Jesuit's Marquette University, 'no one's idea of a serious research centre on Jewish thought', 143. Stephen Plaut notes that Ellis is not endorsed by 'a single Jewish scholar'. http://archive.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=8889. Accessed 20 August 2010. The policy group Middle East Forum profiles Ellis as a 'non-specialist' in the field of Middle East studies. http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/4154. Accessed 21 August 2010. In 9 February 2012, the magazine *Religious Dispatches* reported the suspension of Ellis from Baylor University for alleged sexual misconduct. Ellis' supporters in the action, who included Dr. Cornel West, feminist theologian Rosemary Ruether and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, issued a petition on his behalf, claiming his suspension was politically motivated due to Ellis' controversial views. It only underscores Ellis' position as a polarizing figure.

[111] Rosemary Radford Ruether and Herman J. Ruether, *The Wrath of Jonah- The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 186.

descendants, he further draws an even more fundamental point: that 'it is clear in the Hebrew Scriptures that the land of Canaan really belongs to God[112]. So a theological understanding of issues of land, power and justice must root itself the nature of God: who God is and what is he like[113]? Therefore, Ateek frames the issue not in whether or not God 'gave' the land to the Jews, but in what his giving of the land signified: God's concern for the provision of the poor and the displaced:

> The blessing of God's concern for one people is universalized to encompass every people and every land. Consequently, every nation can say about its own country, 'this is God's land, God's country'... Such a blessing does not exclude the Jews or the modern State of Israel. Neither does it justify their invoking an ancient promise... in order to uproot an entire people and expropriating their land in the twentieth century... The tragedy of many Zionists is that they have trapped themselves into this nationalist concept of God (and) they will be freed only if they discard their primitive image of God for a more universal one.[114]

Ateek calls on the Jewish people to re-locate themselves in that tradition; to discover it anew and use it as the foundation for what is to come between Arabs and Jews.

On the issue of violent resistance to occupation and marginalization, Ateek points out that since both Jews and Palestinians have suffered great violence[115], the path to liberation and justice must transcend violence. Echoing Ellis, he stresses that any moves toward liberation or justice that either only address the grievances of the one or the other community- or at the expense of the other community- will only perpetuate the cycle of violence and victimhood. Even violent action perceived as legitimate resistance to a perceived- or actual grievous wrong must be cast under

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[112] Naim Ateek, *Justice And Only Justice- A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 105.

[113] Ateek, *Justice And Only Justice*, 109.

[114] Ateek, *Justice And Only Justice*, 108-09.

[115] For the Palestinians, a central narrative is that of the *Nakbah* (النكبـة يــوم *Yawm an-Nakba*, meaning 'Day of the Catastrophe'), the 1947-48 partition of Palestine by UN mandate and the systematic loss of land to the Jewish state. During this period, half of the Palestinian Arab population fled the country, either voluntarily or otherwise, and their position as a majority population of the area was lost. Beverly Milton-Edwards, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict- A People's War* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 59.

suspicion; there is a legitimate right of resistance to the occupation by military action[116], but crucially it does not break the cycle of violence. Acknowledgement of the historic pain and victimhood of the other community (their history of objectivity), the legitimacy of their call for liberation and justice, as well as the legitimacy of their national aspirations for a functional and sovereign state (both part of the ongoing development of their historical subjectivity) are all key to this conception of liberation. It is only through this risk that the cycle of violence and victimhood can eventually be overcome.

Solidarity among the marginalized takes on a new dynamic in the divided situation. The situation of such emotive issues as those involving divided situations like that in Israel/Palestine can see the fostering of solidarity between advocates for non-violent liberation and reconciliation as a cross-community-building exercise in and of itself. In essence, those seeking constructive and non-violent solutions to the issues are often a minority themselves, and this minority status- across the community divide- is an exercise of consciousness-raising all on its own. Sociologist Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD)[117] notes:

> I think people who are for justice and human rights and peace are
> on the same side. Naim (Ateek) and I are not in any way on
> opposite sides. The ones who are on the other side from me are
> the ones encouraging conflict and domination and occupation and
> militarism.[118]

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[116] The UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/3246 (XXIX) of 29 November 1974 '...Reaffirms the legitimacy of the peoples' struggle for liberation form colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation by all available means, including armed struggle (and) ... Strongly condemns all Governments which do not recognize the right to self-determination and independence of peoples under colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation, notably the peoples of Africa and the Palestinian people.' UN General Assembly database, available at: http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/738/48/IMG/NR073848.pdf?OpenElement, internet, accessed 23 August 2010.

[117] ICAHD is 'a non-violent, direct-action organization established in 1997 to resist Israeli demolition of Palestinian houses in the Occupied Territories'. Jeff Halper, an Israeli professor of anthropology, is its founder. Their website is http://www.icahd.org/.

[118] 'Sabeel: "The Way"', available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPKPjflymqw, the internet, accessed 19 August 2010.

This dynamic of solidarity toward a joint understanding of overcoming cycles of violence, marginalization and sectarianism might be seen as an understanding of the divided community as both diverse and interdependent. Thus, a transformational theology addressing a divided context in which religious nationalism plays a role, the issue of translation and interpretation of scripture must attempt, not the rejection of nationalisms, but hopefully their transcendence. To do otherwise risks simply continuing a sectarian cycle.

Drawing on the analysis of Hamber and Kelly, such a transformational theology needs to remain concrete and rooted in reconciliation as a socio-political process. In a similar way, Ateek's Sabeel centre, founded in 1989 to help facilitate the development of a Palestinian liberation theology, has developed a ten-point programme that seeks to comprehensively address the historic and current situation between the two nations and envision a way forward[119]:

1. End the occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
2. Establishment of a viable, sovereign and independent Palestinian State recognized by Israel.
3. Have universal recognition and acceptance of Israel by both the Palestinians and the Arab states.
4. Recognition of and amends for past wrongs by the state of Israel to the Palestinian people.
5. Rights to Palestinian refugees.
6. Redemption of the illegal Israeli settlements.
    a. The settlements become an integral part of the Palestinian state and serve as housing for returning refugees.
    b. Israeli settlers who want to remain must be welcome to remain, but as Palestinian citizens.
7. Jerusalem as a shared capital of the Palestinian and Israeli states.
8. Develop an interdependent confederation between Palestine and Israel .
9. Create a culture of peace.

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[119] Sabeel: "The Way"', available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPKPjflymqw, internet, accessed 19 August 2010.

       a.   Educational programmes between the two states.

       b.   Development of creative and active nonviolence programmes.

10. Build fully multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious democracy in the two states.

       a.   Full democratic rights for all citizens of both states.

       b.   Full religious equality for all faiths in both states.

       c.   Separation of religion from the state.

The depth and breadth of these ten points draw attention, first, to the implicit unacceptability and dysfunction of the *status quo. S*econdly, the full scale of transformation of the *status quo* is implicitly declared. Both draw attention to the full scale- in terms of time, resources and social and political will- of achieving true peace and reconciliation. Finally, the interdependent nature of transformation in contexts of division is stressed. The various allowances and mechanisms of interdependence are not framed as either magnanimity (one or the other party simply seeking to be generous) or as tactical concessions (expedience so as to achieve the most favourable settlement for one's self). Rather, the vision is at all levels completely dependent on the will and action of both parties.

This is both a strength and weakness, as this programme does not lend itself to gradualism or political expediency. When one looks at the arduous negotiations to try and resolve the Northern Ireland conflict[120], and the subsequent process of defining and implementing a programme of reconciliation, the difficulties can appear insurmountable and open to dismissal as essentially utopian[121]. Ultimately though,

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[120] See Paul Bew and Gordon Gillespie, *The Northern Ireland Peace Process 1993-1996: A Chronology* (London: Serif, 1996). Also, see Senator George Mitchell, *Making Peace (*London: William Heinemann, 1999).

[121] The accusation of utopianism dogged Latin American liberation theology from its inception. However, Gutiérrez noted that the vision of utopia should not be dismissed as vague idealism; such a vision is, in fact, 'a historical plan for a qualitatively different society and... new relations among human beings'. For Gutiérrez, liberation will always be both 'a condemnation of the existing order' and firmly rooted in the rational. Both Gutiérrez and Boff preferred to see utopian visions as an essential aspect for the realization of social transformation through the engendering of hope, without which social progress is impossible. For them, the utopian vision and the rational programme are inextricably mixed and constitute a complex interplay between the 'little utopia' (bread for the day), the 'great utopia' (a truly transformed society of freedom and justice) and the 'absolute utopia' (communion with God in a redeemed creation). Those seeking to envision transformation in

what Ateek's theological refection contributes to the understanding of a transformational theology is to demonstrate how comprehensive and interdependent the vision of reconciliation must be in a context of division and just how expansive Lederach's moral imagination can be. The parameters of both liberation and reconciliation cannot be based on the terms of one side of the divide alone; liberation and reconciliation are only possible with a shared vision of fundamental social and political shifts initiated from both positions.

c. Exploring Liberation Theology in the Irish Context

i. Enda McDonagh

In the Irish context, Irish theologian Enda McDonagh lays a foundation in his various commentaries on liberation theology and, specifically, liberation theology's concern with the poor as a new historical subject[122]. He begins by observing what he sees as an overall dearth of contextual Irish theology[123]. He notes that as the

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contexts of division struggle with the temptation to root themselves in the 'little utopia' and allow the visions of the 'great' and 'absolute' to wither or, similarly, to allow the process of reflective praxis to atrophy by not reflecting on the 'little' as a contributing factor in the process *toward* the 'great' and the 'absolute'. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Eschatology and Politics', from James B. Nickloff, ed. *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 201-202 and Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates, 1987), 94-95.

[122] The Second Vatican Council, particularly *Pacem in Terris*, indicated a new focus for the Church that shifted theological emphasis from the poor being an *object* of God's love to the *subject* of God's justice and liberation. This understanding developed further at the second meeting of the Latin American Episcopate (abbreviated in Spanish and Portuguese as CELAM II) held in Medellín, Columbia in 1968. There, the bishops recognized that Latin America was experiencing a new epoch of human aspiration. In this new dispensation, the poor and the marginalized became a new historical subject, a new theological focus, beginning from a contextual emerging to take on a fuller role in the search for theological and social alternatives to their own situation as essential partners in the theological process.

[123] The Reverend Professor Enda McDonagh is the former Professor of Moral Theology at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland, a post he held from 1958 until his retirement in 1995. McDonagh's own Moral Theology is an extention of the tradition of Catholic Moral Theology which can be understood as dealing with 'how one is to act' in contrast to dogmatic theology which proposes 'what one is to believe.' In this sense, it is a contextual extension of dogmatic theology. McDonagh deals explicitly with the interaction of moral theology with contextual theology in *Northern Ireland: A Challenge to Theology* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1986) and *Theology in Winter Light* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2010). For introductions to Moral Theology, see Michael A. Hayes and Liam Gearon, eds., *Contemporary Catholic Theology: A Reader* (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1998, reprinted 2001), 389-402 and Antônio Moser and Bernardino Leers, *Moral Theology: Dead Ends and Ways Forward*, originally published in Brazil as *Teologia moral: Impasses e alternativas* (São Paolo: CESEP, 1987, English translation, Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates Press, 1990).

development of such theology happens at a reflective stage, this is further evidence for him that post-independence Ireland has not socially or theologically reached this reflective point. Irish theologian Gabriel Daly concurred and opined that Irish Christianity had been 'intellectually unadventurous and derivative':

> For a variety of reasons, most of which were beyond our control, we have lacked the sort of post-renaissance and post-Enlightenment intellectual culture which might have been expected to produce a distinctive theology. Irish Catholics looked to Rome not only for authority but also for their theology and spirituality. Similarly, it might be said that Irish Anglicans looked to England and Irish Presbyterians looked to Switzerland or Scotland.[124]

This pre-reflective phase of theological dependence and 'theological colonisation' is McDonagh's primary focus. Irish Christians must develop theological reflective mechanisms from their own context as historical subjects as 'there is no way in which man the object can recognise and respond to God'[125]. McDonagh then notes that contextual theology in the Irish context would need to 'deal seriously' with the process of self-reflection; therefore 'a liberation of such Irish theology as exists may be the first task'[126].

Building on this point, the development of contextual theology in contexts of division is complicated by the considerable divergence in the historical memory along communal lines. This point is exemplified in the lack of a shared narrative in the

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[124] Gabriel Daly, OSA, 'Towards an Irish Theology- Some Questions of Method', from *Irish Challenges to Theology*, Enda McDonagh, ed. (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1986), 93. Additionally, Irish literary scholar Declan Kiberd sees consequences for this theological dearth on the production of the corpus of the national literature as well. It is his assessment that, as Catholic faith in Ireland was 'part of the air that everyone breathed, few writers of Catholic background have cared to discuss the spiritual content of religion, preferring to focus... on its social effects or its personal consequences. There is, of course, much writing about religion in Ireland but, for all that, remarkably little religious writing, little spiritual probing in the literary form.' Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage Books, 1996), 422.

[125] Dermot A. Lane, ed. *Liberation Theology- An Irish Dialogue* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 89.

[126] Enda McDonagh, 'An Irish Theology of Liberation?' from *Liberation Theology- An Irish Dialogue*, Dermot A. Lane, ed. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 97.

Northern Irish context[127]. The social analytic 'first act' in the liberation methodology is further complicated by the fact that both sides of the divided community are, independently of each other, both in the position of historical objects and, through sectarianism and violence, are objectifying the 'other'. Developing a vision of the divided community as one historical subject of a shared history- analysing, reflecting and acting on a shared historical moment together interdependently- becomes a key to understanding social transformation in this context.

McDonagh emphasises that while this subjective development is crucial, it is not aided through violence[128]. He admits that both Republican and Loyalist paramilitarism arises out of traditional frameworks designed to help communities embrace agency and historic subjectivity. Realistically though, it has had the opposite effect and stagnated to a point of rendering their respective communities as 'objects in their political goals, in their attitudes to other people, and of course in their political methods'[129]. Crucially, in the context of Northern Ireland, paramilitarism is

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[127] 'The conflict in Northern Ireland is a *meta-conflict*. That is to say that there is conflict over what the conflict is about.' Dr. Claire Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 3.

[128] McDonagh's assessment of the use of violence is pertinent because it is in contrast to other voices analysed in this work. Cone locates his argument on the topic of violence in the act of 'looking into the face of black America in the light of Jesus Christ... lynched, beaten, and denied the basic needs of life...' As violence already exists in the form of systemic poverty, oppression and racism, '(the Christian) decides between the lesser and the greater evil... whether revolutionary violence is less or more deplorable than the violence of the state'. In essence, violence did not begin with black people, and it is not for elements of an inherently violent 'white' system to condemn out of hand the use of violence to the oppressed: 'Looting, burning or the destruction of white property are not *primary* concerns. Such matters can only be decided by the oppressed themselves that are seeking to develop their images of the black Christ. What is primary is that blacks must refuse to let whites define what is appropriate for the black community. That said, Cone does not *advocate* violence; he merely states that the question 'can only be decided by the oppressed themselves.' He does state the need to break the cycle of violence and that violence 'must be completely rejected as an inappropriate strategy for black liberation in the United States. Yet while he states that much of white condemnation is hypocritical by focusing on retaliatory violence rather than systemic violence, he does not make clear if *all* white condemnation of systemic violence is hypocritical and, if it is, what would constitute a condemnation of violence on the part of 'whites' suitably equivocal enough for him to deem satisfactory. See Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 143, and *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 123.

[129] Enda McDonagh, 'An Irish Theology of Liberation?' from *Liberation Theology- An Irish Dialogue*, Dermot A. Lane, ed. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 95.

'not leading anywhere in the sense of engaging the divided peoples in achieving a history for themselves'[130].

The roll of faith communities and churches, as the divided communities' theological (and mythological) repositories, should not be understated, and the process of building of the new subject must essentially be 'not simply ecclesial, but ecumenical'[131]. McDonagh emphasises the need for all Christian traditions to emphasise 'the tradition of the wider and older ecclesia in service to the future and fuller ecclesia'[132]. Ecclesial reconciliation and, by extension, transformation, is understood as both fidelity to the development of one's own subjectivity and to that of the 'other'. The underdevelopment of the ecumenical project in the Irish context by the majority of ecclesial traditions is a challenge[133], and in some ways exemplifies the ongoing objectification of one tradition by the other.

ii. Fr. Joe McVeigh

One author who refers to his work as liberation theology in the Irish context is Fr. Joe McVeigh, a Catholic priest from Fermanagh in Northern Ireland who has written on the subject of religion and politics in the Irish context. McVeigh's thinking is grounded in two overarching themes: a critique of the Catholic Church in Ireland and an Irish Republican political analysis[134]. The Irish Catholic Church, for McVeigh, suffers from being hierarchical and authoritarian rather than communitarian and humanitarian. The Church has always inextricably tied itself to political power and is essentially 'a conservative reactionary organization- politically and theologically'[135]. Moreover, by noting that the ancient church in Ireland was significantly different in belief, practice and structure from the Catholic Church presently constituted,

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[130] McDonagh, 'An Irish Theology of Liberation?', 95.

[131] Enda McDonagh, 'An Irish Theology and the Influence of Particulars', from *Irish Challenges to Theology*, Enda McDonagh, ed. (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1986), 114.

[132] McDonagh, 'An Irish Theology and the Influence of Particulars' 115.

[133] Alan Falconer notes of Irish ecumenism: '...little explicit attention has been paid to the life, thought and practice of other Christian traditions or to inter-church theological approaches... [There is] remarkably little action or interest in this with the exception of one seminary in the south east'. See Ian Ellis, *Vision and Reality- A Survey of 20th Century Irish Inter-Church Relations* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, QUB, 1992), 119.

[134] For an overview of the Republican interpretation of conflict and peace in the Irish context, see Bairbre de Brún (Sinn Féin MEP), 'The Road to Peace in Ireland', Berghof Transitions Series No. 6, Berghof Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008.

[135] Joe McVeigh, *Renewing the Irish Church* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1993), 87.

McVeigh implies that the Catholic Church in Ireland is as much a foreign interference in Irish affairs as is, in his estimation, the British government. In this way, McVeigh's criticisms of the British and the Catholic Church dovetail, as he sees the Catholic Church's desire to maintain a political *status quo* and its condemnation of violence throughout the conflict without, in his mind, appealing for 'justice' for the Irish people- explicitly equated with Irish independence from British rule- as discredited and essentially duplicitous[136].

McVeigh's understands British involvement in Ireland as the main obstacle to peace and justice in Ireland:

> I believe that the British made armed conflict inevitable by their
> resistance to the demand for basic human rights in 1968-69... Until
> the British government acknowledges its culpability for the war
> and the violence then it is meaningless to apportion blame to the
> IRA alone.[137]

With this in mind, the actions of Republican paramilitary organizations such as the IRA must be understood as those of 'an armed revolutionary organization'[138] and 'merely symptomatic of the underlying violence of partition and the institutionalized violence 'of the 6 county statelet'[139].

McVeigh's understanding of liberation theology comes from his contact with the corpus of the Latin American thinkers (Gutiérrez, Boff et al.) and the witness of figures such as Oscar Romero and Camilo Torres[140]. His vision of a just society in

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[136] Regarding the 1977 Irish Bishops Pastoral, *The Work of Justice*, McVeigh criticises the hierarchy's failure to refer to 'the problems created by partition and British interference' and of their obsession 'with Republican violence out of its historical and social context, and to the exclusion of institutional violence' (*Renewing the Irish Church*, 90). He does admit that Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich 'came close' to a condemnation suitable to him (*Taking a Stand*, 125).

[137] Joe McVeigh, *Taking a Stand- Memoir of an Irish Priest* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2008), 221-222.

[138] McVeigh, *Renewing the Irish Church*, 112-113.

[139] McVeigh, *Renewing the Irish Church,* 111.

[140] Camilo Torres Restrepo (1929-1966) was a Colombian sociologist and Catholic priest who, over his lifetime, attempted to reconcile the concepts of social revolution and Catholic faith. He eventually joined National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla organisation and was killed in combat. See John Gerassi, ed., *Camilo Torres- Revolutionary Priest*, (Harmondsworth, England:

Ireland is synonymous with the platform that was envisaged by 'the revolutionary people of 1916'[141] and involves 'a British declaration of intent to withdraw from Ireland'[142]. 'In Ireland', he states, 'we discovered that the way forward is though empowerment'[143]; he refers to his vision of an Irish liberation theology as a *meitheal* theology, from the Irish tradition of neighbour helping neighbour[144]. He speaks of a Catholic Church radically different from the present model and more in line with the pre-Norman 'Celtic' Christianity rather than those models imposed from without[145].

Overall, McVeigh's focus is on the interplay of peace and justice, with the understanding that one is impossible without the other and the latter must precede the former. But again, the primary obstacle to both justice and the peace that will follow is the British government:

> Some people prefer to talk about the need for good community
> relations. They avoid the issue which makes good community
> relations impossible- the British government's involvement in Irish
> affairs and the historic reliance on fractionalising the Irish people
> as a strategy[146]... I had learned a long time ago that you could not
> trust the British to do the honourable thing. They do not seem to
> have that precious quality that is so necessary for human living
> and for civilized politics. They do not keep their word.[147]

Penguin Books, 1971) and John Alvarez Garcia and Christian Restrepo Calle, eds., *Camilo Torres- Priest and Revolutionary*, (London and Sydney: Sheed and Ward, 1968).
[141] McVeigh, *Taking a Stand- Memoir of an Irish Priest*, 260.
[142] McVeigh, *Renewing the Irish Church*, 112-113. 'Statelet' is a pejorative Republican term for the province of Northern Ireland, implying that Northern Ireland so constituted is illegitimate and unviable.
[143] Joe McVeigh, 'Liberation Theology and the Palestinian Struggle for Self-Determination', from *Towards a New Liberation Theology: Reflections on Palestine*, Arzu Merali and Javad Sharbaf, eds. (Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2009), 41.
[144] McVeigh, *Renewing the Irish Church*, 128.
[145] There is considerable academic opinion that would question the level of distinctiveness of the medieval 'Celtic' church within to the greater European one. See Liam De Paor, *Saint Patrick's World* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993), Ian Bradley, *Columba: Pilgrim and Penitent* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1996), and Donald E. Meek, 'Modern Myths of the Medieval Past', from *Christian History*, Issue 60 (Vol. XVII, No. 4), 42.
[146] McVeigh, *Renewing the Irish Church*, 130.
[147] McVeigh, *Taking a Stand- Memoir of an Irish Priest*, 245-246.

When seeking to analyse McVeigh's point of view, it can be stated that his commitment to human rights and justice and his envisioning of peace, justice and reconciliation in the culture and language of his Irish tradition are key contextual strengths. Additionally, he demonstrates the necessity both sides of a divided community to show willingness to critique their own tradition in his detailed critique of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Finally, McVeigh's recognition that a country that is 'outward-looking, forward-looking and economically sound' requires 'leadership and co-operation from all sides[148] is eminently practical.

However, McVeigh's overall analysis suffers from similar factors as does Cone's, without having Cone's level of theological expertise. McVeigh's is open to question in three areas: post-conflict social reconciliation, the use of violence and his contextual analysis. Regarding the first, while McVeigh is entitled to his political analysis and indeed to his republican views, his failure to analyse the communal divisions *within* Northern Ireland's socio-political context- other to blame them on what he sees as British colonial 'divide-and-rule' tactics- is problematic. He does not effectively address an analysis of the conflict that acknowledges a Protestant/Unionist perspective; a survey of McVeigh's published work finds no engagement with a Protestant/Unionist viewpoint in any sustained or meaningful way. Seeking to conceive a vision of liberation for Ireland that does not acknowledge the perspective of a community that in the contested area of the island constitutes half of the population displays a lack of engagement with that aspect of the social complexity of the region.

McVeigh leaves unmentioned exactly what he means by an end to 'British involvement' in Ireland and how the Protestant/Unionist community in Northern Ireland- the majority of whom identify themselves as 'British' and wish to retain the constitutional link with the UK[149]- figure into his vision for an Ireland at peace. Republican analysis has tended to view the Unionist population as merely an adjunct

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[148] McVeigh, *Taking a Stand- Memoir of an Irish Priest*, 263.

[149] The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey of 1999 (variable NINATID) found 72% of those identifying themselves as Protestants defined themselves as 'British'; the same study (variable: British) found that 78% replied 'strongly British'; from 'Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, 1999; Module: Community Relations' at http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/1999/Community_Relations/NINATID.html, internet; accessed 29 August 2010.

part of a larger British colonial project, and not even the most important part[150]. It is believed that when an independent Republic is eventually established, the Protestant population will take their places as equal citizens[151]. This analysis overlooks the aspirations of that section of the population. McVeigh, by saying that he came to the realization that Protestants in Northern Ireland are 'Irish even though they professed a strong loyalty to the British monarch'[152], only serves to impose a cultural identification onto the 'other', regardless of the 'other's' own preferred self-identification.

Just as McVeigh employs the term 'British' homogenously, he tends to use the term 'Irish' in a homogenous way as well, implying that his vision of Irish political aspiration is normative when the reality is more complex. For example, if voting figures are to be believed, the majority of Catholics in Northern Ireland did not support the Republican armed struggle[153], and if one factors that support on an all-island basis, the percentage is even smaller. Likewise, the Roman Catholic Church did not view the Republican struggle in the North of Ireland as meriting the definition of a 'just war'[154].

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[150] Roger MacGinty argues that 'for much of the Troubles, republicans had regarded the British Government as the most significant "political other" in Northern Ireland with unionists as secondary actors.' See Roger MacGinty, 'Irish Republicanism and the Peace Process: From Revolution to Reform' in Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke and Fiona Stephen, eds., *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, edition, first published by Manchester University Press in 2000), 125.

[151] M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the IRA* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 'Republican attitudes to northern Protestants have not, until very recently, included engagement and inter-community dialogue on an equal footing.' See also Ruane and Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland,* 95-96.

[152] McVeigh, *Taking a Stand- Memoir of an Irish Priest*, 57.

[153] The popular support for the IRA's campaign in the Troubles is difficult to quantify as Sinn Féin did not stand in elections until the early 1980s. Most nationalists in Northern Ireland voted for the moderate Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) until 2001. Although support for Sinn Féin increased after the 1981 hunger strike, gaining 43% of the nationalist vote in the 1983 UK general election, by 1992 the SDLP won four seats and Sinn Féin none . See Brendan O'Brien, *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Féin* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 115 and 198. Similarly, in the 1993 Local District Council Elections, the SDLP won 136,760 votes to Sinn Féin's 77,600 votes. See 'The 1993 Local Government Elections in Northern Ireland' at http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/flg93.htm, internet, accessed 29 August 2010. Sinn Féin's vote has increased significantly since the IRA's ceasefire and decommissioning.

[154] J.G. Davies makes this analysis in his book *Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 180-182. See also Prf. Peter Simpson's 'Just War Theory and the IRA', available at http://www.aristotelophile.com/Books/Articles/pdf_5.pdf, internet,

Regarding the use of violence, McVeigh states that he viewed the IRA's actions as legitimate and inevitable consequences of the violence of the British state. But this analysis grows problematic when he also opines that 'the decision to pursue armed resistance or passive resistance in our situation was ultimately a question of conscience'[155]. McVeigh seems to be of two minds: on the one hand, armed resistance is natural and inevitable; on the other, it is a matter of personal reflection and decision. What is left unanalysed is the strategic efficacy of that use of violence, how the use of violence either benefits or hinders the use of other nonviolent strategies, and whether the same right of personal reflection and decision are available to Protestant/Unionist individuals who either joined the security forces or Loyalist paramilitary groups in reaction to Irish Republicanism.

McVeigh makes clear his opinion that liberation theology 'offers a context for dealing with armed resistance/struggle and makes clear distinction between institutional/state violence and armed insurrection'[156]. While this is true[157], an outright rationalization or justification of violence from Latin American liberation theology was not forthcoming[158]. Moreover, foundational Latin Americans such as Dom Hélder Câmara devoted considerable attention to the importance of developing a critique of violence and its usage, and made clear that any analysis regarding the efficacy of violence should have as its end goal the overcoming the cycle of violence rather than its rationalization[159].

Finally, McVeigh's analysis suffers from a 'like-for-like' equating of the Latin American and Irish contexts when the socio-economic and political conditions of both

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accessed 29 April, 2010. Also of note is the address given by Pope John Paul II at Drogheda in 1979, *The Pope in Ireland: Addresses and Homilies* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1979) 16-25.

[155] Joe McVeigh, 'Liberation Theology and the Palestinian Struggle for Self-Determiantion', from *Towards a New Liberation Theology: Reflections on Palestine*, Arzu Merali and Javad Sharbaf, eds. (Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2009), 39.

[156] McVeigh, 'Liberation Theology and the Palestinian Struggle for Self-Determination', 39.

[157] In *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez draws a sharp distinction between institutionalized violence and resistance to it, but that resistance is described as a broad-based and complex critique of global relationships rather than as a call for armed struggle. 63-68.

[158] Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 186-189.

[159] 'If I joyfully spend the rest of my life, the rest of my powers, the rest of my energies in demanding justice, but without hatred, without armed violence, through liberating moral pressure, through truth and love, it is because I am convinced that only love is constructive and strong.' Dom Hélder Câmara, *The Spiral of Violence* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1971), 32.

regions, as well as both regions' scale of state violence and repression, are quite distinct[160]. Simply put, Northern Ireland is not El Salvador, and to uncritically import the social analysis from one region to another, particularly when dealing with the issue of armed resistance against institutionalized violence, could impair the development of the type of contextual theology of which Ireland has been historically deficient[161].

Ultimately, McVeigh's work, like Cone's, offers cautionary notes for a transformation theology in a context of division. Like Cone, his vision of liberation is strikingly similar to Ellis' vision of empowerment. In that light, McVeigh's lack of a vision of reconciliation is particularly stark, as is his relative lack of engagement with the major themes of liberation or reconciliation on a theological level. He offers no analysis as to how his vision of liberation will lead to transformation, i.e., restored relationships between those who oppose British involvement on the island of Ireland and those who support it; he leaves unexplored what his vision of 'empowerment' will mean for those holding very different visions of the Irish future. Ultimately, McVeigh's work bears similarities to the notion of liberation theology that Miroslav Volf sought to critique:

> What do you do when both sides call themselves oppressed?
> Liberation theology provided the antagonists with religious
> combat gear rather than any way to help resolve their situation. It
> became very clear that the fundamental category, to use the
> terminology of the Apostle Paul, is not justice simply; it's
> justification. It involves concern for justice but it involves mending
> a relationship in a way that is lasting[162].

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[160] 'My contention was, and is, that oppression and state violence is the same everywhere- in Ireland, the Philippines, South America- it is always the same for those on the receiving end'. McVeigh, *Taking a Stand- Memoir of an Irish Priest*, 198.

[161] See Gabriel Daly's 'Towards and Irish Theology: Some Questions of Method' from *Irish Challenges to Theology*, Enda McDonagh, ed. (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1986), 90-91. Daly does not rule out the analogous use of liberation models in the Irish context, but stresses that any such use would require 'considerable sophistication and sensitivity'.

[162] Greg Dabel, 'Balkan Spring', available at http://www.worldmag.com/articles/11672. Accessed 18 August 2010.

5. Liberation, Reconciliation and Transformation
in a Context of Division

These contextual examples show, to one degree or another, that the process of envisioning social transformation in a context of division is significantly impeded unless the transformation of human relationships fundamentally informs the process. This is most often due to the sheer ubiquity of the 'other'. Because of historical, political, and diplomatic decisions, divided communities such as those in the US, Israel/Palestine and- as will be explored in the next chapter- Northern Ireland share space; often contested, and often violently so[163]. Under such conditions choices of how to deal with the legacies of that conflict emerge. Barash and Webel note:

> It is relatively easy to destroy a complex structure, compared with
> building in the first place, or restructuring it after it has been
> knocked down. By the same token it is, unfortunately, much easier
> to disrupt society than to repair it after serious damage has been
> done. Conflict- and particularly, violence- often does considerable
> damage to a social fabric, leaving societies in substantial need of
> repair... There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the problem...
> However, it is increasingly clear that (reconciliation) is not only
> necessary, but also possible, and that a truthful, honest recounting
> of the past can contribute greatly toward achieving a more
> peaceful future... (One choice available is) to ignore the past and
> attempt to move on. Another is to acknowledge the past, but
> lightly, and attempt to move on. Yet another- and this is all too
> common- is to engage the past as a cause of present, future, and

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[163] For background on the complexities of living with or near enemies or former combatants, see Phil Clark and Zachary D. Kaufman, eds., *After Genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond* (London: Hurst & Company, 2008), Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), Andreas Wimmer, Richard J. Goldstone, Donald L. Horowitz, Ulrike Joras and Conrad Schetter, eds., *Facing Ethnic Conflicts: Toward a New Realism* (Lanham MD and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004) and Katy Hayward and Catherine O'Donnell, eds., *Political Discourse and Conflict Resolution: Debating Peace in Northern Ireland* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

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escalating cycles of violence: generating a continuing culture of revenge, feuding, and retaliation.[164]

In a post-conflict divided context, the four elements within the liberation methodology must therefore be informed by an overarching emphasis on reconciliation. In light of the definitions of liberation and reconciliation proposed earlier, 'transformation' in contexts of division might be understood as *the ongoing process of exploring theological reflection in the light of liberation and reconciliation.* A transformational theology thus encompasses theological reflection and action with a commitment to both the transformation of unjust socio-political structures and of damaged relationships in the light of faith. Such reflection necessarily occurs in the knowledge of, and more explicitly in light of the 'other', particularly the 'other' perceived as an 'enemy'. The focus on social analysis becomes an analysis of the social context in the knowledge of and- ideally- with the participation of the 'other'. The priority of one community's experience and consciousness are intertwined with the understanding and knowledge of and, again with the participation of the 'other' community's experience and consciousness, ideally informing a shared experience. The method of ongoing praxis is understood as both parties' theological reflection and action on a fundamental commitment to living together well. And the option for the poor is an option made in the 'direction' of reconciliation, inclusion and sharing, focusing on the enrichment of life, the dismantling of those structures that impede reconciliation and conceiving of structures that benefit the ongoing process of living together well.

Conclusion

The conception of transformation in contexts of division is in some ways distinct from conceptions in contexts which do not immediately display these characteristics. These situations are marked by deeply conflicted identities, social division, ongoing sectarianism and a history of violence, between segments of a community which perceive themselves to be diametrically opposed along ethnic, political, and/or cultural lines. While Latin American liberation theology developed in contexts where

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[164] David P. Barash and Charles P. Webel, *Peace and Conflict Studies* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publications, 2nd edition, 2009), 454-455.

the manifestations of oppression and marginalization were very often 'vertical' in nature, the divided context, while often exhibiting those elements, exhibits systemic and endemic sectarianism that very often lead to oppression and marginalization that is 'horizontal' in nature, with opposing segments of the community- particularly at the localised level- antagonising and marginalizing each other. Such situations necessitate attempting to locate the relationship between liberation (the transformation of society and the structures of oppression) with reconciliation (the transformation of human relationships and the structures of estrangement).

Because reconciliation in the divided situation very often takes place in the context of violently broken relationships, the process of defining what constitutes 'reconciliation' is complex. Conceiving of a theology informed equally by liberation and reconciliation is likewise difficult because of how reconciliation has been defined by the critics of the liberation theological movement in Central and South America. It requires care lest reconciliation be seen as an alternative to liberation's central thesis of critical reflection and action on the mechanisms of structural inequality and injustice. In locating the interrelationship between liberation and reconciliation in the divided situation, depth, breadth and flexibility are crucial. Lederach's coordinates and Hamber and Kelly's working definition provide for this necessity by conceiving of the reconciliation process as one of comprehensive social transformation as well as relational transformation. At its broadest and most flexible, reconciliation is the ongoing process of living together well after violent conflict and in the reality of sectarianism and deep social divisions that continue.

In looking at specific contextual examples, Cone's work socially analyses cultural, racial and political repression and envisions liberation from these three dynamics. His lack of a vision of reconciliation that incorporates the experiences and consciousness of the 'other' stands as a notable deficiency; Roberts' vision of liberation and reconciliation informing each other provides a more credible foundation.

Ellis' theology moves the process forward by conceiving of liberation as a critical self-reflection on the plight of the newly-empowered traumatised victim and the effects of that acquisition power on both ones' own community and on the 'other'. This analysis points to empowerment (which constitutes liberation for McVeigh) as

an insufficient foundation on which to build one's own liberation if that empowerment merely serves to oppress another.

Conversely, Ateek's theology makes explicit that liberation in the divided situation necessitates an interdependent vision which critically reflects and acts in a way that addresses the comprehensive transformation that is at the heart of liberation and reconciliation.

As McDonagh shows, liberation's focus necessitates critical reflection on communal identity. In contexts of division, this reflection must include the 'other', who also strives for transformation. Therefore, the 'divided community as historical subject' must reflect on and with the 'other' in a way that seeks to move beyond violence and sectarianism. McVeigh's analysis begins that process by reflecting on his own Irish/Catholic/Nationalist tradition, but would benefit from an interactive reflection that includes the needs and desires of the 'other'.

It is in critical reflection of the needs and desires of both parties- in the light of liberation and reconciliation- that a transformational theology begins to emerge.

Chapter 3- Separation Barriers in Belfast:
Physical Manifestations of Segregation and Sectarianism

Introduction

The social context of Northern Ireland has exhibited all of the dynamics of a divided context mentioned earlier: sectarianism, contested identities, contested space and cyclical patterns of violence. Belfast in particular has, for much of its history, exhibited considerable levels of communal segregation which, with the advent of sustained civil conflict in the late 60s, has increased and solidified[1]. This chapter will draw attention to and analyse the physically-reinforced aspect of segregation in Belfast, embodied in the city's separation barriers, a network of walls, fences, gates, buffer zones and various other physical security apparatus.

The separation barriers are often approached in both popular and academic discussion with either an ironic tone (the 'so-called' phenomenon) or one that suggests they are a grotesque, anachronistic holdover from a more violent and intolerant past (the 'despite' phenomenon). Given the consociational underpinnings of the Good Friday Agreement, this is somewhat understandable. This chapter rather argues, however, that a more productive analysis sees the separation barriers presence as one of cyclical 'cause-and-effect', a physical manifestation of three deeper, inter-related dynamics fundamental to the conflict in Northern Ireland: the desire for security and public order in the face of socio-political violence; fear and lack of trust both in the ability of the authorities to maintain order and in the other communities' intentions and motivations; and the need to foster identity and a sense of belonging within one's own community in the face of what is perceived in a more organised, bold and threatening 'other'.

With regard to these three elements, the interplay of responsibility for the continued proliferation of separation barriers between the state and local communities adds another level of complexity to the discussion. Any discussion of

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[1] Writing in 1982, Boal noted that segregation in the Belfast 'has been a feature of the geography of Belfast for a long time. There is no evidence of long-term decline in segregation levels- indeed, the contrary is the case'. Fredrick W. Boal and J. Neville H. Douglas, *Integration and Division: Geographical Perspectives on the Irish Problem* (London: Academic Press, 1982), 274.

the barriers is invariably heavily couched in assurances that removal is predicated on the desires of local residents. However, it will be argued that the security provided by the barriers has always been suspect, not so much 'ending' sectarian violence, but often merely changing its form or location. Nor do the barriers dispel fear, but in fact reinforce the notion that, given the ambiguities regarding security, the fear is a reasonable emotion. Finally, the communal identities they reinforce are impoverished by the harsh binary of 'us' and 'them' to which the barriers inevitably attest.

In the background of this social reality is the reality of the institutional church and the role that it has played in defining, maintaining and indeed hardening the amorphous sectarian and social divisions in Northern Ireland. This chapter argues that the churches' record on addressing the sectarian and social divisions has been mixed. The unequivocal stance against violence that the church has unfailingly adopted is commendable, but despite the enormous presence of the churches in Northern Ireland, their diminishing public moral authority has led to a lack of rigorous engagement with the underlying causes of violent conflict. This has resulted in the institutional churches' difficulties in envisioning roles for themselves in Northern Ireland's post-conflict- still deeply divided- social reality. This puts the churches' relative lack of engagement with the issue of the barriers into perspective: the barriers don't easily fit into the definition of 'violence' to which they have traditionally responded, and the barriers proliferation results from sectarian and social dynamics for which the churches' bear at least indirect responsibility.

This chapter lays a foundation for later exploration of a transformational theological reflection on the barriers specifically and the possible role of such reflection in contributing to the process of addressing the cyclical process of physical segregation and sectarianism. The social analysis provided into the separation barriers' role regarding security, communal fear and lack of trust and identity reinforcement forms the basis for a theological reflection focusing on the themes of security, trust, freedom from fear and identity and belonging in the light of the specific social reality of Belfast's separation barriers.

1. Social and Academic Perceptions of Separation Barriers

The late political scientist Frank Wright of Queens University Belfast described Northern Ireland as an 'ethnic frontier', an existentially contested and explicitly demarcated space[2]. Because of the historical factors which led to the formation of Northern Ireland, communal identities developed in such a way as to be 'structurally antagonistic'. In such a situation, inter-communal social interaction developed into a form of 'tranquillised' (as opposed to 'tranquil'), 'ritualised' or 'mutual deterrence':

> Antagonism can be said to be endemic when ethnic communities come to experience each other through the most threatening and aggravated acts of the 'other'. Ideologies of ethnic supremacy are perceptions of the 'other' as a conspiracy against which eternal vigilance is required; they are related to deterrence or vigilance practices which they reinforce and by which they are reinforced. [3]

Wright's analysis lays a philosophical grounding for an investigation of what might be the singular, physical examples of the 'structural antagonism' and 'eternal vigilance' along Belfast's many 'ethnic frontiers': the walls, fences, gates and buffer zones that constitute the network that will be collectively referred to as the separation barriers.

Beyond the actual experience of living near or beside them, my first encounter with the subject of Belfast's separation barriers was in the popular press. Informally and over time, I began to notice that the subject most often fell into two categories, what might be described as the 'Despite' Phenomenon and the 'So-Called' Phenomenon.

a. The 'So-Called' Phenomenon

The 'So-Called' Phenomenon refers to a commonly-appended prefix to the popular terminology 'peace lines' or 'peace walls'. Evidently, the appending of 'so-called' to the terminology was designed to point out a supposedly-obvious irony. For example,

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[2] See Frank Wright, *Northern Ireland: A Comparative Analysis* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1987), 112-163.

[3] Wright, *Northern Ireland*, 122.

the *Belfast Telegraph* observed that, 'paradoxically, the number of so-called peace walls separating communities in Greater Belfast has trebled since the IRA and loyalist ceasefires...[4]. Similarly, the BBC observed:

> The first one went up eight years after construction started on the Berlin Wall, but 20 years after that wall went down, Northern Ireland still has its so-called peace lines...[5]

And, *the Guardian* also noted:

> Segregation in Belfast has got worse since the Northern Ireland peace process began... Surveys carried out among 4,800 households in 12 neighbouring estates separated by so-called peace lines - usually brick walls or metal barriers - show there is less integration than 10 years ago, particularly among younger people...[6]

The abbreviated tone is also present in academic and public policy literature as well[7]. For example, Cornelia Albert's detailed work on the Northern Ireland peace process and post-conflict transformation devotes half a page to the specific issue of the separation barriers and views them in isolation. Similar to the accounts in the popular press mentioned above, she writes:

> Although the Northern Irish society shows a lot of signs of normalisation and in spite of the power- sharing government established in 2007, it might take a few years until the sectarian tensions at the interfaces- the regions where the two different

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[4] Claire McNeilly, 'Berlin celebrates, but Belfast has more walls than ever', http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/berlin-celebrates-but-northern-ireland-has-more-barriers-than-ever-14557115.html (accessed 29 November 2010).
[5] BBC news, 'Forty Years of Peace Lines', http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8121362.stm (accessed 29 November 2010).
[6] Paul Brown, 'Peace But No Love As Northern Ireland Divide Grows Ever Wider', http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2002/jan/04/northernireland.paulbrown (accessed 29 November 2010).
[7] As recently as February 2012, page 75 of Gráinne Kelly's Report for the International Conflict Research Institute of the University of Ulster's report 'Progressing Good Relations and Reconciliation in Post-Agreement Northern Ireland' refers to the barriers as 'These so-called "Peace Lines"'.

communities border each other- will ease and until the people
living in those areas are ready for tearing the walls down.[8]

Again, the assumption appears to be that there is a direct correlation between
political normalisation and the lessening of sectarian tension; and that as those
tensions lessen, local residents will come to no longer desire the barriers. However,
any correlation between the Agreement, political normalisation and the actual
increase in barriers is left unexplored.

The tenor and tone in all the aforementioned discussion suggests two
assumptions: first, there is the implication that the separation barriers are an
unfortunate, awkward exception to the natural progression of Northern Ireland after
the Good Friday Agreement moving from conflict to stability and peace, with no
reflection given as to why this would naturally be the case. Secondly, as much of the
material produced on physical segregation is weighted toward policy-making
analysis, the localities that have barriers and the barriers themselves risk relegation
to the position of, in Lauber's words, 'an inner-city situation suffering from extreme
urban pathology'[9]. In essence, the separation barriers are deemed to be only of
concern to the areas in which they are present, with little attention given to any
possible social ramifications posed to the province as a whole by the reliance on
them at social policy-making level and their continued proliferation. A possible
unintended consequence of this assumption is that interface communities
themselves become identified as awkward exceptions to a conventionally-held
narrative that the province is progressing normally toward a stable, pluralistic future,
furthering the disconnect that is held by many of these areas' residents from
conventional politics and the benefits associated with the peace process[10].

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[8] Cornelia West, *The Peacebuilding Elements of the Belfast Agreement and the Transition of the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford and Wien: Peter Lang, 2009), 239.

[9] Margarethe C. Lauber, 'Belfast Peacelines: An Analysis of Urban Borders, Design and Social Space in a Divided City', available at:
http://web.archive.org/web/20070208064520/http://www.mspacenyc.com/belfast.study.html, accessed 18 March 2011.

[10] Both historical narratives of the majority communities in Northern Ireland feature communal understandings of alienation. Generally, Catholic/Nationalists have held deep reservations of their place within Northern Ireland, a place created out of a political compromise that they historically did not support and within which they never felt completely

Overall, the 'so-called' phenomenon appears to be a tacit admission that the 'so-called' peace lines have not produced peace, but their role in what *has* been produced, again, remains relatively unexplored. They remain a resultant 'effect' of a violent and disordered 'cause', but their own causality is under-analysed.

b. The 'Despite' Phenomenon

If the 'so-called' phenomenon implies that the 'so-called peace lines' have not produced peace, I personally developed the 'despite' phenomenon to identify what I saw as the popular, short-hand way that the media used to discuss what the barriers and the peace process overall *have* achieved. It also, perhaps unconsciously, seemed to infer a relationship between the two. In this case, however, the irony is not found in the term 'peace lines' but, evidently, in the term 'peace process'. When the subject of the persistence of segregation- and the proliferation of separation barriers in Belfast especially- is raised, it is often with a sense of irony that such a situation is happening 'despite' the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) and the peace process. For example, writing in *USA Today*, Shawn Pogatchnik states:

> Ten years after peace was declared in Northern Ireland, one might
> have expected that Belfast's barriers would be torn down by now.
> But reality, as usual, is far messier. Not one has been dismantled.
> Instead they've grown in both size and number... The past decade
> of peacemaking has brought political elites of both sides together
> in a Catholic-Protestant government in hopes that their example
> would trickle down... But it has not delivered meaningful

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integrated or welcomed. Conversely, Protestant/Unionists have sought to strengthen their place within the United Kingdom with emotional rhetoric and displays of loyalty in the face of what they have perceived as unreliable support from the rest of the UK's constituent regions and central government. Both of these larger dynamics are amplified and concentrated at interface areas, with every perceived indignity perpetrated by the 'other' community feeding the larger narrative of alienation and resentment. See Fionnuala O'Connor, *In Search of a State: Catholics in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1993), Susan McKay, *Northern Protestants: An Unsettled People* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2000) and Colm Heatley, *Interface: Flash points in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Lagan Books, 2004).

reconciliation. Instead, for dozens of front-line communities of Belfast, fences still make the best neighbours.[11]

Similarly, *the Guardian* reported in 2007:

> Army watchtowers have been dismantled. Soldiers are back in
> barracks. Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness share power at
> Stormont... And yet amid Northern Ireland's uncharacteristic
> euphoria of good news, there is a familiar, cautionary note:
> the peace lines that zigzag for scores of miles across Belfast,
> dividing loyalist from republican and nationalist estates, are
> about to be extended.[12]

Writing for *the Daily Telegraph* in 2004, Thomas Harding notes the proliferation of separation barriers after the Good Friday Agreement :

> From soon after the Troubles began, the delineation between
> opposing territories has been confirmed by reinforced structures
> known as "peace lines"... Since the signing of the Good Friday
> Agreement in 1998 there have been 15 new walls erected or
> modified making the Roman Catholic and Protestant communities
> even more entrenched.[13]

However, by 2010, The *Belfast Telegraph* was voicing dismay:

> The ending of conflict and the formation of an all-embracing
> power-sharing administration at Stormont appeared to create just
> the right atmosphere to enable (the quest for a more tolerant and

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[11] Shawn Pogatchnik, 'Despite Peace, Belfast Walls are Growing in Size and Number', http://www.usatoday.com/news/topstories/2008-05-03-1826820552_x.htm?POE=click-refer, accessed 3 September 2010.

[12] Owen Bowcott and Mark Oliver, 'Another Brick on the Wall', http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2007/jul/04/guardiansocietysupplement.northernireland /, accessed 3 September 2010.

[13] Thomas Harding, 'The Security Wall on your Doorstep', http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1455245/The-security-wall-on-our-doorstep.html, accessed 3 September 2010.

cohesive society in Northern Ireland) to be achieved. Yet, sadly, the divisions within the province seem as immutable as ever[14].

Despite this sort of commentary, the underlying foundations of the Good Friday Agreement can be seen as a contributing factor to the proliferation of physical segregation. At the heart of this analysis is an analysis of the Agreement's consociational ethos. Although often used synonymously with 'power-sharing' (though it is technically only one form of sharing power), consociationalism refers to governmental mechanisms that involve guaranteed group representation, and is often suggested for managing conflict in deeply divided societies. Proponents such as John McGarry and Brendan O' Leary point to its benefits in providing governmental stability in a post-conflict context. However, as their analysis of the conflict downplays the religious aspects of conflict in favour of ethno-national understandings, they leave the sectarian dynamics of the conflict and how they impinge on the political process of Northern Ireland, particularly on its stability, under-explored.[15]

The assumption that the community groupings' identities are homogenous is a weakness of the consociational model, particularly in the Irish context. Consociationalism tends to focus on communal groups rather than on individuals, which can lead to over-representation of some individuals in society and under-representation of others. The model also places a great deal of emphasis on the setting up of institutions rather than on causes of the conflict or transitional issues. With this in mind, Donald Horowitz points to the danger of consociational arrangements in solidifying ethnic divisions, since 'grand coalitions are unlikely, because of the dynamics of intra-ethnic competition. The very act of forming a

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[14] 'Editor's Viewpoint: It's time to build unity not barriers in Northern Ireland', available at: http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/viewpoint/editors-viewpoint-its-time-to-build-unity-not-barriers-in-northern-ireland-14990038.html, internet, accessed 29 October 2010.
[15] See John McGarry, and Brendan O'Leary, 'Consociational theory, Northern Ireland's Conflict, and its Agreement: What Critics of Consociation Can Learn from Northern Ireland", *Government and Opposition* 41 (2), 2006: 249–277, and John McGarry, and Brendan O'Leary, *The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational Engagements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

multiethnic coalition generates intra-ethnic competition – flanking – if it does not already exist'[16].

Thus, the Agreement concerns itself-first and foremost- with the creation of power-sharing institutions that guarantee participation for all political actors who foreswore the use of violence. It therefore represented political progress- or the possibility of political progress- toward the normalisation of the 'macro' political relationships. It held out the possibility of 'the ideal of political civility'[17] in a context where it had not been present before. However while it is certainly hoped that such 'macro' developments will positively impact the 'micro' context of local inter-community relationships, that hope is not naturally assured. Indeed, critics of consociational mechanisms have argued that while they might bring stability at the 'macro' level, the antagonisms previously present at the 'macro' level might simply shift to the 'micro' level, making the 'micro' level antagonisms more acute. McGrattan argues that the identities present in the two largest communal groupings in Northern Ireland grew out of historical events, and were then maintained and nurtured by political and state actors for their own interests[18].

The Good Friday Agreement, by relying on power-sharing between ethno-national groups- based on an underlying assumption that those identities are monolithic and static- tends to conflate their importance and divert attention from critical reflection on the historic causes and responsibility for the conflict:

> In other words, a political culture based on ideas about the
> necessity of sharing power between 'two traditions' may sideline

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[16] See Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 575. The political marginalisation of the more moderate parties at the heart of the negotiations of the Good Friday Agreement- the Ulster Unionist Party and the Social Democratic and Labour Party- and the subsequent ascent of their more extreme counterparts- the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin, respectively- is often pointed to as an example of this in the case of Northern Ireland.

[17] Arthur Aughey, 'A New Beginning? The Prospects for a Politics of Civility in Northern Ireland', in *After The Good Friday Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*, Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, eds. (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1999), 122.

[18] McGrattan, *Northern Ireland 1968-2008*, 185-186.

important historical questions about what actually happened and who made key decisions and why.[19]

Such a situation runs the risk of developing into one where the means to the end becomes the end in itself; the 'benign relationship' between the state actors endures whereas 'the sectarian antagonism that should have been addressed- between the Shankill and the Falls in Belfast- is as poisonous as ever[20]. Additionally, while it is beyond doubt that the GFA 'fundamentally altered the mode of government in Northern Ireland', reliance on a consociational mechanism was at the expense of attention to the overall process of conflict transformation and reconciliation:

> ... a common humanity was denied in Northern Ireland by the rigid division of its politics into two ethnic blocks... legitimising a form of zero-sum politics that a new political dispensation ought to overcome.[21]

Mac Ginty argues that there is evidence of significant increases in serious inter-group tension and violence with the ending of larger-scale hostilities and the disarming of formalised armed groups in other post-conflict societies (Kosovo, El Salvador, Chechnya etc.). Specifically, in light of the dynamics of the divided context shown in the previous chapter, this violence tends to be 'horizontal' in nature rather than 'vertical', inter-communal rather than directed toward the central state[22]. Northern Ireland has provided a reasonable example of this, with sporadic, disjointed public disorder involving issues of localised grievance (Loyal Order parade routes, the display of flags and other such symbolic acts of territorial control) that are at least

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[19] Cillian McGrattan, *Northern Ireland 1968-2008: The Politics of Entrenchment* (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 185-186.

[20] Robin Wilson, 'From Violence to Intolerance: Ethno-nationalism and the Crowding Out of Civic Life', in Christopher Farrington, ed., *Global Change, Civil Society and the Northern Ireland Peace Process: Implementing the Political Settlement* (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 208.

[21] Jonathan Tonge, *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education, 2nd ed. 2002), 84.

[22] Roger Mac Ginty, *No War, No Peace: The Rejuvenation of Stalled Peace Processes and Peace Accords* (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 120-121. For additional comparative analysis of Northern Ireland and other regional conflicts, see John McGarry, ed., *Northern Ireland and the Divided World: Post-Agreement Northern Ireland in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Michael Kerr, *Imposing Power Sharing: Conflict and Coexistence in Northern Ireland and Lebanon* (Dublin and Portland OR: Irish Academic Press, 2006).

indirectly related to deeper historic and political divisions and narratives. This in turn reinforces communal belief that 'security can only be assured by inviolable and unchanging control of territory'[23], of which separation barriers are the most concrete example.

Thus, rather than the use of rhetorical mechanisms such as the 'so-called' and 'despite' phenomena, the separation barriers are a better approached as a cyclical cause-and-result, a more natural consequence of broader policies than most policy-makers and commentators would perhaps like to admit. 'Urban segregation', notes Daniela Vicherat Mattar, 'has been the cost of peace , and the peace lines still function as the glue that holds together the city's rival imaginaries'[24].

What this means is that although the presence of the barriers might be understandable, the products of reasonable desires, the barriers are not merely neutral; they can be seen as causative. In contrast to the off-hand way in which they are often approached, the role they play and the social arenas they affect are multiple. Aside from the perhaps obvious security perspective, they also have a significant financial impact, both on the security budget itself and the subsequent toll that such expenditure has on other public services. From a good relations perspective, the barriers are a constant reminder of cultural, political and religious difference. Similarly, viewed from a perspective of health and social well-being, it is difficult to escape the fact that the barriers are located within areas identified as the top 10% most socially and economically deprived areas of Belfast. Finally, from an international perspective, issues of the image of the city and its potentiality for outside investment come to the fore[25].

Attention will now be turned to three dynamics that have both led to and perpetuate the presence of separation barriers. Following the

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[23] Neville Douglas and Peter Shirlow, 'People in Conflict in Place: The Case of Northern Ireland', *Political Geography*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1998), 126.

[24] Daniela Vicherat Matter, 'Did Walls Really Come Down? Contemporary B/ordering Walls in Europe', in Marc Silberman, Karen E. Till and Janet Ward, eds., *Walls, Borders, Boundaries: Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 87.

[25] Jonny Byrne, Cathy Gormley Heenan and Gillian Robinson, 'Attitudes to Peace Walls: Research Report to Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister', June 2012, 4.

liberation/reconciliation methodology presented earlier, these historical and sociological dynamics will form the basis for theological reflection to follow.

2. Separation Barriers and the Desire for Security

Three notable observations can be seen: separation barriers were at one time considered an emergency and temporary measure; there are now more separation barriers than at any point in the history of the conflict or post-conflict periods; and separation barriers continue to be built.

a. The Transition from Temporary to Permanence

The use of separation barriers for public order and security in Belfast pre-dates the most recent phase of the conflict (1968-1998) by several decades, although their use was not widespread or a matter of public planning until relatively recently. One very early recorded use of separation barriers for civil pacification during unrest in Belfast was during the riots of 1920 when the army erected a steel fence near the Short Strand in East Belfast[26]. Barriers were similarly erected by the military in Belfast's York Street area and in the Sailortown area of Belfast's docklands[27] during rioting in 1935[28]; the barricades were removed after a period of nine months[29].

When the local police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)[30] found itself unable to contain much more widespread civil disorder in August 1969, the military

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[26] Colm Heatley, *Interface: Flashpoints in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Lagan Books, 2004), 81.

[27] Denis Smyth, *Sailortown: The Story of a Dockside Community* (Belfast: North Belfast History Workshop, 1990), 26.

[28] Taylor Downing, ed., *The Troubles: The Background to the Question of Northern Ireland* (London: Thames MacDonald, 1980), 115.

[29] The subsequent history of physical separation in Belfast make it noteworthy that no details are provided as to the process of removal, i.e., were they removed after consultation of the local residents or was the decision taken unilaterally by the security forces? It is at least reasonable to assume the latter.

[30] The history of policing in Northern Ireland, first by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and then by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is a fraught one and one of the most contentious aspects of the conflict. There is broad agreement across the academic literature regarding the undoubted importance of effective policing policy in moving Northern Ireland from conflict to stability; the complexities and difficulties in implementing those policies, both historically and currently, are of course equally acknowledged. McGarry and O'Leary point to a definitive 'Protestant' ethos to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) prior to the implementation of the Patten Commission reforms. In such a context, building confidence in policing structures becomes critical to the whole peace process. However, as Moran notes that in Northern Ireland, the very term 'policing' and its functioning is spread between legal (the police), extra-legal (community restorative justice projects) and illegal bodies (the

was again given overall responsibility for security operations in Northern Ireland[31]. Incidents such as the burning of dozens of Catholic homes in Bombay Street and the construction by locals of *ad hoc* barricades constructed from wood, scrap metal, and burned out vehicles precipitated the first semi-permanent barrier along Cupar Way and Bombay street between the Shankill and the Falls areas of West Belfast[32].

As in the earlier cases of civil unrest in Belfast, the use of separation barriers, like the deployment of troops, was always initially seen as an emergency measure[33]. British Army GOC Sir Ian Freeland was famously quoted at the time: 'The peaceline will be a very, very temporary affair. We will not have a Berlin Wall or anything like that in this city'[34]. It was generally assumed that, as in the past, the violence would be short-lived and as tensions lessened normalcy, of a sort, would return.

This was not to be the case. Instead, the conflict 'bedded down' and moved from sporadic civil unrest to sustained insurgency and political stalemate[35]. The army's corrugated sheets soon were more permanently constructed over time and/or replaced with more permanent brick structures that have often been heightened

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paramilitaries), and Patten struggled to envision this under one conventional understanding. Needless to say, the two majority communities Northern Ireland had (and have) two different experiences of the police, and Gethins notes how Protestants were more likely to experience a '"normal" liberal model' of policing as compared to the Catholic experience of 'paramilitary colonial model'. See John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *Policing Northern Ireland: Proposals for a New Start* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1999), 71-72, Jon Moran, *Policing the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: Politics, Crime and Security after the Belfast Agreement* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), 111-112, Mary Gethins, *Catholic Police Officers in Northern Ireland: Voices Out of the Silence* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011), 16 and 30, and Aogán Mulcahy, *Policing Northern Ireland: Conflict, Legitimacy and Reform* (Cullompton, Devon and Portland OR: Willan Publishing, 2006), 75-81.

[31] 'UK and Northern Ireland Communiqué of 19 August 1969', http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/UK_and_Northern_Ireland_communiqu%C3%A9_of_19_Augus t_1969 (accessed 15 November 2010).

[32] Arthur Strain and Peter Hamill, 'Forty Years of Peace Lines', http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8121362.stm (accessed 15 November 2010).

[33] BBC Home, *On This Day*, 1950-2005, '14 August 1969: British Troops Sent Into Northern Ireland', http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/14/newsid_4075000/4075437.stm (Accessed 16 November 2010).

[34] Paul Bower, 'Reprogramming the Wall', http://www.shef.ac.uk/architecture/main/gallery/gal/diploma/studio2/stud0506/strategies/ 08_Paul/Strategy_Paul.htm (accessed 3 October 2010).

[35] 'Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland, Chapter 2: The events', points 213-227, http://www.vilaweb.cat/media/attach/vwedts/docs/op_banner_analysis_released.pdf, (accessed 13 October 2010).

with additional steel fencing (*see photos 1 and 2 in Appendix*). Crucially, these barriers followed the locally-understood identity borders.

This gradual transition from being thought of as temporary to being accepted as permanent can be partially explained by the fact that the longer the barriers remained in place, the greater their psychological exertion on communities that they divide, becoming, in a sense, a self-fulfilling prophesy of justifying the need for their presence by the fact that they are present:

> It is far easier to put (the barriers) up than it is to take them down.
> By and large, it looks like we have built a psychological barrier and
> it's the psychological barrier which is hard to take away.[36]

Thus, like other aspects of the conflict, the presence of- and need for- the barriers have become cyclical, a self-perpetuating 'cause-and-result' of the need and desire for them:

> Once built, such partitions quickly become part of the physical and
> mental landscape of cities, delineating safe and unsafe areas and
> refashioning interface areas from central meeting points into
> periphery best avoided.[37]

As of 2008, the Community Relations Council (CRC) put the number of separation barriers in Belfast at eighty-eight walls, fences, gates and buffer zones erected at the behest of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Belfast City Council or private owners[38]. Several barriers have been built or extended since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. This fact, plus the fact that the most recent separation barriers feature more expressed aesthetic design and colour as well as prominent landscaping of trees and bushes, effectively rejects any notions of expediency or temporality and confirms the use of separation barriers in Belfast as

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[36] Robert Schaeffer, *Warpaths: The Politics of Partition* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 185.
[37] Hilary Bown, 'Partition in Entrenched European Conflicts', paper delivered at the University of Hamburg, Institute for Conflict Research and Security Policy, 16 July 2007. Available at: http://turin.sgir.eu/uploads/Bown-bown-paper.pdf, accessed 9 April 2011.
[38] 'Towards Sustainable Security: Interface Barriers and the Legacy of Segregation in Belfast' (Community Relations Council, 2008), 11. This figure represents a significant increase from the 22 barriers when the Agreement was signed in 1998.

a matter of ongoing security, civic geography and social policy (*see photos 3, 4 and 5 in Appendix*)

Conversely, as the peace process has progressed, much of the military security apparatus (border checkpoints, watchtowers, etc.) have been gradually removed[39]. Street and pedestrian barriers in and around Belfast city centre have also subsequently been removed. In the case of the city centre barriers, the process of removal benefited from political and commercial will for their removal[40]. Also present was the desire and impetus from all parties concerned (government and commercial), as well as a single central and recognisable agent of implementation. Residential areas display other layers of complexity that make removal much more challenging.

At the time of writing, all evidence would appear to point to separation barriers remaining an integral part of security, regulation of contested public space and residential development of Belfast for the foreseeable future- not simply the present number, but including those recently constructed or being expanded[41]. An example of this is the barrier that is evolving along the rear of Mountainview Parade off the Crumlin Road in North Belfast, which was a metal fence and has since been replaced by a sculpted brick wall with metal poles mounted along the top to accommodate the addition of metal fencing at some time in the future (*see photos 6, 7 and 8 in*

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[39] Neil Jarman, 'Security and Segregation: Interface Barriers in Belfast', *Shared Space*, Issue 6, June 2008, 27.

[40] The last security barriers in Belfast City Centre were removed in 2006. The move was praised by then-Northern Ireland Office Social Development Minister David Hanson and by Joanne Jennings of Belfast City Centre management, with Hanson saying that the move would 'contribute positively to the economic and social vitality of the city and will help to promote the city as a leading European regional capital and the primary retail, leisure and business destination in Northern Ireland.'
See:http://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/belfast-security-barriers-come-down-253679.html#ixzz1JhEmLUvO, accessed 15 April 2011. The last of the military apparatus was removed in 2007. See http://uk.reuters.com/article/2007/02/13/uk-irish-tower-idUKL1325533820070213,accessed 15 April 2011.

[41] Writing in the *Irish Times* in 2008, president and founder of the US-Ireland Alliance Trina Vargo notes her survey's findings of the overall desire of the Northern Ireland populace to have the barriers removed, the only question being when. However, the number of barriers was not (and is not) static, but increasing, and this is a point unmentioned in the US-Alliance polling data. This point should be included in any discussion of the barriers, their effects on the city and their removal. The Community Relations Council 'Sharing Over Separation' document (2006) does recommend some type of commitment to building no more barriers as well as eventually removing those already in place.

Appendix). As the demographics of North Belfast continue to change, it would appear

that planning bodies assume that there is significant enough opinion to suggest that

sporadic tensions at the interface of Woodvale, Glenbryne and Ardoyne will either

continue or increase. Along with this, there is also the potential for newer

incarnations of tension to develop as the Catholic population expands along the

Crumlin Road. With that prognosis in mind, foresight that includes this barrier

developing as it is between these residents, the Protestant Glencairn and any newly-

proposed residential development of the Forthriver areas is obviously deemed

reasonable and prudent.

b. The Growth of New Interfaces

Throughout the decade since the implementation of the Good Friday agreement,

separation barriers continued to be built and extended. In 2003, the Northern Ireland

Office (NIO) recorded 27 barriers in Belfast; research by the Belfast Interface Project

(BIP) in 2005 put the number at 41[42]. Revised BIP figures in 2008 placed the figure at

81, with an additional seven examples of 'intrusive police security'[43]. However, the

Community Relations Council that same year put the number at 88. As of 2012, the

Department of Justice officially puts the number at 48[44], but a University of Ulster

report commissioned by the OFMDFM[45] that same year put the number in excess of

80[46]. The lack of a definitive number points to the ambiguous nature of classifying

what constitutes a barrier, where one barrier ends and another begins and

incomplete data and recording[47]. What is undeniable, though, is that in spite of the

BIP's 2008 revised figures that account for the removal of five barriers, the number

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[42] Neil Jarman, *BIP Interface Mapping Project* (Belfast: Belfast Interface Project, August 2005); available from http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/segregat/docs/jarman0805.pdf; internet, accessed 14 November 2010.

[43] Neil Jarman, *Interface and Security Mapping Project* (Belfast: Belfast Interface Project, May 2008), available from http://www.belfastinterfaceproject.org/news.asp?id=137&archive=true; internet, accessed 14 November 2010.

[44] Paul Nolan, 'The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report, Number One', published by the Community Relations Council, February 2012, 71.

[45] 'OFMDFM' is the abbreviation used for 'Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister' within the Northern Ireland Executive.

[46] Jonny Byrne, Cathy Gormley Heenan and Gillian Robinson, 'Attitudes to Peace Walls: Research Report to Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister', June 2012, 4.

[47]Community Relations Council, 'Towards Sustainable Security: Interface Barriers and the Legacy of Segregation in Belfast', 2008, 11.

and type of physical separation barriers in Belfast is increasing and becoming more integrated into the city's architecture and planning process.

Jarman points to three reasons for this: the complex interplay of demographic shifts through inner-city Protestant migration to outer suburbs and the areas they formerly inhabited being turned into 'buffer zones' rather than mixed housing (*see Photo 9 in Appendix*); urban redevelopment in areas close to interfaces can also lead to fears of the 'other' community encroachment with the redevelopment being thus enveloped into the greater interface dynamic; and finally, the possibility of anti-social behaviour and disorder simply being pushed along into previously stable areas as one interface becomes the subject of increased police surveillance and community initiatives[48].

Thus, in such cases, barriers do not so much *end* inter-community tension as change its form and its location[49], and this movement of the disorder continues the pattern of interface development.

c. Responsibility for Separation Barriers

The use and spread of separation barriers raises the question of who bears ultimate responsibility for that use and spread: the local residents who undoubtedly demand them or the security forces which provide them. The complexity of the question is shown in Liechty and Clegg's critique of sociologist Robbie McVeigh's assertion that efforts to overcome sectarianism in Northern Ireland suffer from a fundamental flaw: much of the funding for such efforts is state-sponsored. This, in his mind, exposes a conflict of interests on the state's part. The state, he maintained, was not a neutral arbiter of peace but was, in fact, the 'key sectarian actor' because of its central role in the spheres of security, public housing sector, education, and the fact that it is the state that 'builds and polices peace lines'.

Liechty and Clegg disagreed, concluding that to describe the state as 'the key sectarian actor' is to go 'much too far'[50]. There was one sphere of McVeigh's four

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[48] Neil Jarman, 'Changing Places, Moving Boundaries: The Development of New Interface Areas', *Shared Space No. 1,* August, 2005, 12-17.
[49] Community Relations Council, 'Towards Sustainable Security: Interface Barriers and the Legacy of Segregation in Belfast', 2008, 4.
[50] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism,* 42-43.

that Liechty and Clegg conceded was one for which the state must take sole responsibility: security. On public housing, they maintain that the state's attempts at voluntarily desegregation did not have broad enough public support and forced de-segregation would be unreasonable. Similarly, in the area of education, they point to public desire for the right to choose and that it was the churches, in 1923, who opposed an integrated education system[51].

As to the separation barriers, similar to segregated housing and education, they give public desire as the key impetus: 'many (peace lines) have been built at the request of embattled communities, not imposed by the state on unwilling citizens' and that attempts to remove them since the ceasefires of 1994 'have been resisted by the people immediately affected, because they believed that the danger was still too great to warrant the dismantling of the peacelines'[52].

It is notable that Leichty and Clegg give the state full responsibility for the sphere of security 'and the ways that it is sectarian' yet no responsibility for the separation barriers and- it can be assumed- the ways that they might be sectarian. If this is the case, it can further be assumed that it is their assertion that separation barriers somehow fall outside of the realm of responsibility that Leichty and Clegg admit is the government's remit, while at the same time continuing to note the public's desire for safety and security, as they do by acknowledging that the public resists integrated housing because the 'threat of violence has made people feel more

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[51] In 1923, the British government appointed Lord Londonderry, Charles S.H. Vane-Tempest-Stewart as Minister of Education. That same year, he produced the Education Act of 1923, which set out his vision of a non-sectarian, secular education system. Londonderry made clear: 'Religious instruction in a denominational sense during the hours of compulsory attendance there will not be.' When the Act was made public, clergy from all churches were outraged. In a rare show of unity, all of the churches objected to it. Protestant clergy insisted that religious education be part of the school day; Catholic clergy insisted that their separate schools be exempt from the Act. In 1924, the United Education Committee, set up by Protestant clergy, held demonstrations and distributed leaflets condemning the Education Act. The leaflets read: PROTESTANTS AWAKE! 'The door is thrown open for a Bolshevist or an atheist or a Roman Catholic to become a teacher in a Protestant school'. Finally, James Craig, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, quietly worked out a deal (while Londonderry was out of the country) that satisfied all the competing interests: religious education became part of the curriculum in all state schools and Catholic-maintained schools looked after their own interests. Lord Londonderry resigned in 1925. See D.H. Akenson, *Education and Enmity: The Control of Schooling in Northern Ireland 1920-1950* (London: Newton Abbot, 1973) and Sean Farren, *The Politics of Irish Education: 1920-65* (Belfast: Queens University, Institute of Irish Studies, 1995).

[52] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 42-43.

secure when living in their own communities'. Regardless, safety and security (or the perceived lack thereof) is the main impetus for physically-reinforced segregation, and therefore a significant role for the government in fostering physical segregation, even at the merely logistical level, can be reasonably assumed[53].

The implementation process regarding separation barriers has changed over time. Between 1969 and 1994, the decision-making process rested solely with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the police and security forces; they would consult on the issue and simply implement the decisions. From 1994 to 2010, the initial consultation process has been expanded to include local political representatives and residents as well as the security forces who consulted with the NIO who would then advise the Secretary of State who would make the ultimate decision. For example, in the wake of the Holy Cross dispute of 2001 at the Ardoyne/Glenbryn interface in North Belfast, itself a culmination of 30 years of inter-communal tension, Protestant Glenbryn residents were keen to have the separation barrier along Alliance Avenue heightened and extended, which was implemented[54]. Their request for Ardoyne Road to be permanently closed off by a gate was denied[55]. Since the devolution of policing and justice powers to the Northern Ireland Executive in 2010, sole responsibility for the barriers has rested with the local Department of Justice, who have also committed themselves to local consultation.

A more inclusive framework is certainly preferable to a unilateral one, in the sense that building a barrier is not simply an imposed, 'top-down' decision. However, that must be considered against the reality that 'building a barrier was still regarded as an

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[53] In fairness to Liechty and Clegg, they admit early in their work that because that work 'focuses primarily on the responsibilities of Christians and their churches in relation to sectarianism, state responsibilities are addressed only occasionally and in passing.' They do admit, however, that 'the state has been deeply implicated in establishing and nurturing sectarianism and that moving beyond sectarianism involves political and legal actions that only the state can accomplish.' It is therefore somewhat understandable that they would focus on the local community's responsibility for making the barriers necessary rather than on the government's role in either providing them or (as is the argument suggested here) the more amorphous issue of providing little no other alternative to them. Regardless, the actions of the state and the local population appear to cyclically feed each other, with the government's over-reliance on physical barriers feeding the conventionally-held assumption that such a policy is reasonable. See Liechty and Clegg's *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 41.

[54] Colm Heatley, *Interface: Flashpoints in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Lagan Books, 2004), 33.

[55] Neil Jarman, 'Managing Disorder: Responses to Interface Violence in North Belfast', in *Researching the Troubles: Social Science Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Conflict*, Owen Hargie and David Dickson, eds. (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 2004), 235.

appropriate response to a sectarian incident resulting in criminal damage'[56]; the individual barrier is not a foregone conclusion, but physically-reinforced segregation is. A cycle emerges: the ultimate responsibility continues to be borne by state agencies, who continue to base their decision on evidence of 'an ongoing problem of violence or disorder'; the barriers then remain in place due to local residents' desire for them to remain 'because they create a sense of safety that otherwise would not exist'[57].

Police attitudes to low-level crime also become a factor[58]. Just as a report by Sir Denis O'Connor found pervasive ambivalence among police officers in England and Wales to anti-social behaviour [59], Jarman found similar attitudes to sectarian violence among senior police officers in Northern Ireland. In this context, sectarianism adds complexity to the issue of crime, and in the absence of a standardised system for defining and recording sectarian incidents (unlike systems put in place for racist and homophobic crimes[60]), the line between what is considered sectarian violence and 'ordinary' crime is blurred. This in turn has led to a situation where sectarianism is further 'normalised' and there is 'either a disbelief that there is

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[56] Neil Jarman, 'Security and Segregation: Interface Barriers in Belfast', *Shared Space*, No. 6 (June 2008), 21.

[57] Neil Jarman, 'No longer a Problem? Sectarian Violence in Northern Ireland', *Institute for Conflict Research*, March 2005, 27.

[58] Graham Ellison gives detailed evidence of the disparity between PSNI attitudes to 'minor' crime and those of the victims of it, as well as its corrosive effects on community life in interface communities: 'Local surveys... emphasise the cumulative nature of much criminal victimisation: that it occurs not as a one-off, but multiple times over a longer period of time... Finally, local victimisation numbers inform us about police performance in urban, working-class areas and alert us to a growing perceptual disparity between what the public wants from the police (i.e. to deal with anti-social behaviour, public drunkenness, noisy neighbours, kids on the street, vandalism, etc.) and what the police think the public need (i.e. an organisation solving serious crime, and so forth)... This disparity, at least from the point of view of the residents in the (North Belfast Catholic/Nationalist) New Lodge area, is borne out starkly in the August 2008 research.' Graham Ellison, 'Police-Community Relations in Northern Ireland in the Post-*Patten* Era: Towards an Ecological Analysis', in John Doyle, ed., *Policing the Narrow Ground: Lessons from the Transformation of Policing in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Royal Irish Acadamy, 2010), 260.

[59] Sandra Laville, 'Police Forces Not Doing Enough to Tackle Antisocial Behaviour, Survey Finds', http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/mar/11/antisocial-behaviour-police-forces-report, accessed 10 October 2010.

[60] Neil Jarman, 'No Longer a Problem?, 41.

a problem, that it is not a significant problem, or that we cannot really do much about it anyway'[61].

The desire voiced by local communities for separation barriers must therefore be interpreted in the light of these facts. With local community and policy-making levels both playing a role, the separation barriers are best understood as a component part of systemic sectarianism as defined by Liechty and Clegg. This systemic interpretation allows responsibility for- and responses to- the barriers to be acknowledged across the spectrum of actors in the system. Those responsibilities, as well as what each actor can conceivably do in response, will differ, but viewing the issue as a spectral one allows each constituent to realistically acknowledge that they are part of the system and then reflect on what role they play.

d. The Qualitative Aspect of the Security Provided

If the stated function of the separation barriers is to provide security for local residents and reduce sectarian incidents, the qualitative benefits of the security provided then impinge on the discussion.

Throughout the conflict, a third of victims of political violence died within 250 metres of an interface; if the proximity is increased to 500 metres, the figures increases to close to 70%[62]. Thus, while it would be erroneous to infer that interface communities are in some way more inherently violent or sectarian than other communities, residential segregation had a concentrating effect upon violence into certain areas of the city, which contributed to the 'remapping' of the city, both physically and cognitively. This, combined with the fact that nearly one-third of all victims were murdered in or within a few metres of their homes, entrenched the idea that violent acts were an assault on the community itself rather than simply on the individual[63].

An interface area exerts significant influence on the communities on or around it, and these communities have been found to be keenly aware of the need for intimate

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[61] Jarman, 'No Longer a Problem?', 56.
[62] Peter Shirlow and Brendan Murtagh, *Belfast Segregation, Violence and the City* (London, Dublin, & Ann Arbor MI: Pluto Press, 2006), 73.
[63] Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast Segregation,* 74.

knowledge of a complex social-spatial geography. Communities living near, or along, an interface order much of their daily lives (travel, dress, work patterns, socializing etc.) around this geography[64]. Residents at interfaces live with levels of social and economic insecurity, fear and political disenfranchisement that are higher than average, all of which translates into anxiety regarding their place in broader society, their hopes for the future and their relations with other communities. A long history of antagonistic relationships and limited meaningful interaction between the two sides of the community beyond the 'disordered and threatening'[65], security and the need to overtly delineate territory become the primary overarching concerns.

The majority of residents of interface areas indicated that the purpose of the barriers was to stop violence (51% overall) and to help people feel safer (67% overall)[66]. However, Murtagh and Shirlow's findings question the quality of the security they provide and note their propensity either to concentrate violence in one particular area or simply to move it to other areas. This is mirrored by findings that despite segregation, sectarian intimidation remains a significant problem[67]. So while much of the research available draws attention to local residents' desire to have barriers erected, it must be remembered that the most often cited reason by the residents themselves for this desire is *not* to segregate themselves from the other community or to have nothing to do with them, but to prevent or lessen anti-social behaviour associated with certain elements in the other community. This is further reflected in a lack of confidence in the police if the barriers were to be taken down (7% 'very confident'/18% 'fairly confident' vs. 39% 'very worried'/19% 'fairly worried') and a noticeable loss in confidence in elected local government[68]. We will return to these issues of fear and lack of trust in the next section.

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[64] David Russell, 'Belfast: Strategies for a Shared City', paper presented on behalf of the Community Relations Council at 'Shared Worlds- Shared Cities', a conference held on 14 October 2004 in Berlin, hosted by Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung, http://www.community-relations.org.uk/fs/doc/shared-space-issue-1-c-david-russell-2.pdf, 23.

[65] Russell, 'Belfast: Strategies for a Shared City', 25.

[66] The full results of the 2007 US-Ireland Alliance study concerning the removal of one or more of the separation barriers are available at the North Belfast Interface Network, http://www.nbin.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=50&Itemid=2.

[67] Jarman, 'No Longer a Problem?', 25.

[68] The 2009 Life and Times Survey is available at:
http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2009/Political_Attitudes/index.html. A Report from the Devolution

The actual qualitative security benefits of the separation barriers were commented upon in an interview given by the then-Lord Mayor of Belfast Martin Morgan. Morgan first described the barriers as 'regrettable, but understandable and necessary,' yet then went on to question their overall effectiveness:

> First, (the barriers) don't guarantee peace, because ... a terrorist can get into a car and drive through the walls, and they do so. And how high do you build the wall, to block things from being thrown over?[69]

At the same time, Morgan admitted that the barriers represented a cost-effective security alternative to large-scale security operations:

> Instead of sending dozens of policemen and army personnel, we close the gates and have two policemen patrol the area.... The structure itself is maybe 400-500 meters. It costs £200,000 pounds, paid by the British government, and has a gate in the middle, and it requires only two police officers to open the gate. It is locked at night, and if there's an incident during the day the police come and lock it. They send two police officers, so right away they save dozens of police officers from attending, and so these dozens of police officers can be redirected to do other assignments. In terms of human resources, the fences save a lot of money and resources.[70]

Morgan's comments are an example of McKittrick's assertion that there is a basic dichotomy in the government's position and a disconnection between social and security policy:

> On the one hand general government social policy would theoretically favour a mix. But then security policy would probably

Monitoring Programme notes the decline; available at http://eprints.ucl.ac.uk/19855/1/19855.pdf.
[69] Sharon Sadeh, 'Belfast's Separation Fences Divide, but Slow Violence', *Haaretz*, 4 September 2003, available at http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/belfast-separation-fences-divide-but-slow-violence-1.99147, internet, accessed 20 December 2010.
[70] Sadeh, 'Belfast's Separation Fences Divide, but Slow Violence', *Haaretz*, 4 September 2003.

prefer a separation because it keeps things distinct and easier to control.[71]

The difficulty with this position is that it does not take into account how short-term security policy undermines longer-term visions of social policy and/or post-conflict social transformation. Ongoing issues such as recreational rioting, flags and parades continue to undermine both the short-term and long-term policies, and the state's undergirding of division makes reconciliation and a shared future more difficult to envision[72].

What emerges is a situation where physical segregation is the solution made most readily available to residents, and often only after local community relations have deteriorated (or violence escalated) to the point that a barrier is often the only logical action. In this regard, the presence of the barriers at least opens up the implication that 'the state has failed to provide public spaces that are safe for all' and, to a degree, has accepted ethno-sectarian segregation as a reasonable, long-term solution in absence of a more progressive 'creation of democratic values that could be played out within a mixed community-based spatial framework'[73].

For example, In 1999, after years of escalating violence in the Whitewell and White City areas of North Belfast, previously a reasonably stable area in terms of community relations, a decision was taken by then-Security Minister for Northern Ireland Adam Ingram to erect a 60 meter-long, 9 metre-high separation barrier between the two communities, the first to be erected in Belfast since 1994 (*see Photo 9 in Appendix*). Explaining the decision, Ingram said:

> I have based my decision solely on the pressing need to maintain
> the safety of both communities living in this area. I very much
> regret the need to take such a decision... I believe however, there

[71] David McKittrick, 'Apartheid deepens on the Streets of Ulster: Alarming New Statistics Show the Extent of Northern Ireland Segregation',
http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/apartheid-deepens-on-streets-of-ulster-alarming-new-statistics-show-the-extent-of-northern-ireland-segregation-writes-david-mckittrick-1499129.html, accessed 21 December 2010.
[72] James Anderson, 'Sectarian Demography, Territoriality and Political Development in Northern Ireland', *Political Geography*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1998), 204.
[73] Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation,* 22.

is no other option available in the circumstances. Since 1 January 1997 the police have recorded nearly 300 separate incidences in the area, the vast majority have been caused by the scourge of sectarianism. Despite strenuous efforts, no viable solution to this fencing could be identified... I believe that the measures proposed represent the best way of preserving peace and maintaining order in this area of North Belfast.[74]

Ingram's admission of his belief that there was 'no other option available' encapsulates the socio-political inertia at work when confronting interface violence Both sides of the community requested the barrier, yet the Whitewell/White City barrier failed to reduce the number of sectarian attacks in the area, even in the shot term, and Catholic residents, who had been returning to the area over the intervening years, began to move out, culminating in an exodus during extensive rioting in the summer of 2001. The security solution on offer to residents was inadequate to instil enough hope of improvement for them to decide to remain or- once they have left- to return.

All of these examples, taken together with the data cited, suggests that while the barriers might have made people 'feel safe', it is questionable to what level they realistically protect residents from violence. Rather, the presence of the separation barriers can serve as an ever-present reminder of the history of violence and the threat of more violence, and this sense of insecurity and threat cyclically reinforces both 'the logic and need for intercommunity separation'[75].

3. Separation Barriers and Fear and Lack of Trust

The fact that separation barriers fall under the remit of security naturally assume that they are a product of real and perceived insecurity, i.e. fear and lack of trust, both in the intentions and actions of the other community and in the will or ability o the authorities to deal comprehensively with sectarian disorder and petty crime in any other way[76]. Interviewed by *Deutsche Welle* in 2012, Paul O'Neill, a community

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[74] Heatley, *Interface*, 47-48.
[75] Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast Segregation*, 79.
[76] It is important to stress that, in situations like that in Northern Ireland, mistrust is the product of both individual and collective experience and memory of violence and trauma.

development coordinator in North Belfast said, 'The barriers are really a manifestation of people's own fears. The problem is very, very profound. It's deep-set, it's historical'[77]. Questions, however, revolve around their qualitative efficacy in reducing fear and the lack of trust, and in the role they play in perpetuating it.

a. Cross-Community Similarities and Differences

In 2007, the US-Ireland Alliance previously cited found that a majority of interface residents (60% overall) indicated that they are in favour of barriers being removed at some point in the future, but only 21% favoured their immediate removal. The same (60%) indicated they wanted the barriers to remain in place, the most common reason given being fears for their safety if they were removed[78]. The most recent research, published in 2012, continued to confirm this interpretation[79]. However, within all the findings, there were clear differences between Catholic and Protestant interface residents' perceptions of that security role. Catholic interface residents tended to believe that the purpose of the barriers is to keep communities under control of the security forces than were Protestant residents. Conversely, Protestant residents indicated their belief that the barriers were constructed because the government had no other option, inferring that Catholic residents believe that the

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Simply, there might be credible reasons not to trust, particularly if meaningful social interaction is so limited as to give no evidence of good intentions or good will. Uslaner notes that in societies marked by 'strong class, ethnic, or racial divisions... such conflicts lead to strongly polarized societies, where people do *not* see common interests with other groups (and) people are likely to begin with the premise that members of out-groups are *not* trustworthy. And personal experience may be a very good guide to such expectations.' Uslaner's analysis also goes some way to explaining why fear and lack of trust are so prevalent in lower-income, working class areas of Belfast, and therefore why the barriers proliferate in such areas: 'dire economic circumstances' and the perception of competition for limited resources exacerbate other dynamics of conflict already present. See Eric M. Uslaner, *The Moral Foundations of Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge and New York: University Press, 2002), 19.

[77] Joanna Impey, 'Belfast: "The Barriers are Really a Manifestation of People's Fears"', *Deutsche Welle*, available at: http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,15905256,00.html, internet, accessed 26 April 2012.

[78] The full results of the US-Ireland Alliance study are available at the North Belfast Interface Network, http://www.nbin.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=50&Itemid=2.

[79] See Jonny Byrne, Cathy Gormley Heenan and Gillian Robinson, 'Attitudes to Peace Walls: Research Report to Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister', June 2012.

government does have other options available to it, but chooses not to pursue them[80].

Interface working-class Loyalist communities' interpretations of the separation barriers are played out against the backdrop of long-term demographic decline which in turn leads to 'unambiguous fears concerning wider sectarianised notions of territorial dissolution'[81], complex feelings of being marginalised and ignored and ongoing senses of being under threat and prone to attack. This perpetual state of 'dis-ease' tends to magnify every perceived daily indignity into a larger conspiracy aimed at (in the case of Protestants) the destruction or (in the case of Catholics) the marginalization of the community. The fears of these individuals and communities should not be dismissed, as they are often rooted in the memories of violent or traumatic history. That those fears inform attitudes, decision-making and actions indefinitely is indicative of the locally-held opinion that similar acts are still possible as the issues behind the acts are locally deemed not to have been sufficiently addressed and (unconsciously) that the perpetrator's community is unchanged[82].

Because of long-term demographic changes and declining numbers of urban Protestants, Protestants expressed fear of being 'overrun' by what they perceive to be a larger, better organised, bold and more politically-skilled Catholic community[83]. The barriers are therefore often perceived as a 'necessary fact of life' to counteract what is seen as a coordinated Catholic expansionist campaign into Protestant areas. This belief compliments a broader post-Good Friday Agreement urban Protestant

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[80] Jonny Byrne, Cathy Gormley Heenan and Gillian Robinson, 'Attitudes to Peace Walls: Research Report to Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister', June 2012, 11.
[81] Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation*, 16.
[82] See Michael Liggett, *Glenard: Surviving Fear* (Belfast: Sásta, 2004). Similarly, Doherty and Poole draw attention to the fact that the population displacement that occurred in Belfast and Derry in 1969 was the largest such incident in Europe since the Second World War. They conclude that the mixing of dynamics such as traumatic events, a cohesive local population and a small geographic area should not be understated and go some way to explaining the subsequent desire to seek out physical segregation and security. See Paul Doherty and Michael A. Poole, 'Ethnic Residential Segregation in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1971-1991', *Geographical Review,* Vol. 87, No. 4 (Oct., 1997), pp. 520-536, available at: https://elib.tcd.ie/login?url=http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid%3E, accessed 28 October 2011.
[83] Heatley, *Interface,* 63, 67, 91.

narrative that the Catholic community and the Housing Executive conspire to 'move the Protestant working class out of the city as a process of political appeasement'[84].

Conversely, while Catholic residents reported a similar narrative of fear, that fear is often framed around the issue of besiegement and being 'hemmed in', denied the ability for natural growth and expansion by Protestant intransigence bolstered by the British government. Ardoyne community worker Michael Liggett:

> We have a chronic housing need... but our community is
> completely enclosed by walls, it means that new houses can't be
> built and when they are it is a question of taking away what little
> free land there is for more housing... We are supposed to be in a
> peace process at this point and it is time for the walls to come
> down. Or is the British Government telling us that they think
> loyalists are still going to come in and assassinate us?[85]

It is evident that both communities experience feelings of fear and lack of trust in the other, but the nature and focus of the fear and distrust is not identical[86]. Although there is fear of living in the area dominated by the 'other', that fear was most often expressed by Catholics. Conversely, Protestants expressed more concern about Catholics moving into their supposed territory than *vice versa*. 'Thus Protestants fear the actions of Catholics; Catholics fear the reaction of Protestants to the same actions'[87]. This dynamic is an outworking of the Protestant community's deeper fears regarding place: place within their immediate neighbourhood, within

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[84] 'Fear, Mobility and living in the Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne Communities', a report by the Mapping the Spaces of Fear Research Team (2000) at the University of Ulster, 8.
[85] Heatley, *Interface*, 41.
[86] The proliferation of CCTV cameras in interface areas illustrates this dynamic. In a news item in the *Community Telegraph* of 24 November 2010 about the installation of new CCTV cameras at the interface areas of Ardoyne, Oldpark, and Rosapenna areas, the (Unionist) DUP's Nigel Dodds was 'very pleased' and confident the cameras would 'help deter sectarian attacks and the gathering of youths at this interface location'. (Nationalist) Sinn Féin's Gerry Kelly was more guarded, wishing to emphasise that the primary solution would be for 'ringleaders to be arrested and brought before the courts'. In the absence of that police action, however, he remained sceptical as to the camera's effectiveness. Thus, one sees the DUP reflect the urban Protestant fear of invasion while Sinn Féin reflects a Nationalist fear of the intentions of the authorities, as well as the notion that the government is not willing to deal with the problem at the source, which they infer emanates from the 'other' community.
[87] Fredrick W. Boal, Michael A. Poole and Russell C. Murray, 'Religious Segregation and Residential Decisions in Belfast', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (June 1978), 401.

Northern Ireland and within the United Kingdom. For Catholics, the dynamic is an outworking of deeper feelings of being marginalised, unwelcome and excluded from Northern Ireland in general and the local interface context in particular[88]. Place is of key importance to psychological well-being and to identity formation and, as Murtagh notes, a sense of place and the possession of land are 'crucial to the construction of identity in Northern Ireland and how it is reproduced'[89].

Communal interpretive differences are even evident in opinions of the barriers' removal. When queried, the majority of residents living near barriers expressed a desire for their eventual removal, as well as- to varying degrees- a belief that this would eventually occur. It is interesting to note, however, that respondents tended to say that they themselves- individually- wanted them removed more than any other group. When queried about who they thought wanted the barriers to remain, it was Protestants who were more likely to indicate 'people from this community' than were Catholics. Researchers interpreted these responses as indicating that 'respondents see themselves as more socially liberal than their neighbours', indicating that there was a 'perception gap between how residents saw themselves and their neighbours'. In the case of both questions, it can be postulated that there is a significant difference in both communities as to how the barriers are perceived and how the barriers themselves affect these perceptions[90].

While the nature and focus of fear and distrust across the community divide is not identical, it is notable that in both cases there exists a pronounced lack of trust in the intentions of the government, whether Protestants' fears of a larger conspiracy in which the government is complicit, or Catholics' lack of trust in the will of the government to stand up to what Catholics' perceive as Loyalist intransigence. The result is an ongoing cycle of alienation toward both the government and the other community, which in turn feeds the perceived need for security and reliance on physically-reinforced separation.

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[88] David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002), 4-5.
[89] Brenden Murtagh, *The Politics of Territory: Policy and Segregation in Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 2.
[90] Jonny Byrne, Cathy Gormley Heenan and Gillian Robinson, 'Attitudes to Peace Walls: Research Report to Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister', June 2012, 19.

b. Economic Consequences of Fear and Lack of Trust

There are economic issues raised by the levels of fear and lack of trust in interface areas that resonate into the city as a whole, particularly as Belfast seeks to socially and economically re-identify and re-'brand' post-conflict Belfast. Proponents point to outward investment and new shopping centres, tourism and vibrant night life as signs of success. What the proponents' vision often lacks is comprehensive reflection on the barriers' affect on this process[91]. However, commentators have observed that the 'new' Belfast is geographically small and far removed from the 'old' Belfast, i.e., interface areas which continue to form the backdrop for serious, albeit sporadic, civil unrest:

> ...the tourists walking around the 'new' city are physically and cognitively distant from such conflict. Most tourists are corralled into those parts of the city that can be controlled and made to look acceptable. Belfast... draws and directs visitors into narrow spaces. [92]

Brewer *et al* not only note that the 'new' Belfast is geographically small, but also that the majority of the population do not 'live' there. Actual living space is as segregated as ever:

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[91] Brenden Murtagh's research highlighted the costs in terms of Belfast's international image incurred by the barriers and notes that this is undoubtedly behind the more recent 'softening' of the design appearance of separation barriers ('coloured brick, pastel rendering and extensive use of greenery and planting'). The unspoken statement seems to be that the barriers, while an absolute necessity, do not correspond to the city's post-conflict narrative. See Murtagh, *The Politics of Territory,* 47-49 and Community Relations Council, 'Towards Sustainable Community: Interface Barriers and the Legacy of Segregation in Belfast', 2008, 4-5.

[92] Peter Shirlow, 'Belfast: The Post-Conflict City', *Space and Polity* Vol. 10, No. 2 (August 2006), 101. Dr. Tim Campbell of the St. Patrick's Centre in Downpatrick, Co. Down, commenting to an online Irish tourism blog forum, in some ways illustrates the desire of those involved in tourism to downplay violence in Northern Ireland and reinforce the notion that such violence is geographically far away from anywhere that tourists would conceivably go: 'Belfast was recently voted the second safest city in the World after Tokyo. No matter where your visitors are coming from it will be more dangerous to stay at home than come here. News reports about Belfast always get worldwide attention, *but a little disturbance in one street far from the city centre for two nights is hardly worth reporting and has already been forgotten about here* (italics added). Most cities have areas you'd rather not go to, but Belfast is actually safe in all parts, bar some very rare and isolated incidents like this one. See *Irish Fireside Blog and Podcast,* http://irishfireside.com/2011/06/29/is-belfast-safe/, internet, accessed 25 March 2012.

> There are now twice as many peace walls as there were at the
> height of the conflict. For all the increase in shared space arising
> from the peace process- in bars, recreation and leisure sites,
> shopping centres and the like- Belfast people seek more than ever
> the comfort of return to own-group space, in some cases marked
> off and separated by peace walls.[93]

There is a correlation here with Daniela Vicherat Mattar's research; she notes that
the 'new' commercialised city centre is effectively cordoned off from the northern
and western areas of the city by the Westlink motorway, with the city centre zone
only accessible at six easily-controllable points[94]. By doing so, the regeneration and
gentrification of certain areas of Belfast to the exclusion of other, more ethno-
nationally and ethno-religiously contested areas have severely reduced the random
points of contact and common experiences usually offered by urban life[95].

Interface areas that bear the largest proportion of physical segregation are prone
to levels of unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment that are out of
proportion to the rest of Northern Ireland as a whole. The close relationship between
Belfast's physical interfaces and social inequality is indicated by many interface areas'
inclusion among the top 10% of deprived wards according to the Noble index[96]. Even
with the influx of investment due to the peace dividend, investment has not always
been evenly distributed. What has been developing in real terms, since the peace
process, is a 'dual economy', with commercial revitalization in the city centre
regeneration of the former docklands replacing the traditional heavy industry on

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[93] Brewer *et al*, *Religion, Civil Society and Peace*, 5.

[94] How much of that security design was planned, by whom and at what point, is open to
debate. The Westlink as it is known currently was originally conceived as the Belfast Urban
Motorway in 1964, before the outbreak of the current conflict. Its construction has, however,
gone on throughout the conflict and itself been affected by the conflict and other global
events such as the oil shortage crisis of the mid-70s. The Westlink as it exists currently is a
much scaled-down version of original plans; all of the original ideas of linking routes from the
west of the city were abandoned in the 70s, with only the most basic, earliest phases of the
scheme going forward. See 'History- Belfast Urban Motorway and Westlink', Northern Ireland
Roads Site, available at: http://www.wesleyjohnston.com/roads/belfasturbanmotorway.html,
internet, accessed 29 October 2012.

[95] Daniela Vicherat Matter, 'Did Walls Really Come Down? 86-87.

[96] Peter Shirlow, 'Belfast: A Segregated City' in Colin Coulter and Michael Murray, eds.,
Northern Ireland after the Troubles, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press,
2008), 79-80.

which the majority of Belfast's inner-city working-class communities depended. Simply put, those with the education, skills, mobility and access to finances have prospered in the new economic dispensation; those without those resources have not, and those that have not constitute a majority of the residents of inner-city and outer-city estates, many of which are associated with interface areas[97].

Moreover, there is evidence that it is the fear and insecurity engendered by living in areas of acute physical segregation that impedes the acquisition of the skills needed to seek employment. Research at the Ardoyne interface found that the lack of employment in North Belfast demanded that its job-seeking population be more mobile and better educated than others in the city, but that the dynamics of fear and insecurity associated with areas of physical segregation impedes the desire of residents to avail themselves of job creation schemes and education programmes which might entail travelling out of their own area or through what was perceived as a rival's area, thus hindering the relevance and effectiveness of such programmes[98]. The fear of movement to or through the adjoining community's territory similarly resulted in Catholic Ardoyne residents being prepared to travel across the city to use leisure centres in the Falls Road or Andersonstown rather than the Ballysillan leisure centre less than a mile away, leaving the Ballysillan facility underutilized[99].

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[97] Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation,* 26.

[98] 'Fear, Mobility and living in the Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne Communities', a report by the Mapping the Spaces of Fear Research Team (2000) at the University of Ulster, 29.

[99] The *Belfast Telegraph* of 11 August 2011 reported that Belfast's 10 leisure centres were incurring losses of more than £8m a year; 2008 had been worse, with losses of almost £10m. Ulster Unionist councillor Jim Rodgers was quoted as saying that 10 centres were 'far too many... A city our size needs only two leisure centres. But given that we are still a politically divided city, I would be prepared to go up to four - one each for east, west, north and south Belfast.' Needless to say, the article went on to document the difficulty in deciding which leisure centres to close, and the opposition of politicians to close a leisure centre in their constituency. The intricate geographical understandings of what services and amenities are 'owned' or available to which 'side' of a divided community is demonstrated in the 25 February 2012 issue of the *North Belfast News.* A reader texted the comment: 'In an ideal world, yes there would be a leisure centre for nationalist North Belfast. I for one would use it regular (sic.)... Has (the park in a predominantly Catholic/Nationalist area of North Belfast) the Waterworks ever been looked into for a leisure centre build?' Similarly, a North Belfast-based Catholic priest interviewed as part of this research commented: 'Within this Nationalist area here, Ardoyne is bursting at the seams, population-wise. There's nothing; there's no football pitch, there's no green space, there's no swimming baths...' The tacit acceptance by the priest and, ostensibly, by his community that the football pitches (0.5 miles away), the green spaces of Woodvale Park and Ballysillan Playing Fields (0.4 and 0.5 miles away), the two large supermarkets (0.5 and 0.7 miles away) and the leisure centre with swimming facilities (0.6

All of these factors were at least indirectly referred to by Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness when he acknowledged employment as 'the most immediate and effective way out of deprivation', before acknowledging that there existed 'substantial structural, historic, geographical and social barriers to employment and full participation in the economy for deprived communities'[100]. However, despite these evidences that the insecurities associated with living at a physical interface had direct economic consequences, they have not translated into clear and integrated proposals to specifically address 'the injustices of segregation and socio-spacial exclusion[101]. It can be assumed that the separation barriers, by acting as a physical, constant reminder of potential threat, do not significantly ameliorate the fear or the effects of it.

4. Separation Barriers and Identity Reinforcement

Cultural division and identity reinforcement have manifested in patterns of residential segregation in Belfast that predate not only the most recent conflict period but the formation of Northern Ireland itself[102]. It is for this reason that it is perhaps more accurate to conceive of Belfast not so much as a city but as 'an assemblage of villages'[103], with each 'village' possessing its own unique identity issues and set of historic local antagonisms feeding into the larger socio-political context. Thus, each local interface area- and each particular barrier- works to perpetuate and magnify deeper historical patterns of segregation and identity reinforcement.

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miles away) were not 'available' simply because each required less than a mile's travel to territory they would not feel safe travelling through or into shows how these fears and insecurities are played out spatially and economically.

[100] 'Social Investment Fund Announced', http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/executive-statement-220311-social-investment-fund-announced, accessed 22 March 2011.

[101] Shirlow, 'Belfast: The Post-Conflict City', 100. It should be noted that McGuinness made his remarks while announcing the establishment of an £80million Social Investment Fund aimed at reducing poverty and unemployment.

[102] Boal et al. point to pronounced residential segregation in the early 19th century, despite the lack of any concerted institutional efforts to either sustain or reform the situation. 'One might say, very simply', comments Boal, 'that Belfast is segregated because it is segregated'. See Frederick W Boal, Michael A. Poole and Russell C. Murray, 'Religious Segregation and Residential Decisions in Belfast'. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (June 1978), 400.

[103] Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation,* 17.

The findings of the US-Alliance survey demonstrate that the majority of residents near separation barriers have lived there for a significant amount of time (over 70% responded 'more than 10 years') and only a small minority (10% overall) indicated they would leave the areas if the walls were removed. For the surveyors, this was indicative of both a high level of a positive cohesive community identity in interface areas, but also lower levels of mobility[104]. Thus, physically-reinforced separation can enforce division to those outside a group and, conversely, act as an integrating force within a group. In a context such as Belfast, where the two primary ethno-cultural groupings are relatively unassimilated and historically segregated, particularly at interfaces, the reinforcement of group cohesion is especially pronounced[105]. With specific regard to the separation barriers, any indication that the positive identity reinforcement taking place within either community is leading to a reduction in the negative identity reinforcement that interprets the other community as alien and hostile has not been forthcoming. Both Shirlow and Wright highlight that although the stated purpose of the barriers is to reduce local sectarian tension they often have the opposite effect, in fact creating and perpetuating conditions that foster sectarian attitudes and actions[106].

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[104] Lower levels of mobility have also been found to indicate an aversion to moving beyond one's familiar area, based on both positive and negative attitudes to place and identity. A 2008 study of the 'Facts, Fears & Feelings' project conducted by the School of History and Anthropology of Queens University documented a phenomenon in Belfast communities which they called 'bounded contentment': an insular satisfaction to remain in a community comprised only of one's 'own' community. Amongst young people especially, interaction with the other community was seen as an unnecessary risk. Thus, a pattern emerges: one's own community and area are viewed positively as a source of family and provision, and there is no perceived need to venture beyond; the 'other' community and their intentions are unknown commodities; moreover, past history leads to the judgement that it is best to leave things as they are. Add to this the probability that, at interfaces, any contact with the other is very often wholly negative or antagonistic (petty criminal damage, unwanted flags or other displays, marches, etc.) and one is left with a situation where the ability to diffuse communal tensions is significantly inhibited and subsequent bad feelings reinforce one's own positive identity and the 'other's' negative one. The study also found that, ironically, many of the young people surveyed felt themselves to be unaffected by sectarianism for the simple reason that they never interacted with the other community. See 'Sectarianism and Segregation in Urban Northern Ireland: Northern Irish Youth Post-Agreement' (Belfast: Queens University, 2008), 71-107.

[105] Brendan Murtagh, 'Peace Line Communities: Implications for the Fountain', http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/segregat/temple/discus2.htm (accessed 1 December 2010).

[106] See Peter Shirlow, '"Who Fears to Speak?"': Fear, Mobility, and Ethno-sectarianism in the Two Ardoynes', *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, 3(1), Special Issue: Northern Ireland, 76-

Issues of security, identity and the barriers can also overlap. The most recent research in 2012 indicated that, for Protestant interface residents particularly, understanding of the barriers' security role is closely linked to issues of identity, as civil unrest tends to revolve around their community's primary expressions of communal cultural identity-Loyal Order processions, band parades, etc. Thus, a majority of Protestants surveyed felt that the barriers allowed for more safe and free celebrations of communal identity-related cultural events than did Catholics[107].

What this leads to is a reductionist view of individual and communal identity along very narrow parameters. At an interface, broader social conditions such as divergent education, churches, sporting affiliations and historical remembrance are magnified by close proximity, perceived and actual antagonism and lack of meaningful interaction with the other community, of which the separation barriers are a constant reminder and reinforcement[108]. The development of the 'collective self' is negatively impacted in contexts of extreme division by the reiteration of a discourse of 'threat' posed by the encroachment (or merely the existence) of the 'collective other' leading to a situation where communities see no alternatives other than defence against and avoidance of each other[109].

91,available at: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ethnopolitics/shirlow03.pdf, accessed: 28 October, 2011.

[107] Jonny Byrne, Cathy Gormley Heenan and Gillian Robinson, 'Attitudes to Peace Walls: Research Report to Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister', June 2012, 14.

[108] In this context, the terminology of 'meaningful interaction' is based on Niens, Cairns and Hewstone's data on group interaction in a divided context which stresses 'quality of contact' and its effect on 'inter-group anxiety'. The frequency with which an individual meets members of the out-group is judged qualitatively by determining whether or not the individual perceived the contact as positive or negative, then determining whether the contact was judged to be 'casual' or 'intimate'. Individuals deemed intimate contact as preferable to casual; indeed, casual contact often had little or no effect on basic attitudinal change and, if such casual contact is frequent, it tended to reinforce negative attitudes toward the out-group. Thus, 'meaningful interaction' denotes sustained, positive and intimate contact between individuals and groups which allows Lederach's 'moral imagination' of what is possible to grow, Hamber and Kelly's shared vision of interdependence to be valued and, crucially, trust to develop. See Ulrike Niens, Ed Cairns and Miles Hewstone, 'Contact and Conflict in Northern Ireland' in Owen Hargie and David Dickson eds., *Researching the Troubles: Social Science Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 2004), 123-139, Roy J. Lewicki, 'Trust, Trust, Development and Trust Repair' in Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman and Eric C. Marcus, eds., *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 92-119.

[109] 'Fear, Mobility and living in the Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne Communities', a report by the Mapping the Spaces of Fear Research Team (2000) at the University of Ulster, 5.

5. **The Churches' Role in Segregation, Sectarianism, and Peacemaking**

In the midst of the social reality of physically- reinforced segregation are the institutional churches. In relation to the social reality, what becomes apparent is that, while churches are prime actors in the realm of social and ecclesial boundary definition, maintenance and hardening, their public commentary on physical segregation has not been particularly pronounced. In this and in other aspects of peacemaking and reconciliation, the Northern Ireland churches' overall impact has been mostly indirect[110]. During the conflict, peacemaking overtures and reconciliation initiatives were slow in coming and were always carried out against an unconscious background of the negative boundary maintenance, weak ecumenical engagement and (however unconsciously-fostered) zero-sum communal identities. The topic is pertinent for this thesis, not simply for the exploration of the institutional churches' engagement with the separation barriers but because of the issue of the two main themes- liberation and reconciliation- and where they both ideally lead: transformation. This speaks to the impact of institutional churches on a society in conflict, the roles churches understood for themselves, both before and during the conflict, and how those understandings shape the role they play now and what roles- particularly regarding theological reflection on social issues like physically-reinforced segregation- might be played in the future.

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[110] Ganiel, Brewer *et al* and Wells all note that in the case of reconciliation initiatives and projects in Northern Ireland, much of what were, on the surface, seen as 'church initiatives' were more commonly the work of a small number of dedicated individuals with varying degrees of consent or cooperation from their respective congregations or centralised authorities. It is also notable that much of the reconciliation projects in Northern Ireland, even those developed and facilitated by churches, such as the 'Gospel in Conflict' project of the Presbyterian Church, was funded by outside international funders such as the EU, the International fund for Ireland, Joseph Rountree foundation, Esmée Fairburn and others (a significant exception was the Church of Ireland's 'Hard Gospel' Project). When outside funding came to its natural end, many of these projects were terminated. See Gladys Ganiel, 'Religion in Northern Ireland: How Can the Churches Contribute to Post-Violence Reconciliation and Reconstruction' (unpublished paper delivered at the 'Religious Difference and Conflict' conference, Belfast, 5-7 September 2012, cited with the permission of the author), John D. Brewer, Gareth I. Higgins and Francis Teeney, *Religion, Civil Society and Peace in Northern Ireland* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Ronald A. Wells *Hope and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland: The Role of Faith-Based Organisations* (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2010).

a. Boundary Definition, Maintenance and Reinforcement

Writing in 1990, John Whyte observed that the churches' role in Northern Ireland was so pervasive and all-encompassing that, paradoxically, there was very little literature dealing directly with them[111]. Duncan Morrow *et al* note that 'the churches in Northern Ireland are the oldest indigenous social institutions in the land'[112]. In Ireland, as in other contexts, that ubiquity must be analysed against the history of social division and violence. The Church and religious belief and practice form an underpinning for many of the guidelines for acceptability or unacceptability of social life. However, while other social institutions might claim a similar publicly influential role, the claim to the role made by the churches is specific by means of coming from the churches' unique self-understanding:

> Churches are not simply institutions with a single social science
> meaning and purpose, like political parties or pressure groups.
> Primarily this stems from a claim to loyalty in the faith which goes
> beyond any state institution.[113]

Thus, while discussion of the role of the churches in public life is often framed in sociological frameworks, which tend to emphasise their social and institutional roles, the churches claim a more central and transcendent self-understanding. In Ireland and Northern Ireland, much of that role has revolved around identity formation and boundary maintenance.

Claire Mitchell's work explains in detail the churches' role in identity formation, which is uniquely pronounced in Northern Ireland. As the terms 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' carry a heavier social significance than in the other parts of the UK- or in the rest of post-partition Ireland- 'religious affiliation often determines one's place in

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[111] John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990), 26. As of 2012, the intervening years have seen Whyte's observation remedied to some degree, as the work of Mitchell, Mitchel, Ganiel, Liechty and Clegg, Brewer, Higgins and Teeney and others cited here affirms.

[112] Duncan Morrow, Derek Birrell, John Greer and Terry O'Keefe, *The Churches and Inter-Community Relationships* (Coleraine, NI: University of Ulster, Centre for the Study of Conflict, 1991), 111. The point is echoed by Brewer *et al* in *Religion, Civil Society and Peace*, 11.

[113] Duncan Morrow, 'Churches and Religion in the Ulster Crisis', in Seamus Dunn, ed., *Facets of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 152.

the social and political structure'[114]. Crucially, for a population which lacks more obvious physical, linguistic, or racial divisors, religious differences and the boundaries they create and represent become amplified and the role conceived of for religion more pronounced. Religion- and religious difference- historically becomes the lens through which all other differences are understood[115].

Liechty and Clegg, as shown before in their analysis of sectarianism, also emphasise the churches' role in relation to 'boundaries', the understood limits of contact and interaction with the other community. Churches played a significant role in defining boundaries of contact and engagement with groups deemed outside their own community or church. Beyond boundary definition, they then work to maintain those boundaries. However, they also often played, and continue to play, a significant role in hardening the boundaries between the communities, meaning they frustrated contact and interaction that the structural leadership of the church institution deemed unacceptable. This is seen most starkly in the role played by the churches in endogamy and education[116]. Mitchell specifically notes this role and expands the analysis, as it encapsulates a primary role played by religion in the divided context:

> We are inclined to attribute negative and positive values to
> perceived out-group and in-group characteristics anyway. Thus in
> a country with a religious history, it is likely that *theological* beliefs
> and religiously informed values, which are often intrinsically about

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[114] Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics*, 4-15. Even ethno-national interpretations, such as those of McGarry and O'Leary, who downplay the religious factors in the conflict in favour of the political aspirations of the protagonists and power imbalances between the two, acknowledge that religious affiliation remains the primary boundary marker between the rival groups. Mitchell would concur, but emphasises the role played by these religious boundary markers are not simply as an ethnic marker have a much more fundamental role in identity formulation and social construction: '...in a deeply divided society, religion is one of the key dimensions of difference. It is not what the conflict is about, but it is very closely tied in to wider structures and experiences of group differences. See John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 212.

[115] Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics*, 137.

[116] Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, 51. For detailed history of the setting up post-partition education in Ireland, with particular emphasis on the role played by the institutional churches, see Sean Farren, *The Politics of Irish Education: 1920-65* (Belfast: Queens University, Institute of Irish Studies, 1995). For a history and analysis of the resistance to integrated education, particularly from the Catholic hierarchy, see Jonathan Bardon, *The Struggle for Shared Schools in Northern Ireland: The History of All Children Together* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2009).

good and bad, come into play. Rather than simply marking out the

boundary, religious beliefs can help people evaluate what the

boundary means. If I believe that certain groups go to heaven and

others to hell, this may help explain why some groups in society

are more antagonistic than others... religious beliefs can help

justify and explain social relationships.[117]

Therefore, beyond the defining, maintaining and hardening of boundaries, theological and religious belief help a community *explain* the boundaries- religious and socio-political. In this regard, Ruane and Todd note the Northern Ireland conflict's 'clear theological base', and these theological questions are then broadened by their being played out in the social and political spheres[118]. Moreover, this explanation role goes in both directions; a person's or a community's experience of the boundaries and their politics has an impact on their religious belief. By marking and helping to ceremonially frame a religious peoples' civic engagement, churches help to establish and maintain a community's understandings both of historical and current political events and how both have shaped and now affect them[119].

In the midst of the roles involving the understanding of boundaries has been the churches' concomitant desire to locate themselves at the centre of communal and political life, influencing their respective communities, providing theological direction and comfort and with a concomitant political empathy. This dualistic relationship is manifested not so much by one sphere's dominance over the other, but one of co-

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[117] Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics*, 15-16.

[118] See Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland: Power, conflict and Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 22-23.

[119] See Gladys Ganiel, *Evangelicalism and Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 11-40 and Patrick Mitchel, *Evangelicalism and National Identity in Ulster1921-1998* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 22-24. A contemporary example of a practical analysis of historical and theological factors on a contemporary Irish context this is explored by Johnston McMaster and Cathy Higgins in their book on the centenary of the 1912 Ulster Solemn League and Covenant. By analysing the historical context in which the Covenant was conceived, particularly the Ulster Protestant theology that served as its theological underpinning, they offer a historical critique of theological justifications for violence within Irish Protestant and Catholic cultures. They then offer suggestions on how contemporary Christians might draw on the historical resources in alternative ways to reflect upon a contemporary shared future. See Johnston McMaster and Cathy Higgins, *Signing the Covenant- But Which One?* (Derry: Yes! Publications, 2012).

dependency and mutual benefit[120]. Therefore, the Catholic population's political struggle for equality and emancipation was given a theological underpinning by the prayers for justice and liberation from pulpits and funeral orations, while Protestants seemingly surrounded by a hostile and capricious enemy aided by a large- and largely unknown- community, favoured a theological emphasis on biblical imagery of a God who was a 'rock', a 'fortress', and a 'high tower'. In addition, Public services such as funerals, by simple reason of demographics and affiliation, meant that Catholic Churches presided over the rites of Republican volunteers and the casualties of police and army enforcement while Protestant clergy very often buried soldiers and police officers. In each case, clerical support and ecclesial practice gave public management and interpretation to their various communities' grief and anger[121].

But in terms of the sectarian conflict, the churches' understanding of peace and its role in both, there are consequences to these perceived roles and activities that churches have not always self-critically recognised. In the end, the churches' vision of peace and reconciliation did not transcend their social context, but sought a vision of both within its social and communal confines. A vision of peace and reconciliation that would have addressed the structural sectarianism within the society would have required a level of introspection and re-structuring that was beyond their vision:

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[120] Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics*, 39-40.

[121] Funerals are a particularly sensitive event in the context of division and civil conflict. From the Protestant/Unionist perspective, the role played by the Catholic Church in the funerals of Republican paramilitaries was seen, not only as provocative and offensive, but as showing a tacit approval of the actions of the deceased. Likewise, Catholic/Nationalists often saw the role played by Protestant churches in the funerals of police officers and soldiers as tacit proof of their support and condoning of the actions of those seen by many Catholic/Nationalists as agents of an oppressive state. In both cases, the Church was explicitly the Church of 'them'. There is truth in the last statement. Catholics and Protestants have significantly different theological beliefs about what the purpose of a funeral is. For Catholics, the primary purpose of a funeral is to pray for the repose of the soul of the deceased; for Protestants, a funeral is, in significant part, an act of thanksgiving for the life of the deceased[121]. Thus the specific *actions* that led to the death of the person are of minor importance to the Catholic Church, and the saying of a funeral Mass does not assert approval of those actions. However, the Protestant understanding of 'celebrating the life' of the deceased is transposed onto the Catholic funeral. These theological differences, however, were not a sustained point of introspective discussion between Churches or their parishioners on the institutional level, and efforts to understand each others' religious cultures have been sporadic at best since the end of the conflict. See *Burying Our Dead: Political Funerals in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Interchurch Group on Faith and Politics, 1992), 4.

(the churches in Northern Ireland) wanted peace without
disturbing the traditional political landscape. Remaining in the
'tribe' proved more important to them as institutions in the end
than dismantling tribalism.[122]

b. Negative and Positive Peacemaking

During the Northern Ireland conflict, hierarchical and clerical representatives of all
denominations were uniformly vociferous in their denunciation of violence.
However, which particular incidents of violence were denounced, in what manner,
and by whom, reveal not only the affect of the divided context on the institutional
churches themselves and their public role in the midst of the conflict, but also their
underlying philosophy on what constituted 'peace' in Northern Ireland. Broadly, as
Brewer, Mitchell and Leavey note, while the mainline denominational churches never
directly supported violence in the modern period, 'they did little to dismantle the
structures of sectarianism in which it was embedded'. Neither did the churches
display any particular commitment to developing a social gospel which might have
addressed social structural conditions in the underprivileged areas of Belfast where
social structural conditions fed support for violence[123].

Furthermore, the churches' denunciations of paramilitary violence- to the
exclusion of the violence of the security forces or government policy- created an
antipathy between them, paramilitary prisoners and also- indirectly- the working-
class communities from which prisoners came[124]. This exacerbated the waning
influence of the mainstream denominations in working-class areas of Belfast in
general and furthered the lack of engagement by the churches with a more rigorous
social analysis of conditions within working-class communities and of the dynamics of
conflict within and between the majority communities[125].

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[122] Brewer et al., *Religion, Civil Society and Peace*, 194.

[123] Brewer, John D. Brewer, David Mitchell and Gerard Leavey, *Ex-Combatants, Religion and Peace in Northern Ireland* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 91-92.

[124] Brewer et al., *Ex-Combatants*, 92.

[125] See Philip Orr, *New Loyalites: Christian Faith and the Protestant Working Class* (Belfast: Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, 2008).

To give historical context, by the mid-1960s, the previous century in Ireland had seen many fitful and difficult developments in the nascent ecumenical movement, both between the Catholic Church and Protestant churches and amongst the various Protestant churches[126]. By the late 50s and early 60s, these formal, hierarchical developments, delicate as they were in and of themselves, began to be tested by the growing social and political tension[127].

From 1968, as the political and security situation worsened, institutional churches continued to struggle to speak decisively into the situation. The introduction of internment without trial in 1971, which at the outset was disproportionally used to detain Catholics, further strained the already tenuous united front of churches across community divides and began to show the ambiguities of denunciations of 'violence'. Cardinal Conway expressed Catholic outrage with the policy; Dublin archbishop Simms (Church of Ireland) supported it but urged the government to use restraint[128].

January 1972, thereafter known as 'Bloody Sunday', saw 13 Catholics in Derry killed by the British army. July of that year saw the Provisional IRA detonate 26 bombs in Belfast on a single day, killing 11 and injuring 130. After 1976, as the IRA adopted their policy of the 'Long War' and the conflict bedded in for what seemed the foreseeable future, the churches faced a dilemma regarding their denunciations of violence: their pleas were ignored by the protagonists and the failure to speak out on issues that were profoundly affecting their own communities led to a loss of influence within their communities. Over time, the denunciation of violence thus

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[126] See Alan Megahey, *The Irish Protestant Churches in the Twentieth Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: MacMillan Press and New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 121-131 Ian Ellis, *Vision and Reality: A Survey of Twentieth-Century Irish Inter-Church Relations* (Belfast: Queens University, Institute of Irish Studies, 1992) and Norman W. Taggart, *Conflict Controversy and Co-operation: The Irish Council of Churches and the 'Troubles' 1968-1972* (Blackrock, C. Dublin: Columba Press, 2004).

[127] A statement by the Irish Council of Churches in November 1968 bears witness to this; on one hand it emphasised the need for social reforms in the areas of employment and housing allocation, but also expressed a hope that Catholics 'would seriously examine in what ways they can alleviate the effects of those policies which tend to divide the community' Likewise, the Church of Ireland General synod in May of 1969 did not mention the growing instability in Northern Ireland, though the archbishop's address did somewhat amorphously called to called the church to 'stand firmly for the equal rights of every man irrespective of nationality, colour or religion' and to be 'firmly opposed to all forms of fanaticism- religious or political'. Anything more proactive at the institutional level was not forthcoming. See the Presbyterian General Assembly Reports of 1969, 63-64 and 'Journal of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland', 1969, xlvii.

[128] *Belfast Telegraph*, 10 August 1971.

became, almost exclusively, denunciations of *paramilitary* violence; the more complex dynamics of sectarian social structures that had led to the paramilitary violence in the first place, were left largely unchallenged, at least at ecclesial policy-making levels[129].

This exemplified the main contribution of the churches, what Galtung refers to as 'negative' peacemaking: working to end violence[130]. This is not to diminish the necessity of this role; Brewer *et al* note that the literature detailing the Northern Ireland peace process, by focusing on the post-ceasefire narrative of political negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement, often neglects the role played by clergy and dedicated church members in achieving the ceasefires, which in all likelihood could not have been achieved without those efforts[131]. However, more positive peacemaking, particularly what Galtung identifies as 'structural positive' peacemaking- philosophically, '*dialogue* instead of penetration, *integration* instead of segmentation, *solidarity* instead of fragmentation and *participation* instead of marginalisation'[132]- were far less forthright and often carried out by individuals and small groups in relative secrecy rather than by the institutional church itself in public[133].

This goes some way to explaining the churches' lack of engagement with the issue of physical boundaries: while they are a cyclical *result* of violence, and indeed have often served as *venues* for violence, they are not, in and of themselves a manifestation of the type of violence to which the church has historically seen the need to respond. By perceiving the problem of Northern Ireland primarily as the violence- and in particular, *paramilitary* violence- and channelling the majority of their peacemaking efforts into denouncing it, more positive visions of peace and more structural visions of reconciliation did not emerge from them. This, in turn, hampered churches from a fuller engagement in post-conflict Northern Ireland, a society significantly less violent but no less divided:

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[129] See Brewer et al, *Religion, Civil Society and Peace in Northern Ireland*, 220.
[130] Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 31.
[131] Brewer *et al*, *Religion, Civil Society and Peace*, 6-7.
[132] Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means*, 32.
[133] See Wells, *Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*, 133-160.

> The Churches' chief weakness was... to focus on conflict
> transformation at the expense of social transformation... Fr. Des
> Wilson summed this up well: '... it always seemed to me that what
> churches were looking for was peace without change.'[134]

c. Community and Inter-Church Relations and Reconciliation

In lieu of positive peacemaking and alongside the negative peacemaking, and in the midst of violent conflict that took a deep personal toll on many of their members, the churches most prominent role became that of the refuge, islands of stability in the midst of social upheaval:

> In the calmness of the weekly service, in the wholeness of
> community life there is a respite from the siege and embattlement
> outside. Also in Church membership is a guarantee that nobody
> belongs to the enemy... Churches provide safe havens, anchors of
> security, identity and belonging from which the enemy is
> excluded... In this context an attack on one by someone outside is
> experienced as an attack on our Church membership. Churches are
> expected to provide comfort and sustenance in times of trial. This
> they do.[135]

The majority communities in Northern Ireland are, for better or worse, 'national communities', distinguished by specific branches of Christianity[136]. Because of this fact, it is reasonable that when the national community, as it is understood, feels threatened, the church often assumes the role of sanctuary, refuges against the violence and instability. Much of what individual parishes, pastors and priests did in

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[134] Brewer *et al., Religion, Civil Society and Peace*, 203. In contrast to the relative silence of the historical record, historian and journalist Ed Moloney's well-documented and detailed account of the years leading up to the ceasefires and the ensuing peace process draws attention to the role played by clergy in hosting secret talks and establishing trust among paramilitary leaders and government officials. The clandestine, even scandalous nature of the work is a main reason for the lack of publicity, then and since. To that end, Moloney's book is notable and welcome. See Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

[135] Morrow et al., 'The Churches and Inter-Community Relationships', 113.

[136] Frank Wright, 'Reconciling the Histories of Protestant and Catholic in Northern Ireland', in Alan D. Falconer and Joseph Liechty, eds., *Reconciling Memories* (Blackrock C. Dublin, 1998), 134.

this regard was quite positive and extremely beneficial to those most affected by the conflict[137]. However, as this involves such elements as remembrance, commemoration, festivals and funerals, it was a *de facto* mechanism of identity and boundary reinforcement and communal exclusivity. Churches often create a great wealth of civil and social capital but- particularly in the divided context- expend that social capital only on their 'own', which then limits their ability to effectively speak in to all the social issues directly or indirectly affected by conflict and division. During the conflict, the Northern Ireland churches were weak at 'bridging' social capital- which, under the circumstances, was often seen as controversial and awkward- while being considerably stronger at 'bonding' social capital[138], thus using their ecclesial role to replicate divisions rather than actively break them down.

This manifested itself during and after the conflict often manifests in two ways: the first is often relatively benign and involves simply keeping communal life 'ticking over'- baptisms, weddings, funerals, services, clubs etc. During the Troubles and subsequently thereafter, churches had the ability to provide a rich, full and busy endogamous life:

> The life of their community or their church is so time-
> consuming and so gratifying that people do not need or
> want to look beyond the boundary of their group. This is
> especially true when relationship with people beyond the
> boundary is likely to be difficult and challenging.[139]

In this context, when running a parish is a full-time job for many ministers and priests, cross-community or 'reconciliation' work becomes another agenda item for which there is often little time- and little perceived 'need'. To step beyond the stability of the 'ticking over' role into what might be unknown- and potentially unpopular- cross-community work is often seen as simply not worth the effort,

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[137] For detailed accounts of individual clergy's thoughts, feelings and motivations in this regard during some of the most violent incidents of the Northern Ireland conflict, see Fred Vincent's M.Phil dissertation *'And the church doors never closed..;': A review of the experience of clergy, and the roles they played, while working along the Falls Road/Springfield Road interface with the Shankill Road in West Belfast, from the outbreak of 'The Troubles' to 'Bloody Friday', 1968-1972* (Trinity College Dublin, Irish School of Ecumenics, M.Phil dissertation, 2006).
[138] See Brewer et al., *Religion Civil Society and Peace*, 220-222.
[139] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 316.

particularly if no particular support or encouragement is emphatically forthcoming from higher up the ecclesial hierarchy[140].

The clerical role is often a predominantly managerial one. This opinion was voiced on several occasions by clergy interviewed for this project. Even those who had a conscious commitment to reconciliation efforts admitted that it was not seen as part of their part of their primary role by their hierarchies or parishioners. A priest in Ardoyne in North Belfast, involved in the Holy Cross dispute of 2001, noted that it was not a foregone conclusion that the priests take such a pronounced role in that dispute, though he was extremely glad that they had done so:

> The peace process was in the balance, (but) a guy could come
> here, he could be based here and be a very safe pair of hands.
> There's 40-something weddings here a year. I did 18 baptisms here
> one day myself. And the week before last we had a funeral every
> single day of the week. A guy could come here, be based here, and
> that's all he could do. He could just do the pastoral stuff; that'd be
> a job in itself. The difference is, once you put your head above the
> parapet, like we did in 2001, you became something; you stood for
> something. (*Catholic, North Belfast*)

A senior Catholic cleric was blunt regarding the situation that churches found themselves:

> Churches are increasingly recognising that they are minorities. The
> population that goes to church on Sundays is maybe 20%. So in
> that sense, the churches are so concerned at present with survival,
> with 'how do we get through the next set of changes, when so-
> and-so dies or so-and-so retires?' And there really isn't either the
> energy or confidence to generate that power that might actually
> be a power to change, or to challenge the politicians. Churches are
> badly hammered and badly bruised at this stage; There's so much
> to do; you've three funerals a week to look after; you've schools to

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[140] See Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 317 and Brewer *et al.*, *Religion, Civil Society and Peace,* 180-182.

> look after; you've people to visit in hospital; you've people getting married... 'don't ask me to do anything more!' (*senior Catholic cleric*)

This is an example of what Liechty and Clegg identify as 'benign apartheid', the situation where individuals and groups 'do not remember, imagine or even desire more for Northern Ireland than separate development in the absence of violence[141]; 'a basically friendly- albeit highly static- 'co-existence' in which churches remain as they are'[142].

Secondly, there are the various denominations relationships with each other, manifested in ecumenical relations and reconciliation initiatives. The '21st Century Faith' survey, carried out by the Irish School of Ecumenics as part of the broader 'Visioning 21st Century Ecumenism' research project, gave a contemporary insight into beliefs held by clergy in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland regarding issues of reconciliation and ecumenism[143]. The survey found that while clergy on the island as a whole did feel that preaching on reconciliation is important, there was both diversity and unease with the term and its meaning. Reconciliation was deemed to be an important topic for preaching and teaching. However, in terms of what constitutes reconciliation, the preponderance of opinion felt that reconciliation is best understood as between individuals and God; any other understanding (such as reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics) follows from that. Moreover, the study found that clergy were more likely to preach about reconciliation between different ethnicities and nationalities than between Catholics and Protestants. Overall, reconciliation was approached primarily in either spiritual terms (humanity and God) or individual terms (between specific persons) rather than in social/communal terms.

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[141] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 195.

[142] Ola Tjørhom, 'The Goal of Visible Unity', *Ecumenical Review* 54, no.1 (January-April 2002): 164.

[143] Gladys Ganiel, '21st Century Faith: Results of the Survey of Clergy, Pastors, Ministers and Faith Leaders' (Dublin and Belfast: Trinity College Dublin, Irish School of Ecumenics, 2009). Available at: http://www.ecumenics.ie/wp-content/uploads/Clergy-Survey-Report.pdf, internet, accessed 13 October 2012.

With this in mind, the relative absence of the barriers from what theological reflection is being done across Ireland and Northern Ireland is somewhat unsurprising. What can be surmised from these findings, as well as from the clergy interviews and group session findings to be explored in Chapter 6 is, firstly, that the understandings of reconciliation most commonly in use are not nearly as creative or expansive as those proffered by Lederach nor rigorous or comprehensive as the five-point understanding proffered by Hamber and Kelly. Issues such as that of publicly-funded, physically-reinforced segregation are best understood and analysed within such expansive understandings of reconciliation. Even if such conceptions of reconciliation are acknowledged or understood, the reality of clergy on the ground is often quite divergent, both in terms of their own beliefs and understandings and those of their parishioners.

Secondly, the churches have often placed a greater value on maintaining 'good relations' between their congregants. This often practically means keeping more rigorous understandings of reconciliation and ecumenical engagement somewhat at arms' length. While 'good relations' is admirable, as Brewer *et al*, Ganiel, Mitchell and other academic commentators note, the conflict in Northern Ireland was not simply about bad relationships between communities, but had many of its roots in structural issues involving social injustice, economic disparity and unequal life chances, all of which were manifested in a deeply divided society. In such a situation, 'social transformation' was as much part of the solution as 'relational togetherness'. Addressing the core issues- issues for which the separation barriers are enduring and ever-proliferating physical manifestations- would have required churches to embrace Galtung's analysis models of 'positive' peace and critical self-reflection. This, all the churches, more or less failed to do.

Finally, the institutional churches' engagement-or lack thereof- with the issue of the barriers can therefore be interpreted within the framework discussed earlier: the barriers are an ongoing product of social dynamics- desires for security, fear and lack of trust and desires to reinforce identity physically- for which the institutional churches have not been forthright in admitting their complicity. Rather, churches have tended to mirror and cyclically reinforce their communities' attitudes rather than comprehensively question them; they have avoided openly questioning public

policies, particularly social issues as complex as those surrounding physically-reinforced segregation. It would be highly unusual, in the context of Northern Ireland, for the churches to draw attention to a social issue that politicians or their own laity had not already identified as a particular concern. The churches have tended to denounce violence, and the separation barriers do not immediately fit into that parameter.

6. Moving Towards Theological Reflection

In their theological analysis of sectarianism, Liechty and Clegg mention the barriers as part of their analysis of identity formation in the sectarian tendencies for 'hardened boundaries' and 'separation'. Their analysis, however, as was begun to be demonstrated earlier, struggles to fully connect the two issues or integrate the barriers into their analysis of sectarianism as a whole.

For Liechty and Clegg, mirroring some of Mitchell's analysis, a 'hardened boundary' is a dysfunctional manifestation of identity reinforcement impacting upon relating; the barriers represent a physical manifestation of a hardened boundary (along with the specific Northern Ireland traditions of painted kerbstones and murals[144]). However, as in their comments regarding the barriers and security mentioned earlier, they rationalise the barriers as 'an expression of a need for security in situations where people feel very vulnerable and under threat', and immediately turn their attention to the kerbstones and the murals. These, in their estimation, are 'more directly linked with what we have termed negative identity'[145]. The desire to paint murals or kerbstones is not the distorted aspect of identity and relating *per se*; this occurs when 'positive community solidarity' content of a mural becomes 'distorted into "us" over and against "them"' and when murals carry 'evidence of threat... desires for domination, or inappropriately quoted biblical

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[144] See Neil Jarman, 'Painting Landscapes: The Place of Murals in the Symbolic Construction of Urban Space' in Anthony D. Buckley, ed., *Symbols in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queens University, 1998), 81-98 and Bill Rolston, *Politics and Painting: Murals and Conflict in Northern Ireland* (London: Associated University Press, 1991).
[145] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 130.

texts'[146]. The positive desire for identity morphs into a sectarian aspect of a 'destructive pattern of relating'[147].

Closely related to hardened boundaries is their understanding of 'separation', which focuses on how much contact and interaction with an 'other' group is acceptable or prudent. In keeping with the rest of their analysis of sectarianism, both arise from healthy patterns of identity that have become distorted. The desire for separation, they note, often arises from three aspects of fear: fear of contamination from another religious tradition; fear of being absorbed or taken over by the 'other'; and fear for physical safety[148]. They note that it is from the last aspect- the issue of physical safety- from which the desire to spatially and physically segregate arises, yet do not bring this analysis to bear on the barriers even though, as has been shown earlier, both their second and third aspects- the threat of absorption and physical safety- are directly related to peoples' demands for barriers.

What Liechty and Clegg's research does not explore concerning the barriers is whether or not they understand them to be the *result* of destructive patterns of relating or a destructive pattern of relating *in and of themselves*. This feeds into an overall tendency- in public, academic, official and (as we see in Liechty and Clegg) theological discourse to approach the barriers as merely a background feature to the analysis of community interactions, which are implicitly inferred to be of greater importance. However, as Lauber notes:

> That decision is not necessarily unusual with regard to physical
> structures... but the fact that the peacelines are actually
> downplayed is a matter for serious consideration. The casual tenor
> of such a discussion is tantamount to saying, 'this is a divided
> society, of course, which naturally results in two main
> communities living side-by-side, oh and by the way, in some parts
> needs walls to separate them'.[149]

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[146] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 130-131.
[147] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 128.
[148] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 314-315.
[149] Margarethe C. Lauber, 'Belfast Peacelines: An Analysis of Urban Borders, Design and Social Space in a Divided City', available at:

As mentioned earlier, Liechty and Clegg stress that the remit of their research was 'the responsibilities of Christians and their churches in relation to sectarianism'. However, the way they refer to the separation barriers then leads to the assumption that they do not believe the subject of the barriers falls in any way at all under the churches' reflective remit. Keeping in mind that earlier in this chapter they were also hesitant to assign responsibility for the barriers to the government, it becomes evident that the separation barriers occupy a place of significant reflective ambiguity.

In all analyses- public, governmental and ecclesial- it appears to be generally held that the barriers may be amorphously *associated* with the sectarian system, are very definitely a *result* of it but apparently play little substantive role in *perpetuating* it. It is notable that in Liechty and Clegg's analysis, the separation barriers are the singular aspect of their conception of the sectarian system for which they do not obviously make a more positive correlative, e.g., if it is held that a.) sectarianism arises as a 'distorted expression of positive desires' and 'destructive patterns of relating', and b.) the desire for physical security is a positive desire, then what would be an example of a more positive manifestation of physical safety for which the barriers are a distortion? In the case of the murals, their answer is implied: murals with content that is not threatening or hostilely divisive. No such positive correlative for the barriers is suggested.

In reflective terms, what this leads to is a situation where there is little purpose in reflecting on the barriers; more practically, there is nothing that can be done *about* the barriers, only about conditions that *lead to* the barriers. Moreover, the barriers are, in and of themselves, not implicitly deemed to be 'doing' anything. The subject of the barriers, then, is perceived as a distraction. This is illustrated by a comment made by a respondent to INCORE's 'Progressing Good Relations and Reconciliation' study who noted that the physical divisions were 'just a manifestation of the conflict' and addressed by tackling 'the real social issues'. Only then will they 'lose their meaning and purpose':

> People are clamouring to bring walls down, but you cannot do this
> work in isolation. The removal of the walls should not be the focus

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of attention. The focus should be on relationship-building and regeneration and that should be led by the local community.[150]

The respondent intimates that, while the barriers have a 'meaning' and a 'purpose', no causative effect is mentioned. She appears to assume that reflection on the barriers is, at best, a distraction or, at worst, a ruse for a preconceived action: removal. It might indeed be the case that, in her experience, the only time the subject of the barriers arises is in relation to their removal, perhaps with the implication that removal would lead to the resolution of all other interface issues, and it is against this tendency that her comments are directed.

All of this demonstrates that the issue of the barriers has become divorced from praxis. Both the perpetuation of the policy of physically-reinforced segregation in a post-conflict society that exhibits ongoing sectarianism, as well as perpetuating a simple 'leave them'/'remove them' binary, are manifestations of this tendency. In light of this, we return to the vision of transformation informed by liberation and reconciliation, beginning from a place of reflective praxis: a reflection on reality in the light of faith out of which a re-imagining becomes possible. First, and most practically, this will mean beginning from a place where the barriers are, first and foremost, a simple reality; a part of the overall sectarian system; an understandable result of life in a compacted, urban civil conflict; a product of healthy and normal desires that, by reason of being part of an overall systemic sectarianism, have become distorted and damaging; a choice, but one that has consequences- not just for those living in close proximity but for the city as a whole.

Secondly, a theological reflection can begin from the barriers being understood as something that is consciously constructed; something that is built to fulfil human desires. A theological reflection can then begin to investigate the biblical text in light of this reality, focusing on texts where something is constructed because God or, perhaps more consciously, human authorities appear to be deficient in providing for those desires- safety, security and identity.

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[150] Gráinne Kelly, 'Progressing Good Relations and Reconciliation in Post-Agreement Northern Ireland', published by the International Conflict Research Institute, University of Ulster, February 2012, 76.

Liechty and Clegg lay much of the groundwork for this approach. By focusing on the barriers specifically as a specific subject of theological reflection, it can be taken a step further.

Conclusion

The separation barriers represent a complex and ongoing social reality in Belfast. They were perhaps an understandable development in the history of division, sectarianism, and violence in the city. That the barriers continue to form a basic, integral part of the city's security apparatus 14 years on from the Good Friday Agreement, continually maintained, extended and newly constructed, is only evidence to how deep the divisions, sectarianism and the fear of violence actually are.

The entire network of separation barriers serve as physical manifestations of deeper, amorphous desires: a desire for security; a desire to live free from fear; and a desire to reinforce the identity of the community in the face of an 'other' perceived as a well-organised, bold and threatening 'other'. The desires themselves are quite normal and benign; whether or not the barriers fulfil them in a normal and benign way or simply perpetuate a dysfunctional status quo is open to question.

In the midst of the barriers are the institutional churches, which have both consciously and unconsciously played a significant social role in defining and perpetuating the underlying divisions. Even while decrying social violence, the churches enormous social presence- albeit with diminishing moral authority- has not enabled them to publicly envision positive peace and social transformation. As most of the social realities that lead to the proliferation of the barriers generally would have their beginnings in this type of reflection, the barriers are a subject upon which the churches have been largely silent.

However, what can be seen is that the barriers are not simply products of their reality; they are a causative factor upon it. The decision to erect and maintain separation barriers is 'doing' something to Belfast; they exist out of a desire for security, and they also reinforce insecurity; they exist because of fear, and they also reinforce the need to be fearful; they exist because of communities' need to maintain a cohesive identity, and they also reinforce those identities in static, antagonistic and threatening ways. In short, the barriers have unforeseen consequences and those

consequences are often negative ones. Yet those consequences have not been the subject of sustained reflection, either political or theological.

Building on the social analysis of the reality of the separation barriers, as well as the theological reflection of sectarianism and reconciliation, the task remains to envision theological reflection on the barriers, not simply as products of the reality, but an effect upon it; something being constructed to accomplish something but having unforeseen or negative consequences in the final analysis. Using the underlying methodology of liberation and reconciliation, reflection then turns to the biblical text for a lens to examine the social reality. In this case, the social reality will be examined through the theological lens of idolatry.

Chapter 4- Towards a Theological Reflection
on Idolatry and Separation Barriers

Introduction

The previous chapter began the process of emphasising social analysis with a theological lens when reflecting on the separation barriers in Belfast. This chapter now places an emphasis on a theological analysis with a social lens, beginning the process of envisioning theological reflection in the midst of that social reality. It proposes the theological lens through which the barriers might be examined: idolatry as understood in the Hebrew Bible. It examines how idolatry was defined in the Hebrew biblical text and examines how that biblical understanding has been used as a theological lens in more recent theological reflection in the Irish context. It finally proposes a new usage for the lens: reflection, not on the idolatry of boundary maintenance but the idolatry of the boundaries themselves.

The writers of the Hebrew biblical text understood idolatry specifically as the construction of physical representations of the gods and most often associated it with religious practices of the foreign nations surrounding them. Their rejection of these practices set them apart as a nation and defined their relationship with Yahweh in a unique way. In the Hebrew understanding, Yahweh could not be represented physically, nor could Yahweh be invoked and controlled. The people's security and identity could not be found in a physical construction- the idol.

Latin American liberation theology employed idoatry as a critique of structured oppression. Their understanding of idolatry, however, was not simply as an analogy, e.g., oppressive systems were analogous or merely similar to the idols in the biblical text. Rather, idolatry was a contemporary practice. Oppressive systems were idolatrous in their own right, and had immediate social consequences on the life of the community. The liberationists identified an idol as that which was an antagonistic rival to the God of life, or a God-like level of obedience or submission to a humanly-conceived psychological or physical strucure. Finally, the 'idols' demanded the sacrifice of human victims, whose lives were being subordinated to the concerns of national ideology, financial gain and national security.

Moving to the Irish context, this chapter argues that the concept of idolatry has been employed as a theological mechanism variously as an 'outward', an 'inward' or a 'supernatural' critique. Broadly, the 'outward' critique has its roots in the Protestant Reformation, where specific doctrinal beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church were condemned as idolatrous, evidence of superstition and deep error. Thus, idolatry was a critique of the 'other' and their religious practice.

Conversely, the 'inward' critique has been perhaps more positively employed by the evangelical Protestant group ECONI/CCCI and, to a somewhat lesser degree, by the Church of Ireland's 'Hard Gospel' project. This critique was used to reflectively question if and to what level traditional beliefs and concerns of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland had been elevated to an idolatrous level in the collective psyche of the community. While ECONI/CCCI's 'inward' self-critique represents a more constructive end, it also displays elements of the 'outward' critique, as it implicitly marginalises and perhaps criticises those elements of the Protestant community who do not embrace ECONI/CCCI's reflection.

The 'supernatural' critique shares some of the same features of the 'inward' critique, in that it employs the language and understanding of idolatry to reflect on the religious life of the individual believer and the community. It differs not so much in diagnosis, but in prescription. It understands 'idols' to represent malevolent spiritual forces and demonic influences which can only be effectively dealt with primarily through the prayer, repentance and renewal of the believers, all understood to be directly efficacious in the physical realm. This understanding has been influential in the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements of the 20th century onwards, but suffers from being something of a reflective *cul de sac*, in that unless the prescription is embraced as credible, the overall diagnosis is difficult to address.

This chapter will argue that there is scope for idolatry to serve an even broader theological reflection and critique in Northern Ireland than has been previously recognised: that the separation barriers embody physically many of the conceptions of idolatry that Irish theological reflection has only recognised as psychological. Both Liechty and Clegg and ECONI/CCCI came close to formulating such an analysis through their reflections on sectarianism and Christ's breaking of the traditional political, religious and social 'boundaries' of appropriate interaction in his own

context, and held that Christ's 'boundary breaking' might serve as a contemporary example. However, their literature makes no mention of physical boundaries that might need to be confronted, and there is likewise little suggestion on the place or consequences of physical boundaries in this reflection. This chapter argues that there is scope in the Irish context to reflect upon physically-reinforced segregation through the idolatry lens as a means of theologically engaging with the separation barriers in a way that has not been forthcoming previously.

1. The Understanding of Idolatry in the Hebrew Bible

The English term 'idolatry' is derived from the Greek εἰδωλολατρία (*eidololatria*), which derives from a haplology of εἰδωλολάτρης- εἴδωλον (*eidolon*), 'image' or figure', and λάτρις (*latris*), 'worshipper'[1] . This Greek term appears to be borrowed from the Hebrew עבודת אלילים (*avodat elilim*, 'the worship of idols'), though that specific Hebrew term does not appear specifically in either the Septuagint, Philo, Josephus, or in other Hellenistic Jewish writings or pre-Christian Greek literature. The Greek first appears in the New Testament in the letters of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, and The Revelation of John, where its understanding and use is uniformly negative.

Theologically, the biblical text presupposes worship; in the ancient Near East, there was no question of the gods' existence. The choice simply had to be made as to what will be worshipped and in what manner[2]. The Mosaic Law, however, was unique for insisting both that no god but Yahweh was to be worshipped and no image should be made of Yahweh or any other god. It is upon this twofold injunction that Jewish monotheism is founded. The first part has, as its root, the biblical idea that a right understanding of God and man entails having a proper perspective of the relationship between God and his creation. Care needed to be taken not to confuse God with God's creation and, specifically, what humans have fashioned from that creation. To place such a created object 'before' (or 'in front') of God was this confusion; idolatry[3].

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[1] See *The Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* (London: Chambers Harap Publishers, 1988), 506.
[2] See E. La B. Cherbonnier, 'Idolatry', in Marvin Halverson and Arthur Cohen, *A Handbook of Christian Theology: Essential Information for Every Christian* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1960, second impression 1962), 180-186.
[3] See Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearance: A Study of Idolatry* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 107-116 and Edwyn Robert Bevan,

The subject of religion in the Hebrew biblical text, then, is in some ways an account of the tension, for the biblical authors, between two incompatibilities: an essentially spiritual and 'genuine' conception of worship epitomised in the Mosaic Law and the more common, materialistic elements common to ancient Near Eastern region.

The Hebrew terminology of Exodus 20:4 highlights that the idol was not, in that context, thought of as a mental or metaphysical construction but as a physical one. The Hebrew 'image' (פֶּ֫סֶל, '*pesel*', 'hewn'[4]) specifically denoted construction and building. Anthropologist Mary Douglas emphasises that 'the words were carefully chosen'; the writers were not overly concerned with 'mental or verbal images'; such 'spatial projections over bodies and objects do not raise the spectre idolatry.' Mental or verbal images 'did not seduce the eye or compete with the thought of God for the worshipper's attention'[5].

In contrast to this specificity, more modern conceptions of idolatry have emphasised an existentially broad definition of what might constitute an idol, encapsulated well by Tillich's definition of idolatry:

> the elevation of a preliminary concern to ultimacy. Something
> conditioned is taken as unconditional, something essentially
> partial is boosted into universality, and something finite is given
> ultimate significance.[6]

Here, Tillich describes any and all attempts to conceive of, explain or describe God as an essentially idolatrous practice; placing limits on the limitless. So, God might be envisioned as the highest, the greatest, or the most powerful thing in reality, but in this vision God is still being conceived of as a 'thing'. Thus, all such reductionism identifies God as a 'thing', whether that 'thing' is a personality- albeit a supernatural personality- an idea or ideology, a doctrine or theology, or even nature itself. For

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Holy Images: An Enquiry into Idolatry and Image-Worship in Ancient Paganism and in Christianity (London: G. Alan & Unwin, 1940).

[4] Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[5] Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 57-58.

[6] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 13.

Tillich, the only way to speak of God is as reality itself; this is the only understanding that truly encompasses God's divinity.

Tillich's understanding is echoed by the approach adopted by Belfast-born philosopher Peter Rollins, and serves as an example of Tillich's approach *in extremis*. Rollins' critique of, as he sees it, Christianity's obsession with theological certainty, sees him define an idol as a projection of humanity's unfulfilled desires:

> In a precise sense, an idol can be understood as an object that we believe is the answer to all our problems, the thing we believe can fill the fundamental gap we experience festering in the very depth of our human experience... and idol is not an idol because of some property the object has; it is an idol because we project an absolute value onto it.[7]

Crucially, Rollins' philosophical understanding focuses on the idol as a distorted understanding of God, or more specifically, on an unhealthy reliance on one type of understanding of God. Idolatry here represents humanity's attempts to overcome a 'gap', an existential crisis:

> By claiming that God is the way to fill this gap, (the Church) reduce the divine to the level of a product...

Any and all thought of God, then, for Rollins, runs the risk of idolatry. Thus, while Rollins refers to an idol as an object, it is 'object' as a derogatory reduction brought about by a psychological act: the reduction of God's attributes by the very attempt to name and understand them by the finite human mind. 'God', then, becomes the idol that must be rejected and the Christian's highest task becomes atheism (or as Rollins chooses to frame it, 'A/Theism')[8].

Rollins work is bold and creative from within a philosophical framework. Such an understanding of idolatry as inherent in human desire is, as will be examined later, prolific and serves as the underpinning in the Irish context of the theological reflection of ECONI/CCCI.

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[7] Peter Rollins, *The Idolatry of God: Breaking the Addiction to Certainty and Satisfaction* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012), 25.
[8] See Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God* (London: SPCK), 97-102.

Tillich's- and, by extension, Rollins'- conception of idolatry is obviously informed by the Hebrew idea of the idol as a construction. However, the point here is to differentiate between the modern philosophical or theological explanation which would attempt to be existentially all-encompassing and the ancient Hebrew understanding which was very specifically physical[9].

This point is made clearer when it is remembered that the in the Mosaic conception, Yahweh is invisible and unknowable, only discerned through Yahweh's self-revelation. To construct an image of Yahweh- or any deity- implied that Yahweh could be made visible and knowable; to construct an idol meant that a god could be *located*, placed in one place or another, depending solely on the human's desire. The god could be made present and available, attributes Yahweh had made clear were beyond the Hebrews' control[10]. The archetypal text of Exodus 32, to be analysed later, strongly intimates that the image made by Aaron is a representation of Yahweh, who has made clear that he cannot be represented- certainly by anything that the people could have made themselves. The constructed image gave the people the ability to worship Yahweh as they desired- it allowed the possibility of controlling the deity[11].

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[9] See also D. MacKenzie Brown, ed., *Paul Tillich, Ultimate Concern: Dialogue with Students* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 24-25.

[10] Waltke posits that as the animistic nature of many ancient near Eastern religions drew no distinction between matter and spirit, the physical personification of a deity in a sense captured the spirit of the deity in a static form, allowing the worshipper to locate, focus or manipulate the power of the deity. But the understanding is complex; De Vaux notes that even though there was a contemporary understanding that the god in the form of an idol could be, in a sense, 'treated badly' or punished by being deprived of offerings, this was a matter of religion; the spirit of the god itself was not harmed; the person of the god was not touched. Whether the understanding extended into the physical world is a matter of conjecture. Fox notes that when Moses asks Yahweh his name so that he can tell the Hebrews when they ask, the implication is that, like the Egyptian magic with which they were familiar, to possess the name of the deity gave the power to invoke or even coerce the deity. Moses foresees the Hebrews' desire to understand, to own, to call down the power of Yahweh (Ex. 3:13: 'What is his name?', or, 'What is behind his name?'). Yahweh's answer, EHYEH ASHER EHYEH ('I am that I am', or 'I will be-there howsoever I will be-there'), is ambiguous; but the implication is that God is distinct from the Egyptian gods, i.e., does not serve at humanity's whim or surrenders his will to their control, but nevertheless his presence is assured. See Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 416-417, Everett Fox, *Now These Are the Names: A New English Rendition of the Book of Exodus* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 29 and Roland De Vaux, *The Early History of Israel: From the Beginnings to the Exodus and Covenant of Sinai* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978).

[11] *The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 1* (New York and Nashville, 1952), 1066.

In contrast, Yahweh filled and transcended the cosmos. The idol- the thing that was made- presented the implication that it was possible to invoke and direct the deity; to bend the will of the deity to one's own will; to render that which was ultimate and transcendent immediate and imminent. The Mosaic commandment, on the other hand, declares that Yahweh is a 'jealous God'; zealous for God's own nature and essence and will not share it. Yahweh's will, determinism, presence and revelation are jealously Yahweh's own. 'Being the work of human beings, images of God cannot represent him; they degrade both God and humanity'[12]. It is for this reason that the actual physical structure of an image held to be the image of God was of greater importance to the Hebrew writers than the more ephemeral conception of idolatry as an imperfect idea or belief *about* God.

Beside the text's attack on idolatry as a breach of the Mosaic covenant with Yahweh, it also declares that the constructed idol is useless. Yahweh is revealed in the text to the Hebrews as the God of their liberation; Yahweh had heard the people and liberated them from slavery; Yahweh had not been specifically invoked by the people to perform this role, thereby *making* God liberate them, but because Yahweh had seen their oppression and had made it his will to rescue them (Exodus 3:7-8). Yahweh was the God of the Hebrew people by reason of his own will and by empirical evidence of his deeds. Yahweh *knew*, *saw* and *heard* and because of this Yahweh *acted*. Obedience to Yahweh proceeded from the fact that Yahweh had done what Yahweh said Yahweh would do: 'I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves' (Ex. 20:1)[13].

However, pure monotheism is rare in the biblical text[14]; it is the deviation from the twofold injunction that idolatry was located. While the law seems straightforward,

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[12] Werner H. Schmidt, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, originally published as *Einführung in das Alte Testament* (Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1979, second edition 1982. Translated from the German by Matthew J. O'Connell (London: SCM Press, 1984), 206.

[13] Scholars draw a victorious allusion from this text: 'a strong assertion that Yahweh is the only deity for Israel. Since he defeated their former lord and master (i.e., Pharaoh), he and no other deity is their God. The best translation is 'I, Yahweh, am your God.' See Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A Fitzmurray and Roland Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968).

[14] Brueggemann states that Ex. 20:1 assumes a polytheistic world in the sense of a world of 'other possible objects of loyalty.' But Routledge points out the view that the commonly-held historical/critical view that Israel's religion was essentially polytheistic and over time evolved toward monotheism, with sole worship of Yahweh not emerging until as late as the 9th cent. BCE is problematic. Popular practices of other faiths may have been *adopted* by the Hebrews,

the history of Israel's relationship with the gods of their neighbours is a complex combination of, variously, syncretism (the mixing of worship, beliefs and practices), suppression (stressing Yahweh's utter singularity) or subordination (Yahweh was acknowledged as the distinctly preeminent deity over and above all other gods), often all three being held in tension at the same time[15].

The broad Hebrew terminology for the practices of idolatry, הדובע הרז ('abōdāh zārāh, 'alien cult'), points to the Hebrews' understanding that idolatry called into question the unique aspects of Israel as a people and Yahweh as the God of the covenant with them. It was the gentile, the foreigner, who worshipped other gods and constructed their gods in specifically physical and visible forms. The Jews, throughout their history, were surrounded by cultures and governments that were rife with what Jews held to be idolatry and critically, great care was to be taken to avoid it[16]. Materials once used in the making of what were deemed idols were not to

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but none of those practices were ever part of Israel's official faith. See Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 183, Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 94-101.

[15] This three-fold formulation is Walter Wink's, Likewise, Schmidt notes that in much of the prophetic literature (Isaiah 44-45 are his examples), the existence of foreign deities is not simply denied as would be expected of a 'pure' monotheism; 'there is rather a denial of their power and ability to direct and predetermine the course of history.' As Routledge frames it, '(Yahweh) was *their* God and their dealings were to be with him alone. This may not deny explicitly the existence of other gods, but it does assert they are not worthy of attention' See Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 109-110, Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 97 and Schmidt, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1984), 206.

[16] The Midrash states: 'There is a remedy for every sin, viz. prayer and repentance; but there are three grievous sins for which there seems to be no expiation, and these are murder, idolatry and adultery... If again you are persuaded to commit the very grievous sin of idolatry, let these serious words ever be before you: "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Eternal only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (Exod. 20. 22). And not only are we prohibited the worship of a strange god, but all accessories of such worship are forbidden, even for the purpose of medicine, such as using some of the incense for a medicine, or any of the groves for any purpose whatsoever. We are told, "And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand" (Deut. 13. 17); "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it" (Deut. 7. 26). Exodus Rabba 16, available at: http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/tmm/tmm08.htm, internet, accessed 16 April 2012. While the Jewish injunction against images of God is a universally understood tenant, the argument as to what constituted idolatry could be subtly and intricately made, particularly in the Kabbalistic tradition of the Chasidic mystics. Tzadok Hakohen, in 'Pri Tzaddik', Naso 37b, in relating the teaching of his teacher, Mordechai Joseph Leiner, Rebbe of Izbica, Poland, comments on the vision of heaven found in the biblical text Ezekiel 1:26 ('On the likeness of the throne was a likeness of the appearance of a man'): ' Certainly one cannot ascribe to Him, may He be blessed, any likeness, rather, as it were, He contracts Himself into the souls of Israel, in all their details and according to their spiritual understanding. This is the likeness of a

be re-used; trees in groves where idols were present were not to be sought out for shade; the wine from idolatrous offerings was not to be purchased, and even a drop of it would contaminate wine not so offered[17].

It is in the embrace of the gods of their neighbours that one of the starkest consequences of idolatry, in the mind of the Hebrew authors, becomes apparent. If Yahweh was to be the God of the Hebrews because of what Yahweh had done, other gods were to be rejected because of what they had *not* done: not delivered the people, not provided for them, not cared for them. But beyond this, there was the issue of what the gods did do: they demanded victims. The worship of idols was not, in the minds of the biblical authors and the prophets whose pronouncements they recorded a benign or neutral practice; it had consequences that were horrific.

It is this aspect of idolatry- that it is a practice antithetical to a God of life and liberation by demanding the shedding of innocent blood- that serves as the theological reflection in Latin American liberation theology. The liberationists asserted that, contrary to all the rhetoric of the national security state, the deity worshipped by those state structures was not Yahweh, the God of liberation and salvation. The oppressors had embraced a different god altogether, with very different motives and demands; they had embraced idolatry.

2. Idolatry in Latin American Liberation Theology

Gustavo Gutiérrez wrote of idolatry:

> We of the twentieth century may think that the word 'idolatry'
>
> refers to an ancient or even primitive problem... The Bible,

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man.' Thus, the image of God in humanity does not constitute an image- an idol. Also, Elijah Hakohen argues that bowing down to the image of God *present in the human form* does not constitute idolatry; one is bowing to the divine. Even when Abraham bowed down to the angels who appeared to him in human likeness (Genesis 18:2), he did not bow to the angels (which would have been idolatry) but to the human form with which the angels cloaked themselves. However, Chaim of Volozhin argues that the worship of the Holy Spirit with a human being is indeed idolatrous; however, his arguments were made within a somewhat anti-Christian (and anti-Chasidic) polemic. In any case, idolatry is understood to be a grave offence, and such care in addressing it was obviously considered worthwhile by the scholars. See Alan Unterman, ed., *The Kabbalistic Tradition* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 14-15, 19-22.

[17] See Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Talmud: Selected Writings* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 26.

however sees idolatry as a danger lying in wait for every religious

person; more than that, as a permanent temptation.[18]

This encapsulates the role that the theological concept of idolatry played within Latin

American liberation theology. In the Latin American reading, idolatry was not

primarily understood as historical or anthropological, one of many particular cultural

facets of primitive religious practice[19]. Rather, it was a contemporary and ongoing

human tendency and could be seen in the socio-political actions of the various

National Security regimes throughout Central and South America under which the

theology developed. While the liberationists were not the first theologians to

understand idolatry as an ongoing human temptation[20], their notable contribution

was to stress what they saw as its social, political and economic consequences.

Regardless of any alleged damage to personal faith and piety, idolatry served as a

theological reflection on contemporary oppression, specifically oppression imposed

from above. Seeking power and security, the regime turns to the 'idols of death' to

provide them; the poor and the marginalised are the sacrificed victims. Pablo Richard

declares that the world in which we live is systemically idolatrous:

> We live in a profoundly idolatrous world- economically, socially,
>
> politically, culture-ideologically, and religiously. We live crushed
>
> under the idols of an oppressive and unjust system.[21]

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[18] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, London: SCM Press Ltd.,
1990), 48.

[19] Both Philip Berryman and Jon Sobrino note this. See Philip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of
Rebellion: Christians in Central American Revolutions* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1984, 3rd
printing 1986), 378. Sobrino provides a more in-depth look at the theological place of idolatry
before liberation theology and the unique understanding brought by the liberationists. See
Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*,
originally published as *Jesucristo liberador. Lectura historic-teológica de Jesús de Nazaret*
(Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1991), translated from the Spanish by Paul Burns and Francis
McDonagh (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 181- 183.

[20] No less than Protestant reformer and theologian John Calvin declared, 'scarcely a single
person has ever been found who did not fashion for himself an idol or spectre in place of God.
Surely, as waters boil up from a vast, full spring, so does an immense crowd of gods flow from
the human mind (*Institutes*, 1.5.12)'. See Benjamin Farley, ed. *Sermons on the Ten
Commandments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 66.

[21] Pablo Richard, 'Biblical Theology of Confrontation with Idols', in The Idols of Death and the
God of Life', originally published as *los ídolos de la oppression y la búsqueda del Dios liberador*
(San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1980), translated by Barbara E. Campbell and Bonnie Shepard
(Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 24.

As the liberationists broadened their reflection beyond the social sciences and philosophical influences that marked the early stages of development and began to develop a fuller spirituality of liberation, they utilised the biblical texts' understanding and historical practices of idolatry as one particular lens through which current socio-political contexts could be spiritually understood. Theologians Moser and Leers provide a good introductory example:

> The Israelites, freed from their slavery in Egypt, sang and danced
> around the golden calf, which they had made with their own hands
> (Exod. 32). This sad memory from the past provides a clue to the
> way we live now... So the uses and abuses of modern society carry
> on the age-old struggle between spirit and flesh: between
> freedom, justice and mutual love, and sin and the power of death
> (Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5: 13-26).[22]

Likewise, Jon Sobrino gives an example:

> In the first place- and (Latin American liberation theology) shouts
> from the rooftops- idols are not a thing of the past, nor realities
> that occur only in the religious sphere, but currently and really
> exist: they are actual realities that shape society and determine
> the life and death of the masses.[23]

What this emphasis on biblical themes proposed was a spiritual understanding of the struggle for life and liberation in Latin America (and, by extrapolation, further afield) as a much deeper conflict than a socio-political one. Rather, as all actors in the struggles of Latin America couched their beliefs and actions in religious terminology and imagery, what was at stake was not simply a conflict between one or more

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[22] Antônio Moser and Bernardino Leers, *Moral Theology: Dead Ends and Ways Forward*, first published in Great Britain (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates Ltd., 1990) and in the US (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990). Published originally as *Telogia moral: Impasses e alternativas* (São Paolo: CESEP), 1987.

[23] Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, first published as *Jesucristo liberador. Lectura historic-teológica de Jesús de Nazaret* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1991), translated from the Spanish by Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh, (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 185-186.

models of political or social organisation. Rather, the conflict was between rival and incompatible conceptions of God[24].

The starting point for Latin American liberation theology concerning idolatry remained its primary focus: a reflection on the God of life in a reality full of death. Sobrino asserts that the question of God is not that of existence or non-existence, but a choice between competing images of the divine, and all of the implications that held. For Sobrino, God is not God simply in a vacuum; God manifests himself positively and actively against all other deities:

> God shows himself through life, but by defending it from death;
> through justice, but against injustice; through setting people free
> but doing so against slavery... God's transcendence not only as
> beyond creaturehood but also as what is against creaturehood
> absolutized as an idol.[25]

Moreover, Sobrino is adamant that there can be no accommodation between the two:

> In order to speak the whole truth, one must always say two things:
> in which God one believes and in which idol one does not believe.
> Without such a dialectical formulation, faith remains too abstract,
> is likely to be empty and, what is worse, can be very dangerous,
> because it may very well allow for the coexistence of belief and
> idolatry.[26]

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[24] This type of theological reflection continued and broadened in the wake of liberation theology's developments. A notable example is Philip Potter's biblical analysis of the idolatrous nature of globalised neoliberal economic structures. See Philip Potter, 'The Global Economic System in Biblical Perspective', in Marc Reuver, Friedhelm Solms and Gerrit Huizer, eds., *The Ecumenical Movement Tomorrow: Suggestions for Approaches and Alternatives* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Publishing House and Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1993), 13-35.

[25] Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, first published as *La fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo desde las victimas* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1999), translated from the Spanish by Paul Burns, (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 85.

[26] Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross*, first published as *El Principio- Misericordia: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados* (Santander, Spain: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1992), English translation (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1994, 9.

This vision of God then informs a vision of Christianity as 'a religion of struggle and conflict'. This victimisation makes them, according to Sobrino, '*rivals* of God'[27]. Thus, every action of God is a negation of, and in contrast to, the action of some other deity, manifested in the form of an idol.

The liberationists identify three characteristics of an idol: it serves as a misplaced repository of trust and submission; it is made by human hands and turned into a fetish; and it demands human suffering, sacrifice or murderous obedience.

a. A Misplaced Repository of Trust and Submission

This characteristic is described by Gutiérrez in this way:

> Idolatry consists precisely in giving oneself to someone or something other than God and making it the unqualified point of reference of our lives... I think the question of idolatry has acquired a new meaning among us, even though the problem is an ancient one, even more ancient than atheism.[28]

Idolatry, for Gutiérrez, consists 'precisely in giving oneself to someone or something other than God and making it the unqualified point of reference of our lives...'[29]. Specifically, He focuses on the area of security and safety. He draws on biblical texts to claim the reliance on the acquisition of wealth and power as idolatrous and contrasts this with the assertion that only reliance on knowledge (that is, love) of Yahweh, and in doing what is just and right can be reason for confidence[30].

b. That Which is Made by Human Hands and Then Turned into a Fetish

Liberation theology focused on the idol-as-fetish in two ways: first, there is the notion that the intrinsic value of the constructed object, structure, ideology or mechanism becomes predominant and the needs, desires and any intrinsic value of the people become secondary. For Gutiérrez, this value of the constructed thing more

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[27] Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 86.

[28] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 32.

[29] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, 32. The similarities between the obsession of the Vatican with Latin American liberation theology's alleged indebtedness to godless, materialist Marxism and the various incarnations of the National Security State's similar obsession with real and imagined threats from material communism are worthy of note.

[30] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1990), 49-51.

than the living thing forms his reflection on the Hebrew prophets, who focused on the worthlessness of the constructed idol, ridiculing those who put their trust in the idol as opposed to Yahweh[31].

In this way, idolatry functions as the theological manifestation of Marx's conception of alienation or 'reification', where commodity- the human production- is made a fetish, human potential frustrated and humanity dominated by social conditions[32]. For the liberationists, idolatry can be understood as this social concept reflected upon theologically.

Secondly, closely related to the idea of the reification of the people is the idea that God, or religious practice, becomes a commodity; 'God is a commodity or thing in the midst of other commodities or things'[33]. The fetish not only denies the transcendence of God, but the presence of God in humanity- and the intrinsic worth of human life- is subjugated to the fetish- the idol.

c.   That Which Demands Human Sacrifice or Murderous Obedience

For the liberationists, the fetish-as-idol is not a passive representation. The idolatrous god is a false and murderous god. The idolatrous god is not false by virtue of being 'useless and inane' but because it produces victims, identified as 'the poor, the unemployed, the refugees, the detainees, the tortured the disappeared, the massacred'[34]. When life itself is subverted to the demands of wealth and power, and when the sacrifice of life is seen as a necessary thing for God to flourish, Gutiérrez asserts that we have crossed over into idolatry. Conversely, Gutiérrez' biblical God of life insists on no such human sacrifice. This he relates to the fetish of the constructed aspect of idolatry:

> The idolatry of money, of this fetish produced by human hands, is
> indissolubly and causally connected to the death of the poor. If we

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[31] Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 51-53.

[32] See Alan W. Wood, *Karl Marx* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, paperback edition 1984), 50. See also 'Excerpts from *The German Ideology*' in Lewis S. Feuer, ed., *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co., Fontana edition, eighth impression, 1981), 287-302.

[33] Henri Mottu, 'Jeremiah vs. Hananiah' in Norman K Gottwald, ed., *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermaneutics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 242-243.

[34] Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy,* 9.

thus go to the root of the matter, idolatry reveals its full meaning:

it works against the God of the Bible, who is a God of life. Idolatry

is death; God is life.[35]

Romero explicitly indicts the National Security State model of government for the

sacrifice of the people. When the state and its own agenda become absolutized, he

argues, people become secondary to that agenda and are expendable. He also makes

the claim that the legitimate security that the state ought to provide is 'cruelly

perverted' into an embodiment of the rapacious deity Moloch, demanding 'the daily

sacrifice of many victims in its name'[36].

Throughout these three identifying stands, a common theme emerges: Latin

American liberation theology's conception of idolatry was that it was fundamentally a

rejection of the God of the biblical text. It served as a theological reflection on the

types of oppression they perceived in their context. Furthermore, the liberationists

contended that the idol was an unworthy and unreliable substitute. In their

theological reflection, God revealed himself as the sole liberator and protector of the

poor, a reliable provider, the lover of justice and the reconciler of humanity to God

and each other. The idol, on the other hand, oppressed and demanded the sacrifice of

the poor[37] and brought not reconciliation but estrangement. The idol promised one

thing and delivered, not simply a different result, but the opposite result. This was the

final reason for the need for a choice, a new praxis; 'Whom, in practice, do you serve?

The God of Life or an idol of death?'[38]

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[35] Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 56.

[36] Archbishop Oscar Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 135. 'Moloch' refers to an ancient Near-Eastern chthonic deity (various English spellings derived from the Semitic root מלך *m-l-k*, meaning 'king') mentioned several times in the biblical text in conjunction with child sacrifice.

[37] 'In the Bible the opponent of God isn't atheism; it's the idols... Only Yahweh liberates. In Psalm 82 God appears rebuking the gods because they are on the side of the oppressors, because they have not been just to the weak and orphaned, because they do not liberate the poor and the needy.' Ernesto Cardinal, 'The Most Important Commandment', from *The Gospel of Solentiname, Vol. 4* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 120.

[38] Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, 49.

3. Idolatry and the Irish Theological Context

Idolatry as a theological reflection does not figure as prominently in the Irish context as it did in the Latin American context. However, the roles it does play are noteworthy. What can be deduced is that the manner or manners in which idolatry is used as a reflective mechanism reflect its place in the context of division, and the majority of the Irish reflections largely serve to comment on those divisions or the actors in them.

a. Idolatry as an 'Outward' Critique

In Northern Ireland, ecclesial doctrine and practice has not only served as a marker for acceptable levels of contact and interaction, but as a critique of the 'other' community. In the case of idolatry, that critique has been utilised by certain elements of the Protestant tradition as an 'outward' critique of both the Catholic Church and individual Catholic people[39]. It is perhaps embodied in the question, 'How has "the other" been idolatrous?' It has thus served to reinforce a particular strand of Protestant identity which would see itself as superior to Catholics.

The Reformed Protestant understanding of idolatry is rooted in a specific reading of the biblical text and a particular understanding of church history[40]. The Catholic

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[39] There is no significant correlative of Protestantism's charge of idolatry from the Catholic position, though Jaroslav Pelikan commented on Vatican II's *Unitatis Redintegratio* (*Decree on Ecumenism*) 21, noting the genuine admiration, but 'ever-so subtle reproof' of Protestantism's doctrine of *soli scriptura*, which they noted came close to elevation of the Bible itself to a position of near-cult-like status. Conceptually, individualism and the role of personal conscience as they affect theological pluralism would also be a cornerstone for Catholic criticisms of Protestant theology concerning the nature of ecclesiology, Papal authority and the issue of apostolic succession, and undue reliance upon them is often seen by Catholic dogma as unhealthy. More recently, perceived social liberalism on issues such as abortion and human sexuality, particularly within mainline Protestant denominations in the US, has come in for criticism, as well as the perceived lack of theological rigour amongst charismatic and Pentecostal groups. These criticisms, however, are not described or identified as specifically as idolatrous. See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Whose Bible Is It? A Short History of the Scriptures* (London: Pelican Books, 2005), 163, and Bill McSweeney, *Roman Catholicism: The Search for Relevance* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 170-171.

[40] In *The Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 79, W. Ian P. Hazlett identifies this understanding of church history as Erasmian/Lutheran argument that 'true Christianity is the Christianity of antiquity, before it fell foul of the papacy and tyrannical human relationships masquerading as divine authority.' This Reformation view of a pristine Christian ideal corrupted over time certainly informed the wording of the Preamble and Declaration adopted by the Church of Ireland in 1870 which stated that the Church of Ireland, as a 'reformed and Protestant church, reaffirmed the 'constant witness against all those innovations in doctrine and worship, whereby the Primitive Faith hath been from time to time defaced or overlaid.'

Church was, and is, denounced as an idolatrous body and the key Reformation documents object to idolatry specifically: the *Westminster Confession of Faith* of 1646 (24, III) forbids reformed persons from marriage to 'infidels, papists, or other idolaters' and declared the doctrine of transubstantiation 'the cause of manifold superstitions; yes, of gross idolatries'(29, VI); The *Thirty-nine Articles* of 1563 warns that the sacramental elements are not to be 'gazed upon' or 'carried about', 'lifted up, or worshipped' and that transubstantiation is 'repugnant to the plain words of scripture'(XXV; XXIII); the *Heidelberg Catechism* of 1563 equates idolatry with the invocation of saints and interprets the first two commandments as forbidding representing the image of God in any form, even for use in the church (95-98); and the *Shorter Catechism* of 1647 similarly interprets the first to commandments as forbidding the making of images and that the second commandment 'requireth the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word'(51).

These examples formed a bulwark of Protestant anti-Catholicism which portrayed the Catholic tradition's use and understanding of images in religious devotion as deeply in error, anti-scriptural, irrational and dangerous[41]. By the 18th century, such opinions were deeply embedded in the English social and religious discourse, seen for example in a piece from *the Weekly Observer* of 1716: 'A Papist is an idolater, who worships images, pictures, stocks and stones, the works of men's hands'[42].

Mitchell identifies the Protestant theological view:

> ... 'superstitions', such as devotion to Mary and the saints, insignia and medals are not only a waste of time, but are idolatry. Ideas that Catholicism is fundamentally wrong, even evil, and that individual Catholics are deluded at best or damned at worst has informed Ulster Protestantism and loyalism for centuries...[43]

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[41] See John D. Brewer and Gareth I. Higgins, *Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland 1600-1998: The Mote and the Beam* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd. And New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1998).

[42] Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England: A Political and Social Study*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 22.

[43] Claire Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006), 119.

This has resulted a fostering within Northern Ireland Protestantism to socially view Catholicism with suspicion and incredulity. Researcher Glenn Jordan identifies several theological issues (images, Mariology, praying to saints, the infallibility of the Pope etc.) and notes that Protestant reactions 'display a mixture of incredulity reserved for the superstitious by the rational and the condescension of the mature for the childish'[44].

Perhaps the most widely known popular examples of the 'outward' critique in contemporary Irish discourse come from the Rev. Ian Paisley, who has a long and comprehensive pedigree of anti-Catholic rhetoric, literature and social action[45]. Paisley critique of invocation of the saints and the angels as:

> ... a pure invention of man or rather of Satan and wholly
> unwarranted in Scripture... and it is gross idolatry... The second
> Commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images or
> any other way not appointed by His Word.[46]

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[44] For example, he relates the comments of an interviewee who admitted to a lack of understanding as to how 'intelligent people' could succumb to such superstitious practices, as 'contrary to the Ten Commandments, they are also prone to worship idols, which I cannot reconcile with the Scriptures'. Glenn Jordan, *Not of This World? Evangelical Protestants in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2001), 144.

[45] Ian Richard Kyle Paisley, Baron Bannside (born 1926) is a co-founder of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and served as leader from 1971 to 2008. He is also a founding member and was Moderator for 57 years of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster. During his career in politics, he has served as Member of Parliament for North Antrim (1970-2010), Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly (1998-2011) and Member of the European Parliament for North Antrim (1979- 2004). He was also the First Minister of Northern Ireland (2007-2008) and was made a life peer in the House of Lords in 2010. Paisley has been one of the principle social and political actors in Northern Ireland for over half a century, his name almost synonymous with an uncompromising form of religious Protestantism and political Unionism that he played a significant role in formulating. See Steve Bruce, *Paisley: Religion and Politics in Northern Ireland* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Ed Moloney, *Paisley From Demagogue to Democrat?* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 2008) and '"Ourselves Alone": Paisleysm and the Politics of Purity' in Patrick Mitchel, *Evangelicalism and National Identity in Ulster 1921-1998* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 171-212.

[46] 'A Concise Guide to Biblical Christianity and Romanism' available at: http://www.ianpaisley.org/answers.asp.

Paisley goes on to contend that the Catholic Church 'oftentimes omits the second commandment completely from her Catechisms...' implying a deliberate subterfuge as opposed to a difference of sequencing[47].

The Catholic use of images and, specifically, icons predates the East-West Schism of 1054, and the ecclesial defence for their use is closely aligned with those of the Orthodox Churches, with whom their use is most commonly associated[48]. Their response to Protestant concerns is to be found in the complex distinctions between three Greek terms regarding worship and adoration: 'Latria (λατρεία)', the supreme worship due to God alone; 'dulia (δουλεία)', that degree of reverence due to a saint or a saint's image or relic; and the variation 'hyperdulia', the degree of reverence due to the Blessed Virgin Mary alone[49]. Additionally, while the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* warns of the sin of idolatry, quoting Origen's definition of an idolater as someone who 'transfers his indestructible notion of God to anything other than God', it goes on to state that the 'respectful veneration' given to a sacred image is 'not the adoration due to God alone'[50]. These distinctions tend to be dismissed by Protestants[51].

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[47] What the majority of Protestant denominations would understand as the first and second commandments- the injunction to have no other gods and the injunction against graven images (Exodus 20:3-6) - the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* understands to be one single commandment. Similarly, what the majority of Protestant denominations would understand as the tenth commandment- the injunction against covetousness (Exodus 20:17)- is understood by the *Catechism* to be the ninth and tenth, drawing a distinction between covetousness of the flesh (sexual desire for another's spouse, the ninth commandment) and covetousness for another's worldly goods (the tenth). See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dublin: Veritas, 1995), 459-464 and 534-542.

[48] For the background on the use of icons, as well as their significance in the Orthodox Churches, see Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Baltimore, MD and Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), 38-43. The significance of the use of icons in Christian worship is also comprehensively detailed in Peter Pearson, *A Brush with God: An Icon Workbook* (London: Morehouse Publishing, 2005).

[49] See the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, available http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/, internet, accessed 23 May 2012.

[50] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dublin: Veritas, 1994), 463.

[51] E.J. Bicknell D.D., in his commentary on the Thirty-nine Articles, noted that 'these distinctions are excellent on paper, but have proved to be very difficult to observe in practice': Superstition begins when the means employed to express and quicken devotion get in between the soul and God, when the means are erected into an end, when some inherent power, independent of God Himself, is supposed to reside in the means used or when they are treated as possessing a magical efficacy... Against such dangers no rules can safeguard. See E.J. Bricknell, D.D., *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1919, Second Edition 1925), 364-365.

What we see is that the 'outward' critique serves as an extension of a sectarian indictment of Catholic practice and belief, informing a specific Protestant indictment of Catholic doctrine as simplistic and undeveloped and, by extension, Catholics as untrustworthy people. In this context, whatever defence might be given for the particular practices or beliefs is essentially irrelevant, as the critique is serving as a reinforcement of communal identity[52].

This type of theological reflection, regardless of its veracity, does little to foster social or relational transformation. Dismissing the religious practice of the 'other' as idolatrous, while at the same time failing to accept the possibility of credibility of their understanding of the practice leaves little room for understanding or reconciliation. Secondly, it is a continuation of the Reformation critique which presupposed that the mundane, physical object could not contain at least an understood transcendent element, one unrecognised by the critic who would dismiss the physical object as an 'idol'.[53] Thirdly, by limiting the definition of what constitute idolatry, it leaves unexplored the notion that idolatry might be present in the practices of one's own group, and that there is nothing to prevent one's own practices or doctrines from becoming idolatrous.[54]

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[52] It is worth noting that the cautions raised by the 'outward' critique are not necessarily entirely unfounded; the distinctions noted in the *Catechism* are delicate and complex. However, any constructive aspects of the critique are unheard due the lack of good will with which they are often delivered. For example, researcher and historian James Grant, in his history of Clonard Monastery in Belfast, when describing the yearly Perpetual Novena of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, dismisses out of hand any risk of idolatry in the event: 'Only the most cynical or uninformed opponents of the Catholic Church believe that it encourages or even tolerates the 'worship' or 'adoration' of images or that it advocates the 'worship' of the Virgin Mary or the saints'. From whichever direction the critique emerges, its 'outward' nature renders its positions self-evident to the holders. See James Grant, *One Hundred Years with the Clonard Redemptorists* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2003), 143.

[53] Cantwell Smith approaches this issue by positing that the traditional understanding of idolatry as a physical object divorced from the transcendent. However, he argues that if one takes a comparative approach, one finds that there is often a transcendent element or understanding to the physical object that goes unnoticed by the critic, who too-easily dismisses the physical object as an 'idol'. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, 'Idolatry in Comparative Perspective', in John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Human Uniqueness* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 53-68.

[54] Regarding Ian Paisley and the fundamentalist religious vision he has proffered, Patrick Mitchel notes that it is ironic that 'by rejoicing in its uncontaminated identity and the expulsion of all that is impure from God's presence, Paisleyism represents a retreat into an inviolable Pharisaical self-righteousness that idolizes the myth of the Protestant of Ulster as God's people in God's chosen land.' Paisley's anti-idolatry essentially became a manifestation of idolatry, albeit unrecognised by Paisley himself. Patrick Mitchel, *Evangelicalism and National Identity in Ulster 1921-1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 212.

b. Idolatry as an 'Inward' Critique

The converse to the 'outward' critique is a theological reflection employed introspectively; to critique one's own or one's own community's beliefs or behaviour. Succinctly, it is perhaps embodied, not in the question, 'How are *they* idolatrous?' but in the question, 'How have "*we*" been idolatrous?'

'We in Ulster have been idolaters', declared Timothy Kinahan, Church of Ireland rector in East Belfast in 1995:

> We have not feared or respected God. One result is that we have
> had a whole lot else to fear. Deep down we have feared the Gaelic
> people whom our ancestors dispossessed. We have feared their
> church and their Political representatives. And since partition we
> have feared Dublin... Surely, if we had been true worshippers of
> the One God, our criticisms of government and society would have
> grown, not out of the narrow instinct of self-preservation, but out
> of a prophetic understanding of the needs and aspirations of all
> the people.[55]

What Kinahan evokes here is twofold: he alludes that idolatry, as he sees it, has arisen out of historic Protestant fears- whether consciously or unconsciously understood at the time- of both their perceived enemies and the fact that God was not sufficiently protective or assertive on their behalf. Secondly, this then led Protestants to effectively reject the God of scripture and God's call to compassion and reconciliation, thereby marginalising and abusing their perceived enemies. Idolatry was the result of fear, and that idolatry had social consequences.

This theological reflection was systematised and used most often in the statements and literature of Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland (ECONI[56]), an

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[55] Timothy Kinahan, *Where Do We Go from Here? Protestants and the Future of Northern Ireland* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 1995), 92-93.

[56] ECONI began in 1987 in Northern Ireland as an informal meeting of Evangelical Protestant leaders seeking to articulate a distinctive witness in the context of the civil conflict, which they felt the Evangelical community had neglected. 1n 1988, they published *For God and His Glory Alone*, which served as a de facto manifesto of their theological reflection. In 1994, ECONI was formalised as a trust and initiated a programme of events, training courses, publications and public statements, supported by an active research programme which continued over the next decade. In 2005, ECONI was re-named the Centre for Contemporary

interdenominational Evangelical Protestant group which appeared in the mid-80's seeking to serve as a voice for moderate Evangelical Protestants in Northern Ireland regarding issues of the conflict and the biblical idea of peacemaking[57].

To this end, ECONI/CCCI sought to openly question many of the assumptions they felt had been made by the Protestant community regarding their sense of cultural identity, their sense of place and their political aspirations. The theological idea of idolatry figured prominently in their critique from the outset. In the 1988 publication *For God and His Glory Alone*, ECONI declared:

> As citizens of Heaven, our primary loyalty is to the Lord Jesus
> Christ. All other loyalties are secondary and must be judged by the
> values and priorities of this one. It is idolatry to equate God with
> any one culture or political ideal. It is quite wrong to require
> allegiance to any of them as evidence of allegiance to Him.[58]

Similarly, in *The Fire and the Hammer*, ECONI research officer Alwyn Thompson writes:

> ... we (Northern Ireland Evangelicals) are a people whose hearing
> of the Word of God has been compromised. We have made the
> weapon of God's Spirit into a weapon of our own beliefs. We
> proclaim that we have set aside the idols of false religion, yet in
> their place we have established the idols of land and people.[59]

Finally, *A Future with Hope* states:

> It is idolatry to limit God to one nation, state or land... This action
> is often prejudicial to legitimate minorities, and allows for the

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Christianity in Ireland (CCCI). For the purposes of this thesis, the organisation is generally referred to as 'ECONI/CCCI'. One or the other acronym is used if a particular publication was issued specifically by one or the other. See
http://www.contemporarychristianity.net/econiroot/index.htm, internet, accessed 10April 2012.
[57] See chapter 8, 'The Balancing Act: The Evangelicals of ECONI' from Patrick Mitchel, *Evangelicalism and National Identity in Ulster 1921-1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[58] *For God and His Glory Alone: A Contribution Relating Some Biblical Principles to the Situation in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: ECONI, 1988, 2nd edition, 1998), 16.
[59] Alwyn Thomson, *The Fire and the Hammer* (Belfast: ECONI, 1997), 16.

undue influence of the dominant religious tradition. This is equally
true of leaders who present their political cause in terms of a
religious crusade. We cannot identify either Unionism or
Nationalism as inherently expressive of Christian faith.[60]

The 'Hard Gospel' project, designed by the Church of Ireland (Anglican) to
facilitate churches in 'dealing positively with difference in the Church of Ireland'[61], is
similar to ECONI/CCCI's material in many ways, particularly in using the boundary-
crossing analogy. The fourth session of a six-part course, titled 'Boundaries and
Bonds', focuses on identifying and (and hopefully overcoming) the boundaries. The
emphasis, similar to ECONI's, is on social interaction across boundaries of
psychologically and socially-perceived difference.

The analogy of the 'inward' critique, in ECONI/CCCI's case, can be only taken so far.
First, ECONI/CCCI is not, in a sense, an official representative body of the Protestant
community in Northern Ireland, or even of all evangelicals within that community. Its
views are those of itself and its supporters. Secondly, its 'inward' critique also displays
an inherent 'outward' critique- in the direction of those Protestant leaders and
people with whose beliefs, words and actions ECONI/CCCI would implicitly disagree[62].
Lastly, and in a context such as Northern Ireland perhaps needless to say, ECONI had
its detractors from within the broader Protestant community. In that sense,
ECONI/CCCI did not completely transcend the sectarian mechanisms evident in
divided societies designed to adjudicate, often through socio-religious belief, who is
'in' and who is 'out'.

However, these qualifications do not negate the contribution that ECONI made to
the dialogue in Northern Ireland concerning conflict, peacemaking and the role of
evangelical Protestants in those processes. And their use of the concept of idolatry to
critique of cultural and political assumptions is noteworthy, and indirectly informed
by similar efforts formulated by Latin American liberation theology. These efforts

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[60] *A Future with Hope* (Belfast: ECONI, 1995, 2nd edition 1998), 15.

[61] 'Loving our Neighbours: Six Explorations for Parish and Diocesan Discussion Groups', a
resource pack from the Hard Gospel, a project of the Church of Ireland, 2.

[62] Both Ganiel and Mitchel note that the formation of ECONI was in response to Paisley's
theology and politics. See Ganiel, *Evangelicalism and Conflict in Northern Ireland*
(Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 48-49 and
Mitchel, *Evangelicalism and National Identity,* 265.

served as a counterbalance to the more typical and traditional usage of idolatry as a sectarian weapon to deride the 'other' community's religious beliefs and, by extension, their legitimacy.

c. Idolatry as a 'Supernatural' Critique

Another theological use of the idolatry reflection that enjoys significant presence in the Northern Ireland context is found in the religious reflection and practice of Charismatic and Pentecostal expressions of Evangelical Christianity[63].

A local manifestation of an international phenomenon[64], the 'supernatural' critique bears resemblance to aspects of both the 'outer' and 'inner' critiques with certain particularities. It embraces the wide definition of idolatry found in Latin American liberation theology- that an idol is anything taking the place of the divine in the experience of the believer- as well as acknowledging the physical and psychological aspects of idolatry. In the Northern Ireland context, this wide breadth of the theological definition and language encompasses the anti-Catholic tendencies of the 'outer' critique[65], but more strongly emphasises the psychological definition

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[63] Although terminologies and understandings are often conventionally interchangeable, 'Pentecostalism' can be described as a specific manifestation of several emphases, beliefs and practices of the Charismatic movement within Evangelical Christianity. Broadly, 'Evangelicalism' is a theological tendency, transcendent of any particular denomination, emphasising four core beliefs: the need for idea of personal religious conversion (being 'born again'); the primacy of the Bible as the inspired and inerrant 'Word of God'; the death of Jesus Christ as an historic event, necessary for the salvation of the world; and the need for Christians to publicly proclaim a Gospel of salvation through evangelisation and social action. To these core beliefs Pentecostalism, dating to the early 20th century, and the Charismatic movement, dating from the late 1960s, then add distinctive metaphysical emphases: the need for a specific 'baptism of the Holy Spirit', from which the believer derives special spiritual authority and power; the exercising of the spiritual 'gifts of the Holy Spirit', including 'speaking tongues', divine healing, prophesy (the ability to impart specific messages from God to a group or individual), words of knowledge (specific divination of the mind of God in a particular situation or in the life of another); and belief in the immanence of the miraculous power of God and, through the faith of the believer, the ability of the believer to perform miracles. See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-20.

[64] For detailed analysis of Pentecostal theology's rise in the developing world, see Donald A. Miller and Tetunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 2007).

[65] Anti-Catholic rhetoric tends, however, to be slightly less overtly exclusive and more simply thoughtless than that of the 'outward' critique. For example, Samuel Lee, a Pentecostal pastor and sociologist, notes how he used to mock Catholics and Orthodox Christians and accuse them of idol worship. However, 'a little voice inside' of him showed him his 'hypocrisy'. 'It whispered, "You too are an idol worshipper... You don't worship idols of stone, but you worship living idols, idols with flesh and blood".' As with the 'outward' critique, the

and personal examination embraced by the 'inner' critique. Where the 'supernatural' critique departs from both is to be found somewhat in diagnosis but definitively in prescription: 'idols' in every form represent the actual manifestation of demonic influences which subsequently can only be effectively dealt with through prayer, personal and corporate repentance and spiritual renewal.

Somewhat at the heart of the 'supernatural' critique as it pertains to idolatry is the Charismatic understanding of the idea of spiritual warfare, and it is here that the concept of idolatry figures most prominently. The propagation of this particular understanding of spiritual warfare within evangelicalism owes much to the writing and speaking of figures such as C. Peter Wagner, Cindy Jacobs, Don Basham, Derek Prince, Joy Dawson and John Dawson. For them and others, spiritual warfare is the outworking of a belief that physical reality is directly impinged upon, for good or ill, by supernatural forces. Believers, by the power of the Holy Spirit, can discern the actions of 'principalities and powers'- demonic influences- who presume authority over physical reality and how that authority is related to both personal and corporate sin. Through that discernment, the believer can then actively resist the understood spiritual oppression through intercessory prayer and renewal- a lifestyle of personal and corporate holiness. Russell Spittler of Fuller Theological Seminary concluded that this phenomenon is an extension of Charismatics' understanding of the Biblical text:

> Pentecostals approach Scripture literally, so they see the world
> populated with demons. It is not a far step to start naming them,
> assigning them territories, devising prayer strategies. For
> Pentecostals, 'spiritual warfare' is not a metaphor - it's reality.[66]

Though spiritual warfare is understood as a set of spiritual exercises, aspects of them can be grounded in physical geography and show the physical outworking of a metaphysical belief. However, though physical, they are not necessarily social, and

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assumption is that, regardless of their assertions otherwise, Catholics and Orthodox are engaged in image 'worship', yet the 'outward' critique is mitigated by the admission of his own idolatry, albeit in a different form. However, there is a dualism at play as well, as he later criticises many Pentecostals of accusing Catholics of 'Mary and idol worship. This should stop!' In so doing, Wells shows more of an amenity for ecumenism than might be considered normative within Pentecostalism. See Samuel Lee, *A New Kind of Pentecostalism: Promoting Dialogue for Change* (Amsterdam: Foundation Press, 2011), 39.

[66] Jane Lampman, 'Targeting Cities with "Spiritual Mapping", Prayer', *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 September, 1999.

this again sets the theology apart both from conventional Evangelical theology and Latin American liberation theology. One example of these practices is the concept of 'spiritual mapping'. In this practice, a geographical area is researched for historic influences of demonic 'territorial spirits' understood to be manifested in occult practices, witchcraft, freemasonry, as well as in social pathologies such as drug abuse, prostitution and homicide rates. Once the area of interest has been 'mapped', the area can be the target of concentrated prayer. John Dawson, an internationally-known proponent of this theology, explains:

> In any conflict for a person, a family, a church or a city, discerning
> the nature of the enemy's lie is half the battle. Once his deception
> is exposed, we can now apply the specific promises in the Word of
> God that are the basis of our faith and authority.[67]

The second- and closely related- geographical outworking is the practice of 'prayer walking', where individuals and groups walk and 'pray over' an area, stopping at particular points understood to be in need of spiritual renewal. Describing such a walk in Belfast, anthropologist Liam Murphy notes the participants' objectives:

> First, to reflect on the devastating events which, through the
> years, have conspired to give Northern Ireland over into the hands
> of evil gunmen. Secondly, the prayer walk provides an opportunity
> to pray for the redemption of the land and to ask the Holy Spirit to
> make his presence felt among the people... In praying at specific
> sites of ethnonationally-inspired violence, (participants) style
> themselves agents of divine will, and in so doing 'cleanse' the
> streets consecrating the urban geography to the protection of
> God.[68]

Ultimately, these influences, whether they are perceived as manifesting in the spiritual or the physical, are understood to be supernatural in nature and must be

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[67] John Dawson, *Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1989), 74.
[68] Liam D. Murphy, *Believing in Belfast: Charismatic Christianity After the Troubles* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2010), 143-147.

dealt with through concentrated prayer, through which the power of underlying demonic influence is then broken.

The themes of reconciliation are at the heart of much Charismatic belief in Northern Ireland in a somewhat utopian and quite radical way. Believers are very conscious of their desire to transcend the traditional 'tribal' Protestant and Catholic understandings and attitudes of Northern Ireland and model a 'new' type of community; as Murphy observed, the charismatic believers with whom he interacted 'openly disdain the structures of a divided society, and in effect hope to form a new ethnic community'[69]. From this basis emerges a hermeneutic by which these believers navigate the variables of post-conflict dynamics and the peace process. All life events are to be understood as the visible part of an invisible cosmos:

> Most of the individuals I came to know took little for granted,
> instead working out and puzzling over the significance of a
> ceasefire, murder, political accord or setback, just as they sought
> to understand how purpose was to be found in illness, a new job, a
> failed marriage or a car accident.[70]

Although the prescription for the alleviation of physical or social problems within the 'supernatural' critique ultimately remains prayer and spiritual renewal, these spiritual activities and physical aspects of understood sin again can intertwine. Included along with the prayer might be the action of destroying what is understood to be the physical repository of the demonic influence, mirroring the Hebraic understanding mentioned earlier. Wagner details a prayer and worship service that included this destruction:

> they must burn the idols... the kinds of material things that might
> be bringing honour to the spirits of darkness: pictures, statues,
> Catholic saints, Books of Mormon... the witches and warlocks had
> surrounded the area ... When the flames shot up, a woman right

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[69]Murphy, *Believing in Belfast,* 14.
[70] Murphy, *Believing in Belfast,* 11

behind Doris (Wagner's wife) screamed and manifested a demon, which Doris immediately cast out![71]

Of primary importance for the 'supernatural' critique, however, remains the belief that the 'idol' is a direct channel for demonic influence and therefore a direct influence on the socio-political reality. Thus, the solution to any perceived pathology manifested in idolatry ultimately resides in the efficacy of prayer by believers. Crucially, the responsibility for the pathology might be- and often is- understood to be the believers themselves who, through spiritual laxity, have allowed the socio-political pathology to propagate. The solution ultimately rests with the believers themselves as well. Murphy's research mentions a Sunday sermon given at a large charismatic congregation in Belfast:

> 'The Spirit of Christ lives and moves among us. And you know', he continued, feigning an expression of disbelief, 'the churches have actually been responsible for quenching the power of the Spirit when they should have been bringing it to bear on the situation in Northern Ireland. And you and I know full well that without the power of God's Holy Spirit, there will never be a permanent solution to our problems... never an end to the Troubles!'[72]

This type of rhetoric simultaneously places a good deal of responsibility for the Troubles onto the congregation, without any particular analysis of their complicity in the socio-political division *per se*, but through a lack of spiritual practice and rigour; for their and like-minded believers 'quenching' the Spirit. At the same time, it places the ultimate solution for the Troubles- prayer and renewal- in their hands as well. It is believed that they, the believers, often through their own spiritual apathy, who have given Satan free reign and it is they who can defeat Satan[73].

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[71] C. Peter Wagner, *Hard-Core Idolatry: Facing the Facts* (Wagner Publications, 1999), 38-40.
[72] Murphy, *Believing in Belfast,* 32.
[73] Ganiel and Mitchell, in their research into evangelicalism in Northern Ireland, note the empowerment and responsibility that this theology inculcates, noting examples in their research subjects of rather extreme examples of surrendering of agency through a belief in the demonic influence on the circumstances, while at the same time seeing great personal power to pray for the release from these demonic influences, even if that release does not lead to any noticeable change in their material circumstances. See Claire Mitchell and Gladys Ganiel, *Evangelical Journeys: Choice and Change in Northern Irish Religious Subculture* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011), 83-86.

Two practical illustrations of the 'supernatural' critique in the Irish context show this in detail. The first is in the theology and practice of the Christian Renewal Centre, founded in 1974 by the Rev. Cecil Kerr and based until 2010 in Rostrevor, Co. Down. Remaining firmly grounded in its roots in the charismatic renewal movement of the late 60s and early 70s, this group attempted to transcended denominational and ethno-national differences through an emphasis on peace and reconciliation by way of a particularly narrow focus on intercessory prayer and spiritual revival[74].

In his book, *Heal Not Lightly*, Harry Smith, former director of the Christian Renewal Centre, writes extensively of Protestantism, overt Unionism, Irish Nationalism and the Ulster Covenant of 1912 as examples of idolatry, and his rhetoric shows the particular distinctions between the 'supernatural' critique and the 'inner' critique:

> Whatever happens politically regarding the border, I believe God is calling us to lay down our idolatry over the land. To be able to say as a Christian from a Unionist background, 'God, if you can further your Kingdom purposes for Ireland, through a united Ireland, that is alright with me', or as a Christian from a Nationalist background, you can embrace the reverse scenario, would truly enable us to place the future in God's hands and to disempower Satan's grip on the idol we have made out of our national identities.[75]

Smith specifically identifies the idolatry as a manifestation of an active and efficacious satanic influence:

> If the Ulster Covenant was a wrong covenant in the eyes of God, then it is sin. If it is sin- and I believe it was- then...It set in concrete, covenantal terms, centuries of sectarian attitudes. It (is)

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[74] It was this narrow focus, concluded Irish studies expert Maria Power, that ultimately led to CRC's development stagnating; their absolute single-minded belief that the issues and solutions surrounding the conflict in Northern Ireland were rooted in the spiritual inhibited creative growth or partnership with groups with a more socio-political understanding of peace, reconciliation and conflict transformation. See Maria Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations: Inter-Church Relationships in Northern Ireland 1980-2005* (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 131-136.

[75] Harry Smith, *Heal Not Lightly* (Chichester: New Wine Ministries, 2006), 96.

giving Satan *carte blanche* into the politics and spirituality of the whole island.[76]

Moreover, just as the responsibility for sectarianism lies with the Church, so any solution rests with the Church, and entirely through a specific spirituality that it is believed will alter the socio-political reality:

> We need to realise afresh that the primary authority in the nation
> is not the secular one but the Church. It is the Church that should
> be determining what happens in the nation as we exercise our
> authority in the heavenly realms against Satan's principalities and
> powers (Ephesians 6:12).[77]

Smith illustrates this methodology in his description of what he sees as the Centre's involvement in the ongoing Drumcree crisis in Portadown, Co. Armagh, involving a disputed Orange Order parade down the predominantly Catholic/nationalist Garvaghy Road[78]. The decision by the government and security forces to block the parade in 1995 led to widespread disorder and violence throughout the province, leading to legitimate questions concerning the stability of the peace process and the province as a whole. The following years continued to see the parade either forced down the road or blocked, with extensive rioting and violence being instigated from both sides of the community. Smith details that, in January 1999, he and participants at a prayer gathering 'had a sense that God wanted to call a "solemn assembly"'. This, according to Smith, was confirmed by other groups in the US and England. A decision to hold a worship service in a tent at Drumcree was organised for 3 July:

> Inside the tent, we laid down our agendas for the day, along with
> British and Irish flags at the foot of the cross. And then we
> worshipped. Flowing out of that worship time came a time of deep
> repentance. I don't think I've ever been at a gathering where we
> experienced such a 'spirit of repentance'. And then it was over, a

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[76] Smith, *Heal Not Lightly*, 86.

[77] Smith, *Heal Not Lightly*, 126.

[78] A comprehensive and detailed account of the history and events of the Drumcree crisis can be found in Chris Ryder and Vincent Kearney, *Drumcree: The Orange Order's Last Stand* (London: Methuen Publishing, 2001).

deep sense of peace settled on us and, in keeping with the wishes

of the military, we packed up and went home.[79]

Somewhat in contrast to previous years, the events of the 4 July 1999 parade

passed off relatively peacefully, a result for which Smith claims full responsibility:

(BBC journalist) Mervyn Jess reported, 'in recent years the

numbers have gone down'. The media don't understand why. But I

do, along with everyone else gathered in that tent that day. That

day, as we met there in obedience to God to hold a 'solemn

assembly', He showed up and something dynamic happened in the

heavenly realms over Northern Ireland in general and Drumcree

specifically. A stronghold of Satan was broken.[80]

Smith's assertion regarding the sole efficacy of prayer and worship to bring about

tangible socio-political results is common within the 'supernatural' critique.

Mediation, negotiation and other social, political and historical factors occurring over

the course of the crisis that are noted by other commentators are, on the whole,

disregarded[81].

Another practical illustration was related by Mikael Kristianssen, president of the

Amnesty International student society at Queens University Belfast and pursuing a BA

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[79] Smith, *Heal Not Lightly,* 116.

[80] Smith, *Heal Not Lightly,* 117.

[81] Several events and occasions can be seen as contributing to the withering of the Drumcree standoff. Price and Kearney note the murder of the three Quinn children on 12 July 1998 in the run-up to that years' parade as a key moment in the ongoing crisis. William Bingham (County Grand Chaplain of Armagh and member of the Orange Order negotiating team) said that 'walking down the Garvaghy Road would be a hollow victory, because it would be in the shadow of three coffins of little boys who wouldn't even know what the Orange Order is about'. He said that the Order had lost control of the situation and that 'no road is worth a life'. Riots on 5 September 1998, which led to the death of RUC officer Frank O'Reilly, further prompted Bingham to admit that O'Reilly's death was the 'last Straw' for many of the Order's supporters. Though protests continued and the Orange Order voted unanimously to continue their standoff, the major confrontation dissipated. Difficult negotiations throughout the next year, meticulous preparation and choreography by political figures and the security services, growing divisions within the Orange Order and First Minister David Trimble (in the capacity of his office rather than as a member or representative of the Orange Order) holding face to face meetings with the Garvaghy Road Residents' Committee in May 1999 are all held up as integral parts of the long process that led to the slow drop in violent confrontation at Drumcree. See Ryder and Kearney, *Drumcree,* 280-313, Eric P. Kaufmann, *The Orange Order: A Contemporary Northern Irish History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 236-266 and *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 1999), 169-171.

(Hons) in Politics, Philosophy and Economics[82]. Kristianssen described events surrounding a public meeting at Queens held in 2012. Following a week-long event around the issue of human trafficking in Northern Ireland sponsored by a local group anti-trafficking charity Project Futures, various local NGOs and groups began discussions about organising a larger event to further raise awareness around that issue. This event was being planned for May 2012 under the title 'No More Traffic on Our Streets'. Kristianssen explained that he attended the public meeting in his capacity as president of Amnesty International (QUB) and that it was designed to conclude the week-long Project Futures event:

> The evening in question was the end of the week at Queens. It was going to be a time to wrap things up. A law professor at Queens came in and spoke about trafficking from a legal standpoint. There were representatives from the special task force that the PSNI have set up. And the people that were organising the May event were there to share what that was about. And all of the individual groups that were sponsoring the May event were there as well.

Kristianssen says he noticed there were representatives from an international and interdenominational evangelical Christian missions organisation, with whom he was acquainted, at the event:

> After the law professor and the PSNI representative had finished, the organisers invited people to come up who represented the various organisations to talk about what they were doing. So one of the guys from (the Evangelical organisation) stood up and he showed a documentary that they wanted to screen. And then, towards the end, a girl from that group also stood up... And that's when she started talking about what needs to happen for human trafficking to be solved in Northern Ireland. She said, 'we know that this is an issue of purity. We really want to take this country back for God and have God's name known here. We're living in a generation that's really impure, and if we can just have people become pure, this is the root of the issue'.

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[82] Kristianssen's comments are from an interview conducted and recorded 2 August 2012.

Kristianssen said that his reaction to this was that, even though the young woman was specifically complimentary to the efforts of the PSNI reported by their representative, he felt her overall analysis displayed a dismissive tone to these actions. In addition, he said he felt that her remarks marginalised the importance of the participation of those in the room who did not share her religious analysis:

> I later had a conversation with my friend (who was also at the event) about it. And the thing that really got him, and that subsequently made me really angry, was that she went on to say, 'we know that we can't do this without God. It's fine that we're doing all this stuff, but without God, none of this can happen'. To my friend, this was almost a verbal attack. To me, it was just confusing.

This example serves to illustrate perhaps the most recognisable weakness of the 'supernatural' critique in addressing social concerns: it places immense importance on both an understanding and acceptance of the spiritual realm proffered by this particular spirituality. Likewise, by placing ultimate responsibility for social problems in the spiritual realm, it diminishes the value of any proffered analysis or solutions other than the spiritual one. Maria Power posits this as a reason for a notable lack of expansion in Christian organisations that hold to this spirituality as a means of moving toward reconciliation in Northern Ireland, as well as the reason that such organisations meet with difficulty in partnering with other organisations that see the problems of the divided context as more socially complex[83]. In this sense, the 'supernatural' critique, and the theology from which it springs, can somewhat be seen as the antithesis of a vision of a transformational theology- with its emphasis on beginning with social analysis and basing its reflection on praxis- and the theological reflection of Latin American liberation theology which informs it[84].

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[83] Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations*, 131-136.

[84] The rise of Pentecostal spirituality in Latin America, somewhat at the expense of liberation theology, however, does attest to its obvious appeal. The rise of Pentecostalism did not go unnoticed by the Latin American Catholic hierarchy and by the Vatican in general. Pope John Paul II's opening address to the meeting of CELAM in Santo Domingo in 1992 spoke of his concern of 'sects' and 'pseudospiritual' movements, as well as the Catholic Church's responsibility to act as a Good Shepherd to their flock in the midst of 'rapacious wolves'. The final documents were more nuanced and sensitive to Latin American Protestant sensibilities, but the tension for the loyalty of large numbers of the population was becoming self-evident.

d. The Absence of the Barriers from the Three Irish Critiques

The absence of the separation barriers from the 'outward' fundamentalist Protestant critique of Catholicism is perhaps understandable; the argument from their perspective is that while idolatry is certainly a danger to believers like themselves, it is endemic in the religious practice within the Roman Catholic Church and the Catholic Community. Likewise, as the 'supernatural' critique somewhat views all social issues as manifested archetypes for a spiritual 'reality' for which the primary efficacious action is exclusively within the bounds of a specific theological understanding, discussion of the barriers would be difficult to situate in a broader critique. In terms of the 'supernatural' critique, in a way that is similar to the 'outward' critique, there is simply a hierarchy of boundaries; the absolute emphasis that both place on conversion from (in the case of the latter) Catholicism and (in the case of the former), if not specifically Catholicism then at least to a conception of evangelical Charismatic/Pentecostalism, is the 'boundary' that commands absolute supremacy[85].

However, the relative absence of the barriers from ECONI/CCCI's literature and from the Church of Ireland's 'Hard Gospel' project is more noticeable, as the two reflections aspire to more conventionally-understood socio-political theological engagement. Likewise, the absence mirrors the barriers' lack of prominence in Liechty and Clegg's work.

From the liberationist's point of view, there was an added dimension of the contrasts of the more socialist/communitarian ethos of its theology and a more capitalist/individualist theology of the Pentecostals. The latter had appealing social benefits for many prospective converts; Pentecostalism's emphasis on personal holiness norms- alcohol, drug and gambling abstinence, delayed sexual activity- had a beneficial effect on entrepreneurial endeavours and helped Pentecostalism to appealingly resonate with the capitalist ethos of personal wealth creation, social mobility and economic success. The tension between the two Christian expressions was perhaps best put by a quote by a Brazilian Evangelical pastor, reported by James Brooke for 4 July 1993 *New York Times* ('Pragmatic Protestants Winning Converts in Brazil'): 'The irony is that the Catholics opted for the poor and the poor opted for the Evangelicals.' See Alfred T Hennelly S.J., ed., *Santo Domingo and Beyond: Documents and Commentaries from the Historic Meeting of the Latin American Bishops' Conference* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 47-48, 195-196 and Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism,* 33.

[85] J. Christopher Soper, *Evangelical Christianity in the United States and Great Britain: Religious Beliefs, Political Choices* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire:Macmillan Press, 1994).

In 1999, ECONI produced *Border Crossings: Affirming Faith by Crossing Boundaries*, a book designed as a fifty-day study guide to the Gospel of Luke, with particular attention given to the accounts of Christ's social interactions. The introduction states that Jesus was an example as one who 'transcends his boundaries', his own community's 'set of social attitudes, moral values, religious convictions and political aspirations'. His life and teaching challenged his own community and, by extension, the modern reader[86]. While not mentioning physical barriers in the body of the work, the back cover briefly mentions that 'borders can be lines on a map, razor wire in a field or walls in a city':

> But we can build borders in our hearts and minds that are every bit
> as real... Have we built boundaries? Do we need to hear again the
> challenge of Jesus, the boundary breaker? Will we control and
> confine the grace of God? Or will we follow Jesus as he challenges
> us to follow him across the borders?

The Politics of Holiness, produced in 1998, also uses the analogy of Christ as a boundary breaker:

> Faithful followers of Christ will not be people who establish
> exclusion zones or draw boundaries... In Northern Ireland, true
> followers will, like their master, have to challenge the boundaries
> that have been drawn by others.[87]

Again, physical 'exclusion zones' and 'boundaries' do not factor in the analysis. The work concludes that while social boundaries are a normal part of human behaviour, 'in Northern Ireland, there are other, more dangerous boundaries... boundaries of political allegiance and identity':

> To warn of the danger that land and nation can become our idols
> is to step outside a boundary... Too many of us in Northern Ireland

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[86] Alwyn Thompson, ed., *Border Crossings: Affirming Faith by Crossing Boundaries* (Belfast: ECONI, 1999), 7.
[87] Alwyn Thompson, *The Politics of Holiness* (Belfast: ECONI, 1998), 39.

have built political and social boundaries, as solid and permanent
as the 'peacelines' that blight the city of Belfast. [88]

This is the single specific example of the separation barriers being mentioned in ECONI's study and reflection material. But from it, two beliefs about them can be inferred: first, they are not desirable elements of the city but rather 'blight' it; second, they are 'solid and permanent'. Why either belief is held is not elaborated upon.

As in the case of ECONI/CCCI's material, this in no way diminishes the overall quality of the resources that 'Hard Gospel' provides, but merely seeks to note the lack of a reflection on physically-reinforced boundaries. It is notable that both ECONI/CCCI's and Hard Gospel's formal theological engagements, beyond ECONI's passing acknowledgment that borders can indeed be physical structures, the separation barriers receive little attention. Both, however, include indirect potentials for separation barriers to enter the discussion[89], but neither explores what the barriers' effects or consequences on the psychological/cultural boundaries might be. In both cases, as was postulated previously in Liechty and Clegg's analysis, there seems to be an assumption that the barriers are beyond the scope or remit of the Church; If one looks at ECONI's literature specifically, the separation barriers are the only specific example of a 'boundary' existing between the Protestant and Catholic communities for which there is no suggestion of reflective critique.

Furthermore, one notices that the 'boundaries of political allegiance and identity', though they are amorphous and conceptual, are specifically labelled as a danger, but the tactile, physical boundaries are not specifically identified as such. Considering the explicit emphasis they are given, it would appear that the amorphous psychological/cultural boundaries are considered *more* difficult and *more* dangerous. Writing in ECONI's *Lion & Lamb* magazine, Presbyterian pastor and community worker Bill Shaw:

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[88] Alwyn Thompson, *The Politics of Holiness* (Belfast: ECONI, 1998), 38.
[89] In ECONI's *Border Crossings*, the first day's question for reflection asks, 'think of some of the boundaries Christians in Ireland have put up. Would Jesus commend them or cross them?' Hard Gospel's fourth session invites participants to identify 'the boundaries and the boundaries that are barriers between your parish and the others.'

> People here, in many respects are more divided than ever with
> Catholic and Protestant communities often separated by the so-
> called 'Peace Walls'. Then there are the 'walls' in people's minds
> that are harder to demolish... Every street and building is 'owned'
> by one side or the other and people feel threatened when they
> move out of their own neighbourhood.[90]

Again, the amorphous/psychological 'walls' are identified as the primary- and more difficult- issue, since they are deemed 'harder to demolish'. The physical barriers pass without comment. However, the next line immediately addresses a physical and spatial delineation of territory with a concomitant fear of movement through the physical environment.

Finally, it is notable that both ECONI's and Hard Gospel's literature employ the use of pictures and graphic images of physical barriers. The front cover of ECONI's publication *Beyond Fear, Suspicion and Hostility* features a drawing of a figure leaping over barbed wire; the introduction to Hard Gospel's fourth session features a picture of a chain-link fence. In both cases, the physical manifestations of separation- and indirectly, the separation barriers- function as a *metaphor* for the psychological/cultural manifestations of separation, but the theological reflection does not address them specifically. Keeping in mind Douglas' analysis of the Leviticus text that idolatry in the minds of the Hebrew biblical authors was more an act of *constructing and building* than one of *thinking or believing*, the fact that, in the context of Northern Ireland, idolatry is conceived of almost exclusively in terms of thought and belief is striking.

4. Expanding Beyond the Irish Critiques

Liechty and Clegg's engagement with physical segregation was explored in the previous chapter. In that analysis, it was argued that the full implications of the physical aspects of sectarianism, and the barriers as a manifestation of sectarianism, are not particularly addressed in their analysis. However, idolatry as a theological reflection on division is briefly touched upon in their work and it makes a valuable

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[90] Bill Shaw, 'North Belfast', in *Lion & Lamb*, Spring 2006, no. 40, 24.

contribution in the process of expanding beyond an 'outward' or 'inward' critique. It does so in two ways.

First, they employ a theological reflection that explicitly identifies idolatrous tendencies in not one or the other majority communal traditions, but in both. Drawing on Volf's conception of 'an idolatrous shift in loyalty' that makes one's own identity- and therefore one's own community- 'disproportionately important', their critique mirrors ECONI/CCCI's 'inward' critique overall. But they postulate that idolatry manifests itself in the Catholic community in a similar way to the Protestant, but with subtle differences: 'the failure of the Roman Catholic Church to distinguish sufficiently the various components of Catholic culture', i.e. the 'strong link' between Irish nationalism and the Church- not in overt politics, but in the 'deliberate emphasis on the relationship between church, home and school'. This otherwise healthy tendency blurs the distinctions between the socio-political and the religious[91].

Secondly, they display a marked reconciliation focus, which goes some way to locating idolatry as a common factor, thereby expanding idolatry beyond 'something *they* do' or 'something *we* do' towards 'something at the heart of what *we all* do'. They identify the tendency in the religious context for clergy and laypeople to 'work with their own, for their own, and among their own'[92], ignoring the biblical imperatives to 'cross boundaries towards the stranger, even the enemy.' This undue focus on boundary maintenance, as well as the understanding of growth and effective ministry starkly in terms of one's own church, only deepens the sectarian divide; 'this identity in opposition is bound up with the directly, or shadows of an idolatrous, relationship to nation and nationalism'[93].

It is at this point that the hermeneutical aspects of a transformational theological approach move to the fore. In the social reality of physically-reinforced segregation as a manifestation of sectarianism, the question that formulates with idolatry as a lens is: 'how does idolatry divide us?' In the 'outward' critique, the

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[91] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 302-303. For Volf's full analysis, see Miroslav Volf, 'A Vision of Embrace: Theological Perspectives on Cultural Identity and Conflict', *Ecumenical Review,* Vol. 47, no. 2 April 1995, 195-205. This serves as a concise encapsulation of The broad work that Volf developed in *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).
[92] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 304.
[93] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 313.

answer is, 'through *your* sinful superstitious practice and false understanding of God'; in the 'inward' critique, the answer might be manifested as, 'through *our own* sinful exclusiveness and limited view of God.' In the 'supernatural' critique, the answer might manifest as 'through our spiritual laxity and the spiritual forces we've allowed to take dominion over our nation.' Attention can now be turned to a theological reflection that poses the same unconscious question but looks beyond the idolatry of boundary maintenance to examine the idolatry of the boundaries themselves. Again, keeping in mind Douglas, the questions might begin to formulate as 'because of what has developed in our hearts and minds, what have we built, demanded be built, or allowed to be built that divides us? Furthermore, how has what has been built between us affecting our hearts and minds?'

Conclusion

Idolatry was not, for the Hebrew biblical writers, a benign or neutral practice, or a mere culturalism; nor was it understood primarily as a matter of belief or a psychological thought practice. Rather, it was a physical act- an act of making something; constructing something- with actual consequences for the practitioners and their society. The construction of an idol was a mechanism to control or direct the divine will, and it is from the physical construction that social consequences resulting from beliefs about the construction derived. The authors were at pains to insist that Yahweh was beyond the senses; could not be controlled or directed; was not to be confused with the gods of other nations; and was the source of the Hebrew nation's life and liberation and did not desire the blood of their children.

Latin American liberation theology developed its theological reflection on oppression and liberation from this idea of idolatry in the biblical text. The liberationists' reflection drew clear distinctions between the God of scripture- a God of life and liberation- and the idols of the National Security state apparatus. Their distinction is crucial, as the state appealed to Religious symbolism and language in their justification for their actions, and sought legitimacy through the public support and patronage of the Catholic Church. However, it was the sacrifices demanded by the 'idols of death' that- for the liberationists- exposed the lie that the state was worshipping the God of scripture.

Idolatry as a theological reflection has been present in the Irish context, and has been used within the context of the divided society in Northern Ireland to evaluate and judge either the other community (the 'outward' critique), ones' own community (the 'inward' critique) or as a reflection on the primacy of the spiritual over the secular in terms of diagnosis of social pathologies and prescription for dealing with them (the 'supernatural' critique). The social reality of the separation barriers has not figured prominently in any of the three Irish reflections. While it is perhaps understandable from the standpoint of the 'outward' and the 'supernatural', the barriers' absence from the 'inward' is notable, as theological reflection from that standpoint has emphasised conceptions of 'divisions', 'boundaries' between communities, and the need to 'cross over'. The language and concepts are employed, however, invariably to describe and address cultural and social divisions rather than physical ones.

The purpose of a transformational theology is to help the process of expanding beyond these various critiques into a context that more thoroughly encompasses the social reality of division in Northern Ireland. Latin American liberation theology laid the groundwork for theological reflection in light of social reality; theologies of reconciliation have stressed theological reflection in light of division. A transformational theology informed by both would seek to develop theological reflections on the biblical text in light of structural manifestations of division physically dividing the community and adversely affecting the reconciliation of the divided community. In the next chapter, four biblical texts will be introduced and reflections given that demonstrate how this development might be undertaken.

Chapter 5- Idolatry and Separation Barriers:
Case Studies in the Biblical Text

Introduction

This chapter introduces biblical reflections based on four biblical texts. By doing so, a practical vision for a transformational theological reflection is given. For each text, a historical-critical reading of the text is examined, as well as how Latin American liberation theology attempted to expand on the historical-critical examination. Then, a 'transformational' reflection will be offered, one that attempts to expand on the Latin American reading through a conception of the separation barriers as a manifestation of idolatry in a context of division.

The purpose of identifying these three approaches is, firstly, to give an overview of the contributions that each approach has made to the understanding of the biblical text and, secondly, to show how each successive approach has been informed by and expanded upon the previously-examined approach.

This process begins with the historical-critical approach, which has been the primary theological approach to the biblical text for the past two centuries. Historical-criticism seeks to ascertain, through historical investigation, a date and authorship for the text, the style and form that the author or authors brought to the work, as well as the purpose for the writing of the text and its meaning to the intended readers. Historical-critical methodology has been invaluable to the process of understanding of the biblical text, helping to produce a comprehensive picture of the biblical culture's own record of history and that culture's self-understanding.

The Latin American liberation theological approach builds upon the historical-critical by emphasising the social context of the original reader, and reflecting on the text in the light of that social context of the modern reader. For the liberationists, the historical-critical tradition served this contextual focus by encouraging their readers to 'find themselves' in the text, as well as to reflect on the parallels between the textual context and the modern context. Thus, the details of the text- authorship, historical context, etc. - serve as contributions for the focus and priority of Latin American liberation theology- social analysis and building the experience and

consciousness of the people of faith, particularly in the direction of the most poor and marginalised.

A 'transformational' approach is one informed by a shared emphasis on liberation's contextual reading in the light of the marginalised and reconciliation's emphasis on the ongoing process of living together well after violent conflict and continuing social division. This approach seeks to approach the text in the full knowledge of historical criticism, informed by the liberationist's focus on praxis and direction, but with an equal focus on the impact of the reading of the text in light of the necessity for reconciliation in a context of division.

The four biblical texts in this chapter are Exodus 32, 1 Samuel 8:1-22, Genesis 11:1-9 and Leviticus 18:21. They serve as the reflective focus, with the lens for that focus being idolatry. Thus, idolatry serves as the lens through which the social context of physical segregation in Belfast, embodied in the separation barriers, is reflected upon. The causations and motivations toward idolatry in the biblical text and the separation barriers are noted in this reflection, with idolatry and the barriers arising from fear and lack of trust, a desire for security and the desire to reinforce communal identity through physical construction. Additionally, the reflection emphasises that both idolatry in the text and the barriers in the social context result in 'sacrifices', i.e. consequences in the form of loss of life- or quality of life- borne inequitably in both cases by the most poor and the most marginalised and by the young.

1. Overview of the Three Theological Approaches

Four biblical texts will now be presented with an intention of offering from the texts an initial theological reflection on the separation barriers. Each text will be examined in light of three approaches. The key characteristics of each approach will be identified as will relational aspects between the approaches. We begin with a historical-critical approach to the text. This is followed by an examination of how Latin American liberation theology broadly approached the biblical text, emphasising a more contextual reading than the historical-critical, based on both the commitment to praxis and a direction toward the poor and marginalised. Finally, a 'transformational' approach- informed by liberation and reconciliation- will be

presented, based on a reading of the text in light of the reality of Belfast's separation barriers.

a. The Historical-Critical Approach

The use of historical criticism and critical methods has been the predominant discipline within much of the Biblical research undertaken throughout the 20th century[1]. The historical-critical method seeks to ascertain the text's primitive or original meaning in light of the original historical context and literal sense[2]. It attempts to do so through a disciplined interrogation of the primary source material in order to secure a maximal amount of verifiable information in terms of historical context, literary genre, the events described, the principle actors, the social context of the text, the linguistic arrangement and how the text corresponds to or deviates from extra-biblical historical accounts[3]. The final goal is to, as much as is possible, arrive at what happened and why; to understand the text in light of its history and literary function.

The parallel matters of dating biblical texts and assigning authorship are of primary concern to the historical-critical method, though what can be considered 'accuracy' on either matter is relative to one's understanding and approach. For the modern reader, accustomed to a literary culture where the conspicuous personality of the author is central to an understanding of the work, assimilation of biblical literature, where authorship is more disparate, requires a different mindset[4]. Exact age and authorship of Old Testament texts are matters of scholarly opinion. Evidence for one opinion or another regarding authorship is often to be found in the study of the evolution of Hebrew language over a period the nine centuries as well as cultural and political details found in the text.

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[1] For comprehensive overviews of the historical-critical method, see David R. Law, *The Historical-Critical Method: a Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: Continuum, 2012), David Allan Black and David S. Dockery, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), and I. Howard Marshall, ed. *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1979).

[2] Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 3rd edition, 2001), 78.

[3] Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (London: SPCK, 1975), 6.

[4] Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature* (London: SPCK, 1992), 153.

Broadly, modern scholarship of the Old Testament commonly assigns authorship not to a single author but to one or more ancient Hebrew literary tendencies or schools of thought: J, the 'Yawhistic' school; E, the 'Eholistic' school; 'D' the 'Deuteronomist' school; and P, the 'Priestly' school. These four are often further subdivided as scholarship deems appropriate. There is no compelling reason to assume that any of the strands constitute the unitary work of a single individual[5]. The final, unified work of the Torah- the first five books of the Hebrew and Christian Bible- was probably complied from one or more of these disparate sources sometime in the 6th century BCE during the Babylonian exile by redactors from the Priestly school, some five hundred years after the written events described took place[6].

To the complexity of assigning authorship of a particular text to one or more of these four strands is added the overarching complexity of deducing what constitutes an original 'received' strand and what might be the work of one or several later redactors. This is often accomplished through physically dating the parchment and ink and through comparison of language with other scrolls of the same linguistic style or topic and trying to verify the oldest sources of a particular text. Of course, an underlying argument- one that often puts historical/critical methods at odds with other practical and narrative approaches- is whether the 'original' text ostensibly being sought is in some way intrinsically 'better' than the 'final' compilation or not[7]. This line of discussion forms the basis for practical and narrative theologies seeking to approach the text as text, and not focusing to the same degree as historical/critical scholarship the notion of a text as the sum of its parts.

The benefits of the historical-critical approach are an understanding of the historical context and the part it plays in the interpretation of the text. As Krentz notes, the method helps to produce a comprehensive picture of the biblical culture's

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[5] Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature*, 167. and Anthony Phillips, *Lower Than the Angels* (Bible Reading Fellowship, 1983 and Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1996), 3-6.
[6] See Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 14-16 and Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses* (London and New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2004), xii and *The Interpreter's Bible*, 'The Growth of the Hexateuch', 189-192.
[7] Anthropologist Sir Edmund Leach was famously critical of much of the historical source criticism's methodology for, in his estimation, engaging in a process of 'unscrambling the omelette'. The end product of complex process, he argued, often has an intrinsic value that is easily overlooked when seeking to deduce the individual ingredients. See Edmund Leach, 'Introduction' in Edmund Leach and D. Alan Aycock, eds. *Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 3.

own record of history and that culture's self-understanding[8]. Through the investigation of the text's original sources, its form and how the biblical writers interacted with the work of their predecessors, the investigator is well-placed to arrive at the meaning of the text as it was intended by the human author[9].

The limitations of the method vary depending on the approach taken to the text. For example, theologians working in narrative theology- those theologies which recognize the theology of the text embedded in a literary narrative- have taken issue with the methodology of historical criticism for, in their opinion, failing to engage with the narrative unity of the text-as-presented[10]. Narrative theologian Robert Alter criticizes the historical-critical methodology for focusing on form and construction over literary content and narrative:

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[8] Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 35-36.

[9] See Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defence of the Historical-Critical Method* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 66.

[10] Narrative theology is theology that has literary criticism at its foundation and sees the biblical text as a meta-narrative, telling, according to Motyer (197-199), 'a unitary story about the world in which we live; a story of creation, fall, promise, fulfilment and redemption; a story which has its narrative centre in the life and actions and fate of one man, Jesus of Nazareth'. This represented a shift away from traditional historical-critical methods toward the way the text communicates meaning as a self-contained unit, a literary artifact, an undivided whole. Theologians such as Resseguie and Beardslee argued for moving beyond historical criticism, as much of the biblical text is literature and must be approached as a self-contained unit, a literary artifact, an undivided whole. With Regard to the Gospels, Powell argues: 'These books are stories about Jesus, not compilations of miscellaneous data concerning him. They are intended to be read from beginning to end, not dissected and examined to determine the relative value of individual passages'. Narrative theology does, however, seek to take into account the various cultural milieu of the narrative, various literary styles found within the text and the contradictions between various narratives. Likewise, attention is paid to complexities regarding literary form; where the term 'fiction' is deemed inappropriate, literary analysis, a tool of fiction analysis, is brought to bear. This leads to such devices as referring to the 'implied' author and the 'implied' reader, helping to transcend the historical-critical method's singular focus on the actual author and actual audience. Narrative theology does not, however reject the legitimacy of historical inquiry; 'it should not be assumed that they naively accept whatever they read as perfectly historical or that they view the bible as a collection of tales with little basis in reality. Rather, these critics bracket out questions of historicity in order to concentrate on the nature of the text as literature. They do not deny that biblical narratives may also serve as a referential function or that it may be rewarding to study them in that regard as well.' See Stephen Motyer, 'Narrative Theology in John 1-5' in John Lierman, ed., *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 194-208, Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative criticism?* (London: SPCK, 1993), 2-8, James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 19, William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969) and Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

A century of analytic scholarship has made powerful arguments to
the effect that where we might naively imagine that we are
reading a text, what we actually have is a constant stitching
together of earlier texts drawn from divergent literary and
sometimes oral traditions, with minor or major interventions by
later editors in the form of glosses, connecting passages,
conflations of sources... What then, are we to do with our literary
notions of intricate design in reading these texts which the experts
have invited us to view, at least in the more extreme instances, as
a crazy quilt of ancient traditions?[11]

From another standpoint, as textural criticism perhaps assumes a basic scepticism
in the authenticity or historicity of the traditions laid out in the text, more
conservative and evangelical biblical interpreters feel that the method undermines
the traditional understanding of biblical literature as inerrant- the inspired 'Word of
God'- by emphasising the human authors of the texts, their opinions and biases, as
well as the perceived historical discrepancies with non-Biblical material by
approaching the text with historical scepticism regarding editorial biases on the part
the authors[12]. Proponents counter that the clock cannot be turned back; the text can

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[11] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 132.

[12] Writing in the preliminary notes for his critique of liberation theology in 1984, Cardinal
Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, rhetorically critiqued the historical-critical
method's influence on liberation theology: 'absolutely fundamental, finally (to liberation
theology), is the stress on praxis: truth must not be understood metaphysically, for that
would be "idealism". Truth is realized in history and its praxis. Action is truth. Hence even the
ideas which are employed in such action are ultimately interchangeable. Praxis is the sole
deciding factor. The only true orthodoxy is therefore orthopraxy. *It follows that the biblical
texts can be treated more loosely, for historical criticism has loosed Scripture from the
traditional interpretation, which now appears to be unscientific* (italics added). Tradition itself
is treated with the greatest possible scientific strictness along the lines of Bultmann. But as
for the historically transmitted content of the Bible, it cannot be exclusively binding.
Ultimately, what is normative for interpretation is not historical research but the hermeneutic
of history experienced in the community or the political group'. Fitzmeyer, however, notes
that Pope VI's *Dei Verbum* in 1965, building on Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu* from 1943,
tacitly endorsed historical criticism as an interpretive mechanism. Biblical scholar Eta
Linnemann, originally a student of Bultmann, approaches the matter from a Protestant
perspective, and argues for an approach to the method that presupposes the text's inspired
and inerrant nature. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), 'Liberation Theology:
Preliminary Notes', in *The Ratzinger Report* (Ignatius Press, 1985), reprinted in J.F. Thornton
and S.B. Varenne, eds., *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007). See
also Joseph Fitzmeyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture,* 59-73, and Eta Linnemann, *Historical
Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* Originally published as *Wissenschaft oder*

only be approached critically, regardless of one's own preconceptions regarding textural inerrancy and divine inspiration.

A rather fundamental critique of the method- one that is notably prescient to the subject of this thesis- was given by biblical scholar and theologian Walter Wink. Writing in 1973, he declared the method 'bankrupt':

> I use 'bankrupt' in the exact sense of the term. A business which goes bankrupt is not valueless, nor incapable of producing useful products. It still has an inventory of expensive parts, a large capital outlay, a team of trained personnel, a certain reputation, and usually, until the day bankruptcy is declared, a facade which appeared to most to be relatively healthy. The one thing wrong — and the only thing — is that it is no longer able to accomplish its avowed purpose for existence: to make money. It is in this precise sense that one can speak of the historical critical method generally... It is bankrupt solely because it is incapable of achieving what most of its practitioners considered its purpose to be: so to interpret the Scriptures that the past becomes alive and illumines our present with new possibilities for personal and social transformation.[13]

Wink proposed a 're-centering of interest' in the biblical text which, if defined as 'the search for personal and social transformation in the light of the teaching of Jesus', presupposed for him a process which makes transformation possible[14]. This was a similar critique and re-direction to the parallel developments within Latin American theology and its approaches to engagement with the biblical text.

b. The Latin American Liberation Theology Approach

The Latin American liberation approach carries its own inherent critiques of historical criticism. Unsurprisingly, neither historical investigation nor literary

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Meinung? Anfragen und Alternativen (Neuhausen: Hänssler-Verlag, 1986), translated from the German by Robert W. Yarbrough (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House Books, 1990, fifth printing 1995).

[13] Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 1-2.

[14] Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation*, 55.

criticisms concern themselves with the motivations of protagonists or with the ethics of the intentions or actions recorded. However, those concerns move to the fore when approaching the text with a mind toward developing a contextual reading in the light of social context. With this in mind, while Latin American liberation theology was not adverse to the historical-critical method- and was often well-informed by it[15]- the liberationists' particular focus, priorities, method and direction did emphasise more pointedly the importance on the interpretation of the text in light of the historical realities of the immediate context of the most poor and the marginalised. The assertion of the liberationists that the text itself is approached and read differently by the poor and marginalized, even when such factors as original understanding, historical context and literary genre are taken into account, distinguishes the liberation emphasis on hermeneutic from the historical-critical emphasis on exegesis[16]. Therefore, liberation theology served as somewhat of a departure from the historical-critical emphasis, which was valued primarily to the extent that it facilitated liberation theology's emphasis on historical praxis in light of the poor.

One notable liberationist approach applicable to analysing the overall approach to the biblical text is Juan Luis Segundo's writing on the relationship of faith and ideologies, 'ideologies' in this case referring to a system or a strategy as means for reaching a goal. Faith in this case represents permanency; ideologies represent

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[15] The majority of foundational voices in Latin American liberation theology studied theology at a postgraduate level in both Latin America and Europe. Both Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo studied at the Faculty of Theology San Alberto in Louvain, Belgium. Leonardo Boff's doctorate in theology and philosophy is from the University of Munich, while Clodovis Boff received his doctorate in theology from the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. Jon Sobrino received his doctorate in theology from Hochscule St. Georgen in Frankfurt. Hugo Assmann studied philosophy at Central Seminary of St. Leopold in São Paolo and theology at the Gregorian University in Rome.

[16] See Carlos Mesters, 'The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People' in Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, eds. *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981, second printing 1982), 197-210, Leonardo Boff, *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, originally published as *Igreja: Carisma e poder*, Petrópolis (RJ, Brazil: Editoria Vozes, 1981), translated from the Portuguese by John W. Diercksmeier (London: SCM Press, 1985), 125-130 and Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, originally published as *Eclesiogénese: As comunidades eclesias de base reinventam a Igreja* (Petrópolis, RJ, Brazil: Editoria Vozes, 1977), translated from the Portuguese by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 40-44.

praxis. In the light of our faith we approach the text; out of our historical circumstances, we construct ideologies from the text[17].

Segundo draws a distinction between two approaches to reflection on the text in light of the social context: the first method involves searching the Bible for a situation that is similar to the current situation and acting upon the current situation as the actors in the Biblical text did, which he acknowledges as a conservative method. In contrast, the second method is, in his mind, the only alternative to a rapidly-changing and modernising social context:

> ... invent an ideology that we might regard as the one which would
> be constructed by the Gospel message contemporary with us.
> What would the Christ of the Gospels say if he were confronting
> our problems today? If the faith is one amid the diversity of
> history, then there must be some ideology that can build a bridge
> between that faith and our present-day situation even as there
> were such ideologies in the past.[18]

Segundo's ideology, in this case, is the approach that people of faith take to the biblical text. They are in a constant process of learning and re-learning; the ideologies in the scripture are 'responses to historical situations. Faith... is the total process to which the human being submits, a process of learning... how to create the ideologies needed to handle new and unforeseen situations in history'[19]. Segundo concludes:

> The Bible is not the discourse of a Universal God to a universal
> humankind. Partiality is justified because we must find, and
> designate as the word of God, that part of divine revelation which
> today, in the light of the concrete historical situation, is most
> useful for the liberation to which God summons us. Other
> passages of that same divine revelation will help us tomorrow to

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[17] Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, originally published as *Liberatión de la teología*, translated from the Spanish by John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 116.
[18] Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 117.
[19] Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 120.

complete and correct our present course towards freedom, God will keep coming back to speak to us from the same Bible.[20]

Thus, Segundo's permanent faith can be described as the fundamental belief in the God of life and liberation, to which the Word of God in the biblical text attests. The ideology is the searching out that Word of God in the biblical text through the hermeneutical cycle and praxis.

This was the theological foundation for the practical application of the Base Christian Communities and other such grassroots communities in the context of Latin America. For example, Ernesto Cardenal's *Gospel of Solentiname* collects group dialogues and reflections from informal meetings, Bible studies and the Sunday mass of the Solentiname community in Nicaragua. When reflecting on the account of the slaughter of the innocents in Matthew 2:12-23, the topic of the Sandinista Revolution, the primary political context of the participants, arose. One participant, Fernando remarked:

> I don't understand how you can read the Gospels and get spiritual
> lessons for your life out of it and not get involved in the
> Revolution. This Book has a very clear political position for anyone
> that reads it simply, as you read it. But there are people in
> Managua who read this Book, and they are friends of Herod; and
> they don't realize that this Book is their enemy.[21]

This is an example of liberation theology's attempt to interpret scripture in the light of the poor community's experience, and to locate that experience in the scriptures. It represents its primary approach to the biblical text[22].

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[20] Segundo, *Liberation of Theology,* 39.

[21] Ernesto Cardenal, *The Gospel of Solentiname*, originally published as El evangelio en Solentiname (Salamanca, ES: Ediciones Sígueme, 1975), translated from the Spanish by Donald D. Walsh (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 85.

[22] It can be argued that liberation theology's commitment to reading the text in the light of the experiences of the poor often ran the risk of idealism of the poor. José Comblin exemplifies this in his assertion: 'Theological knowledge of God's revelation is never better than popular knowledge. The faith of the simple and poor is better. And the aim of theology is to liberate such faith, not shift it.' Anthropologist John Burdick's study of the interrelationships of Catholic-influenced Base Communities, Pentecostalism and the syncretic *Umbanda* faith in Brazil, in which he documents the complexities of domestic violence, prejudice, political ambivalence and narrow-mindedness on the part of laypeople and clergy,

c. A Transformational Approach

A transformational interpretation is one informed equally by two emphases: liberation's emphasis on a contextual reading in the light of the marginalised; and reconciliation's emphasis on the ongoing process of living together well after violent conflict and continuing social division. It would seek to approach the text in the full knowledge of historical criticism, informed by the liberationist's focus on praxis and direction, but with an equal focus on the impact of the reading of the text in light of the necessity for reconciliation in a context of division.

The transformational approach is informed, firstly, by my lived experience coming to Northern Ireland from the US and living in North and West Belfast and working with various post-conflict reconciliation projects in Belfast, beginning in 2000 and continuing to the present. This work included group facilitation, research and resource development for community projects and education programmes sponsored by groups such as Corrymeela, Irish Peace Centres, Youthlink, The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), Community Relations in Schools (CRiS) and various faith-based or church-sponsored community initiatives.

Much of this work took place against the backdrop of the daily life along Belfast's interface areas and the separation barriers. As my primary mode of transport was a bicycle, the intricacies of navigating a practical and safe route from one area to another were regular considerations. The separation barriers regularly impinged on that process in ways quite distinct from driving a car. For example, as the security gates between the Falls Road and the Shankill Road were locked at night, it was necessary to be aware of how late one stayed on one side or the other, lest a journey that would normally take ten minutes be doubled in time and distance. Likewise, as the gates were closed on weekends, the decision of which church to attend was conditioned by whether one wanted to cycle one mile or three. These daily realities led me to reflect on the barriers' affects on my social life and religious practice, which led me to question their affect on Belfast's social and religious life as a whole.

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often serves as a realistic corrective to some of the popular idealism concerning the amorphous conception of 'the poor'. See José Comblin, *The Church and the National Security State* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 18 and John Burdick, *Looking for God in Brazil: The Progressive Catholic Church in Urban Brazil's Religious Arena* (Berkeley, CA and London: 1993).

Secondly, in the midst of my community work, I undertook an M.Phil in Reconciliation Studies at Trinity College Dublin, Irish School of Ecumenics, which introduced me to more formalised theologies of reconciliation as well as practical and contextual theological approaches, and Latin American liberation theology in particular. As part of the academic process of analysing the two theological approaches, the initial questions for the basis of this thesis began to emerge. It was my belief that the emphasis that Latin American liberation theology gave to social analysis, the structural and systemic qualities of oppression and the importance of a radicalised reading of the biblical text in the light of praxis and the social realities of the most poor and the most marginalised, had not been significantly explored within the formalised reconciliation theologies. Likewise, the emphasis on the transformation of human relationships, the complexities of sectarian dynamics and deep social divisions that transcend class and culture, had not figured prominently in Latin American liberation theology. The envisioning of a theological methodology that attempted to be informed equally by the prominent characteristics of both led to the envisioning of a 'transformational' approach.

The exploration of practical applications for this approach emerged directly from the observations made during my years of community work in Belfast regarding attitudes towards- and perceptions of- the separation barriers. Firstly, when the subject of the barriers was raised, in many circumstances a majority of reconciliation workers would say, 'it's not the physical barriers that are the problem, but the barriers in people's hearts and minds'. This observation led to corollary observations. For example, while underlying historical, cultural and psychological factors were an undoubted impetus and reinforcement for sectarianism, little theological reflection seemed to be given to the possible interrelation between the physical barriers and the more amorphous barriers in peoples' 'hearts and minds'.

Secondly, when the subject of the barriers was raised, in many circumstances a common evaluation was, 'it is important to remember that it is local residents who *demand* the barriers. Any decision to remove them must be entirely up to them.' This led to corollary observations such as that, while it was perhaps reasonable to acknowledge the opinions of the residents who would be most directly affected by the construction or dismantling of a barrier, little reflection was being given to what effects, if any, the overarching policy of physically-reinforced segregation was having

on the city as a whole. Moreover, it was unclear whether or not it was the barriers that were being demanded or the barriers were the only solution being proffered to residents' demands for safety and security.

Thirdly, when the subject of the barriers was raised, it appeared that discussion or reflection on the separation barriers risked being interpreted either as an inherent demonization of local residents or a surreptitious call for their removal. This led to corollary observations such as that perhaps assigning complete responsibility for the barriers' proliferation might carry the unintended assumption that a more positive solution to the issue of the barriers is entirely dependent on interface communities themselves, already struggling with higher levels of social deprivation and perceived social exclusion than the rest of the city.

Finally, when the subject of the barriers was raised, many people, particularly those who were geographically or socio-economically removed from interface areas, would often comment that the barriers were unfortunate and reflected badly on the city as a whole, but would add that they did not feel it was their place to comment on the barriers, deferring to local residents. This led to corollary observations such as while it would be indeed unfair to describe interface residents as more violent or sectarian than the rest of the city, there was little reflection on why the barriers proliferate in the areas of the city with the lowest income, employment and academic achievement levels. Moreover, such comments seemed to confirm Murtagh and Shirlow's assertion that Belfast was better understood as an 'assemblage of villages'- socially, economically and in many ways culturally disconnected from each other- rather than a city.

In light of these observations, a 'transformational' theological approach began to emerge. The initial perception of benefits of a transformational approach were that it seeks to emphasise that theological reflection based on social analysis must precede a course of action, i.e. it allows attention to praxis to be integrated into the discussion of physically-reinforced segregation. Only after there has been conscious reflection on the barriers as a social reality- one that affects, to a greater or lesser degree, all of the city- can any response or action on them be proposed. This is envisioned as both *social* reflection by the population as a whole and *theological* reflection specifically by the people of faith.

Secondly, the approach seeks to help emphasise the specific role that faith communities- who have often felt unable or unwelcomed from commenting on the barriers- can play in the process of post-conflict social reconciliation. Finding ones' own experience in the reading of the biblical text in the light of social reality- and in this case, a physically-constructed context of division- is a key element of the approach.

Lastly, the approach seeks to help emphasise the place of interface communities in the city as a whole and, by reflecting on the commonalities of idolatry, encourages theological reflection across boundaries of geography, class and lived experience.

2. Textual Case Studies

a. Exodus 32:1-24

i. A Historical-Critical Approach

Much of the historical critical tradition has grappled with the question of the historical veracity of the Exodus text; is it a fanciful reconstruction or a faithful, reliable account of historical events? In making a case for the former, scholars can point to virtually no extra-biblical historical accounting of the events, a lack of geographical place names- as opposed to Genesis and Numbers- and the appearance of a lack of a consistent linear narrative[23]. However, even in the absence of historically verifiable evidence, it would be unwise to dismiss Exodus as entirely fiction because of the place that the text holds in relation to the rest of the Hebrew canon and within the overall structure and form of the Pentateuch. Exodus serves as Israel's second book of origins, giving, within a general narrative framework, an account of the formation of Israel as a nation and forming the basis of the nation's ongoing socio-political and ethical life[24].

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[23] Fox notes that it would appear that chapters 16 and 18 presuppose the existence of laws that were given later in the text. See Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 241.

[24] See Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology vol. 1: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, originally published as *Theologie des Alten Testaments I, Die Theologie der historischen Überlieferungen Israels* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1957), translated from the German by D.M.G. Stalker (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962, Paperback edition, London: SCM Press, 1975), 175-179, Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 180-181 and Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 241.

In style and form, Exodus is a text of Israel's movement, both geographically and metaphorically, beginning in Egypt, proceeding to Sinai where the law is given and the nationhood that it brings takes shape. This is followed by the episode of building the golden calf, the breaking of the law; the covenant is then restored through the building of the tabernacle[25]. Another 'movement' motif can be interpreted as a movement from the 'domestic, moral and psychological realism' of Genesis to a stylised and schematic form of broad storytelling. The first of the text's two halves (chaps 1-20) is a grand narrative of liberation and national triumph; the second half (21-40) sees a complete shift in style, from this broad narrative form to a series of legal treatises. This second section is intruded upon only by the narrative episode of the golden calf (chaps. 32-34). Historical-critical scholars have thus concluded that the different sections have different authors, the first section being a 'J' composition, the second most likely being from the Priestly literary school[26].

As to the golden calf episode, its inclusion points to its being, in some sense, a centrepiece between the instructions for the tabernacle and the building of the tabernacle. Alter suggests that this is a metaphorical piece whose purpose is to show the difference between what humans construct in their own will and what Yahweh desires them to construct. Thus, the tabernacle is the opposite of the calf; it is human work redeemed, the true constructed repository of Yahweh's presence as opposed to the bogus construction, the calf[27]. The two cults- essentially, Moses' and Aaron's- are put in stark contrast[28].

The golden calf episode has also been analytically used as a means of dating the Exodus text overall. First of all, there is the question of the image- the matter of the idolatry. There is no evidence that any voice before the prophet Hosea spoke out against the practice; in addition, it does not figure into general prohibitions until the reforms of Josiah. This reinforces the notion that the Exodus text is from a later date.

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[25] See Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 183-187 and Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 244.

[26] See Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, a translation of Ernst, Sellin, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, tenth edition, revised and rewritten by Georg Foher (Heidelberg: Quell & Meyer, 1965), first published in Great Britain, London: SPCK, 1970), 143-178 and Alter, *The Five books of Moses*, 304-305.

[27] Alter, *The Five books of Moses*, 304-305.

[28] See Dmitri Slivniak, 'The Golden Calf Story: Constructively and Deconstructively', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Vol. 33.1 (2008): 19-38.

Some scholarship goes as far as to say that not only did near-eastern nomadic peoples such as the Hebrews find the idea of constructed images unattractive, they would have been unknown altogether. This serves this scholarship as further proof of the story's late pedigree and purpose[29].

Secondly, there is an editorial assessment of Aaron and his complicity in the actions related, i.e., whether Aaron is complicit in fostering idolatry or not. Historical criticism had traditionally assigned authorship to an anti-priestly, anti-Aaronide group. This analysis concludes that the biblical texts either implicitly or explicitly mention the golden calf on several occasions (Ex. 32; Duet. 9; Duet. 33:8-11; Ps. 106:19-23; Neh. 9:18), but the story doesn't appear in any other Jewish literature until the 1st cent. CE. It concludes that the earlier the text (with Duet. 9 held to be the earliest), the less blame is assigned to Aaron. This then puts the text in the postexilic, Second Temple period; The Exodus text absolves Aaron of most of the blame, placing the majority of blame on the people, thereby solidifying the Aaronide position in the priesthood[30].

This points to the purpose and meaning of the golden calf account in Exodus: 'the disastrous consequences' of 'ritual failure' and the dangers of deviation from Yahweh's law even minutely[31]. Exodus serves as a teaching, 'an attempt to distil history and learn from it, using echoes of the past to shape the present and the future'[32].

Critical scholarship has also seen the text as a comment on the Northern kingdom and its king, who established a worship shrine at Bethel after the split with the southern Judean kingdom, incorporating two images of bulls. One historical-critical reading sees Exodus 32 as a critique of Jeroboam's actions. Whether the bulls constituted an act of idolatry or not has been a matter of scholarly debate. One view sees the bulls as not as representations of Yahweh, but as a visible pedestal or sitting

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[29] *The Interpreter's Bible, Vol 1* (New York and Nashville, 1952), 1064.

[30] See James W. Watts, 'Aaron and the Golden Calf in the Rhetoric of the Pentateuch, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 3 (2011): 417-430.

[31] Watts, 'Aaron and the Golden Calf', 417.

[32] Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 243. See also Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, originally published as *Das Alte Testament: Eine Einführung* (Neukirchener Verlag, 1983), translated from the German by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1985), 10-20.

place for the invisible God, and the Ark of the Covenant is held as a positive evidence
of this practical tendency[33].

Another view in historical/critical scholarship specifically dealing with Exodus 32
emphasises the text as a polemic against the northern Kingdom of Jeroboam and the
two bulls he erects at Bethel (I Kings 12:28-33). Bulls were a common religious icon of
the ancient Near East, representing male sexual fertility. This view sees the Exodus
account as a retroactive 'P' document condemning the use of the bulls at Bethel[34]. As
this shows, the matter of what constituted an idol and what did not is one of scholarly
speculation. De Vaux notes that the commandment specifically prohibited making
images of Yahweh, not necessarily images *associated with the worship of Yahweh*.
Thus, he holds that the injunction against images did not apply to the calf in the
wilderness or Jeroboam's bulls 'insofar as these were, in accordance with the purpose
of those that made them, only the pedestal of the invisible deity'[35]. Nevertheless, the
incident is referred to as 'the apostasy of Sinai' by Keil and Dielitzsch and by

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[33] Soggin makes this argument, drawing on Wieppert and Aberbach and Smolar. De Vaux also
notes that the prohibition against images exempted the cherubim of the Ark. See J. Alberto
Soggin, *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah*, originally published as *Introduzione
alla Storia d'Israele e de Giuda* (Brecia: Paideia Editrice, 1998), translated from the Italian by
John Bowden (London: SCM Press, third edition, 1999), 220 and Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient
Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, originally published as *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament*
(Paris: Le Editions du Cerf, 1961), translated from the French by John McHugh (London:
Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961, fourth impression 1978), 334.

[34] See Thomas L. Thompson and Dorothy Irvin, 'The Joseph and Moses Narratives', in John H.
Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, eds., *Israelite and Judean History* (London: SCM Press, 1977),
162, John Bright, *A History of Israel* (London SCM Press, 1960), 218, Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old
Testament*, 40-42, and Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 158.

[35] Old Testament biblical scholar Michael Coogan also questions whether the calf was an idol,
i.e. a representation of a false god, taking at face value the declarations of the people that it
was 'the gods who brought Israel out of Egypt' and noting Aaron's pronouncement of a 'a
festival of Yahweh'. He also notes the interpretation that the image represented a visible
pedestal for the invisible God and the view that the episode serves as a anti-Northern
Kingdom polemic. However, Keil and Delitzsch explicitly draw attention to the physical nature
of the calf as a breach of the second commandment, as well as 'clinging to what was apparent
to the eye', in keeping with Mary Douglas' analysis mentioned earlier. De Vaux concurs,
notong the use of the terminology of a 'great sin', specifically referring to idolatry and also
referring to Aaron's actions in the account as idolatry. See Michael D. Coogan, *A Brief
Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in its Context* (New York and Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2009), 155-118 and Ronald de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and
Institutions*, 37 and 360 and C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament in
Ten·Volumes, Volume 1: The Pentateuch,* translated from the German by James Martin (Grand
Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, fifth printing 1978).

Lemche[36]. There is also the fine distinction between idolatry (the worship of false gods, the worship of Yahweh by foreign rituals and the actual constructing of idols) and either legitimate or illegitimate iconolatry (the Ark of the Covenant and the golden calf, respectively)[37]. With the coming of Christianity, the explicit charge that the episode in Exodus 32 was an act of idolatry was emphasised as part of an ongoing anti-Jewish polemic beginning with an anti-Semitic understanding of Acts 7:41-52 and continuing through Patristic and medieval scholarship[38].

ii. A Latin American Liberation Theology Approach

Biblical scholar Anthony Ceresko, well-acquainted with the historical-critical method, has sought to formulate an analysis of the Old Testament in the light of liberation theology. His approach has been in keeping with much of liberation theology's methodology overall, giving primacy to the social context of the readers, reflecting on the text in the light of that social context[39]. He thus employs a meta-narrative to the Old Testament in light of liberation theology's hermeneutic:

> The Bible is, at its heart, the story of a people striving to achieve and maintain a life-giving community. It embodies the record of their belief that their God was present and active in the midst of that struggle, indeed was revealed as one who stands with and defends them in that struggle. If such is the case, it follows that the easiest way into this text, the way that best puts us in touch with its dynamics and fundamental concerns, is through the eyes of those who today are themselves involved in similar struggles.[40]

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[36] Niels Peter Lemche, *The Old Testament Between Theology and History: A Critical Survey* (Louisville, KY and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 90.

[37] See the entry on idolatry in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica Vol. 8* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1982).

[38] See L. Smolar M. Aberbach and Pinkhos Churgin, *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1983), 91-116. See also Christine Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-century Syria* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

[39] Anthony R. Ceresko, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Liberation Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 9.

[40] Ceresko, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 307-308.

When approaching the Book of Exodus, Ceresko draws heavily from the historical-critical tradition, yet stresses the role the text plays in recording the social 'history' of the people and in forging a new popular story and national identity:

> Much of what was to go into the creation of Israel, both in terms
> of human subjects and in terms of stories and traditions, was
> already *in* Canaan and already taking on its singular shape and
> pattern. It only needed a catalyst, some key element or 'glue' to
> crystallise and give the decisive and unified shape and character to
> this new people with their new common story in the already
> ancient land of Canaan. It was the small but decisive Exodus group
> or Moses group that provided that 'glue'. This was the element
> around which other groups and stories could gather; its story
> became the appropriate vehicle for forging and expressing their
> new identity and common project.[41]

Similarly to much liberation theology, Ceresko places a high value on the Book of Exodus, particularly the first half, the account of the exodus proper, seeing it as 'the story that stands at the heart of the Old Testament'[42]. Reflections specifically on Exodus 32 are relatively rare in Latin American liberation theology. Two are notable: George V. Pixley, an American-born, Nicaraguan-raised Baptist minister and seminary teacher, and Chilean priest and academic Pablo Richard.

Pixley specifically reads the Exodus as a revolutionary process. Moses and Yahweh have liberated the people; in Moses' absence, the people conceive 'a political novelty. It will appoint God as its leader, to lead it forward.' The image, then, is specifically understood as one of Yahweh, and the account should not be confused with other accounts of idolatry. For Pixley, the important point is that the making of the image does not constitute a counterrevolutionary action; no one is suggesting going back to Egypt[43]; 'this is a rebellion neither against the liberation project nor against Moses':

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[41] Ceresko, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 73.

[42] Ceresko, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 10.

[43] There is scope in the text to wonder if this is indeed the case. The one other mention of the golden calf incident in the Hebrew Bible- Nehemiah 9:17- equates the desire to return to

The Israelites were not trying to erect gods other than Yahweh,
and Aaron did not intend to create another god with the image he
made. The problem of this passage is... that of who is to guide the
people after Moses is gone.[44]

In Pixley's reading, the text is describing a political argument; idolatry is not taking place in any way and, in a sense, idolatry is not the main theme. This is a quite creative and unique interpretation, as the conventional interpretations and rabbinical literature are almost unanimous in their acceptance that a grave sin in the form of a prohibited use of images is occurring[45].

In contrast, Richard does see idolatry at play, but the sin of Exodus 32 was, in his mind, in perceiving and worshipping Yahweh incorrectly. He takes the 'pedestal' approach mentioned earlier, seeing the calf as a 'seat' for the invisible Yahweh; the calf was a 'cultic image of Yahweh', an incorrect *representation* of Yahweh, not the worship of a different deity, and therefore (similar to Pixley) not an explicit rejection of Yahweh or Moses. Richard gives much more time and emphasis to two other manifestations of idolatry: the worship of 'other', 'foreign' gods by Israel's kings and their foreign wives; and the worship of 'false idols'. The former is closely associated with critiques of the liberationists of monarchy and coercive power:

Egypt and the idolatrous act: 'They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion *appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery* (italics added). But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate; slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them, even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, "This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt," or when they committed awful blasphemies.' Additionally, the text is rife with calls by the people to return to Egypt (for example, Ex. 14:11-12; Num. 11:4-6).

[44] George V. Pixley, *On Exodus: A Liberation Perspective*, originally published as *Exudo, una evangélica y popular* (Casa Unida de Publicaciones, S.A., 1983), translated from the Spanish by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 147.

[45] Both Fox and Alter draw attention to the structural arrangement of the text which displays a contrast between the holiness of Moses on the mountain and the debasement of the people below; the covenant is represented in the former, sin in the latter. The text is thus explicitly detailing a breaking of the Covenant with Yahweh, and the prohibition of images specifically. Likewise, *The Jewish Encyclopedia of 1901-1906* notes that rabbinical literature describes the events of the calf as the sin, next to the fall in Genesis 3, from which all of Israel's misfortunes spring: 'There is not a misfortune that Israel has suffered which is not partly a retribution for the sin of the calf' (Sanh. 102a). See Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 2004), 493-495 and Everett Fox, *Now These Are the Names: A New English Rendition of the Book of Exodus* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 179.

> Oppression among the people contradicted the intimate and
> specific nature of the people of Israel and its faith in Yahweh.
> Injustice and idolatry were not just sins like other sins, but rather a
> negation of itself as a people... its justice and its faith in God were
> the source of its strength and superiority over other peoples. [46]

The latter manifestation, again, allows Richard to focus on the oppressive nature of
idolatry:

> One outstanding aspect of (Baruch 6, Daniel 4, I Maccabees, and
> Wisdom 13-15) is that they are all situated in a context of
> oppression. When idolatry appears, it is intimately linked to a
> situation of political oppression. The prophetic or theological
> denunciations of idolatry... always occur within a context of hope
> and liberation. [47]

Richard encapsulates here the most prominent reading of idolatry in liberation
theology. Idolatry represents a coercive imposition on the people, something foisted
on them from above, and always at the expense of the people's freedom and
Yahweh's justice. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the account in Exodus 32 does
not hold a prominent part in the liberationists' refection because, on the surface, it
strains to fit their contextual reading of 'idolatry as reflection on oppression'. In
Exodus 32, the narrative explicitly notes the people's complicity in the calf's creation;
it is their demand. Indeed, Alter holds that the Exodus 32 account functions to detail
the frailty of humanity in the face of divinity:

> Without (Exodus 32), the Book of Exodus would be incomplete or
> at least hopelessly idealistic and idealized. Thanks to the inclusion
> of the Golden Calf episode, we recognize the people of Israel so
> familiar... stubborn, untrusting and utterly incapable of
> comprehending what has just occurred at Sinai... We are also given

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[46] See Pablo Richard, 'Biblical Theology of Confrontation with Idols' in Pablo Richard, ed., *The Idols of Death and the God of Life: A Theology*, originally published as *La lucha de los dioses: los ídolos de la oppression y la búsqueda del Dios Liberador* (San José, C.S.: Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones and Mangua, Nicaragua: CAV, 1980), translated from the Spanish by Barbara E. Campbell and Bonnie Shepherd (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 10.
[47] Richard, 'Biblical Theology of Confrontation with Idols', 11.

a classic biblical description of God in this story- that he is demanding but also compassionate.[48]

This forms a basis for a transformative approach. By interpreting the text as thematically dealing with a universal human trait- fear and impetuousness in the face of the unknown or the threatening- it builds on Liechty and Clegg's analysis of sectarianism and locates the idolatry as a universal response, albeit a distorted one.

iii.   A Transformational Approach- 'Make gods for us...'

Liechty and Clegg's reconciliation focus identified sectarianism as both distorted expressions of healthy desires and present across community and class boundaries. Applying their focus to the Exodus 32 text, a transformational reading emphasises idolatry's nature as a distorted expression of a healthy desire as well as its ubiquity. This reflection focuses on idolatry as a response to fear, insecurity and as a misplaced repository of communal identity, albeit one with consequences that are not foreseen at the moment.

The Exodus 32 text intimates that idolatry is a result of a time of great uncertainty and potential crisis in the minds of the Israelite people. After the trauma of years of slavery and oppression, their liberation comes through Yahweh in the person of Moses. And now Moses was gone, disappeared up a mountain covered with fire and cloud (Ex. 24:17-18). It is understandable that 'they should be terrified at the idea of being stranded in the wilderness without a leader on whom they had been entirely dependent'[49].

So, in this reading, the impetus towards idolatry was a critique of Moses and, indirectly, of Yahweh. The people specifically note that Moses 'delayed' (בשש, *voshesh*[50]), which is synonymous with 'shame'; Moses' absence was directly implied to be an embarrassment, a shame- a sin- against the people[51].

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[48] Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 2004), 437.

[49] Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 493.

[50] Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[51] Gen. 2:25 describes the prelapsarian Adam and Eve as 'unashamed' ('And the man and his wife were both naked and unashamed'). Midrashic scholar Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg notes that the use of the word 'unashamed' in Gen. 2:25 corresponds to 'late' or delayed'. 'The primal experience of Adam and Eve was without time lag, in a direct, spontaneous and

From that, it can be reasoned that the people's concern for Moses was not a worried concern on Moses' behalf- that he might be lost, injured or dead; the emotion is indignation as the result of Moses'- and by extension , Yahweh's- unreliability. Exasperated and in a panic, they speak of him with a derogatively epithet- 'this Moses'[52]. The people then turn on the symbol of authority in closest proximity: Aaron. The people, faced with calamity and unreliable leadership, are an angry mob demanding action; that something be done- something meaningful and conclusive- in the face of a crisis[53].

The unreliable Moses and Yahweh must be replaced with something tangible and reliable. The people demand 'gods' to do what Yahweh and Moses have, for whatever reason, stopped doing[54]. The people are not demanding a representation of Yahweh; they want different gods. These new gods will 'go ahead'; 'go before'[55] (Heb. *'asher*; רָאֲשֶׁר[56]), as into battle[57].The ineffability of Yahweh, so at odds with the practice of the time and region, a god who could not be named (Exodus 3:13-15) or physically represented (Exodus 20:4), could easily be seen as a dangerous liability with the

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uninhibited mode of desire: hence the "shameless" quality.' Desire moved unhesitatingly. Eating the forbidden fruit induces 'a new consciousness, a self-consciousness (Knowledge), which impedes, delays the consummation of desire.' Thus to be un-delayed denotes sinlessness and a lack of shame. To be 'delayed' denotes sin and shame See Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconsciousness* (New York: Schocken Books, 2009), 15.

[52] Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 493.

[53] The English translation 'gathered around' in Ex. 32:1 is, in the Hebrew, 'gathered over, against or above' (אֵלָיו); to use an informal phrase, the people were literally 'piling on' Aaron. Likewise the word 'arise' (קוּם) implies not only a forceful command ('get up!'; 'do something!'; 'act!'), it is also the same word translated 'establish', as in Ex. 6:4: 'I also established my covenant with them...' There is a religious dimension to what the people want Aaron to do; something very similar to what Yahweh historically did with Israel. This compounds the idolatrous nature of their demands. Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[54] 'Make gods for us...'; the term 'gods' (אֱלֹהִים) is the plural for *˘elohin*, the name that would have been understood as the name of the one, true God. The people literally ask for two of the one who brought them out of Egypt. It is notable that the people ask for 'gods' in reaction to Moses' absence, though scholars are not in agreement as to why this is so. The medieval Hebraic scholar Rashi explained that the people looked to Moses for guidance, and the implication is that the guidance he offered could only be obtained from a god.

[55] The term 'brought us up out' is the same term *'asher*; רָאֲשֶׁר. The people want gods to *'asher'* them because Moses, who *'asher'* them from Egypt. Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[56] Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[57] See Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 441 and Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 493.

prospect of the conquest of Canaan growing nearer[58]. In the face of physical threat, something more tangible was required. Moreover, considering that the people had already survived the pursuit of Pharaoh's army and could expect conflict with enemies both on the journey (Ex. 17:8-16) and when they arrived at Canaan, the desire for strategic guidance and leadership was understandable and the absence of Moses and Yahweh was all the more acute. The people needed to be organised and secure. The absence of Moses has left the people, in their minds, insecure. The people again stress the feeling that they have been wronged; they 'do not know' what has become of Moses[59].

Aaron's position as Moses' spokesman and the nation's priestly embodiment is well-established by this point (Ex. 4:10-17; 24:14; 28:4); his authority has been on display since the encounters with Pharaoh. Yet in this situation he is overwhelmed. Aaron's actions in response to the people's protest make him complicit. The people want new gods; he will deliver them. He asks the people to give up their gold and their jewellery and he 'formed it in a mould, and cast an image of a calf'. The word 'formed' (*Haret*) implies that Aaron's actions are performed deliberately. Conforming to Mary Douglas' view of idolatry as, first and foremost, a physical act, the idol is being consciously constructed[60].

At the sight of the calf, the people declare that '*these* are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt', a provocative re-casting of Yahweh's declaration at the giving of the Law: 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt...' (Ex. 20:2). The people declare that the calf- the thing they have made- is the one who brought them out of Egypt. Even more provocatively, Aaron builds an altar in front of the calf and declares a feast dedicated to Yahweh.

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[58] The risk is implied by the remarks of Pharaoh in Exodus 5:2: 'Who is the Lord, that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord.'

[59] To 'know' (יָדַע) harkens to Eden and the tree of knowledge and the link between knowledge and being 'delayed' or shamed. Moses is with Yahweh; he is 'undelayed', experiencing Yahweh immediately. The people, this time, are 'delayed', unknowing. Again, the implication is that Moses is at fault for their not knowing. He is in dereliction of his duty. Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[60] Even with the use of '*haret*', rabbinic scholars differ as to Aaron's motives, even to the point of wondering whether or not it was even he who made the idol. The Midrash of the text of Moses' pleading with Yahweh not to destroy the people for the sin of idolatry does not mention Aaron . Also, the medieval rabbinic authority Rashi comments that the calf was made by foreign sorcerers travelling with the Israelites. Fox and Alter, however, assign the more conventional understanding to the text.

But it is not Yahweh. Aaron, the priest of Yahweh, is in the midst of facilitating the worship of another god. In Moses' absence, he does not take the side of Yahweh and strengthen the people. Whatever he offers them at this point will not be the security and safety of Yahweh; it will be an imitation. Nevertheless the people welcome the imitation; it is fulfilling the role of Yahweh and Moses, but in a manner that meets their perceived immediate needs. This god will not disappear; the calf will be visible and permanent. The people will have it and they will control it, they can move it at their whim.

When Moses does return, in a fury he interrogates Aaron. Aaron's excuses are feeble but obviously make sense in his mind. In contrast to the text's insistence that he deliberately constructed the calf-planning, crafting, executing- he tries to imply that the calf was either an accident or something entirely different from what he intended ('out came *this* calf!')[61]. Aaron implies that he thought he was making one thing, but soon was surprised to discover that it was something quite different- something beyond his original intentions. Was he stalling for time, hoping Moses would appear? Was he dismayed at the request of the people and thought that demanding that they deliver up their gold and jewellery to the project would make them think twice? By saying that the festival would be 'tomorrow' as opposed to that very day another delaying tactic? His motives can only be speculated upon.

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[61] There is a line of thought in the Midrashic tradition that Aaron implies 'I did not know that *this* calf would emerge- but it *did* emerge.' One interpretation posits that Aaron wanted to make a symbolic image but didn't realise that the Israelites would take it so seriously. Alternately, it has been suggested that Aaron did not realise that the calf would have in it a spirit of life. In a similar way, the Midrash offers an intriguing dialogue between Yahweh and Moses that suggests even Moses was trying to negotiate a pardon for the people based on the ambiguous nature of the idol. He suggests that the idol might serve as Yahweh's coadjutor, suggesting that 'the golden calf will take over some of the workings of nature, and may cause the rain to descend. Thou wilt send down the dew, and the golden calf will cause the herb to grow.' Yahweh rebukes Moses: 'Thou also hast become an idolater; is there any power in that idol which the people have made themselves as a god? Is it anything but inanimate matter?' Moses parries by positing that if the idol is nothing, then there is no sin in the people's worship, only ignorance: 'Why then, shouldst Thou be angry with thy people who have made this worthless, powerless thing?' He even postulates that the idolatry is a natural consequence of being enslaved within an idolatrous culture for so long: 'Why does thine anger grow against the people whom Thou hast brought out from Egypt? They have been slaves of the Egyptians, a people who worshipped animals as their gods; and can it be wondered at that they imitated their masters?' Exodus Rabba 43 and 44, available at: http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/tmm/tmm08.htm, internet, accessed 16 April 2012.

What is clear though is that the situation is beyond anyone's control; responsibility and blame for the situation is vague; Moses turns on Aaron; Aaron turns on the people ('you know the people, that they are bent on evil'). Aaron intimates that Moses is either also in some way to blame or that his actions- throwing and breaking the tablets- and Aaron's actions- throwing the gold in the fire- are because of the actions of the people[62].

Moses takes charge. The moment is grave and out of the control of any of the actors. Moses worries that the situation might put the people at risk, not simply spiritually but strategically:

> When Moses saw that the people were running wild[63] (for Aaron
>
> had let them run wild, to the derision of their enemies), then
>
> Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, 'Who is on
>
> the LORD's side? Come to me!

What the people had hoped would be a course of action to bring them security and leadership has, in Moses' mind, put them in a situation of greater insecurity and greater disorganisation. The consequences were now to be seen: they have sinned in the sight of Yahweh and weakened their position in the sight of their adversaries[64].

From this reflection, attention is drawn to the contextual similarities of interface communities and the Hebrew people of the text. The elements of fear, lack of trust and perceived desperation are visible in both. Both peoples demand security in the face of a threatening 'other'. The reflection draws attention to the desire for strong

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[62] The text describes Moses pleading with Yahweh to spare the people, yet when he descends from the mountain and sees the state of the camp, even he is moved to rage and throws down the tablets of the Law. The Hebrew term for 'threw' ('*salak*', שָׁלַךְ) is the same verb used by Aaron to describe throwing the gold in the fire, i.e. something done impulsively, without thinking. Aaron seeks to deflect responsibility from himself through the implication that Moses is also unable to deal rationally with the situation. Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[63] The Hebrew for 'running wild' ('*para*', פָּרַע)- denotes being 'uncovered', 'shamed', 'let loose', 'uncontrolled', 'unrestrained'. It is the same term used by Pharaoh in Ex. 5:4: 'why are you taking the people away from their work?' i.e. why are you letting the people loose from what they should be concerned with? Moses and Aaron want the people liberated; Pharaoh interprets that as allowing the people to be chaotic. Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[64] In addition to the interpretation that the word 'adversaries' is to be taken at face value, Alter suggests that 'adversaries' might mean 'themselves', i.e. they are their own worst enemies and have become a curse to themselves. Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 498.

identity reinforcement and the desire to construct mechanisms to 'go ahead' of the people- to identify them- and deter attacks. And when leadership seems far away or is deemed unreliable, the need for visible, permanent and immediately-located action is acute.

The complicity of the authority figure- Aaron- and of the people is an important point, helping to locate equally the demand for, and the enabling of, the idolatry. Interface communities demand the barriers; the authorities provide them. The complicity of the 'Aaron' allows for a more reasoned reflection on a way forward, beyond simply waiting for interface communities to 'feel secure enough' to explore other options for moving forward. Enda McDonagh alludes to this in his critique of the political authorities regarding the conflict:

> If the political power refuses sustained creative activity and
> depends on delegation to a repressive group or insists again that
> Law and Order is all that matters, then, of course, it will evoke a
> chaotic response... We have to get our governments, the people
> with the responsibility for creating an enabling society, to look to
> non-violent ways of creating the peace and not just keeping the lid
> on.[65]

In this reflection, 'Aaron' can embody two roles: the authorities who enable the barriers or the churches who have historically not addressed them. 'Aaron' representing the authority must be expected to do more than 'keeping the lid on'; Aaron representing the churches must help to reflect on what is being constructed in the place of the God of transformation. But what must either of these 'Aarons' do? What is their ideal role? A reflection of 1 Samuel 8:1-22 explores this further.

b. 1 Samuel 8:1-22

i. A Historical-Critical Approach

Historical-critical scholarship generally holds that I Samuel was composed by combining several works from several time periods when the larger work, now

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[65] Enda McDonagh, *Between Chaos and New Creation* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1986), 143-144.

known as the Deuteronomistic history[66] (i.e. the Former Prophets plus Deuteronomy) was being composed in the period c.630-540 BCE[67]

The biblical texts comprising I Samuel 8-12 have served as a singular example of historical-critical analysis. The reason for this is the conflicted narrative within the text concerning the institution of the Israeli monarchy; the text is somewhat unique in biblical literature for seemingly suggesting diametrically-opposed opinions within a few chapters, understandably leading to the conclusion that the text is a compilation. Historical-critical analysis has sought to propose arguments for how the text arrived at what is perceived to be such a confused state[68].

Historical/critical theological scholars have emphasised the place the text holds in accounting for the historical transition from the time of the Hebrew judges to the institution of the monarchy; the assumption has been that the various accounts are a conglomerate of textual arguments for and against the institutional monarchy in ancient Israel[69]. These scholars note the various editorial voices, the conflict between the two and the proximity of the arguments in the text; broadly, chapters 8 through 12 account for the origins of monarchy, with 8, 10:17-27 and 12 in the negative, 9:1-10:16 and 11 in the positive. The presupposition of the scholarship is that the opposing views derive from different sources, with the latter, positive voices being the older[70].

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[66] The Deuteronomist, or 'D', is one of the editorial sources referred to when assigning authorship to the Hebrew Biblical text. The work of 'D' is found in the book of Deuteronomy, the works referred to as the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and sections of Jeremiah. The adjectives 'Deuteronomic' and 'Deuteronomistic' are both used interchangeably. See Hermann Spieckermann, 'The Former Prophets: The Deuteronomistic History' in Leo G. Perdue, ed. *The Blackwell companion to the Hebrew Bible* (Maiden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell. 2001), 338.

[67] See Douglas A Knight, 'Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomists' in James Luther Mays, David L. Peterson and Kent Harold Richards, eds., *Old Testament Interpretation: Past Present and Future- Essays in Honour of Gene M. Tucker* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1995), 62 and Gwilym H Jones, '1 and 2 Samuel' in John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 197.

[68] Lyle Eslinger, 'Viewpoints and Point of View in I Samuel 8-12', *Journal for the Study of Old Testament Literature* 26 (1983) 61-76.

[69] See Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel: A Commentary*, originally published as *Die Samuelbücher* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, second revised edition 1960), translated from the German by J.S. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1964), 70-74.

[70] De Vaux acknowledges the two narratives, as does Rendtorff; Bright claims that, originally, there might have been three. The important point for Bright is that there is nothing to be gained from trying to use the narratives to reconstruct the narratives in a linier manner; for

Looking at the larger context, the two Books of Samuel are held to be a recording and exposition of the theological history of the nation of Israel. They are a part of a series of historical books (Joshua, Judges and both Books of Kings) which form a practical and literary affirmation and explanation of the Torah under the guidance of the Hebrew prophets[71]. Returning to the question of the monarchic question, historical-critical investigation continues to draw new interpretations from the text using the techniques pioneered throughout its historic usage. For example, another meaning proposed for the I Samuel 8 text is that it is a reading on the issue of obedience and where obedience is invested. This reading uses a technique of examining oft-repeated words and phrases.

Biblical scholar Dawn Sellars' investigation of I Samuel 13-15 serves as a good example of the technique. In seeking to re-evaluate the rule of Saul found in the text (traditionally interpreted almost uniformly as negative), she proposes a narrative structural framework for the text:

> [Preamble on the appointment of Samuel's sons as judges and their
>
> misconduct (w. 1-3)]
>
> A   The elders of Israel **demand** a king (w. 4-5)
>
> B   Divine instruction to **listen/obey** the voice of the people (v. 7)
>
> B   Divine instruction to **listen/obey** the voice of the people (v. 9)

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him the appearance of the two narratives points to an overarching theme that an institutionalised monarchy was always a source of tension for ancient Israel. Eichrodt and Rendtorff appear to agree; the 1 Samuel 8 text lays out both the religious voices that argue that the monarchy represents gross ingratitude to Yahweh, as well as a social case that the move will reduce freedom. The two critiques, according to De Vaux, are synonymous, as ancient Israeli society did not strictly delineate between civil and religious law. See Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, 94 and 154, Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, 29-30, John Bright, *A History of Israel,* 166-167, Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. 2*, originally published as *Theologie des Alten Testament, Tiel 2/3*, sixth edition (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz Verlag in association with Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, fifth edition 1964), translated from the German by John Baker (London: SCM Press, 1967), 319 and 350, Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (originally published Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1934), translated from the German by Peter R. Ackroyd (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 268-281 and A.D.H. Mayes, 'The Period of the Judges and the Rise of the Monarchy', in John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, eds., *Israelite and Judean History* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 295-295.

[71] Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan; UK edition, Paternoster Press, 1986), 67-71.

[Samuel's prophetic **'way of the king'** speech (w. 11-18)]

A   The **demand** is reiterated (v. 19)

B   Samuel hears the words of the people (v. 21)

B   Divine instruction to **listen/obey** the voice of the people (v.22)

Sellars notes that the Hebrew terminology for 'listen/obey' is used in I Samuel 12, 14 and 15 in relation to the voice of God; here, it is used in the context of the voice of the people. The inversion of the meaning is worthy of attention. The Hebrew terminology for 'demand' (the Hebrew verb 'to ask') infers a direct imperative rather than a simple request. By this analysis, she concludes that the text is carefully pointing to the people as the impetus for the monarchy. Lastly, there is the phrase 'the way of the king' and, in that section, the repetition of the verb 'to take', driving home Samuel's opinion that a king will be a source of oppression.

This investigation of repetition within the text undergirds Sellars' argument that the purpose and the meaning of the text is to suggest that Saul, contrary to Samuel's prophetic expectations, succeeds in rising to the challenge of becoming the obedient servant of the people, in line with their demands[72].

However, Eslinger critiques historical-criticism for an approach that, in his estimation, expends too much effort in concentrating only on the pro- and anti-monarchic question; any new ideas as to authorship or editorial voice are simply subsumed into the ever-expanding mass of authorship within the two large groupings:

> The historical-critical net is woven to catch big fish, the pro- and anti-monarchic authors (or sources, traditions, tradents and redactors). It allows the smaller fry, and their separate voices to slip through, untouched... It is very easy to predict the historical-critical response... we need a net with a finer mesh... we need only to refine our literary dissection to obtain a truer picture of the compositional history[73].

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[72] Dawn Maria Sellars, 'An Obedient Servant? The Reign of King Saul (I Samuel 13-15) Reassessed', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* Vol. 35.3 (2011): 317-338.
[73] Lyle Eslinger, 'Viewpoints and Point of View in I Samuel 8-12', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 26 (1983) 61-76.

Eslinger posits a theory of a separate editorial voice: the omniscient narrator who, he suggests, appears to maintain 'a steadfast neutrality toward the subject of monarchy. Only the characters are given to extreme expressions of favour towards the idea or rejection of it'. The narrator, Eslinger contends, allows for a synthesis to be extrapolated, allowing the text to be viewed in a more balanced fashion, rather than as a confused conglomerate of opposing opinions[74].

ii. A Latin American Liberation Theology Approach

As mentioned earlier, Latin American liberation theology drew direct parallels between the tendency for idolatry and that towards monarchy in the biblical text, seeing both as rejections of Yahweh and the embrace of systems of oppression. The critiques mentioned in chapter 4, then, in many ways parallel each other. Pablo Richard notes:

> The biblical authors always maintained an attitude of distrust and rejection *vis a vis* the institution of monarchy... political power generated injustice and oppression of the weak, and idolatrous practices. Criticism of the oppressive and idolatrous monarchy was always made from the perspective of the exodus, in that the superiority of Yahweh lay in his role as a liberator.[75]

Likewise, Elsa Tamez concludes:

> the biblical narratives tell us that after the Hebrews had been freed from the yoke of Egyptian rule, they gradually established themselves as an ever more powerful nation and finally chose monarchical rule. Israel then became an oppressor... On the one hand, it expanded its domain at the cost of the poorer and weaker peoples and exacted tribute from them. On the other, the rulers

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[74] Eslinger, 'Viewpoints and Point of View in I Samuel 8-12', 61-76.

[75] Pablo Richard, 'Biblical Theology of Confrontation with Idols', in *The Idols of Death and the God of Life*, originally published as *los ídolos de la oppression y la búsqueda del Dios liberador* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1980), translated from the Spanish by Barbara E. Campbell and Bonnie Shepard (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 10.

and influential groups within Israel became major oppressors of their own country and impoverished the lowly of the nation.[76]

The I Samuel 8 text, then, is an archetypal text in this interpretation, serving, with others, to reinforce the critique.

iii. A Transformational Approach- 'You will solemnly warn them and show them...'

A transformational reading, like the liberation reflection, again draws similarities between idolatry and the monarchy in the text, but with a different emphasis. The intentions, actions and responsibilities of those understood to be in a place of authority come to the fore. In both cases, the current leadership is seen as unreliable by the people; Samuel is old and those in line to succeed him are seen as corrupt[77]. There is a desire to be like the nations around them (8:5). There is also the same theme of security and identity reinforcement and the desire for someone or something to 'go out before us' (8:20). Finally, there is the clear implication in the text that the two demands are explicit rejections of Yahweh (8:8: 'from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you').

The two accounts deviate from each other in regards to the actions of the principle authority figures, Aaron and Samuel. Aaron's emotions at the demands are unrecorded in the text- though the rabbinic tradition speculates- but also not recorded is any sense that he warned the people of the consequences of the demands. In the 1 Samuel text, Samuel does so and in detail. Crucially, the consequences of monarchy are implied to be both spiritual and temporal. Spiritually, the demand is an affront to Yahweh. Temporally, the consequences were military,

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[76] Elsa Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed*, originally published as *La opresión en la teología bíblica* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1979), translated from the Spanish by Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 20.

[77] One line of rabbinic thinking does hold that Joel and Abijah did not sin; they simply didn't perform their duties as Samuel had done. Samuel travelled throughout the country to adjudicate; by settling their courts in Beer-sheba, sheriffs and scribes, had to be employed to summon the litigants to trial, thus increasing their incomes. This would have made seeking justice more inconveniencing and expensive for the people. This rather delicate distinction noted, the text does strongly intimate that the practices of Joel and Abijah were motivated by profit, thereby aggrieving the people. See the Rashi commentaries, available at: http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15837/showrashi/true, internet, accessed 21 April 2012.

economic and legal in nature: the children of the people will be forced into conscription and servitude; the king will confiscate land for himself; and some of the people themselves will be enslaved (I Sam. 8:11-17). At that point, Samuel warns, the people will 'cry out because of your king, but the Lord will not answer you on that day (8:18).'

Read in this way, Samuel's litany of consequences serves as a critical reflection. This reading of the text credits Samuel with offering a critical reflection on the demands. His biases might indeed be evident and his protestations are ultimately in vain, but he is at least endeavouring to make clear what he believes the consequences will be[78].

The reflection on 'solemnly warning' that we can take from this text is threefold: first, that authority structures unwilling or unable to communicate the consequences of decisions can be seen, like Aaron in Exodus 32, as an enabler of idolatry. It is the critical reflection that Samuel offers the people in the face of their demands for an idolatrous monarchy that the context of separation barriers in Belfast has historically lacked. While the consultation over the barriers has increased over time, postulating the possible consequences of them, both for the residents closest to them and the city as a whole, has not been extensive.

Secondly, this type of reflection has consequences for the authorities as well. Samuel would obviously have to reflect on how his actions- or the actions of his successors- have initiated the demand for an idolatrous monarchy in the first place. Nevertheless, critical reflection initiated as part of a process can be seen as beneficial even when uncomfortable. In the context of the separation barriers, the correlations between the social conditions at interfaces and the will and/or ability of the authorities to deal comprehensively with sectarian disorder and petty crime in any

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[78] Alter's commentary on the text proposes that Samuel was opposed to the idea of monarchy because of his attachment to the old system of the *ad hoc* judicial/political figure which he embodied. His antimonarchical rhetoric is pointed. Even when the text says that Yahweh tells him to acquiesce to their demands, he obfuscates, sending the people to their homes. See Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1999), 41-45.

other way but perpetuating a publicly-funded policy of physically segregating communities are key points of reflection[79].

c. Genesis 11:1-9

i. A Historical-Critical Approach

Historical-critical scholarship has generally approached Genesis as a collection of works compiled over several centuries. Though ancient tradition credits Moses with authorship of the text, most scholarship from the 12th century CE onward has rejected the notion, leading to closer scrutiny through the use of literary criticism. Questions of its date and authorship are closely tied to its progressive change in tone and form, and even though the book is a collection of works, it has also been noted to have a level of thematic coherence despite not being a unitary piece[80]. As with the rest of the Pentateuch,, historical-criticism now holds Genesis to be a composite of 'J' and 'E' documents compiled by 'P' in the post-exilic period[81]. Regardless of the lack of a conventionally-understood 'single' author, Fox concludes that Genesis is consciously constructed around specific themes that point to the purpose and meaning in the mind of the compilers. Scholars are in agreement that Genesis 11 is an early 'J' document due to the formatting of the genealogical information. Beyond this, there is conjecture as to the meaning and purpose of the text. It is conjectured that it might have served to explain a ruined or never-finished ziggurat, laying responsibility on a divine intervention. In any case, the subject of human arrogance is usually seen as a primary intention of the text[82].

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[79] Chris O'Halloran, co-ordinator of the Belfast Interface Project, interviewed by Sean O'Hagen for the 22 January 2012 issue of the *Guardian*, cautioned that the responsibility for funding reconciliation work in Belfast has been disproportionly borne by bodies outside Northern Ireland: 'we have a situation where 80% of the funding for community-relations-based project in Belfast comes from sources outside government and the big funding projects from Europe and America that followed the ceasefires are now all into their exit strategies. There is a real danger that Belfast will sleepwalk into a twin-speed city marked by areas of affluence and areas of great deprivation.' Gráinne Kelly's research highlighted this as well, calling for increased priority over a five-year period to be given to 'economic and social regeneration and investment' in an effort to 'enhance opportunities for sharing'; she further noted that such prioritising would entail embracing a 'language of profound change' from political representatives. See Gráinne Kelly, 'Progressing Good Relations and Reconciliation', 104, 107-108.

[80] Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 11.

[81] See Schmidt, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 46-61 and Von Rad, *Genesis*, 23-27.

[82] *The Interpreter's Bible, Vol 1* (New York and Nashville, 1952), 563.

A number of structural characteristics have been noted by scholars. Alter divides Genesis into two large units: the Primeval History (chaps. 1-11) and the Patriarchal Tales (chaps. 12-50). As the former moves to the latter, the style moves from the more overarching, legendary and mythic themes of origins to the more human and personal[83]. The earlier chapters are more episodic; the changes in character and time more fragmented and abrupt; the tone of each story is more general, with less exploration of the characters involved, with each story divided by genealogies, giving a stylistic structure emphasising etiological events being accounted for and the passage of time acknowledged[84].

Fox outlines a structure of Genesis in four parts, with the primeval accounts (chaps. 1-11) being the first, The Abrahamic saga (12-25:18) broadly being the second, The Jacob saga (25:19-ch.36) the third and the Joseph saga (chaps. 37-50) the fourth. He also identifies a repeated thematic outline more or less repeated five times throughout Genesis involving a chosen figure; sibling rivalry; family continuity threatened, ending in a death; human survival threatened; and an ending of a covenantal line or in a location away from Israel. Despite this archetypal style, particularly of the earlier 'Primeval' section, Genesis differs from other, near-Eastern mythic literature by following a standard storyline based around a central, heroic figure engaging in epic duels with gods and monsters that ultimately represent creation and the struggle of life against death. This variance in style and form points to Genesis' unique understanding of its purpose and meaning.

The central protagonist in Genesis is God, and the central purpose and meaning of the book is God's relationship with his people. Throughout the text, God is intimately involved in the people's origins and their continuity. The overall continuity, evidenced through the genealogical 'begettings' (Heb. *toledot,* appearing eleven times) shows God's ultimate control of history. The people's continuity is not the result of trickery or magic, but rather comes through God's care and his justice[85]. However, it is also possible to see the relationship between God and humanity

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[83] See Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1901), 13-14 and Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 13-14.

[84] See Robert E. Cohn, 'Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective in Genesis', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 25 (1983), 3-16.

[85] See Robert Davidson, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary: Genesis 1-11* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 8-9 and Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 3-5.

change as Genesis progresses. Cohn notes that even though later redactors might have re-worked earlier material to make it more cohesive with latter sections, they did not. Instead, there seems to be a four- or five- stage development of divine presence and human character. The divine-human relationship begins in a mythic 'never never land' of Eden and ends in exile in Egypt[86]. Yet regardless of this tension, the origins of the relationship, its continuity and the place of God as the divine guide of humanity remain the central concerns of Genesis.

The historical/critical evaluation specifically of Genesis 11 emphasises the text as primeval history from the biblical perspective and therefore emphasises locating and harmonising the biblical account with other ancient historical accounts of the building of the city of Babylon and also as biblical evidence of the temple ziggurat of that city[87]. Also emphasised are the etiological aspects of the text regarding humanity's variety of languages, ethnicities and the disorder of the international world. Thematically, humanity's sinful arrogance, hubristic overreaching and his subsequent humbling punishment by God form the most common exegesis[88].

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[86] Cohn, 'Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective in Genesis', 3-16.

[87] Fohrer sees the text as a transformed myth, one of the geographical sagas there to explain the origin of Babylon and its name. Von Rad is likewise etiological, concerning itself with rooting human cultural history and the phenomenon of different languages into the concrete reality of the city of Babylon, here serving as the seat of all human culture. For this reason, he surmises that the character of Yahweh was most likely a late addition to the narrative, rooting the cultural history into the broader Hebrew understanding of morality. See Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* a translation of Ernst Sellin's *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, tenth edition, revised and rewritten by Georg Foher (Heidelberg: Quell & Meyer, 1965, translated from the German by David Green (London: SPCK, 1970), 90 and Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis,* originally published as *Das erste Buch Mose, Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1956), t Translated from the German by John H. Marks (London: SCM Press, 1961), 143-148.

[88] De Vaux's assessment is that the biblical author recounts the episode as 'divine chastisement of men whose pride had sought to climb to heaven.' Waltke euphemistically refers to 'Babel's curse'. House draws similarities between the confusion and scattering of Gen. 11 and the accounts of the flood, both of which represent God's punishment. Routledge refers to the tower builders' 'rebellion against God', and Brueggemann likewise interprets the protagonists' 'rejection of the status of covenanted, blessed, promised subjects of Yahweh'. Ronald De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, 282, Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 12, Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter Varsity Press, 1998), 59, Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 115 and Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 494.

ii. A Latin American Liberation Theology Approach

In Ceresko's reading of Genesis, he stresses the role that the text plays in
constructing a retroactive social history for the Jewish people:

> Genesis is not the record of individuals and groups who took part
> in the great power struggles of the day and who were integral
> members of the dominant social, economic, and political
> structures. Instead, it records the memories and recollections of
> various groups who for the most part stood *outside* of these
> structures, on the margins. These groups, which eventually came
> together to create Israel... attempted by combining their individual
> stories into a single to reinforce their newly-won unity as a
> people... Thus the history we find (in Genesis) is indeed political
> (or ideological) in one sense... it was recorded not only to record
> the past but to play a definite social and political role in the
> present.[89]

What can be seen is that Ceresko's liberation perspective stresses the Jewish
people's historical position as a marginal people who, through solidarity, seek to
move to a more historically-central role. The liberation perspective emphasises the
role the biblical text itself plays in that process.

However, Gutiérrez' engagement with the book of Genesis is indicative of Latin
American liberation theology's engagement with the book generally. Keeping with his
overall theological theme of God's action in history and the interrelationship of
history and salvation, Gutiérrez emphasised God's action at creation (Genesis 1-3)
and the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12) representing the creation of God's people.
By extension, the liberation from Egypt in Exodus is also understood as the creation
of God's people, and the liberation from Babylon recounted in Isaiah as well[90].
However, in keeping with liberation theology's *modus operendi* being broadly
hermeneutical rather than exegetical, individual episodic accounts such as the city
and the tower of Gen. 11 do not play a prominent role in its theological narrative.

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[89] Ceresko, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 38-39.
[90] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation,* 86-91.

iii. A Transformational Approach- 'Let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered...'

Dutch scholar Ellen Van Wolde does engage with the Genesis 11 account in a way that proposes a shift in tone and emphasis in the reading of the text from that of the historical/critical. She points out that, strictly speaking, the humans' desire to make a name for themselves is not judged to be a competition with God in the text. Neither is there any intimation that the humans' ambition is to be understood as an action against God. Rather, it was the desire to stay together in one location that God appears to deem problematic. God had commanded humanity to be fruitful and multiply, to 'fill the earth'; the building of the city and the tower was not a sin for which the confusion and scattering are punishments; dispersal is simply essential for the plans of God, which is for humanity to multiply and fill the earth. God acts to propel this[91].

This reading compliments an interpretation that sees idolatry at play in the account, though that has not been the traditional reading. It speaks to humanity's proclivity toward idolatry, the constant struggle with the desire to build 'gods'. It speaks to an interpretation that sin can, and often does, arise from a distortion of healthy needs and ambitions that deviate from a divine plan. A transformational reading of Genesis 11:1-9 seeks to reflect on the role of idolatry as reflected upon in the other passages and examine this text in a similar light. While the Genesis text is not often associated with the concept of idolatry, this reading looks at it as an example of the relationship between the building of a structure and the relationship with the divine. In it, the community seeks exclusive security, solidarity and truth outside of the divine imperative. The divine intervenes, forcing the community to imagine their desires with more complexity than they initially desired. Though the city and the tower are not explicitly referred to in the text as idols, they are in many ways performing the same function.

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[91] Ellen van Wolde, 'Facing the Earth: Primaeval History in a New Perspective', in Philip R. Davies and David J.A. Clines, eds. *The World of Genesis: Persons, Places Perspectives, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series 257 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 41-45.

The people say, 'Come, let us build...' echoing Yahweh in the Eden account ('let us make...' Gen. 1:26). As in the traditional understanding of idolatry, there is a blurring of the distinction between the creator and the creation and what humans are capable of doing apart from God.

Furthermore, the text informs us that 'the whole earth had one language and the same words.' There was a common understanding amongst all where one thing ended and another began; and all had the same scheme, the same plan of action[92]. This intrinsic commonality, as reflected upon by Ellul, gave them the capability of 'creating a unique truth, believed by all, independent of God'[93].

The plan involves constructing a common cause, 'a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens'. But underlying this endeavour is a crude attempt to re-make humanity. As Yahweh created the heavens, so shall their creation reach to the heavens. The traditional understanding of idolatry is implicit; the distinction between the creation and the creator is blurred or overstepped.

But the intentions are made clearer with the declaration of what the builders hope to accomplish: 'let us make a name for ourselves'. Again, the 'Let us make' echoes Yahweh, but the desire to 'make a name for ourselves' usurps the role of Yahweh as well. It is Yahweh who names humankind; now humankind declares that they will name themselves[94]. Just as the Israelites seek the name of Yahweh (Ex. 3:13) to possess his identity and therefore have a measure of control over him (which culminates in the calf of Exodus 32), so the builders will write their own identity; give

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[92] 'Language' (שָׂפָה, *śāp̄â*) literally means 'lip', which here is a metaphor for language or speech; the analogous meaning is a natural boundary, a border, a margin. The same word is used in Gen. 22:17 for 'seashore' and Gen. 41:3 and 17 for 'bank', as in the bank of the Nile. (דָּבָר, *dābār*)' means 'cause' or 'matter'. Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[93] Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 19.

[94] Ellul's analysis and critique of technology was given theological expression in his examination of the place of the city in the biblical text, which he reasoned intrinsically represented humankind's ultimate rejection and separation from God. In his analysis of the Babel account, he draws a distinction between simply naming oneself- 'giving' oneself a name; what is implied in the text by 'making' a name is to make oneself independent, to be definitively separated from God. That is what the building is an attempt to make the builders. See Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, 16.

themselves a name to have power over themselves[95]. Their destiny will be their own. The builders' city and tower are their creation, their power base from which they will make their name; their identity and their works will endure[96]. This then reveals their fear: '...otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth (11:4).' Without their self-made identity, they would be dispersed, destroyed[97].

As in Exodus 32, their efforts are in vain and counterproductive; they are scattered; their identity is not preserved; their intrinsic commonality must be abandoned. Even more critically, the people lose their 'one language', their common understanding. Though the text is commonly interpreted in the historical-critical approach etiologically- an explanation of the appearance of different languages-the text specifically says that their language was 'confused'; they will no longer be able to understand what others are speaking; 'they cannot really communicate even when they speak the same language and use the same words'[98].

In relation to theological reflection in the context of Belfast, this text can serve as a biblical reflection on the issues involving identity reinforcement, specifically on the working-class Loyalist communities in Belfast. The subject was commented upon by the Presbyterian minister in North Belfast interviewed as part of this research. When asked to comment on the idea of the barriers being a manifestation of idolatry, he engaged with the idea in a thought-provoking way:

> Let me approach this from a Loyalist perspective... I think that the
> idol that the loyalists have erected, that they are trying to build, is
> a new Loyalist identity, given that the former one of loyalty to the
> British crown and support from the British government is no

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[95] שֵׁם (*šēm*) The term 'name' used here is the term used in Gen. 2:19-20 for man's giving names to the animals, and to the woman in Gen. 3:20. It is what Moses worries the Hebrews will demand of him in relation to Yahweh ('they will ask me, "what is his name?"'; Ex. 3:13), what Yahweh commands not to be misused ('you shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your Lord'; Ex. 20:7) and, specifically prescient to the discussion of idolatry, what the Hebrews are not to invoke of other gods ('do not mention the name of any other god. Let none ever be heard from your lips'; Ex. 23:13). Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.
[96] See Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 49.
[97] 'scattered' here is פּוּץ (*pûṣ*), to dash in pieces, literally or figuratively (especially to disperse). The same term is used extensively in the biblical text, with often with the allusion to the destruction of enemies (Num. 10:35; 2 Sam. 22:15) or the tragic dissolution of the community (Deut. 4:27; 2 Chron. 16:18). Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.
[98] Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, 18-19.

longer in place. So the walls, then, become markers of the territory in which the new identity is to be built. So it's not the walls *themselves* that are the idol, but they provide theoretically or conceptually the physical and social space in which a new idol can be built... the walls themselves provide the special security for a loyalist 'god', who actually doesn't exist at the moment (*Presbyterian, North Belfast*).

Thus, in the face of an historical identity that is perceived as progressively weakening, the community begins the process of 'making a name' for themselves- identity, independence, self-determination. The fear of being scattered- dispersed and dissolved- is ever-present in the perceived reality of Nationalist/Catholic encroachment on territory understood to be Loyalist/Protestant. Furthermore, Ellul's 'unique truth, believed by all, independent of God' can be interpreted here as the manifestation of the role of communal historical narrative with no place for, or input from, the 'other' community. As sociologist and lecturer at the Irish School of Ecumenics Gladys Ganiel reflects:

> Though this is changing somewhat, most people of my generation
> and older never learned Irish history in school, or if they did, it
> avoided difficult issues around violence. The result has been that
> many people in Northern Ireland hold mythologised and
> incomplete ideas about what happened in the past. Further, they
> have not been introduced to the idea of history as an ongoing
> process of interpretation that takes on board differing
> perspectives. Rather, they tend to see history as a chronicle of
> supposedly 'hard facts' that can be discovered by 'objective'
> scholars.[99]

A separation barrier can be seen as a physical manifestation of this mythologised and incomplete history; it *solidifies* the truth, history, narrative and name of the community regarding itself and the 'other' community; 'we have named ourselves

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[99] Gladys Ganiel, 'Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week? Jan Robert Schulz on the Easter Rising in Northern Irish History Textbooks', at http://www.gladysganiel.com/ni-politics/who-fears-to-speak-of-easter-week-jan-robert-schulz-on-the-easter-rising-in-northern-irish-history-textbooks/, internet, accessed 24 April 2012.

and we are who we are'; 'they are who they are'; 'they are threatening'; 'we are threatened'; 'it is probably prudent to leave the situation as it is.' This 'naming' gives power to one's own community over itself and, by extension, 'names' the 'other' community wholly negatively ('they are a threat'), which is an exertion of power over them in its own right. The barrier is the language confused, the tower unfinished; Ellul's 'one truth, believed by all' is gone; 'truth' will now be only found with the interaction with the 'other's' truth and the quest for a shared understanding: a shared vision of interdependence, acknowledging and dealing with the past, changes in attitudes[100].

The Exodus 32 text is prescient as well. The minister alludes to the Loyalist/Protestant community experiencing a perceived absence of political leadership. The perceived absence of God manifests itself in an Ulster Protestant attachment to the institution of the British monarch as a solid governor of the established church, along with a strong Protestant church and a Protestant/Christian public cultural ethos. The felt absence of political leadership is coupled with feelings of cultural resentment at the rise of Irish Nationalism/Republicanism at the supposed expense of their own culture and a political resentment at mainstream Unionist parties' supposed acquiescence to these developments. Additionally, the perception of a lack of a peace dividend for Loyalist communities leads to a crisis of confidence, fear and a pronounced feeling of a lack of security. New secure foundations must be found; the former have either vanished or proven unreliable:

> Historically, loyalty to the British crown has been accompanied by
> the support of the British government. Now that the support of
> the British government is minimal politically, with devolution
> taking over across the UK, the only thing that is left is to be loyal to
> the Protestant throne. If that is now under threat, what are we
> loyal to[101]? Who are we loyal to? What does 'Loyalism' look like

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[100] See Hamber and Kelly, *A Place for Reconciliation? Conflict and Locality in Northern Ireland.* Democratic Dialogue Report 18. Belfast, September 2005, 49.

[101] The minister was alluding to media reports at the time that the leaders of the 16 Commonwealth countries where the Queen is head of state unanimously approved changes in the succession of the British monarchy that included the right of a first-born daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to be able to take precedence over younger brothers and the ban on the monarch being married to a Roman Catholic being lifted. While these changes were seen as relatively routine in most of the UK and the Commonwealth, they were viewed

into the future? And the answer is that nobody has the faintest idea (*Presbyterian, North Belfast*).

The minister intimates that this search for a new Loyalist identity is a manifestation of, at best, a perceived absence of God and, at worst, rejection of God:

> The hymn 'In Christ Alone my Hope is Found'... Therein lies the profound theological and biblical and Christian dilemma: where do 'Prods'[102] find their hope? ... if you're a Loyalist, and you're not a Christian in the believing sense, 'in- question mark- my hope is found'... 'in Unionist politics my hope is found'; 'in keeping Sinn Féin down my hope is found'; 'in keeping the British throne Protestant (whatever that means) my hope is found'. The second word in that hymn line is where the gap is. And the walls protect the space for the community to try to figure out what the second word of their secular hymn is... The walls provide the security, on the loyalist side, for a community who have no 'saviour' politically; who see 'the devil' taking over in terms of the Republican agenda, and therefore there is no imperative to do anything about them (*Presbyterian, North Belfast*).

These metaphors and analogies can only be taken so far. Fine complexities can be seen regarding the place of religion, church attendance and spiritual belief in the Loyalist community[103]. What is being proposed is a theological discussion, and many

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with considerable alarm in certain sections of the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community of Northern Ireland who give central importance to the Protestant ethos of the British monarchy. Wallace Thompson, a special advisor to Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) deputy leader Nigel Dodds told the *Belfast News Letter* on 31 October 2011: 'We are in danger of moving towards that full-blown repeal of the Act of Settlement and the overthrowing of the Protestant basis of the monarchy. I think it would be a very serious development for the United Kingdom. My loyalty to the throne is based on the monarchy being Protestant, so from a personal point of view if that were to happen then my loyalty to the monarchy would end... the Roman Catholic influence in the UK is a negative and still a potently dangerous force'.

[102] 'Prod' is an informal term in Northern Ireland for 'Protestant'. The meaning of the term embraces a spectrum from the relatively benign and jocular use employed here through to the more dismissive or disparaging, depending on the user and the context in which it is used. It does not, however, implicitly carry the same level of offence as does the use of the term 'taig' for 'Catholic'.

[103] Protestant churches in Belfast, and particularly those in working-class Loyalist areas, have seen a dramatic drop in attendance over several decades, as congregations have aged and

of the desires and urges under discussion would be deeply unconscious and unquantifiable. That said, this minister engaged with the idea of reflecting on his local reality through the lens of idolatry, the only one of the interviewees to engage thus[104].

He sees the idolatry in the search for a 'new Loyalist identity'; the barriers then serve as 'a marker of the territory in which the new identity is to be built'. Therefore, the walls are seen as purely functional, much as we have seen in Liechty and Clegg's analysis and elsewhere. However, it can still be argued that the barriers are still part of the idolatry. As we have seen, the Hebrew biblical understanding of idolatry would not have been one of rejecting one brand of monotheism for another; ancient Near Eastern religions were polytheistic[105]. Idolatry, for the Hebrews, was worshipping the gods of the other nations, either exclusively or- as was more likely common- alongside Yahweh. In either case, the biblical text, through the Hebrew prophets, condemns this as a turning away from Yahweh.

In light of this fact, the separation barriers can be interpreted as one idol among many, one element of a pantheon; the 'god' of protection, security and vigilance; in league with the 'god' of identity, to the point of even being 'birthed' by it, 'emerging' from it.

d. Leviticus 18:21

i. A Historical-Critical Approach

Historical-critical investigation places the authorship of Leviticus squarely in the Priestly school, laying out in detail the Hebrew laws dealing primarily with cultic

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young singles and families have stayed away. The violence of the Troubles and social trends of materialism and secularisation have also played significant roles. See Eoin G Cassidy, Donal McKeown and John Morrow, *Belfast: Faith in the City* (Dublin: Vertitas, 2001) and Peter McNamee and Tom Lovett, *Working-Class Community in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Ulster People's College, 1987), Philip Orr, New Loyalties: Christian Faith and the Protestant Working Class (Belfast: Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, 2008) and Alan Megahey, *The Irish Protestant Churches in the Twentieth Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Macmillan Press, 2000).

[104] While several other clergy, when given a broad outline of the idea and asked to comment, expressed interest and general affirmation, the Presbyterian minister discussed here was the only one to actively engage in a discussion, and to contribute ideas to it.

[105] See Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958) and Pierre Grimal, ed., *Larousse World Mythology* (London: Hamlyn, 1965).

ritual, social and religious cleanliness, sexuality, diet and a variety of economic and social conventions. Scholarly consensus dates the text to the 6th century BCE, following the fall of Judea in 586 BCE. This dating corresponds with the view held regarding the purpose of the books involving collating and remembering the ritual conduct for the Temple in Jerusalem, then recently demolished, 'as a fact of the imagination and a blueprint for future restoration'[106].

In terms of style and form, Leviticus is located in the middle of the Pentateuch and is the only book that describes no movement of the people; the setting is entirely at Sinai. Thus, geographically and structurally, Leviticus is the centre of the Torah documents[107]. Coggins understands the Hebrew Scriptures to be a series of three concentric circles: the outermost circle consists of the 'Writings' (*Ketubim*) (Psalms, Job, the Wisdom literature, etc.); the next-innermost is the Prophets (*Nebiim*); at the centre is the 'five-fifths' of the Law, the Pentateuch, considered the most central and holy[108]. This structure points to the importance of Leviticus in the Jewish religion.

Structure and placement of the text are also noted by Mary Douglas, who assigns a three-form structure to Leviticus corresponding to a Hebrew cosmology of Sinai and the greater cosmos, the Tabernacle and, between these two, the actual sacrificial animal, the description and preparation of which are of primary importance in the Leviticus text. This in some ways corresponds with her view of the sin of idolatry being specifically related to the physical act of construction; the physical elements of the animal and the physical act of killing the animal- rather than ideology or conceptualisms- are of primary importance[109].

The content of Leviticus points to its purpose and meaning. As noted, Alter points to the collating and remembering of Temple practice in the midst of exile as a key purpose of the book. Historical-critical scholarship points to the content of the book as defining this through a focus on purity and separateness in almost every sphere of communal life:

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[106] See Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, 144-146, Schmidt, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 47-57 and Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 540.
[107] Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 498-499.
[108] Richard Coggins, *Introducing the Old Testament* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3.
[109] Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature,* 15-40.

> Pollution restrictions covered a wide area of social life, controlling
> the food people ate; their sexual behaviour and contact with
> sexual fluids; their defecation; and their contact with birth, disease
> and death. Pollution was contagious and brought people into real
> danger, in a ritual or mystical sense, resulting perhaps in
> misfortune, sickness and even death.[110]

The purpose of Leviticus, then, is to draw distinctions and to do it in physical reality. Leviticus, again, is not concerned with belief as much as practice; it is a book of blood, semen, flesh, intercourse, wounds and infections, issues that were matters of great care in the ancient world:

> ... it is no surprise that (in Duet. 30:15-20)Moses implores the
> people to 'choose life' rather than 'death' engendered by
> improper behaviour by both priests and commoners.[111]

In regard to child sacrifice mentioned in chaps. 18 and 20, much of the historical/critical reading emphasises the question of the unexpected placement of this, an injunction against child sacrifice in a long list of sexual offences, rather than the injunction itself[112]. Some scholars explain the placement among the sexual offences through a commonly-understood misuse of 'seed', i.e. children are 'offspring', the product of the sexual act, therefore their sacrifice and the misuse of sexual relations are inter-related[113]. But though most of this discipline focuses on these themes, there

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[110] Stephen F. Bigger, 'The Family Laws of Leviticus 18 in their Setting', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98/2 (1979) 187-203.

[111] Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*, 499.

[112] For example, Forher focuses on the historical order of the production of the text, i.e. the age of particular passages and the construction of the full text. The actual injunction is not commented upon. As mentioned earlier, De Vaux contributes considerably to the understanding of human sacrifice in ancient Israel for the standpoint of discussing both its prevalence and place in cultic worship, either as an infrequent anomaly or common trait. See Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 101, De Vaux, Roland and *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, 444-446.

[113] See Steven F. Bigger, 'The Family Laws of Leviticus 18 in Their Setting', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (Jun., 1979), pp. 187-203.

is also emphasis given to the overarching importance of the ethical convictions underlying the laws given[114].

Biggers and Fox, on the other hand, are more straight-forward. For them, the issue of child sacrifice, and the religious systems that encouraged it, is simply another practice that needed to be proscribed, for the obvious reason that it too led to death. The dating of Leviticus to the postexilic period is evidence that the practice of child sacrifice was a pressing question in the latter days of the Judean Kingdom[115], pressing enough to include in the midst of all the other matters of purity and separateness.

The practice of idolatry in the ancient Near East was closely related to the idea of human sacrifice, specifically that of children. The regional cult of child sacrifice mentioned in the biblical text most prevalently is that of a chthonic deity named Moloch (various English spellings derived from the Semitic root מלך *m-l-k*, meaning 'king'[116]), but also as a practice typical of Canaanite worship in general. Modern rabbinic scholarship is divided as to whether the 'sacrificing' of children was symbolic or actual; it is clear that a significant portion of the Hebrew population would have considered the actual practice of killing a child an acceptable manifestation of the worship of Yahweh[117]. It would appear that this was at least common enough that the Hebrew prophets saw the need to continually stress Yahweh's abhorrence of it (such as the text of Jeremiah 19:5, which has Yahweh describe child sacrifice as 'a

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[114] Eichrodt, for example, notes that the passage overall, particularly the strict marriage laws, points to the importance of safeguarding such an important aspect of communal life. See Walther Eichrodt. *Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. 1*, 337.

[115] Bigger, 'The Family Laws of Leviticus 18 in their Setting', 191. See also W.F Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1956 (162-164).

[116] Sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

[117] Much of this arises from the interpretation of the Mosaic Law recorded in Exodus 22:28-29: '...You will give (*nātan*; sometimes translated *heˇ ĕbîr*; 'hand over') me the first-born of your children. You will do the same with your flocks and herds.' De Vaux argues that it is absurd to believe that there could have been an understanding that this constituted a constant general law, since first-born would have been equally understood to be 'the hope of the race'. According to him and a majority of scholars, there would have been an understanding that the 'giving' of the child and the 'giving' of the livestock were different transactions, the latter sacrificed, the former redeemed *through* the sacrifice. Levinson, however, argues that the practice of actually sacrificing children was at least prevalent enough to warrant continual condemnation by the prophets of the late 7th-early 6th centuries BCE. See Ronald de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1964), 71. And Jon D. Levinson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 4. Hebrew terminology sourced using Accordance 8.4 Biblical Lexicon Programme.

thing I never ordered, never mentioned, that had never entered my thoughts'). For the prophets, it was not simply the *practice* that was abhorrent, but the intimation that Yahweh desired it[118].

This point is accentuated in the Hebrew Midrash[119], which relates that when the Hebrew people's slavery was at its worst, the Egyptians forced upon the Israelites a daily quota of bricks (Ex. 5:6-9). If the Israelites failed to fill the quota, their children were killed in front of them and their bodies were mixed into the brick mortar:

> Look what you (Moses) have done to us by your meddling. Not only have you failed in your efforts to redeem us, you have actually caused the labour decrees to be intensified. Look! Do you smell the odour of death? The wounds in our flesh are beginning to fester! And the children! Oh, the poor children plastered into the wall! Their pitiful little bodies are decomposing and causing the unbearable stench.[120]

> This was meant as an "incentive" for the *Yisraelim* to complete their daily quotas. If a man did not make his quota of bricks on a given day, he was given a ghastly choice: Either he or his child would have to be placed in the structure to make up for the missing bricks. Such punishment would be exacted even if one missed his quota by a single brick. Ten thousand infants were drowned as a result of Pharaoh's decree. Some say that as many as 600,000 were killed... Many *Yisraelim* were mortared into the walls

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[118] Levinson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son,* 4-5.

[119] The Midrash (from the Hebrew מדרש; plural *midrashim*, 'story' from 'to investigate' or 'study') is a homiletic method of biblical exegesis and commentary found within Judaism. The term also refers to the whole compilation of homiletic teachings on the Bible. *Midrash* is a way of interpreting biblical stories that goes beyond simple distillation of religious, legal or moral teachings. It would be understood to fill in many gaps left in the biblical narrative regarding events and personalities that are only hinted at. See Rabbi Wayne Dosick, *Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition and Practice* (San Francisco and New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 1995), Jacob Neusner, Jacob and Alan J. Avery-Pick, eds., *The Blackwell Reader in Judaism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001) and Isidore Epstein, *Judaism* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex and Baltimore MD: Pelican, 1959).

[120] Yosef Deutsch, *Let My Nation Go: The Story of the Exodus of the Jewish Nation from Egyptian Bondage: A Compilation of Talmudic and Midrashic Sources* (Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 1998), 164-165.

of the structures while still alive. They screamed and begged for mercy, but no one would take pity on them.[121]

These passages are indicative that, in the historical/religious narrative of the Jewish people, Pharaoh's murder of their children was a specific and strategic manifestation of their slavery in Egypt[122]. Therefore, to the prophets, to imply that it was Yahweh- the very one who liberated them from Egypt, who announced to Moses having 'seen the misery of my people in Egypt' and being 'well aware of their sufferings' and had 'come down to rescue them' (Exodus 3:7-8) - demanded the blood of their children, was an unimaginable affront and antithetical to Yahweh's nature.

ii. A Latin American Liberation Theology Approach

As discussed earlier, Latin American liberation theology addressed the question of human sacrifice in the text through the reflection on its ongoing presence in human historical reality as part of the overall theological direction of their output: toward the most poor and the most marginalised. The question of the place of idolatrous human sacrifice continues to be an important legacy of liberation theology and is prominent in the work of theologians influenced by it[123].

A notable example of a specific reflection on idolatry in the context of Latin American liberation theology was that offered by Archbishop Óscar Romero of El Salvador in the midst of that nation's civil war. The use parallels Gutiérrez's definition of idolatry as a human-made concept or structure raised to the level of a fetish. Romero offered a similar reflection in his fourth pastoral letter, 'The Church's Mission

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[121] From Rabbi Yaakov Culi's 1730 commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures, the *Me'am Lo'ez*, http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/ShemotMeamLoez.html, internet, accessed 21 April, 2012.

[122] Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald recounts that Pharaoh, a leper, bathed in the blood of Jewish children, had the Jewish children burned in Egyptian furnaces, and, if the Hebrew slaves failed to produce their quota of bricks, Jewish children were plastered into the walls to fill the gaps. The Egyptian strategy was to disrupt Jewish family life and prevent the birth of Jewish children. See Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald, 'Passover 5771-2011:"At the Passover Seder We Are All Children"', http://rabbibuchwald.njop.org/2011/04/15/passover-5771-2011/, internet, accessed 20 April, 2012

[123] Two particular examples are Ivan Petrella and Jung Mo Sung, both of whom draw specific attention to the idolatrous characteristic of the globalised markets and economic mechanisms rather than the oppressive actions of localised governments . See Ivan Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto* (London: SCM Press, 2006) and Jung Mo Sung, *Desire, Market and Religion* (London: SCM Press, 2007).

amid the National Crisis' of 6 August 1979. He calls this manifestation of the idolatry-as-fetish 'absolutization':

> ... making any created thing into an absolute is an offence against
> the one Absolute and Creator, because it erects and serves an
> idol... in the place of God himself... (and) every absolutization
> disorients, and ultimately destroys human beings[124].

Romero identifies three examples of absolutization: wealth and private property; national security; and the popular organisation. In the first example, Romero sees the amassing of wealth as the embodiment of 'having more' as opposed to the positive goal of 'being more'; it forces the individual to place their own needs and desires above those of others and therefore '... brings about the absolutizing of political, social and economic power... In our country this idolatry is at the root of structural and repressive violence'[125].

It is in his last example that Romero brings a notable addition to Latin American liberation theology's theological reflection by noting that the opposition to the National Security State ran as much risk of becoming an idolatrous fetish as does the state. By advancing their specific popular organisation's ideology, methods or goals at the expense of specific attention to the needs of the people, leaders and participants risk idolatry 'when atheistic ideologies, or the limited interests of the group, cause it to lose sight of... the ideal of the country's common good'[126]. Reflecting his position as an Archbishop for all, Romero does not specifically identify himself on behalf of any popular movement. By identifying those movements' risk of idolatry, it would appear that he, in a pastoral role, inserts a call for self-examination; idolatry-as-fetish remains a temptation of *all* humanity, not simply of the state. Crucially, once the

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[124] Archbishop Oscar Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*, translated from the Spanish by Michael J Walsh (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 133.

[125] Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless,* 134.

[126] Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless,* 136. It is worth noting that, later in the document, Romero seeks to clarify what might be construed by his identification of the risks of idolatry in the popular movements as a simplistic denunciation of Marxism. In contrast, he draws distinction between Marxism as an ideology the Marxist scientific analysis of the economic order. He then goes on to criticise Christian denunciations of Marxism that 'turn into support for capitalism (which is) in fact what is most unjust and unchristian about the society in which we live' (p. 146).

idolatrous structure- whether it be the state or the popular movement- is raised to the point of fetish, the value of human life in relationship to it risks being compromised. Romero implicitly asserts that the God of Life no more demands the blood of the oppressor in the cause of liberation than he does the blood of the innocent victim in the cause of bolstering the oppressive state. The destruction of the human being in defence of either cause is to be rejected.

iii. A Transformational Approach-
'Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed...'

A transformational reading of the text, similar to that given of I Samuel 8:1-22, serves as a beginning to asking the question, 'the consequence of idolatry in the biblical text was understood as the idols demanded sacrifices; what sacrifices, if any, are the separation barriers demanding of us?' A reflective answer lies in contemplating what physical segregation is doing now, who will bear the negative consequences of it now and in the future.

Northern Ireland is a 'young' region; 40% 0f the population are under 25[127]; the effects of the conflict, ongoing sectarianism and segregation- both in terms of the social realities that perpetuate them and public policies that seek to ameliorate them- affect children and young people in unique ways. It can be argued that children and young people suffer a disproportionate cost for the actions of the past and the ongoing policies of physically-reinforced segregation, of which the barriers are the most visible manifestation. In theological terms, it is the children who are still 'sacrificed' to the 'gods'.

That a significant number of children in Belfast live in segregated areas is well known, but their experience of segregation is distinctive and more acute than that experienced by adults. Segregation for children extends beyond residence to school (on religious and cultural grounds and, because of the grammar school system, by both ability and class), social and leisure activities. For many, the first sustained contact with the 'other' community may only come at third-level education or first

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[127] Orla T. Muldoon, 'Children of the Troubles: The Impact of Political Violence in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 60, No. 3 2004, 457.

employment[128]. The fear of being identified as an 'other' limits young people's movements more than adults, and thereby their opportunities and choices[129].

Young people from lower income and interface communities face greater obstacles in achieving either third-level education or sustained employment. Unemployment rates among young people tend to be higher and, in interface communities, the levels are again increased and then act as an important driver toward substance abuse, mental health issues and lack of social capital and transport[130]. Moreover, sectarian dynamics, as they are manifested at interface areas, exacerbate unemployment, acting as a 'double penalty' on young people due to the tendency to only feel safe within the confines of one's own community and therefore the hesitancy to leave it due to a more pronounced fear of physical attack[131]. Youth recreation also suffers if one's perceived area has no such facilities but patterns of fear and territorialism discourage travel to or through what is perceived the 'other's' area[132].

Children and young adults at interfaces tend to have more direct experiences of political violence than middle class counterparts. Particularly, the divided context especially exerts more pressure on boys and young men, where masculine identity and violent behaviour are often seen as an essential experience of being young and male[133]. Many young people living at interfaces described the violence and rioting in their areas, as opposed to the unpredictable and sporadic crime-related violence of city centre areas, as familiar and understood[134].

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[128] Sheena McGrellis, 'Pushing Boundaries in Northern Ireland: Young People, Violence and Sectarianism', Family & Social Capital ESRC Research Group, London South Bank University, May 2004, 4.

[129] Sheena McGrellis, 'Pushing Boundaries in Northern Ireland', 15.

[130] Prof. Owen Hargie and Dr. David Dickson, 'Barriers to Communication across the Interface in Northern Ireland: A Study of Young People from Disadvantaged Areas', World Communication Association Conference, Brisbane, July 2007, 2-3, available at: http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CEIQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwcaweb.org%2FConferences%2FWCA07%2FWCA%252041%2520Papers%2F32%25200, internet, accessed 1 May, 2012.

[131] These attitudes were referred to in Chapter 3; Hargie and Dickson refer to it as the 'bubble syndrome'. See Owen Hargie and Dr. David Dickson, 'Barriers to Communication', 7-8.

[132] Siobhán McAlister, Phil Scraton and Deena Haydon, '"Insiders" and "Outsiders": Young People, Place and Identity in Northern Ireland', *Shared Space*, Issue 9, March 2010, 75.

[133] Orla T. Muldoon, 'Children of the Troubles', 462.

[134] McGrellis, 'Pushing Boundaries in Northern Ireland', 25.

As well as more acute experiences of violence, the dynamics of conflict as they manifest at interfaces throughout the Troubles led to patterns of distrust of the police and a tendency for areas to 'police' themselves, usually through paramilitary intimidation and physical force. Through behaviour deemed anti-social, children and young people often found themselves- and continue to perceive themselves- the chief targets of this 'irregular policing'[135].

68% of 18-25 year-olds had never had a meaningful conversation with anyone from the other community in areas where separation barriers were present. This led researchers to conclude that the barriers between these two communities not only furthers segregation among adults, but these attitudes become 'normal' to younger generations, leaving little hope of ending segregation in the near future[136]. Throughout the Troubles and into the present, attempts were made to mitigate the lack of meaningful contact with young people from the other community through cross-community inter-group contact schemes. The effectiveness of such schemes, based as they are on infrequent and carefully orchestrated contact,

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[135] McGrellis, 'Pushing Boundaries in Northern Ireland', 10. Additionally, a major research study published in September 2004 on behalf of the National Children's Bureau found the most frequent reason by young people as a reason for wanting to leave Northern Ireland was 'the influence and say of paramilitaries'; see 'Voices Behind the Statistics: Young people's views on Sectarianism in Northern Ireland', available at www.ncb.org.uk. The level of threat to working-class and interface young people is confirmed by the media. The 28 April 2012 issue of the *North Belfast News* carried a front-page article which reported that several parents alleged of two separate incidences where their teenage daughters were chatting with friends at the Limestone Road interface in North Belfast when they were approached by men from the Republican Network for Unity (RNU) who told them to move on. When the girls refused they were threatened them with being tied to lampposts and doused with paint or being 'kneecapped' (shot through the knee). Similarly, in a separate incident, the 30 April 2012 *Belfast Telegraph* reported of a mother in Derry who was ordered by the group Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD) to deliver her 18 year-old son to a specific location for a punishment shooting for drug dealing; she complied and he was shot in both legs. The 3 May 2012 issue of the same paper carried a follow-up article which quoted Michael Doherty of the Peace and Reconciliation group saying that he knew of at least five men in Derry who had been ordered to leave the city in the past week by RAAD, but that several had opted to 'take the flesh wound' than be exiled from friends and family. Karen Mullen, a representative of a group called Move On (an acronym for 'Mothers Opposed to Violence Everywhere in Our Neighbourhoods') said locals were angry that this 'option' was the only one made available to the young men.

[136] Urban Residential Geography, Consequences of Segregation: Segregated Communities, available at: http://libwiki.mcmaster.ca/geog3ur3/index.php/Belfast/ConsequencesOfSegregation, internet, accessed 26 April 2012.

has been a matter of intense debate[137]. The formative role played by family and community in a context of cultural segregation is considerable[138]. More problematically, many young people, particularly young men, reported that such schemes increased the chances of sectarian violence by making them more easily recognisable to elements in the 'other' community[139].

The biblical text understood the primary victims of idolatrous practice to be children:

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[137] The 'contact hypothesis' or 'intergroup contact theory' represents a body of research regarding ways to improve relations among groups that are experiencing conflict. One of the principle founders of this approach was American psychologist Gordon Allport (1897-1967) who postulated that under carefully managed and very specific conditions, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between rival groups. These conditions were: *Equal Status* (both groups taken into an equal status relationship); *Common Goals* (both groups work on a problem/task and share this as a common goal); *Acquaintance Potential* (the opportunity of group members to get to know each other as friends, and not merely as actors playing out social roles or as representatives of their social groups); and *Support of authorities, law or customs* (some commonly-acknowledged authority that both groups acknowledge that can define social norms that support the contact and interactions between the groups and members). It is in the final condition that criticism of the theories exists most prominently in the context of Northern Ireland. Brown and Turner argue that contact theory does not take adequate account of how political and institutional structures create and maintain conflicts, while Ed Cairns, in his research into the Northern Ireland conflict, argues that the attitudinal change in young people tended to be short-term and the personal contact of the participants did not engender more inter-group contact. The context of conflict in Northern Ireland made Allport's conditions too difficult to maintain. See Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1954), R.J. Brown and J.C. Turner, 'Interpersonal and Intergroup Behaviour', in J. Turner and H. Giles, eds., *Intergroup Behaviour* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), Ed Cairns, *Caught in the Crossfire: Children and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Belfast: Appletree, 1987) and Ed Cairns and Tara Cairns, ' Children and Conflict: A Psychological Perspective', in Seamus Dunn, ed., *Facets of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 1995).

[138] The formative role of adult extended family- and adults in general- in the development of children's attitudes is not always seen as self-evident. In Northern Ireland, youth workers and reconciliation and community development practitioners reported 'considerable resentment' at what they perceive as conventionally-held attitudes that the work they do is devalued as something only for children and young people, 'as if the behaviour of the supporting adult community was not the primary source of knowledge about what was or was not legitimate in terms of behaviour and attitudes'. Youth workers indicated that there was 'a strong need for community leaders and middle managers to explore their own formation and development in parallel to the demands being placed on them and their young people.' See Duncan Morrow, Karin Eyben and Derek Wilson, 'From the Margin to the Middle: Taking Equity, Diversity and Interdependence Seriously', in Owen Hargie and David Dickson, eds. *Researching the Troubles: Social Science Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 2004), 175.

[139] See McGrellis, 'Pushing Boundaries in Northern Ireland', 22-23, and

'You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree; you **sacrifice** your **children** in the ravines and under the overhanging crags' (Isaiah 57:5);

'You slaughtered my **children** and **sacrificed** them to the idols...' (Ezekiel 16:20);

'... they have committed adultery and blood is on their hands. They committed adultery with their idols; they even **sacrificed** their **children**, whom they bore to me, as food for them... On the very day they **sacrifice**d their **children** to their idols, they entered my sanctuary and desecrated it. That is what they did in my house.' (Ezekiel 23:37, 39)

The analogy can only be taken so far; the consequences to the child victims of idolatry in the biblical text are significantly more brutal and unequivocal. Nevertheless, young people living in Belfast's divided context also acknowledge that they do bear many of the consequences of decisions made by adults. Many of them, when interviewed by researchers, allude to personal loss through their expressed hopes for the future generations: 'I don't want my we'ens (children) growing up seeing fucking bombs going off and not being able to go out with friends and that there'[140].

Perhaps it is the very idea of a shared, reconciled future that is being, in a sense, sacrificed to physical segregation. Councillor Tim Attwood of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), said: 'The Berlin Wall is down – do we want to consign future generations of people to peace walls and lines in Belfast? I don't think that should be our ambition'[141].

What can be taken from this analysis is that it is children who bear a disproportionate cost for the decisions of the wider community regarding the conflict, segregation and fears of the future. It could be argued that they bear this cost most acutely at present, and it is they who will most likely bear it in the future.

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[140] 'Liam', an 11-19 male subject. See Sheena McGrellis, 'Pushing Boundaries', 8.
[141] *Andersonstown News,* 12 September 2011.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to envision and give examples of what the Transformational approach to the biblical text might look like. In style and form, it seeks to build on the approaches that have preceded it. Historical-criticism sought to be a dispassionate and scholarly approach to the text, applying such disciplines as historical analysis and literary criticism onto the theological endeavour that had been somewhat dominated by a sacramental and devotional approach to the text. By doing so, this approach rooted the text into human history and secular academic disciplines.

Latin American liberation theology was indebted to the historical-critical approach and, judging by the academic credentials of its foundational voices, was obviously informed by it. However, where the historical-critical approach sought to show the meaning of the text in light of its original authors' and readers' context, the liberationists approached the text from the standpoint of a hermeneutic that begins in the social context of the historical present: that of the most poor and most marginalised. Therefore, the theological endeavour was not simply a method of understanding the text more effectively, but for investigating the social reality of the contextual and political present. By emphasising the themes of life and liberation, the text was understood as illuminating an arc of God's vision of human history. The text illuminated what was understood to be God's liberation of his people; the poor and the marginalised read the text in the midst of their oppression; the disconnect between the two truths- God's historical liberation and the peoples' historical oppression- led to the moment of praxis and transformation.

The Transformational approach is an extension of the liberationist's approach through a hermeneutic of reconciliation: the reading of the text through the illumination of the historical social reality of not only oppression but division. The God of the text is not only the explicit liberator but the explicit reconciler.

Building on the liberation approach, idolatry, then, is not simply a theological mechanism for exposing structural oppression but of structural division. The 'transformational' reflections based on the four biblical texts serve as a possible initial theological engagement with the separation barriers and idolatry specifically, reflecting on the emotions and desires that lead to both. The Exodus 32 reflection

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envisions idolatry as the product of fear, lack of security and the desire to reinforce communal identity in a physical manner. The text in I Samuel serves to reflect upon the role played by authority figures in either enabling or critiquing the distorted desires of the community. The Genesis account of the city and tower reflects on the specific desire to build a structure to reinforce communal identity. Finally, the Leviticus text reflects on the victims of idolatry, those who bear the most immediate consequences of both the idols the separation barriers.

By building on the reflections of the Latin Americans and the reconciliation aspects of ECONI/CCCI and Liechty and Clegg, these reflections could serve as a starting point for community reflection on the separation barriers as physically-constructed products of distorted emotion and desire, and the effect they are having on the people of faith.

Chapter 6- Exploring a Transformational Approach
in the Irish Context

Introduction

In the previous chapters a transformational approach has been presented, an aspect of social reality identified, a theological lens introduced and a biblical reflection offered. Attention can now be turned to an exploration of this approach with people of faith in the Irish context- local clergy interviews and laypeople group sessions.

A social action research component was designed to help facilitate examination of the transformational approach with a number of group sessions. This component takes as its base starting point the hermeneutical cycle located in models of practical, local and contextual theological reflection as described by Osmer, Schreiter, Bevans and Sedmak. This emphasis on theological praxis is rooted in the liberation methodology. Reflecting on the divided context, in the midst of the divided context, roots the reflection in reconciliation.

The interviews with local clergy were designed to examine to what degree the separation barriers affect the performance of their ministry, as well as to explore their feelings regarding them. The responses broadly seem to reveal that, although the clergy that were interviewed had reflected on social and sectarian division, as well as on the more expansive themes of peace, reconciliation and the three dynamics of the conflict that the barriers physically represent, the physical reality of the barriers themselves has not played a central role in that reflection. Rather, they were referred to-when referred to at all- predominantly as an unfortunate result of deeper sectarian factors, with any potential causative effect by the barriers upon those factors unexplored. Moreover, a desire- or indeed a need- to develop theological reflections specifically on the barriers as part of their local ministry was not immediately apparent.

The discussion within the five group sessions indicated that there is interest both in theological reflection on social reality in general and- somewhat in contrast to the clergy- the separation barriers specifically. The group sessions used a

hermeneutical cycle designed around the themes of 'Reality, Reflection, Reimagining'- the reality of the separation barriers discussed and explored in the light of a reflection on the biblical idea of idolatry, followed by discussion and exploration if the reflection is helpful in the theological re-imagining of the reality.

Several recurring themes were voiced across the five sessions. Many participants initially expressed their alienation with the topic of the separation barriers and with the communities who lived in closest proximity to them. However, many also expressed that the topic of the barriers was an important one and was engaged with seriously and creatively across the five sessions. The connection with idolatry and the barriers was engaged with easily, and the conversations fostered by the possible connections between the two led to many ideas on how what the sacrificial consequences the 'idols' perceived in the various social contexts were demanding. Finally, the 'reimagining' of the social context, the process of living together well and responsibility for the future were all seen as the responsibility for people across the broad spectrum of civil society, as well as clergy and laity within the churches.

1. Principles Underpinning the Social Action Research Component

In common with most examples of practical theologies, Latin American liberation theology had as a philosophical underpinning the importance of the people of God reflecting on the biblical text in light of their social reality and the application of that reflection in the life of the community. In the intervening years, this principle and commitment to theological praxis and reflection has developed alongside and with the aid of the practices and academic disciplines of social action research. If 'research' is, most broadly, systematic enquiry that is collated and made public- enquiry that concerns itself specifically with investigation, reflection on and evaluation of an issue or problem- 'social action research' is understood as evidenced-based research put into some form of practice, followed by a reflective analysis and action. Action research is understood by its practitioners to be a model of research that adds a determination toward implementation and application of the findings. It works on the understanding that the primary purpose of research is not just to gain information-although that desire is self-evident- but also, according to

Swinton and Mowat, as 'a way of enabling new and transformative modes of action'[1]. The purpose of this approach is, on an academic level, to aid the researcher in the investigation and evaluation of their work; on a practical level, it is research designed to facilitate a process of change through implementation of the research findings. Within this basic framework are diverse understandings, but a number of characteristics and traits are noticeable throughout: its participatory nature; its practice-orientated nature; its cyclical nature; and its focus on ongoing critical reflection resulting in change[2].

In the theological realm, there have in the last half-century been complimentary developments in practical and contextual theologies. Broader theological participation, practice, and cyclical praxis are some of the contributions of the developments of Latin American liberation theology and help form a basis for the interaction of social research and theological reflection. That movement's indebtedness to 'See Judge Act' and Freire, as well as the practice of the base communities discussed earlier, bear this out. Of particular importance in this regard is the hermeneutical cycle, a notable example of liberation theology's outlining of theology as praxis. Segundo states:

> It is my feeling that the most progressive theology in Latin America
> is more interested in *being liberative* than in *talking about*
> *liberation*. In other words, liberation deals not so much with
> content as with the method used to theologise in the face of our
> real life situation. [3]

It is important to emphasise Segundo's underlying determination that this cyclical theological endeavour is- and should be- a component of human social and historical

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[1] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 255.
[2] See Martyn Denscombe, *Ground Rules for Small-Scale Social Research Projects* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 3rd ed., 2007), 123, Patrick J.M. Costello, *Effective Action Research: Developing Reflective Thinking and Practice* (London and New York: Continuum, 2nd ed., 2011), 5-7, E. Alana James, Tracesea Slater and Alan Bucknam, *Action Research for Business, Nonprofit, and Public Administration: A Tool for Complex Times* (London: Sage Publications, 2011), Kurt Lewin, 'Action Research and Minority Problems', *Journal of Social Issues* 2 (4), 34-46, and Paul McIntosh, *Action Research and Reflective Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), viii.
[3] Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1976, 2nd edition 1982), 9.

development, i.e. transformation. It forms the basis for Sedmak's call for a theological process that sets as its criteria 'realness'- a theology that is rooted in local and contextual fact and reality- as well as holding a fidelity to the person of Christ revealed in the biblical text and Christian tradition. Again, there is present the relationship between theological reflection and practical consequences- a commitment to praxis[4].

Finally, there is the commitment to reflection that is critical as well as practical- the tension between the academic theological endeavour, based around the systematic, the empirical and the dispassionate, and practical activity and production. Ballard and Pritchard note this in their exploration of practical theology. On the academic level, they note, the search for truth is intrinsically valuable, regardless of application. However, the discovery of truth then becomes the impetus for action that, as we have seen, theological praxis in some sense demands. These two elements must be held in tension:

> ... critical freedom is a necessary part of theology and therefore an essential dimension of the practical theologian's perspective. It is hard for the practical theologian not to be sucked into the immediate expectations and pressures of any situation rather than to have a truly critical engagement. Irresponsible critical detachment- the ivory tower syndrome- can be worse than useless, but so too can unthinking uncritical activism. Theological discernment demands both commitment and perspective.[5]

This overall commitment to the cyclical hermeneutic, critical reflection and communal activity sits at the methodological heart of theological action research. Where action research assigns primacy to an ongoing reflection/action cycle, theological action research practitioners would rely on a form of hermeneutical/pastoral cycle along similar lines beginning with the perception of social reality, the context of the people of faith involved in the process. Following this

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[4] Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 69-71.
[5] Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society* (London: SPCK, 1996, 2nd edition 2006), 31.

is a process of exploration of the reality, identifying and agreeing characteristics and dynamics, problems and opportunities. This is followed by the theological reflection proper, exploring the biblical text and Christian tradition[6], consciously seeking the underlying ethics and understandings of Christian faith which might serve as the theological 'lens' through which the lived experience of the people of faith can be examined. Finally, out of this reflection hopefully emerges a practical expression, the theological reflection actively pursued within the context of the people of faith[7].

In current practice, Green gives examples of his own work in both rural South Africa and urban Britain that stress practical, communal outcomes. In both cases, he focuses on the preference of the groups to have, as their starting point, the lived experience of the group rather than abstract theological concepts. There was also the desire to make the process as communal as possible, as well as making the critical reflection on their shared reality as honest and realistic as possible. Finally, he stresses the desire of participants for the outcomes of the theological reflection to be

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[6] These two subjects- scripture and tradition- are developed further by Cameron, *et al* into four particular theological 'voices', all of which form a component of theology overall: theology encompasses the *normative* (biblical text, creeds, church teaching and liturgy), the *formal* (systematic and cross-disciplinary academic theology), the *espoused* (how beliefs are articulated by a group) and the *operant* (how belief is practiced by a group). There must be a clear understanding that all four impinge on the process at some level, and the complexity inherent in the four must be embraced for a theological practice to be credible. See Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney and Clare Watkins, *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 53-56.

[7] This is the pastoral cycle as it is described by Cameron *et al*. Bevans' Praxis Model follows a similar form, as does Green's, though he chooses to frame the 'action' portion as 'response', but the underlying meaning can be construed as the same. Graham *et al* use a cycle drawn from Segundo encompassing social analysis, theological reflection, pastoral planning and immersion/experience. Though not explicitly described cyclical, Killen and De Beer's model of theological reflection highlights the commitment to insight, progress and growth, all ideally assumed to be evolving and ongoing. To that end, they focus on experience, description of the 'heart of the matter' of that experience, exploration in the light of Christian tradition followed by the discovery of new truths to inform a way of living. See Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney and Clare Watkins, *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 49-51, Stephen B. Bevins, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1992, revised an expanded ed., 2002), 76, Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology* (London and New York: Mowbray, 2009), 19-27, Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Francis Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 188, and Patricia O'Connell Killen and John De Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994, 2005), 71-75.

practically applicable. Thus, for Green, the primacy is on cyclical praxis. He poses a warning regarding divisions in the cycle:

> ... many theologians... have become so immersed in fascinating reflection that they have forgotten to return to the action... they finish their theology with just theological reflection and fine words. On the other hand, many parish churches... may be teeming with active groups throughout the week- everything from day centres and toddlers' clubs to unemployment drop-in centres. But all that activity may be completely separated off from the reflective worshipping community... The worshippers may be lulled into thinking they are part of an active and integrated church, but in fact they are just one part of a fractured cycle.[8]

Somewhat echoing Ballard and Pritchard, however, we can see that Green holds out the commitment that theological action research will be an integrated process with recognisable outcomes, but the 'action' component should not simply be thought of as 'doing something'. For this reason, his inclusion of the terminology of 'response' is perhaps helpful, i.e. theological reflection results in a consciously practical response to that reflection, which may indeed be demonstratively an activity, or perhaps a new way of thinking that hopefully will *inform* future activity. This underlies the analysis of Cameron *et al.* who use a holistic language built around a vision of theological action research helping faith communities to 'live differently', i.e. to approach their lived faith in a paradigmatically different way. They speak of theological action research offering the possibility of 'deep and long-lasting conversations between different kinds of expertise and experience in Christian thought and life', particularly along ecumenical lines, seeking the 'common reality of Christian living in a shared context'[9].

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[8] Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology* (London and New York: Mowbray, 2009), 35-36.
[9] Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney and Clare Watkins, *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 152.

2. Design and Format of the Social Action Research Component

The format of the social action research component was structured around a series of group discussions facilitated by myself and a colleague. A group session followed a simplified modification of the hermeneutical cycle with a three-fold structure of 'Reality, Reflection, Re-imagining'. A session was designed to be roughly 90 minutes.

The 'Reality' section was designed to facilitate a discussion of the separation barriers- enquiry of people's initial opinions of them; what, if any, effect they felt the barriers had on their daily lives; and what effect, if any, people felt the barriers had on the city as a whole. This was followed by a 'reflection' discussion- exploring peoples' initial understanding of idolatry; looking at the use of idolatry as a theological reflection within Latin American liberation theology; and a biblical reflection on idolatry as something constructed in the face of fear, for security and reinforced identity.

In light of the concerns of Ballard and Pritchard and Green, however, the third element- 'Re-imagining'- was consciously chosen. Firstly, it derives from an understanding of the importance of the creative imagination in the reconciliation process, in both the social and the theological. Imagination is the realm of creative thinking, of vision and envisioning; the realm of what *might* be possible in the light of the reflection on the social reality. Much of Paul Ricoeur's work informs this premise through his understanding of imagination as the basis of all language and therefore the basis of much of human communication; the linguistic conception that allows human thought to live and keep living; that which allows thought 'to think more', which serves to structuralise what is 'said' and is 'about to be said'. Imagination, surmised Ricoeur, could never reside in what is unsaid; imagination is the human ability to state things in new ways. This concern for imagination serves as a philosophical underpinning for creative sources towards transformation[10].

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[10] See Paul Ricoeur, 'The Creativity of Language', in Mario J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 303, Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 169 and Ricoeur, "The Creativity of Language," in *A Ricoeur Reader*, 469.

With regard to social reconciliation, Lederach- himself drawing from C. Wright Mills' extensive body of work on the sociological imagination[11]- refers to the 'moral imagination' and bases much of the reconciliation process, both at inception and ongoing, in this realm. Even within the practical reality of the divided context and the legacy of violence, it is the 'capacity to imagine a relationship with the other that transcends the cycles of violence while the other and the patterns of violence are still present':

> (The moral imagination)... is built on a capacity to imagine that it is possible to hold multiple realities and world views simultaneously... (it) refuses to frame life's challenges, problems and issues as dualistic polarities... (It is) to understand that the welfare of my community is directly affected by the welfare of your community... that the creative act is always within the human potential... it is rooted in the courage of people and communities to be and live vulnerably in the face of fear and threat.[12]

Again, in the social context, this type of creative re-imagining is implicitly what underpins several of Hamber and Kelly's elements of reconciliation. Certainly the development of a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society involves interpersonal extrapolation and 'thinking outside the box', as would significant cultural and attitudinal change and, over time, the building of positive relationships;

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[11] Lederach, in his emphasis on the multi-layered, multi-faceted and interconnected nature of the post-conflict reconciliation process, is indebted to Mills. Mills framed the process of sociological investigation and development as a dynamic and multi-layered one, within which an imaginative vision of exploration of the interconnected relations of actors and spheres of influence is essential. The sociological imagination, he said, was 'the capacity to shift from one perspective to another- from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to the comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from the considerations of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self- and to see the relations between the two... That, in brief, is why it is by means of the sociological imagination that men now hope to grasp what is going on in the world, and to understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society.' See C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, 40th anniversary edition, 2000), 7.
[12] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 62-63.

'It is only through robust dialogue that we can ensure a more reflexive peacebuilding'[13]. Ricoeur's contribution is evident once again.

Theologically, Jürgen Moltmann conceived of the Christian understanding of hope as a principle cornerstone of practical/political theology in the 1960s. Criticising former conceptions of eschatology that relegated hope to an idealised, other-worldly future, Moltmann insisted that all future hope must be grounded in human history. 'Christian eschatology', he said, 'does not speak of the future', but rather 'sets out from a definite reality in history and announces the future of that reality'[14]. Christian hope, then, begins in historical reality, standing in contradiction to the reality that is now experienced:

> (Hope's statements of promise)... do not result from experiences, but are the condition for the possibility of new experiences. (They) lead existing reality towards the promised and hoped-for transformation. [15]

This is the theological engagement with the social reality that stands as a primary focus of Latin American liberation theology. Moltmann's thinking stresses that, in the Christian vision, humanity cannot be brought into harmony and agreement with the given situation. Rather, akin to Gutiérrez's 'becoming' and the praxis of commitment and reflection, the Christian visions is 'drawn into the conflict between hope and experience'[16]. That space of tension is the space of 're-imagining' in this hermeneutical cycle, looking forward in the midst of the 'is' in the eschatological conception of what Ruben Alves identifies as the 'consciousness of "ought"' towards what he further identifies as 'the subjective and objective possibility of "can"'[17].

Likewise, Brueggemann theologically approaches the imagination through hope, a visionary aspiration of the biblical prophetic tradition with its resistance to 'despairing conformity'. Explicitly drawing on liberation theology, he describes this

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[13] Hamber and Kelly, *A Place called Reconciliation*, 59.

[14] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, originally published as *Theologie der Hoffnung* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1965), translated from the German by James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967), 17.

[15] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 17.

[16] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 18.

[17] Rubem Alves, excerpt from *A Theology of Human Hope* (Rubem A Alves, 1970), from Alistair Kee, ed., *A Reader in Political Theology* (London SCM Press, 1974), 35.

conformity as either brutality and torture (from the standpoint of the oppressed) or the numbness of Western consumerism (from the standpoint of the affluent). In both cases, 'human transformative activity depends upon a transformed imagination'. Both the torture and the numbness rob the individual of their 'capability for humanity'; in both cases, it is the imagination, drawn from the prophetic tradition of the biblical text, which 'knows that it could be different, and the difference can be enacted'[18]. Thus, the ministry of imagination is to 'nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness of the dominant culture around us'[19]. All of these reflections on imagination and hope inform the conception of transformation at the heart of this theological action research.

The second reason for embracing the terminology of re-imagining comes from this understanding of the despair fostered by conformity and dominant culture. Though in both social and theological cases, the impetus for action arises from the imaginative process, with regard to a reflection on the separation barriers, making a clear distinction between the reflective process and action is beneficial. As can be seen in the research in Chapter 3, in the clergy interviews and the reports from the group sessions, attitudes to discussion of the barriers are often dependent on proximity; locals often interpret any discussion of the barriers as a veiled, surreptitious impetus for the barriers' removal, whereas those not living near a barrier- or in a social or economic strata perceived as removed from those at an interface- often interpreted reflection on the barriers as meddling in an issue with which they had no right to comment[20].

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[18] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2nd edition, 2001), xx-xxi.

[19] Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 3.

[20] The April 2012 edition of the *Shankill Mirror* newspaper carried a story entitled 'Consultation? You Must Be Joking', and focused on the anger of Protestant/Loyalist residents of West Belfast at the removal of a portion of security fencing on the Springfield Road and replacing it with steel bollards as part of the development of a new campus of Belfast Metropolitan College. The article went on to state that community representatives, 'whilst emphasising that collectively both communities should be working towards the removal of all barriers as a long term goal, they have insisted that the fencing be reinstated'. An addendum at the end of the article reported that representatives of BMC confirmed that the fencing would be reinstalled. The article underlines the depth of feeling in interface communities regarding policy decisions regarding the barriers and the communities' desire to exercise almost-complete influence on any decision-taking regarding their ongoing presence.

In keeping with a commitment to praxis, the terminology of re-imagining reasserts the basic premise that reflection precedes action and that a purpose of the group session was a deeper exploration of a social reality without impatiently jumping forward to practical response to that social reality. In the introduction to the group session, this point was explicitly made:

> One thing I'd like to make clear before we start: this session is not
> necessarily about working out what to *do* about the barriers; it is
> not about laying all the blame for interface problems *on* the
> barriers; it is not about saying that interfaces would be better
> places *without* them; and it is not arguing to take them down. Our
> reality is: the barriers are there and they will probably be there for
> some time. In this session, first and foremost, we simply want to
> reflect on that reality in light of our faith.

3. Clergy Interviews: Religious Engagement with Separation Barriers

As has been shown earlier, when investigating the conflict in Northern Ireland, sectarianism, social divisions and violence, the three dynamics of fear, security and identity have also have been sources for local theological reflection. However, as was shown in Chapter Four, physical segregation in general and the separation barriers in particular have not been a specific focus of that theological reflection. The clergy interviews conducted as part of the of the social research of this thesis sought to gauge to what extent the theological reflection presently occurring in Northern Ireland has engaged with the issue of the separation barriers specifically. A number of clergy were invited to share their experiences and opinions concerning the social divisions in Northern Ireland and their feelings about the separation barriers in particular. A primary objective of the interviews was to ascertain from clergy- all of whom to one degree or another recognised that they were living and ministering in a context of deep division- their opinions as to what extent the issue of physical segregation affected their personal ministries and the lives of their congregants.

The clergy interviews were set up by me and my colleague Pádraig Ó Tuama, who had agreed to help me in the process. We had worked together in Belfast on various reconciliation and education projects for close to a decade, and his list of contacts across all Christian denominations and organisations was extensive. We began by

thinking about how many participants I thought would give a credible sample of opinions. I decided that ten would be appropriate and, if it were possible, five Protestants and five Catholics would be ideal.

An initial email contact was made by Pádraig, briefly explaining who I was, the nature of my research and enquiring if the individual was willing to take part, they should contact me directly. I then continued email contact with those who responded positively, and interview times and locations were often set up within two or three further emails. When we met for the interview, the interviewee was asked to sign a consent form, acknowledging that they agreed for their comments to be recorded and transcribed, and offering them the choice of whether or not their name was used in the final work[21].

Twelve clergy were initially contacted by email and asked to participate in this research. Ten responded: three Roman Catholic[22], one Church of Ireland (Anglican)[23], three Methodist[24], two Presbyterians[25] and one Presbyterian (non-subscribing)[26].

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[21] As can be seen, I have made the decision for all clergy and group session participants to remain anonymous, except for the details of location, gender and- in the case of clergy-denomination. This was decided upon both for simplicity and clarity, and to allow the comments to be accentuated rather than the individual personalities involved.

[22] The Catholic Church in Ireland is by far the largest Christian denomination in Ireland, with 87.4% of the citizens of the Republic of Ireland and 43.8% of Northern Ireland identifying as Catholic.

[23] The Church of Ireland (*Eaglais na hÉireann*) is the Irish branch of the worldwide Anglican Communion. It is organised on an all-island basis and is the second largest Christian denomination on the island with approx. 365,000 members. It has retained elements of pre-Reformation practice, notably its Episcopal structure, while rejecting the authority of the Vatican and the Pope. In theological and liturgical matters, it incorporates many elements of the Reformation (in particular the English Reformation) while seeking to accommodate both influences. As such, the church formally identifies as both 'Catholic and Reformed'. However, because of the particular historical and cultural nature of both the Reformation and subsequent history in Ireland, the overwhelming majority of members of the Church of Ireland would identify themselves and their church as 'Protestant'- unlike much of the Anglican Communion- with only St. George's parish in Belfast describing itself as 'Anglo-Catholic'. See Kenneth Milne, *A Short History of the Church of Ireland* (London: APCK, 1966, fourth edition Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2003), Kevin Ward, *A History of Global Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and Norman Richardson, ed., *A Tapestry of Beliefs: Christian Traditions in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1998), 66-85.

[24] The Methodist Church in Ireland is the fourth largest Christian denomination in Ireland with 53,668 members. The Methodist Church organises on an all-island basis, but the majority of congregations are found in Northern Ireland. It is affiliated with the World Methodist Council and, in the context of Northern Ireland) should not be confused with smaller Free Methodist Church (which originated in the US) or the Fellowship of Independent Methodist Churches (a fundamentalist offshoot founded in 1974). See Dudley Levinstone Cooney, *The Methodists in*

Nine of the interviewees were male, one female. Nine lived and ministered primarily in Belfast, one in Armagh.

As their comments are analysed, a number of common themes become apparent. First, all agreed that Belfast was accurately described as a 'divided city'. Precisely how those divisions were manifested, either visibly or invisibly, as well as what aspects of division should be given attention, varied.

When asked the question, 'what divisions do you see in your daily life and ministry?' answers varied and appeared to be conditioned by the location of their church, the demographics of their congregation and the theological ethos of the clergyperson. There was a considerable variety of examples of manifestations of those divisions given in conversation (ecclesial, social, sectarian, political, economic, etc.), and many were able to give specific examples of social divisions in their own experience of ministry. However, in the majority of cases- nine out of ten- the separation barriers were not the first or most obvious example of division described.

One Methodist minister approached the question in general and abstract aspects:

> I think we're still caught in the war of history that still sees these
> divisions as Catholic and Protestant, as Unionist and Nationalist, as
> Loyalist and Republican. We still see each other through that lens
> (*Methodist, East Belfast*).

Ireland: A Short History (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2001) and Norman Richardson, ed., *A Tapestry of Beliefs: Christian Traditions in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1998), 86-103.

[25] The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (*Eaglais Phreispitéireach in Éirinn*) is the largest Presbyterian denomination in Ireland and the largest Protestant denomination in Northern Ireland. It organises on an all-island basis although approx. 96% of its 300,000 members are found in Northern Ireland. It is internationally affiliated with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). It is the largest Presbyterian church in Ireland and should not be confused with the smaller Free Presbyterian Church, which severed from the PCI in 1951. See Finlay Holmes, The Presbyterian Church in Ireland: A popular History (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 1999) and Norman Richardson, ed., *A Tapestry of Beliefs: Christian Traditions in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1998), 45-65.

[26] The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland refers to a Presbyterian denomination who traditionally have considered themselves not bound by 'man-made creeds and doctrines of Faith', specifically the Westminster Confession of Faith, a key document of the Reformation to which the majority of Presbyterians subscribe. The denomination has placed a high value on liberalism and tolerance, out of which come its close ties to Unitarianism, which the clergy person interviewed was keen to stress. The denomination has 31 congregations in Northern Ireland and two in the Republic, with a membership of about four thousand persons. See http://www.nspresbyterian.org/, internet, accessed 13 February 2013.

A senior Catholic cleric also framed his answer in the general and abstract, but emphasised the socio-economic and class-based aspects of community relations:

> What is it about the structures of power that in every generation
> has required sectarianism? In other words, 'who is *benefitting*
> from the sectarianism?' rather than 'who is *doing* it'? Who is quite
> happy to keep two tribes? Whose electoral or ecclesiastical
> interests does it suit to keep two tribes? Because the war is over,
> and the conflict is alive and well (*senior Catholic cleric*)[27].

A Methodist minister from the Loyalist working class Tigers Bay area of North Belfast also saw class and economic issues at the heart of the divisions, but expressed them as between those still involved with the traditional church and those who no longer attend church:

> When the Troubles began in Northern Ireland, the Church drew up
> its drawbridge. 'Carry on, guys. You kill each other as much as you
> like. We're in here in our holy huddle and we're happy as Larry.'
> And so that was what they did. They maintained their holy huddle
> and became self-righteous and disinterested... What happened
> was, the two communities are getting further and further apart,
> the church is showing no interest in the community. And my job is
> to see how to bring them back together again. That's the journey
> we're on (*Methodist, North Belfast*)[28].

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[27] Bennis and Nanus suggest that while leadership is about 'doing the right thing', this then begs the question, 'doing the right thing by whom?' The situation is compounded by sectarianism and conflict. In the case of Northern Ireland, Mcgrattan notes that the Good Friday Agreement 'reified' communal divisions rather than ameliorating them; 'the power-sharing institutions have *created incentives for the local elites* to pursue their long-term goals through democratic channels' (italics added). Mitchell concurs, noting that 'religious communal binaries have been further reinforced in recent years after the Good Friday Agreement as more power-sharing arrangements are made in politics and equality legislation is extended into ever more areas of public life, *increasing incentives to identify with one community or the other*' (italics added). Warren G. Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies of Taking Charge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), Cillian McGrattan, *Northern Ireland 1968-2008: The Politics of Entrenchment* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 174, and Claire Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006), 15.

[28] The dynamics of engagement in working-class Loyalist communities and the Protestant churches to which the minister eludes here are explored in detail by historian Philip Orr in

A Catholic priest in West Belfast framed his answer in a personal experience which was, for him, an example of much deeper ecclesial and spiritual divisions between Catholic and Protestant churches:

> I was yesterday over with a group of unity pilgrims at West Kirk
> Presbyterian Church on the Shankill... we would have gone to that
> church many times. And they welcomed 'the visitors' yesterday,
> but they seem unable to say 'the visitors from (our specific
> Catholic parish)'- I just don't know why... It's not that all
> Presbyterian congregations are a bit like that. It's just the
> formality; I just had a sense that they're not entirely at ease with
> us. (The pastor) made reference in the preamble to his sermon to
> 'people relying on organisations to save them.' It's the old
> formula; no sense, really, of the Church; the Church as the living
> body of Jesus, and we all belonging in the Church in real
> communion with one another... There was an absence of that, an
> absence in a sense of the Church which, for me, is a deep division
> still (*Catholic, West Belfast*)[29].

One Protestant minister from South Belfast saw the traditional Catholic/Protestant divisions transcended by issues of 'inclusion', i.e., sexual and gender equality with

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New Loyalties: Christian Faith and the Protestant Working Class (Belfast: Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, 2008). Orr notes the demographic shifts brought about by the Troubles, and the concomitant rise in paramilitary activity, as a source of decline in the influence of churches in working class areas in Northern Ireland, as well as cynicism on the part of local communities regarding the motives of church and clergy regarding the social involvement of the churches locally. On the whole, Orr notes that the role played by churches in divided contexts such as Northern Ireland is complex and must be recognised as such when approaching any discussion of their influence.

[29] The issue of Catholics and Protestants formally worshipping under the same roof is a significant stumbling block for many Protestants, as is ecumenism in general. Susan McKay quotes the Presbyterian minister Lesley Carroll regarding the 1999 decision of the Presbyterian General Assembly not to establish a new formal structure with the Irish Council of Churches: 'It was because they didn't want formal links with Catholicism. The Protestant Churches have an anti-Catholic strain because... of the Reformation.' Susan McKay, *Northern Protestants: An Unsettled People* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2000), 69. Anti-Catholicism within Ulster Protestantism is also extensively detailed and analysed by Glenn Jordan in *Not of This World? Evangelical Protestants in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2001) and in John D. Brewer and Gareth I. Higgins, *Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland, 1600-1998: The Mote and the Beam* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1998).

which he and his church were particularly concerned. This emphasis on inclusivity extended to other faiths without expectation of their conversion:

> We attract people here- and this is an interesting thing- the gay people who come here tend to be more religious than the straight people. And that is because the gay people who are coming here because that's the issue where they feel completely accepted, because we call ourselves... an 'inclusive church'. The straight people who come here have walked out of other churches for reasons, theologically, reasons that they just can't accept the singular thinking of the mainstream churches. Some Catholics have started coming here; we have a family who have recently joined and they've left the church because their son is gay and they just can't accept the Catholic Church's attitude toward that anymore... We have our Sunday school superintendent who is Jewish and gay. She comes here because the synagogue has a very orthodox rabbi and she doesn't feel accepted up there. So she has joined this church, but it has not disturbed her being Jewish... We have a young Japanese woman who is Shinto (*Non-Subscribing Presbyterian, South Belfast*).

Only one interviewee, a Methodist minister with many years experience in a parish in the North Belfast estate of Rathcoole before serving as the director of the Methodist church's central mission in Belfast city centre, engaged directly with the separation barriers. His answer, uniquely, immediately correlated physical segregation with personal and communal relationships:

> Well, there are the very obvious divisions of the peace walls. You know, they're there. And there's also, over the years as new housing was built, there weren't peace walls then, but segregation was deliberately built in. The old Shankill and the old Falls, all the streets ran from one to the other, heavily Protestant at that end, heavily Catholic at that end and merging in the middle. If you had the will and the intention, you could easily walk from one to the other. But the new Shankill and the new Falls, there were at most

one, two, at the most three through streets. All the rest became

dead ends. So, we actually built it into the bricks and mortar of the

new housing. That, I think, is a thing that we sometimes forget:

there's not easy movement for people. There is a huge tendency

for young people to be ghettoised into their own areas (*Methodist,*

Belfast).

Secondly, the barriers do not seem to engender specific attention in clergy's reflection on a divided Belfast. For the majority of ministers who did not mention the barriers unprompted, a follow-up question was asked: 'one unique aspect of the divisions in Belfast is the presence of the separation barriers; what are your feelings about them and do you feel they affect your ministry and the lives of your congregation? The answers were a spectrum: For example, a Presbyterian minister who lives near the Ardoyne-Glenbryn-Woodvale interface was the most engaged and drew specific attention to the new barrier that extends along Mountainview Parade to Somerdale Park (see photos 7 and 8 in Appendix 1), which he saw as evidence that physical segregation was a long-term policy:

People (from outside interface areas) simply don't believe that

we're still building the barriers... Stopping building them wouldn't

be a bad start! Instead of saying, 'what do we need to help these

communities live together peaceably?' what we will do is, we will

build concrete and steel division into their relationships for the life

of the new housing that's going up. Because that wall (in

Somerdale Park) is built to a phenomenal specification. So that

wall will last for the length of the life of the houses. So we are

saying to folks who live there, to their successors, to their

following generations and to the kids, 'It is our view that you are

better to be separated for the next hundred years'- for the life of

the house (*Presbyterian, North Belfast*).

A Catholic priest, also based near the North Belfast Ardoyne-Glenbryn-Woodvale interface, inferred that the barriers were obstructive and aberrant, yet nevertheless seemed to serve a purpose:

> When I came here, you can go out and see; take a step out the
> kitchen door, walk three paces and you hit the wall. The wall then
> leads on to the Woodvale Road. When I came here, there was a
> 10-foot fence. But following an attack one night where the kitchen
> was blown up, there's now a 20-foot fence along the back of it. So
> consciously, whether we think about it or not, it does affect us. It
> can't *not* affect you. It isn't normal to live with these big
> structures, especially when you see them being reinforced
> (*Catholic, North Belfast*).

Others initially approached the topic of the barriers, if not negatively, than either with
indifference or by focusing attention elsewhere. In the case of the former, the
Catholic priest in West Belfast:

> I don't see the wall at all (*laughs*). I remember in the old days,
> when (another priest) was in the top of the house and looking over
> into the Shankill, explaining to me that we were all the same
> people. They had the rough end of it, as well, never got properly
> paid for the work they did, were exploited. He had that sense of
> fellowship with the people of the Shankill. He grew up among
> them; he was a barber before he joined us. But Hugh had no sense
> of separation. But, there's obviously a fear of taking away these
> supports; a fear for our wellbeing. But as to their affect on us (*long
> pause*)... you live without the natural communication of daily life,
> blocked off. But the old sense that they had, that they were
> enemies, I don't think that that's there now. The walls are (*long
> pause*)... just there... I haven't explored, although I know people
> are exploring how people see the walls. I always just say, 'the walls
> are inside of you'[30](*Catholic, West Belfast*).

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[30] The strict delineation between psychological barriers and physical ones is noticeable in
much of the discussion of the separation barriers. A direct connection between the two was
not readily made by the interviewees. The connection is explicitly made by Naomi Hill of
Bristol University, who notes that while the experiences that lead to a barrier being erected
are diverse depending on location, 'they are all both *products of and reinforce urban
residential segregation and ethno-sectarian conflict*' (italics added). Naomi Hill, 'Contested

The senior Catholic cleric observed a similar resignation as that shown by the West Belfast priest about the presence of the barriers for the majority of the population:

> I suppose in some ways, for the vast majority of people aren't impinged upon by the walls. If you look on the Shankill or the Falls, you go shopping in the city centre and you shop with those people from the other side of the walls. In that sense, the walls are ugly brutes of things. But I don't know that in practice, it makes an awful lot of difference to people. Which of course raises the question, why the hell are people attached, or some people so attached to keeping them? Why are we not angry that they are there? (*Senior Catholic cleric*)

When asked if the Catholic Church had issued any official statement about the barriers as part of the Church's overall commitment to peace and reconciliation, he admitted to ignorance of any and implied that the issue has not been a priority:

> I have no idea. I would certainly suggest that it hasn't been high profile. It might have slipped in somewhere under the radar, but it has not been prioritised. There certainly hasn't been a statement by all the bishops in the North; there might have been individual comments, but then Armagh doesn't have too many peace walls![31]
>
> (*Senior Catholic cleric*)

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sites of Memory: Segregated Space and the Physical Legacy of the Troubles in North Belfast's Interface Communities', University of Bristol, Department of Historical Studies, 2010.

[31] An investigation of the statements and publications of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (ICBC) reveals that the role and function of Catholic education features prominently; in the past two years, the Church has published the Bishops' statement on education in March 2012, the Catholic Schools Partnership's position paper of April 2011 and Bishop Donal McKeown's 'The Role of the Churches in Education' in October 2010. The issue of safeguarding children is also a frequent key discussion point at the ICBC General Meetings of Spring 2012, Winter 2011 and June 2011. The upcoming 50th International Eucharistic Congress in Ireland, 10 – 17 June 2012 also received prominent attention in both Spring 2012 and Winter 2011. While it would be easy to editorialise the output of the ICBC as mundane or bureaucratic, it should be remembered that the primary function of a bishop is 'supervision' and 'oversight' (Gk. *episkopas*) and therefore is fairly administrative by nature. According to *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, a bishop's primary functions are to teach and maintain authentic doctrine and encourage the growth of holiness, to tend to the needs of his diocese and preside at services of worship. On the evidence of the publicly-available output of the ICBC, it could be surmised that the issue of physically-reinforced segregation in Northern Ireland is not a readily-evident diocesan 'need' to be tended with any great priority.

The Methodist minister in Tigers Bay was asked to comment specifically on the barrier in Alexandra Park, near his church. It had recently been announced with much publicity that the gate in the barrier would be opened during the day, while remaining locked evenings and weekends. He voiced a great deal of scepticism:

> That's actually a sore point. It is indeed, because the community were never consulted. Again, you see- this is a bit close to the quick here- in terms of the organisation that made that happen, fundamentally, it was paramilitaries; the Protestant paramilitaries in Tigers Bay were not consulting with their community. They can't, because if they do, they know that the answer is 'no'. To transition change, you've got to be prepared to journey with people, and that's a slow process. Well, the paramilitaries would be used to, I suppose, a dictatorship kind of regime where they don't consult. I mean, I went to that (event) and some in our community did go, not because we were invited or anything, but purely out of curiosity, to see what was happening... So that is a real bone of contention, because it's still a trouble spot. Kids are still hammering each other... And it certainly was a bit premature. That'd be the word on the street... It's a bit of a dead duck really. It's not going to make any difference[32] (*Methodist, North Belfast*).

A Church of Ireland minister from Armagh (a city which manifests several dynamics of division but does not have separation barriers) engaged with the question from her own context, focussing on segregated housing and education. This underscored that separation barriers reinforce segregation, yet are not the exclusive cause of it:

> Around Armagh, the physical divisions would be very segregated communities. You know what part of Armagh you're in and whose identity this part of Armagh belongs to, because you've lived here

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[32] The University of Ulster research of 2012 found a noticeable lack of awareness amongst residents regarding policy and planning regarding separation barriers and that 'this lack of awareness about existing developments further validates the argument that greater community consultation needs to take place so that all stakeholders are aware of the various options, both real and hypothetical, relating to what could/should/might happen to the peace walls.' Byrne et al., 'Attitudes to Peace Walls: Research Report to Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister', June 2012, 15.

long enough to know that. Sadly, I think there's still not much move to change that, because people, in terms of their residential accommodation, are still leading very separate lives. Also, obviously, the split in the church has added to that, fed into that. But one of the fundamental things, I think, is education as well; children educated separately. So that doesn't help. I would be a supporter of people being educated together (*Church of Ireland, Armagh*).

Only one interviewee (originally from Dublin) mentioned the barriers positively, i.e., while most interviewees framed segregation as understandable but regrettable, he was unique in framing segregation as understandable but not necessarily regrettable:

It's a siege mentality... We've got to get away from that, but how do we get away from that? How do we get away from saying, 'this is a Protestant Neighbourhood'? Now, there is another way of reflecting on it: I was invited to open an art exhibition in Dublin of young artists from Northern Ireland... One person had done a piece that was street maps, and some of the streets were painted orange and some were painted green. I immediately knew the young artist meant it as a critique. So I defended it, because I always think you should take up a bit of a contrary position to people. So I spoke to the young artist and said, 'That's brilliant. These are the Protestant areas and these are the Catholic areas. How wonderful is that?!' And he said, 'Oh no, it's terrible.' I said, 'It's terrible?' He said, 'Oh yes, have you ever been to Belfast? These are the Protestant areas and these are the Catholic areas.' So when I got up to speak, I said, 'I could show you a map of New York, and there's Chinatown, there's the Italian area, there's the Jewish neighbourhood, go out to Queens and you're in Ireland. And nobody says 'that's terrible.' So why are differences in culture in neighbourhoods here in Northern Ireland considered terrible? And why do we consider them terrible if Protestants live in one

neighbourhood and Catholics live in another? (*Non-Subscribing Presbyterian, South Belfast*)

The minister did not give any indication of how or if the New York context could be replicated in the Belfast context, simply that diversity did not necessarily engender division, and that that attitude should be fostered[33]. Additionally, he intimated that he would regret the barriers' removal, given that they were of interest to tourism:

> The walls- I mean, don't forget, when anybody visits Northern Ireland, the first place I bring them is up to the Shankill to show them the wall. And they write their name on it and they love it and, in a way, I hope we never take it down because I think some people in Berlin are sorry they took down *all* of the wall; because the wall is such an attraction, the Berlin Wall. And in a way here in Belfast, when we do start opening them up- doing that- we should keep a good section of it, because there's some great work on it, some great graffiti on it. But I can understand people- and I would never dictate to the people in those communities what they should do to satisfy me... And you know, I think, in a way, reflecting on the walls, I don't see it as dramatic and as big a problem as other people. I see it, first of all, a by-product of how

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[33] The differences between the dynamics of community division- as well as the threats of violent crime and intimidation- in New York City and those evident in interface communities in Belfast are considerable. Two reports in 1993 from the New York City Commission on Human Rights, 'Documenting the Hate: A Report on Bias Incidents in New York City' and 'Building Barriers: Discrimination in New York City's Construction Trades' offer a more nuanced account of the dynamics of division in the city, noting how ethnic and racial biases affect employment, housing and social life. The former report details that in the calendar year of January 1992-June 1993, there were 1,299 reports of bias-related incidences to a dedicated hotline, and also notes that if unreported incidents were accounted for, the number was, in all likelihood, far higher. The latter report investigated the extent of discrimination against African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans and found widespread evidence what it referred to as 'institutionalised exclusion'. More recently, the commission's 2003 report 'Discrimination against Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians in New York City Since 9/11: Survey of Anti-Arab and Muslim Discrimination' documented that 2/3 of those surveyed reported perceived bias-related harassment or discrimination, including threats of personal injury, actual personal injury, destruction of property, loss of employment or failure to be hired. What these reports reveal is that New York City is also a 'divided city' regardless if how those divisions are manifested differs considerably from Belfast. Furthermore, the ways in which the divisions manifest themselves in New York City do not make those divisions in some way less destructive or severe.

we behave here, and the fact that more have gone up since the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process, in some ways, doesn't surprise me. Because we seem to be institutionalising the differences at the moment, and the two major parties are totally buying into that (*Non-Subscribing Presbyterian, South Belfast*).

The reference to the barriers as a 'by-product' reflects an overall frequency of the interview subjects to acknowledge the barriers as an 'effect' of sectarianism. They rarely, however, reflected on the barriers as a causation or perpetuation of it.

Thirdly, while theological reflection on division and reconciliation was obviously a natural part of the life and practice of the in the majority of the clergy, the barriers do not naturally form a specific part of that reflection. In conversation, several of the clergy gave theological reflections on the division and reconciliation. The North Belfast Presbyterian minister referred to the biblical text Jeremiah 29:

The one I would normally use is Jeremiah 29, the word of the Lord through Jeremiah to a people who are in exile, in Babylon-modern-day Iraq. They don't want to be there. 'Please, God, can we go back to the safety of Jerusalem?' 'No, guys, you're going to have to settle here.' And crucially, (Jeremiah) 29 talks about, you are to seek the welfare of the city. Not just your own grouping or your part where you live. You are to seek the welfare of the city. This is the bit that is the theological challenge: because if (the city) prospers, you will prosper. So you must integrate (*Presbyterian, North Belfast*).

Jeremiah 29 was also referred to by the senior Catholic cleric:

I think certainly the scriptures, particularly the Old Testament prophets are great on hope in hopeless situations, particularly someone like Jeremiah. You have the prophetic voices like Amos and Hosea being very critical but then equally you have Jeremiah promising hope, particularly even to those in exile. 'Settle down. Take wives, take husbands, raise children. The Lord will look after the future.' (*Senior Catholic cleric*)

The Methodist minister from East Belfast reflected on Jesus as an example of inclusiveness, even when inclusiveness could be interpreted as transgressive:

> Particularly when we look at the model of Jesus... I think he was more naturally found on the edges, with the pushed-out ones... The challenges to the system, where Jesus actually was radical-engaging with prostitutes and lepers, Pharisees with no distinction. His life and ministry were not hemmed in by the tight legislation which actually belonged to the very faith that shaped him (*Methodist, East Belfast*).

Fourthly, the majority saw the importance of theological reflection leading the church to developing and practicing social awareness, and Belfast's divisions were often perceived as a social concern. The Presbyterian minister based on the Antrim Road in North Belfast focused on what he perceived as the disconnection between middle-class Protestants in Northern Ireland and working-class communities; this division then exacerbated sectarianism:

> In 1968, 1969 (middle-class Protestants in Northern Ireland) totally disengaged because they think the Troubles have nothing to do with them, because they 'weren't sectarian'. And the corollary of that then is 'why do they need to be involved in building peace?' (They say) 'my friends are Catholic' or 'I have a friend who is Protestant'. And to get them to buy into it has been, and continues to be, a struggle, especially in the churches. They couldn't care less, because they feel they didn't play any part in the conflict... I was at a church, not necessarily in North Down, but in County Down, that said to me in a Q&A session, 'wouldn't it solve everybody's problems if we just build a wall around North Belfast and let them kill each other?' (*Presbyterian, Antrim Road, North Belfast*)

Similarly, the senior Catholic cleric also focused on class-based division, but noted how that division ironically led to the unity of middle-class Catholics and Protestants with regard to grammar school education:

I'm also conscious that, in our divided society, there is no problem
between the Catholic grammar schools and the
nondenominational grammar schools defending what suits them.
They feel very united in that... We can't just let people off the
hook by saying, 'let's get rid of all this sectarianism' and not
acknowledge the social sectarianism, the snobbery, what we're
creating here for a society divided and diced in a different way into
the future. The ideology of any society is the ideology of the ruling
class. They pose the questions that you ask (*Senior Catholic cleric*).

The Methodist minister in Tigers Bay, North Belfast spoke of the role he felt his
church was playing in local community empowerment:

Two mums from Tigers Bay came to me... One mum, her son had
committed suicide and the other had a son who was going through
rehabilitation and coming off drugs. They wanted to create a space
for parents like themselves. And I said yes... That group has now
matured and has eighteen women (and) they've gotten training,
educated themselves, they've brought in educators. And it's now a
good, strong group of people. And when they look at themselves
and see how they've been transformed, they attribute that to the
church. Even though there's no preaching (*Methodist minister,
Tigers Bay, North Belfast*).

The Catholic priest in North Belfast drew attention to the role played by Catholic
priests in the Holy Cross dispute:

For me, it began with the Holy Cross blockade. And there were two
priest who took quite a liberation theology approach; the 'church
of the street', as it were. By doing that, it shocked everybody; it
shocked our own people because they couldn't believe that two
priests would put their lives at risk for their children; it shocked
the people leading the blockade... So, from that perspective, a guy
could come here, and he could just do the pastoral stuff; that'd be
a job in itself. The difference is, once you put your head above the

> parapet, like we did in 2001, you became something; you stood for
> something (*Catholic, North Belfast*).

Finally, in all cases, a specific responsibility on the part of the church for the presence or proliferation of the separation barriers, or a specific role on the part of the church in addressing the separation barriers, was not forthcoming. Two interviewees specifically made it clear that they were either unsure how to approach the subject publicly or did not necessarily feel that it was their role to do so:

> You'd love to be able to just kind of take them down, but there's a
> certain naivety in that as well. That's all well and good, me saying
> that from the ivory tower of a monastery. But I'm not living there
> every night. I'm not the one who is living in fear of something
> coming over the wall (*Catholic priest, North Belfast*).

> ... I can understand people- and I would never dictate to the
> people in those communities what they should do to satisfy me.
> It's alright living in South Belfast, in a fairly well-heeled
> neighbourhood... But I would never say to people, 'oh, you really
> have to take these walls down'; that's completely their decision
> (*Non-subscribing Presbyterian, South Belfast*).

The hesitancy to be perceived to be a meddling outsider imposing solutions on interface communities is understandable; this *caveat* is routinely employed when the subject of barriers, particularly consultation regarding their efficacy or removal, is publicly mentioned by the government or the press[34]. However, it is notable that while several of the clergy communicated the desire for their church to be socially

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[34]Any proposal to address the barriers that suggests their negative effects on communal relations or hypothesises dismantling them invariably is couched in terms of community consent. For example, the announcement of £2 million funding from the International fund for Ireland aimed at helping to dismantle peace walls stressed that 'there is still fear in many communities about them coming down too quickly'... (The Justice Minister David Ford) stressed action would only be taken with the support of people living in the areas' (*Belfast Telegraph*, 18 January 2012). Similarly, according to the *North Belfast News* (21 January 2012) North Belfast-based community worker Rab McCallum also stressed that 'any removal of peace walls must be in agreement with the local community... We have consulted with many people on this who don't feel like they are ready for the walls to come down.' Also, reports from OFMDFM, CRC, and Belfast City Council all reported that interface communities feared that the decision to remove separation barriers would be taken unilaterally without their consent.

active in their communities- and many practically demonstrated this desire in diverse ways- the issue of the separation barriers seemed implicitly outside this remit. This is notable when one considers that nine out of ten interviewees referred to the barriers negatively. The Catholic priest from North Belfast perhaps displayed this most explicitly, giving a positive account of the clergy's intervention in the Holy Cross dispute yet intimating that it was not their place to explicitly address the question of the physical barriers. It is clear that the two issues, at face value, are not identical; the former was an immediate, 'life-and-death' crisis, the type of event that the barriers themselves might popularly be seen to be designed to alleviate[35]. However, while he and so many other clergy saw a definitive role for themselves and their church in addressing social conditions in their areas, the fact that the ongoing social policy of physically-reinforced segregation- as well as what positive role the church might play in addressing it- seemed to not be a part of that remit, is to be noted.

Overall, and unsurprisingly, the reflection of the clergy survey regarding the separation barriers mirrors much of what is present in the socio-political discourse on them as a whole: that the barriers emerge from the desires for security, the fear of communities and the need for identity reinforcement; that they are unfortunate, but somehow understandable; that assigning responsibility for them or prioritising them within larger debates is complex; and that there is no particularly focused understanding on the part of the institutional churches as to how they could be comprehensively addressed, who has the right to do so or in what manner.

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[35] In an interview with the BBC during the Holy Cross dispute of 2001, Jim Potts, a Protestant community worker with the group Concerned Residents of Upper Ardoyne, saw further segregation as the solution to the dispute: 'let's be honest about it, this is a loyalist community. What was (Holy Cross Girls') school ever built there for in the first place? Would we be allowed to have a school built in (the Catholic/Nationalist area) Ardoyne? No, I don't think so... what the British Government need to do is build a new school in Ardoyne and that'll keep everybody happy. If they close (Holy Cross Girls'), (state-controlled, i.e. predominantly Protestant) Wheatfield will take it 'cos Wheatfield's badly run down at the minute, so we'll take it.' In the wake of the dispute, Protestant residents were keen to have the separation barrier along Alliance Avenue heightened and extended, which was implemented. Their request for Ardoyne Road to be permanently closed off by a gate was denied. See Neil Jarman, 'Managing Disorder: Responses to Interface Violence in North Belfast', in *Researching the Troubles: Social Science Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Conflict*, Owen Hargie and David Dickson, eds. (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 2004), 235. Interview excerpted from http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/learning/eyewitness/holycross/community/potts.shtml.

4. Exploring a Transformational Approach in a Group Session Context

As with the clergy interviews, the group sessions were set up and facilitated by me and my colleague Pádraig Ó Tuama. We began by thinking about how many group sessions I thought would give a credible set of results regarding the methodology. I decided that at least three would be the minimum that would be appropriate and, if more opportunities became available, so much the better.

Pádraig had extensive contacts with faith-based small groups through his work as a facilitator, and these served as the basis for our efforts to locate groups willing to take part in the research. As with the clergy interviews, he sent out an initial contact email briefly explaining who I was, the nature of my research and enquiring if the group representative was willing to be contacted by me. I would then email those who responded positively.

Five group sessions eventually took place: four home-based cell groups of the Corrymeela community- located in South Belfast; Ballyhackamore in Inner-East Belfast; Dondonald a suburb of East Belfast; and Dublin- and one local community outreach group in Lurgan suggested by a representative of CCCI. The groups all consisted of between 8 and 15 participants aged mid-30s to mid-70s, averaged 90 minutes in length and were facilitated either by myself or by myself and Pádraig.

The Corrymeela groups were organised by my contacting the facilitators of the home groups personally, who then promised to suggest the idea of hosting my session to their respective groups at their next meeting. When the rest of the members agreed, the session was organised.

The Lurgan group was organised through my contacting a project worker with CCCI (Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, the current incarnation of ECONI) who Pádraig knew and had worked with in the past. She put me in contact with the facilitator of the Lurgan group who, after a phone conversation about my research, was amenable to the idea of having a session go ahead. As with the clergy interviews, the participants were informed that the sessions were being recorded and might be used in the final write-up of my thesis, but that all names and comments would be anonymous.

It is worth acknowledging that the make-up of the groups, particularly in terms of income and educational levels were, overall, somewhat homogenous. This naturally, and inevitably, conditioned the responses given, as well as the nature and quality of the interaction between the participants. Different participants, with different life experiences, would have yielded different results. For example, a group made up of working-class people living in sustained, close proximity to a barrier might, like the Corrymeela groups, have expressed initial feelings of alienation from the barriers, but the manifestation of that alienation would have been distinctive, even divergent, from that of one of the Corrymeela groups. Also, the members of the Corrymeela groups were generally accustomed to doing theological reflection in the manner that this project envisioned, though no participants mentioned this. Groups with different life experiences- in terms of the variables mentioned above- would undoubtedly approach the theological reflection differently (with more or less social awkwardness, more or less social reserve, etc.). However, the Corrymeela groups were not chosen for the ease with which they would engage with the project, but for their availability.

The process of setting up the group sessions was significantly more challenging than the clergy interviews. The unique challenges that I and my colleague encountered are related in more detail in Chapter 7 and, naturally, have implications for the research as a whole. Most prominently, neither of us are social scientists- our backgrounds are in theology and peacemaking. It is self-evident that a sociologist would have approached the task with significantly different objectives and analysed the findings differently. However, the structure and content of the group sessions, as well as the resources used, were identical regardless of the make-up of the groups and would have been identical for any other groups that were willing to take part. In that sense, the integral methodology is sound and could be easily adapted to different contexts and social environments. Indeed, the underlying ethos of this thesis should imply the hope that it will be.

a. 'Reality': Exploration of the Separation Barriers

In the 'Reality' section of a group session, the social reality of the separation barriers was discussed. As the Belfast Corrymeela cell groups were predominantly comprised of people who would typically be described in the Irish context as 'middle

class'- many university-educated or professionally-skilled, many home owners in the more comfortable suburban areas- the nature of the barriers' reality was framed as being part of the reality of the city as a whole as opposed to their daily, residential reality. For both the Dublin Corrymeela cell group and the Lurgan group, the reality was framed as a reality for residents of the island as a whole. However, all participants were encouraged to engage with the reality of the barriers however they saw fit.

Over the course of the five sessions, the 'reality' section involved engaging with several large photographs of the separation barriers in Belfast, along with a discussion of their location, similarities and differences between older and newer barriers or barriers in different areas of the city. Two key ideas were repeated regarding the reality of the barriers. Firstly, one notable repeated idea was initial feelings of alienation from the subject expressed by people across all of the groups, Belfast-based or otherwise. This alienation, however, did not translate into awkwardness in engaging with the topic, but was in itself an entry point into the exploration of the topic. The alienation was expressed both in terms of the barriers themselves and with interface communities, and was expressed in terms of both physical distance and class distance. For instance, this opinion from a woman in Belfast:

> I'm actually quite stuck by how removed I am. I grew up in South Armagh, which was an enclave of a different sort. Then I came to Belfast 20 years ago as a student... I think there are probably a lot of people like me who aren't as fully aware that this still even exists to the extent that it does. There might be a perception, post-ceasefire that, you know, 'the walls came down'. So I think it's actually good for someone like me to 're-tune' into that (*female, Ballyhackamore*).

A man in the South Belfast group, when asked to sum up the barriers in one word, said 'unknown':

> I would drive past the Short Strand (a Catholic/Nationalist section of East Belfast) and think that I've no idea what it's like behind those walls (*male, South Belfast*).

The alienation manifested as frustration and powerlessness for some:

> I have a feeling of impotence. What do you do? So you keep
> plugging away. You plug at the bits that you know. So it's very
> annoying (*female, South Belfast*).

> (I have a feeling of) fatigue. If you don't live with the reality of it,
> it's very hard to put yourself inside the minds of the people who
> have to live with this every day. I so I just kind of switch off (*male,
> South Belfast*).

The lack of the lived experience of interface communities was seen as impairment to having an opinion:

> **Facilitator: Do you feel that because you don't live in the area
> you wouldn't be entitled to have an opinion?**
> Yes. People would look at you and say, you don't have a right to
> have an opinion.

> **F: So what would give someone the right to have an opinion?**
> Experience living on one or the other side (*female, South Belfast*).

As many of the participants in all groups were either currently involved in community development and reconciliation work or had been in the past, alienation across class boundaries occasionally extended to this type of work in general. One woman related why she felt working-class people would not engage with her work:

> It's a class thing, it's a 'good living' thing as well. 'You don't know
> what it's like to live where we live. You don't have our experience'
> (*female, Lurgan*).

This was similar to one woman, with extensive experience working with community projects, who remarked on her feelings of disconnection with lower-income or interface communities with whom she used to work:

> I'd done youth work with teenage boys and the different realities
> that we can have. You might live only a few streets away, but our

spatial awareness, our understanding of the streets and where we're safe and where wasn't, and what the reality of the road was for them, we wouldn't have a clue about. And my life wasn't impacting theirs, really. I bumped into one of them, a young man now, one of the kids I used to work with last year... I hadn't seen him in about eight years, and he came straight up. His reality of where was safe- he just stayed home and took drugs because it wasn't safe for him to go out because of the paramilitaries. It's a totally different reality. I shop on the same street. I know that's slightly different from the walls, but... (*female, Ballyhackamore*).

However, in the midst of the feelings of alienation, the topic of the barriers was broadly deemed an important one, evidenced by the fact that, when the importance of the topic was occasionally questioned, it tended to be immediately challenged. For example, this exchange between two men in the Dundonald group:

(*First man*) The Bible tells us that, in a sense, in Genesis, once people are urbanised, that's when these issues... once people move from pastoralism, from agriculture to cities... When we come close together, we divide ourselves. It's not unique. I'm saying this carefully because I don't really understand it, but maybe we beat ourselves up way too much.

(*Second man*) We don't 'beat ourselves up'; we beat *each other* up! Those walls were not there when I was a child!

Similarly, this exchange between two women in the South Belfast group:

(*First Woman*): (My one word for the barriers is)'hard'. Not like in 'hard' and 'soft', but very brutal.

(*Second woman*) But that one along the Springfield Road looks rather nice...

(*First woman*)Yes, but it's like an iron hand in a velvet glove! It's this massive wall but they've hung lovely plants all along it! It's just very physically tough!

The second notable element in the discussions was that, as is evident in several of the previous statements, it was noticeable in all of the five groups was there was interest in engagement with the topic. Many participants in the Corrymeela groups related stories of community work in interface areas with which they were currently involved or had been involved with in the past. For example, one man in South Belfast, when asked to sum up the barriers in one word, said 'opportunity':

> Maybe it's a crazy one, but my connection with them would be an academic one. Community groups who come into do modules with me, the last three groups were from interface areas. And I'm tremendously impressed by the work that a lot of these workers were doing. It's been an opportunity for me to experience what's happening. So it's a bit obscure to give that word, but it's the one word that I really fasten onto (*male, South Belfast*).

Similarly, a woman in Dundonald:

> About two weeks ago, I met a girl that I would have been with up at Corrymeela with the 'Over the Wall Gang'- I went a couple of times up with them- and I was so delighted to see her! It was one of those group of women who were just mind-blowing, you know. We got to know the people on the other side of the wall. The experiences we had looking over the wall, bombs over the wall, murder over the wall... That wall played a massive part in my life for about 8 years (*female, Dundonald*).

Finally, the subject was also often engaged with at a level of notable creativity. One participant in Dundonald, when asked to describe the barriers with one word, replied 'Galapagos':

> I have the strangest word: 'Galapagos'. Darwin observed that when people were separated, they went their own different ways and developed different things. And the more we separate people, the more they will become even more separate (*male, Dundonald*).

Another man in South Belfast, with experience working in the fields of community relations and reconciliation, both academically and publicly, approached the discussion of the barriers from a standpoint of the delivery of security and human rights implications:

> What the government is saying to communities is 'we can't keep you safe without those big massive walls.' And actually, that's not acceptable from a government. To me, it's a human rights abuse to tell people that you can only keep them safe by putting huge, massive, brutal walls right next to them. So it's a government and an executive responsibility to say, 'here's your choices; we're going to make you safe in a different way'... And those people on those walls are still saying, 'I'm at risk if those walls come down'. So I want to know, 1: is it true? If the walls came down, would those people be at risk? If it's true, what are we doing about it? ... My concern is that they are right; that if, in the Short Stand, you took that wall down, people would get their windows put in, in which case, what are we doing about it?
> (*male, South Belfast*)

Overall, throughout all five sessions, the subjects of fear and the desire for security were common reasons given for the proliferation of the walls. 'Fear' and 'security' were the most common responses when people were asked to describe the barriers in one word. Outside of Belfast, participants engaged with the idea of physical barriers in their own contexts as well as Belfast's. In Dublin and Lurgan, social, cultural and economic divisions were identified and contrasted with Belfast's barriers. For example, a woman in Lurgan commented that while Lurgan's divisions were just as acute, the absence of physical barriers meant that addressing them must be handled differently:

> We're more subtle - we don't need physical barriers - this is a particular generational thing. I think young people mix more because they weren't raised with the same level of fear. Barriers are crude - because there has to be a physical operation to take

them down, and that can engender fear, whereas if the barriers
are mental, they can subtly be broken down (*female, Lurgan*).

Another woman in the Lurgan session followed on by commenting how a physical
barrier had a very different effect on a community than Lurgan's 'invisible' barriers:

> They don't allow people to change your thinking - the barrier in
> the mind is reinforced by the physical. They are also symbols of
> identity - from a sociological point of view, we have fragmented
> identity - and we all are in the state of becoming - becoming what
> we are now. The sadness of these barriers lies in the fact that
> people do change - and do think differently. If a member of their
> family marries someone of a different tradition, they can begin to
> rethink their prejudices about that tradition - and then a physical
> barrier can mean that living into this change of mind is difficult
> (*female, Lurgan*).

A man in Dublin engaged with this idea of building to reinforce identity in Dublin's
context:

> I was thinking of the modern Dublin and what are we building to
> give us identity. The building that sticks in my mind is the Ulster
> Bank building by the *Busáras* (central bus station in Dublin). It's
> huge! And as you go down the docks there, the National
> Convention Centre. It does make Dublin look nice and modern
> (*male, Dublin*).

Dublin was the only session where the border between the Republic of Ireland and
Northern Ireland was mentioned in the context of division. In the course of the
session, one woman commented:

> There's one barrier we haven't really mention here as it's mostly
> invisible and that's the border. It's a political boundary, but it's
> there. I think for a lot of people, that makes them feel safer
> (*female, Dublin*).

b. 'Reflection': Introduction and Exploration of Idolatry

The reflection of the session involved presenting the idea of idolatry into the discussion of the barriers. Three elements of the reflection were emphasised: the Hebrew understanding of an idol as something consciously constructed; a reading and discussion of Exodus 32; and the reflection on idolatry from Latin American liberation theology, focussing specifically on idolatry as a reflection on structural oppression, the link between idolatry and sacrifice and the need to consciously choose between the God of life and liberation and the idols of death.

Over the course of the five sessions, two notable elements emerged from the reflection on idolatry. One was that participants appeared very amenable to engagement with the reflection, and that connections between the reflection on idolatry and the reality of the barriers were often made. Another notable observation was that people also took the reflection as a chance to tell stories from their own experience, whether these were directly applicable to the subject of the barriers or not. This indicated the level of comfort and trust the participants had with each other relationally. It also indicated that the chance to relate one's own life experiences might be seen by many as part of the overall reflective process.

In the discussions of Exodus 32, people were asked to describe the emotions of the people recorded in the text. Many respondents felt that the text was describing people who felt fearful, insecure and leaderless. The impatience of the people was mentioned:

> (They felt) let down by Moses. He hasn't delivered for them (*male, South Belfast*)

> They don't know how to wait. They're impatient (*male, South Belfast*)

> (They felt) abandoned. They didn't know if (Moses) was coming back (*female, South Belfast*).

> 'Come, get us one of these things; we haven't got one' (*male, South Belfast*).

> Yes. There's a need for security (*female, South Belfast*).

One woman in South Belfast commented that she interpreted the idol as a source of security and identity for the people:

> It looks like they're trying to think of something collectively, to give them identity. And you're carrying it in front of you. It must be meant to scare people. It protects just by bringing everybody together (*female, South Belfast*).

In a similar way, a participant in the Dublin session drew a connection between the idol in the text and the barriers in Belfast. The idol in the text was perceived as precipitating 'movement'- physically, psychologically and socially- but how both the idol in the text and the barriers in actuality impeded that 'movement':

> The calf was going in front of them; it was taking them somewhere. This (*indicates a picture of the separation barrier*) is going nowhere. It's static. It has left 2 generations not knowing in themselves who they are. So it's about *not* going anywhere. That's what it says to me. It's an awful thought- a stifling of life's possibilities. You have to go through danger to get anywhere- you know, cross the raging torrent. There's risk involved, and they're trying to avoid all risk (*male, Dublin*).

One participant made a connection between the proliferation of the barriers and of idolatry:

> Aaron made the calf and then God destroyed the calf. But if they had made the calf, would that have been enough, or would they have to make another calf and another calf? This was a comfort blanket for them. Our proposition is that it was only that... And I think there's something about that in the walls. You accept that, and then it needs to be higher. My sister's living in South Africa at the minute. They live in an apartment block with three layers of electrified wire. And they're talking about putting it up to six. What could they do, If everybody goes from three to six and you're still at three, you're now the vulnerable one. You can say, 'I don't think you can go up to six, but what can you do?' And that's the thing:

you're creating a prison; you're locking yourself in (*male, Dundonald*).

One woman in Lurgan, echoing the comments made during the clergy interviews by the Presbyterian minister from North Belfast, saw idolatry in the efforts to forge a new cultural identity within the Loyalist communities, drawing on the biblical texts explanation for the calf in Exodus 32 as Moses' absence and Yahweh's perceived unreliability:

> My experience here in Lurgan is people from the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community is 'For God and Ulster'; 'God is on our side'. But where is God? Now we are building golden calves - better bands, Somme associations, and I don't know what else - building golden calves, so that we know who we are- because God is gone, and so has the British Government, and they were all gods to us. Jesus became a very unreliable God - if he ever counted. It was never 'For Jesus and Ulster'! We have been let down big time - we have to build our own golden calf, and we *will* know who we are (*female, Lurgan*).

In all of the groups, many people engaged with the reflection on how idols demand sacrifice. There was a variety of thoughts regarding what, if any, sacrifices the barriers were 'demanding'. Many comments involved children and the young being primary victims of social division:

> One of the images of Ireland was a sow pig, and pigs have a tendency to eat their young. In a sense, 'Goddess Ireland' eats her young. And 'God or Goddess Ulster' demands sacrifices as well, and it is the young who are sacrificed (*male, Dundonald*).

> It's adults who've built the walls, whereas normally you're taking your children by the hand and say, come on, you're safe. But what we as parents have done is we have separated, and our children, particularly with the school uniforms, it just means that you're marked and you don't have the same equipment to deal with it, even physically (*female, Dundonald*).

The previous statement, as with the comments of positive opinions of the barriers being challenged, was the one occasion where a statement regarding the victimisation of children being potentially mitigated was likewise challenged:

> (*second woman*) But children adapt very quickly to that. I'm not saying there are no consequences to that. It does seem that they can mix very well in one environment and then move very easily to another environment and throw stones.

> (*third woman*)What do you mean by 'adapt'? It's very conflicting!

Some made allusions to sacrifices of broader definitions of community, freedom and identity:

> The walls make demands on our freedom (*female, Dundonald*).

The loss of common life and the chance of relationship with others were often mentioned:

> Maybe we've sacrificed all thoughts of a common life. That's it. We've sacrificed all ideas of living together (*male, Dundonald*).

> What sacrifices are we making in the building, constructing of these idols? It cuts us off from our fellow man, from our neighbours. It doesn't give many opportunities for us and our children to mix with people of different backgrounds (*female, Lurgan*).

> It inhibits change and thinking about other people (*female, Lurgan*).

> It's always about who I am and who I am not - it cuts out the 'other' (*female, Lurgan*).

The point of the sacrifice of common identity was explicitly drawn from the Exodus 32 text by one woman:

> It's interesting that the people gave their earrings and jewellery willingly. They sacrificed part of their individual identity into a

common identity. In Acts it was considered a good thing, but in Exodus, it was a bad thing (*female, South Belfast*).

In a similar way, one woman saw a common memory as a sacrifice demanded by division:

Maybe a sacrifice we've made is that we don't remember anything together. We have two memorials and a wall in between them (*female, Dundonald*).

Finally, two participants- one in Dublin and one in South Belfast- specifically commented how the idolatry reflection was personally beneficial in helping them engage with their social context. In the case of the Dublin participant, this was in reference to the sacrifices he perceived being made to the Irish economy and the Irish banking crisis:

I never thought of idolatry in that way before- the things that we make sacrifices to. But I'll tell you what I think we in Ireland are sacrificing our children to: the economy. They're the ones who will be dealing with this in the future. All the bad choices and the bad decisions the government's making now are going to be given to the coming generations. The economy's our idol (*male, Dublin*).

A participant in South Belfast commented on how he felt looking at the barriers through the lens of idolatry was beneficial in helping to engage with the barriers. He stated that, even if the barriers seemed physically or socially far away, idolatry was a universal temptation:

The physical walls can be a manifestation of our temptation toward any kind of idolatry, whether that's an idolatry toward family, identity behind a flag, in a church building. They are a very stark way that our city has put physicality on the idolatry that we're all tempted toward. So, in a sense they are all of our walls, even if we live miles away from them (*male, South Belfast*).

c. 'Re-Imagining': Exploring Living Together in Light of Reflection

What came out of the 'Re-Imagining' component of the session was a varied combination of elements. It became apparent that participants had a wide variety of ideas around what might improve the situation in Northern Ireland. Somewhat in keeping with the remit of the session given at the beginning- that the barriers were to be recognised as simply a reality and would undoubtedly remain so for the foreseeable future- few people ventured what might be done to bring about the end of physical segregation itself. Rather, comment tended to involve broader ideas of fostering living together well and the roles that various layers of civil society might play in that process.

Over the course of the five sessions, a number of ideas emerged. Participants felt that the responsibility for fostering conditions for living together well extended across the spectrum of civil society, from high government office to ordinary citizens, as well as migrant communities and international voices. Perhaps unsurprisingly, re-shaping how the population of Northern Ireland deals with the complex issues of personal and communal relationships, as well as the issue of remembrance, were also mentioned. And, mirroring the thoughts of roles for the full spectrum of civil society, the role of the churches- clergy as well as laity- and 'para'-church organisations were also discussed.

The term 're-imagine' itself was commented upon by one participant, who had recently heard the term used on a religious radio programme:

> (Presbyterian minister) Steve Stockman was on *Thought for the Day*, thinking of the John Lennon song, 'imagine there's no heaven.' (Stockman) was saying, 'that's not what's hard; it's more difficult to imagine that there IS a heaven!' (*male, Dundonald*).

Similarly, the prefix 're-' was used in other ways, but with the same implicit meaning:

> David Stephens, in his first address as leader (of Corrymeela), quoted Machiavelli: If society wants to thrive and move, it must always return to their roots. It must 're-vision' and 're-vitalise'. It must be 'refreshed'. It seems to me, that is the reason to keep going (*male, Dublin*).

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One participant in Dublin suggested the term 're-adapt' to describe the social changes needed, which led to a discussion of how much need to change for there to be progress in Northern Ireland:

> There is a love of separateness that people have adapted to and until people re-adapt to some love of togetherness, I don't see anything changing (*male, Dublin*).

> Yes. So many things need to be done in tandem, along with the walls (*female, Dublin*).

Responsibility for implementing change was spread across the spectrum of society. One participant, a Corrymeela member who had recently attended the reception to make the opening of the new Davey Village facility at the Corrymeela centre in Ballycastle, talked of the presence of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Peter Robinson and Martin Maguinness:

> Maybe we should challenge Martin and Peter, who were just at the opening of the new Davey Village, to ask the question, 'what can we do to help?' (*male, Dundonald*).

> I know that Inderjit (Bhogal, current Corrymeela leader) was talking to Martin about the new centre at the Maze and how Corrymeela might fit into that (*female, Dundonald*)...

This was met with scepticism by one woman:

> Peter and Martin don't want what we do, because it doesn't suit their needs (*female, Dundonald*).

Nevertheless, there were many in the sessions who articulated the idea of needing to challenge thoughts and opinions:

> People all through the Troubles- the 'moderates'- continued to live in their segregated way and did nothing. They were kind of disturbed by the Troubles, and now they're no longer disturbed and have settled down. You hope that they can be an engine, as it were, in this reimagining. The resources are there, they know what

it was like. Awakenings are needed, but how do you 'do' awakenings? (*male, Dublin*).

Interaction and understanding were frequently seen as beneficial to changing opinions:

> I kind of wonder about these solid walls. Some of them are wire walls, like that Hazelwood one, that one there (indicates a photo of the Hazelwood barrier, which is a fence as opposed to a concrete wall). But when you can't see the other side, it's a lot easier to throw something at them. You don't see the consequences. You don't see a face. You don't see there's humans there. If you could see that people drive cars, that they put balloons up for their kids' birthdays. Just to see what you're missing, because they're so solid! (*female, Ballyhackamore*).

The input of opinions from outside Northern Ireland was also mentioned as beneficial- if it were moderated by local experience- in bringing perspective to the issue:

> There was an Invest NI conference a few years ago and they had all these international investors come over, but when they took them on a tour of Belfast and they saw the walls there, they interpreted them as indicators that there was not yet a deep and stable peace. You kind of had that outside influence come in and say, 'this is not normal.' I don't think that's helpful because that can be shaming. But if you had an internal resource that could say, 'this is not necessarily normal, and it didn't used to be this way' (*female, Dublin*).

Likewise, immigrant and asylum-seekers in Northern Ireland were mentioned:

> I work with immigrant communities coming into some of these areas. And there's often a huge welcome but 'come into our identity'. So sometimes you could be learning Irish at the same time you're learning English. But then, when people don't understand the walls, someone might go to visit their friend, takes

off their coat and they're wearing the wrong (football) shirt, and that has cause problems. It's interesting when people come in and just don't get it.

(Facilitator) They didn't realize what the 'sacrifices' were. They didn't know that something would be demanded of them. 'You will not dress that way'...

... and in one sense, for the people I know, from the asylum community, it is an utter irrelevance (*female, South Belfast*).

Another important subject that emerged in several of the sessions was collective memory and the role that it plays in shaping identity and conflict. In the Dundonald session, a conversation emerged about memory and Irish history:

It's like what Padraig Pearse said: 'The fools the fools, they've left us their graves'... (*male, Dundonald*).

The memories have become an augmentation of our reality (*female, Dundonald*).

There's that mural on the Albert Bridge Road (of the late David Ervine). What does it say? 'Those who don't remember that past are condemned to repeat it'. It's like my children who refuse to learn from me, because 'what's the problem, mother?' (*female, Dundonald*).

In addition the idea of 'solidified memory' emerged as well, with the idea that the barriers tended to 'solidify' memories of the communities, leading to traumatic memories being held for generations:

The memory isn't from forty or fifty years ago; the memory is like it was last night. I took a group of Americans to the Limestone Road there and a local girl told a vivid story of violence, and her descriptions were so real. And I thought to myself, my goodness, I must have missed this happening, and I asked her, when did this happen, and she said '1968!' Like it was yesterday! The telling of it! (*male, Dundonald*).

The Dublin group also gave substantial time to the discussion of memory, with the thought proposed that the memory of a more communal past had faded:

> The memory has died of communities that once lived together (*female, Dublin*).

> But *we* need to remember that it was before 1970. Look how long that is. It's now generations (*male, Dublin*).

But this conversation also led to a creative idea from one woman with experience working with interface communities in Belfast. She suggested collecting the memories of older residents:

> If you put a call out to people who remembered Belfast before the walls, do you think you'd get a lot of takers from people in regards to come together to remember and share stories about what it was like? I'm thinking there could be an inter-generational project coming out of that where people could remember what it was like before the walls were necessary. It could help young people understand and imagine a time without them (*female, Dublin*).

Finally, across several of the sessions, the role of theology and the churches arose regarding the barriers. It was often mentioned that there was a role for the churches in addressing the issues of segregation and division, but that this role was not being fulfilled. For example, a participant in the Dublin group brought up the need for churches to develop theologies of reconciliation, which he felt they had historically not done:

> The churches (during the conflict) were moderating influences, but they were not reconciling influences. I'd go right back to where we started: to theology. The churches don't have the theology to do it. Their theology is individual-centred; no community at all, or just to their own community (*male, Dublin*).

In the South Belfast group, a conversation emerged about the two different types of separateness: the type found in areas with barriers and in areas like South Belfast without barriers:

> Security demands separateness. Separateness demands difference. You start to obsess over difference. The difference counts much more than the similarities, because we're all different in different ways but we're all the same and similar. The ability to celebrate and engage with the similarities and let people get on with the differences without getting obsessed with the differences- the walls don't give you the freedom to do that (*male, South Belfast*).

One woman noted that invisible barriers afford more chance to engage than a physical barrier:

> Whereas the Ormeau Road does give you that freedom. You can stand on the side of the Ormeau Road (in South Belfast) and watch the Orange band go down... and you can do the same up the Falls (in West Belfast) if you wanted to. That would be the identity of a city without the walls. Every so often you see it, and those are the good times (*female, South Belfast*)...

Another woman interrupted to note that churches were not a helpful part in that process:

> But I never see it in a church here. The churches here are defined by separateness. Churches here are walls of a different type. It accentuates the separateness; in another society it wouldn't but in this society it does (*female, South Belfast*).

The role of the clergy and the laity was brought up in the Lurgan group:

> What's the role of the clergy in all of this? How many of them talk about reconciliation, or what the bible says about forgiving your neighbour. If we went back to the bible, we'd find the answers there if we just implemented them. Why do they not see it as their duty to speak like this? (*female, Lurgan*).

Similarly, another woman related her feeling that clergy did not influence their congregations as much as they were influenced by them:

> (Our clergy) are still rooted in their own nationalism/unionism.
> They are very entrenched. A priest wouldn't use a police
> announcement about elderly safety because the PSNI's emblem
> was on the leaflet - he was believing more that 'I don't want to stir
> the pot' (*female, Lurgan*).

Finally, one woman remarked of the need for integration between laity and clergy on this issue:

> The church is realising who is the church. When it comes to the
> clergy - they are only men, after all (*female, Lurgan*).

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to record and relate what was produced from the social research component of this thesis project. The research served to give a practical application to a transformational approach- a liberation methodology comprehensively informed by reconciliation, given an academic underpinning by a social action research format. This in term serves to ground the theological reflection in the Irish context and the reality of the separation barriers specifically.

The model of the hermeneutical cycle proposed- 'reality-reflection-reimagining'- was modelled on similar cyclical models from various practical and contextual theological practitioners, particularly the first two elements. The third element- 'reimagining'- was developed both to emphasise the creative imagination in the process of dialogue and visioning toward social transformation and to allow for participants in group sessions to approach the reality of the barriers without feeling put in a position to propose solutions for them. This draws on Ricoeur's conception of the imagination as the beginning of communication, Lederach's vision of the place of the moral imagination as the impetus of reconciliation and to the place that Moltmann and, by extension, Brueggemann give to hope in the theological imagination. Reimagining allows participants, whatever their thoughts about or interactions with the barriers in Belfast, to avoid the assumption that discussion is either beyond their remit or a veiled strategy to push for the barriers' removal. Rather, reimagining envisions creative reflection on what might be possible, what

might be hoped for. For a subject of such social complexity as the barriers, this terminology seemed the most beneficial.

Both the interviews with clergy and the group sessions in some ways emphasise this social complexity of the separation barriers in the context of faith in Belfast. All of the clergy were cognisant of their context being one of division and sectarianism, yet few identified the barriers as important components of those divisions, at least in the context of their daily lives and ministries. In this sense, the barriers were- perhaps ironically- a physical manifestation of division but a largely unnoticed manifestation of division. When asked to comment on them specifically, the commentary was perfunctory and the analysis somewhat underdeveloped. It was clear that while all of the clergy were broadly committed to a local vision of peace and reconciliation and, in the case of several, community social activism for justice, few saw a need to address or engage with the reality of the barriers as part of their pastoral remit.

The group sessions, on the other hand, showed that within the context and structure of 'para'-church organisations, there was interest in engaging with that reality, even in the midst of broad feelings of alienation from the subject initially. The reflection on idolatry served as a catalyst to many creative and varied engagements with the biblical text and the lived experiences of the participants. Likewise, the group sessions served to articulate many ideas of reimagining the concept of living together well- and the roles that might be played by participants, clergy and the churches in that process.

A transformational approach as it was implemented served the process of allowing theological engagement with a social reality with which, historically, theological reflection has been limited. Ideas of how to move forward with such an approach, and an analysis of the implications of this approach to theological reflection in the Irish context can now be explored.

Chapter 7- 'Living Together Well':
Insights and Lessons Learned for Ways Forward
in a Transformational Theology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to briefly explore and engage with the findings of the action research project and identify from them possible insights for the process of conceiving of a transformational theology in the Irish context. The purpose for doing so is twofold: to hopefully root this approach into the overall process of conceiving of post-conflict transformation in the Irish context, and to perpetuate the commitment to praxis of reflection on action that should be a primary concern in practical theological reflection. Four key insights drawn from this research project are identified and presented, each reflected on and then re-connected to the biblical text, with a related parable or event from the Gospels.

The first insight goes to the heart of one of the initial impetuses of this research, relating to the popular assertions that the 'barriers' in peoples' hearts and minds deserved more attention and concern than the physical separation barriers. Chapter 3 detailed the symbiotic relationship of the physical barriers and the psychological barriers. The interviews and group sessions subsequently indicated that, in a metaphorical sense, the ephemeral 'barriers' have effectively become 'physical' while the actual physical barriers have become effectively 'invisible'. An example of this phenomenon was demonstrated by many clergy's usage of metaphorical language of location, direction, place and boundary, but nearly always to describe psychological or cultural- i.e. 'invisible'- divisions. The Gospel account of the meeting on the road to Emmaus serves as a correlation in the biblical text of this tendency to overlook a somewhat obvious physical incarnation. Through dedicated engagement, however, that physical incarnation can become 'visible' once again. In terms of this project, it indicates what is positive and possible in terms of envisioning transformational theologies.

Secondly, a transformational approach as it was implemented was successful- it theologically engaged with an aspect of a divided social reality for which theological reflection had been more or less absent. However, the results of the process were

unpredictable. The parable of the sower serves as a biblical analogy- the increase of the harvest depended, not just on the dedication of the sower and the quality of the seed, but the ground on which the seed fell. Practically for this project there were challenges in finding groups willing to engage with the process. Several requests for time and access to churches and groups were, for a variety of reasons, declined or unanswered. However, where the process was implemented in the group sessions, the results were positive, and lively and engaged discussion and reflection were the results.

Thirdly, putting the approach to work in the local context was as important- if not more important- as the material development and quality of the approach. Much depended on the desire of the various strata of local people of faith- hierarchy, clergy and laypeople- to engage with the process once it had been developed. Thus, transformational theological reflection toward reconciliation in the divided context is a matter of implementation and application as much as development. The parable of the talents serves as a biblical analogy- what is practically done with resources is as important as the resources themselves. The 'Hard Gospel' project, developed and implemented by the Church of Ireland is a parallel practical example. The quality of the resources as well as the level of material, financial and individual commitment from all levels of the hierarchy led to the development of a reconciliation programme that was, in the Irish context, nearly unprecedented. However, it is now difficult to judge the impact of those resources on the church currently, though the relative ignorance of surveyed clergy to the existence of the resources, the fact that the project's internet presence is rarely updated, as well as the fact that the resources do not form an integral part of clerical formation at seminary level, is telling.

Finally, persistence and belief in the importance of the task, and the persistence of committed individuals to that task, remain of primary importance. The history of theological reflection and action toward reconciliation in the Irish context shows that it was often highly-motivated individuals and groups *within or alongside churches*- as opposed to the centralised organisations of the churches themselves- who drove the majority of reconciliation initiatives forward. Moreover, these persistent individuals and groups often operated outside of the support or tacit approval- and often to the general indifference- of their respective church authorities. When current trends are assessed, this state of affairs will more than likely be the prevailing norm, making persistence in the effort all the more crucial. The parable of the midnight guest

serves as a biblical analogy- the desire of the host of the midnight guest to see to the vital remit of hospitality, in the face of his neighbour's apathy and indifference, did not detract from the importance of the task and precipitated his persistence all the more.

1.   **The Road to Emmaus- Luke 24:13-35:**
Noticing Anew the Material that was Deemed 'Invisible'

An initial impetus of this research was the observation that the invisible psychological and social 'barriers' in the hearts and minds as a result of sectarianism seemed to receive considerably more attention in the collective social reflection of the Irish context than did the physical barriers. This was despite the physical barriers' being such a prominent mechanism of safety, security and identity in post-conflict Belfast. Moreover, there appeared to be little reflection on any possible inter-relationship between the invisible and the physical barriers. This is not to say that people saw no relationship between the two, but rather that the relationship seemed to only be perceived as mono-directional- the physical barriers were a product of the invisible ones. The sensible remedy, then, was to focus the majority of attention, reflection and resources into helping people move beyond the invisible barriers, at which point the need and the desire for the physical barriers would diminish. This course of action represents the majority of theological and social reflection in the Irish context, both pre- and post-Good Friday Agreement.

Since the Good Friday Agreement, however, the physical barriers in Belfast have proliferated at a rate that exceeds that of the entire period during the conflict. Moreover, subsequent historical events show that, in many locations and related to a number of contentious issues, relations between the two communities are often as tenuous as ever. In keeping with the definition of reconciliation proposed in chapter 2, many residents in Belfast, particularly those at interfaces where physically-reinforced segregation is most prevalent, might indeed be living together, but reluctantly and extremely tenuously. In contexts where the separation barriers have proliferated, 'living together well' remains largely unrealised and easily derailed by any one of many unresolved contentious issues.

As was discussed in chapter 3, the barriers- invisible and visible- are inter-related, yet their symbiosis has not been a source of sustained reflection. However, an insight that has emerged from the action research of this project leads to another

conception of that symbiosis. It can be conceived of in this way: in a sense, the invisible barriers- by reason of being the concerted subject of the majority of theological reflection toward reconciliation- are, in the perception of many people of faith, the barriers that are the most easily recognisable- the most 'visible' and the most 'tangible'. For many, it is the invisible barriers that are more easily 'seen' and 'felt'. They are the more 'tactile', the more readily locatable. As so much of Christianity's belief and practice is based around the centrality of impalpable, spiritual concepts such as the 'heart' and the 'soul', the effects of the conflict on peoples' hearts are, perhaps, the more readily understandable, identifiable and the more easily engaged with. Crucially, as the majority of people in Belfast- particularly people of faith actively fostering theological refection toward reconciliation- do not physically live near physical barriers and are not compelled to engage with their most dramatic social effects on a daily basis, the invisible barriers are, in a sense, 'closer' and more common.

Conversely, the actual, visible barriers- the network of physical walls, gates, fences and locks made from concrete, steel, brick and iron- have become, in the perception of many people of faith, the barriers that are the most ephemeral and invisible. For many, it is the visible barriers that are unnoticed, un-approached and untouched. Crucially, as so much of institutional Christianity's belief and practice in the Irish context has not engaged with reflection on social reality in the manner to which Latin American liberation theology placed notable emphasis, the connections between the material and ephemeral aspects of the conflict are, perhaps, more incomprehensible- and therefore more readily avoided.

This insight began to coalesce during the clergy interviews. As was discussed in the last chapter, the majority did not engage with the reality of the barriers or see them as an immediately pressing issue in their daily life and ministry. However, it was notable that even though the barriers were rarely linked with the issues of division, when addressing the divisions apparent to them in their ministries, several clergy employed terminology and metaphor of location, direction, place and boundary:

> The mentalities are still deeply, deeply **entrenched** (*Methodist, city centre*)

> My dream is that, one of things I'd like to achieve is that if I could erase the **boundaries** between Church and community... where

the **boundaries** between the sacred space and the community are not obvious... (*Methodist, Tigers Bay, North Belfast*)

... there's a sense in which Jesus often invited the rich and the influential, but in a sense I think he was more naturally found **on the edges**, with the pushed-out ones (*Methodist, East Belfast*).

Crossing the barrier into the other community's **territory** is probably risky. But then, the Gospel is about taking risks. It's not about comfortable **zones**. And I still think we, in the church, are still in our comfort **zones**. There are interesting examples of those who've tried to do it; there are groups who are **crossing over** and meeting, but generally there are many, many churches who are only concerned about their own survival (*Methodist, East Belfast*).

... people still have **walls** in their heads. And maybe middle-class people carry them in a more subtle way (*Non-subscribing Presbyterian, South Belfast*).

The **gap** between the haves and the have-nots is growing. The sense of solidarity across sociological or class **boundaries** is growing (*Senior Catholic cleric*).

I always just say, 'the **walls** are inside of you' (*Catholic, West Belfast*).

In most cases, however, this type of metaphor was used to describe psychological or cultural, i.e. 'invisible' divisions; the terminology was rarely employed to discuss the actual physical manifestations of those psychological or social divisions.

An analogy from the biblical text can be taken from the account of Christ's meeting two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35. In the text, two disciples find themselves in the physical presence of the risen Christ. They walk and talk for some time, yet in that time, Christ is not recognised by the disciples; 'their eyes were kept from recognising him'. No indication is given as to why they do not recognise Jesus, particularly as the text suggests they were both disciples of Jesus and would have known him reasonably well. In any event, they share their disappointed hopes. Eventually Jesus- so close yet unrecognised for so long- is recognised for who

he is. They finally notice Jesus at his most physical- in the breaking of the bread, in the fullness of communion and incarnation.

This is perhaps the intersecting heart of both Latin American liberation theology and theologies of reconciliation. Liberation theology attempted to take the abstract and conceptual and root it in the experience of the community, particularly the most poor and the most marginalised. Theologies of reconciliation have attempted to find the presence of God in the 'other' brought close through the estranged parties' efforts toward the transformation of their broken relationships. In this text, Jesus, in essence, offers a transformational reflection- illuminating what the disciples had overlooked or forgotten from the biblical text. He also makes that transformational reflection tangible in his physical presence in the fellowship of the breaking of the bread. In this moment for the two disciples, Christ's life is not reduced to the abstract and conceptual messianic theology, nor Christ's teaching or his deeds that they are remembering- he is physically present in their sight through the resurrection.

What the group sessions accomplished in a small way was to transform what had previously been an abstract concept into a physical reality. The barriers and the issues that surround them- which for many had been abstract and conceptual- were brought closer to the experience of the group. One of the findings of the research for this thesis was that many participants did not immediately recognise the barriers as part of the sectarian system. Moreover, many of the clergy spend a great deal of their lives and ministries very close to the barriers, very often dedicating themselves to helping their communities overcome social divisions, but for many much of what the barriers are and what they do was unnoticed. Like the disciples in the text, other thoughts, cares and traumas have taken pre-eminence and what was physically right in front of them was overlooked.

A transformational approach as it was implemented showed that it is possible for theological reflection to extend the symbiosis between the invisible and the visible barriers. It is up to people of faith who are committed to such theological reflection toward transformation to continue the process of making such connections between the various dynamics of conflict and sectarianism. This is an element in the conception of theological praxis, the ongoing process of building and re-working the theological process as the divided community's experience and consciousness grows through reflection on social realities in the light of faith. The participants of the group sessions and the clergy interviews displayed a mixture of hope, realism and

disappointment. Transformational theological reflection naturally exists in such contextual complexity.

2. Parable of the Sower- Matt. 13:1-23:
The Reality of Unpredictable Results

The second insight that came out of this project was that the approach accomplished what it was originally designed to do- theologically reflect on the reality of the separation barriers. Moreover, the participants found the reflection 'transformative', i.e., discussion and reflection during the sessions was lively and engaged, and the feedback after the session was positive. While we reflected, we were 'transformed'. However, the challenges of organising the sessions- which took the better part of a year- show that such results are unpredictable and rely in large part on the willingness of clergy, churches or lay groups to engage with the reflection.

This more or less describes the process of setting up the group sessions for the action research portion of this project. Several churches and clergy in North, West and East Belfast were contacted by either me or my co-facilitator over the course of ten months. Both of us had worked in Belfast on peace, reconciliation and social justice issues with a variety of both faith-based and secular organisations for over a decade and we both had extensive personal relationships with local clergy and church hierarchies to draw upon. Despite this, the process proved challenging.

One challenge seemed to be the amount of ministerial work that clergy in a church setting already have to do, much of it important and necessary and, with limited material and human resources, only able to be done by them. Much depended on the initial contact with a clergyperson or other representative. Enquiries often simply went unanswered. Some initially showed interest but circumstances intervened. For example, two clergy in North Belfast found themselves at the heart of negotiations to bring the civil unrest of September 2012 under control.

Another challenge appeared in finding churches in Belfast that had a network of regularly-meeting small groups willing to engage with the topic. Where such groups were not a natural part of a local church's life, organising a group for a specific session became necessary. The success of this depended on how much time and effort a church- or more often, the individual pastor or priest- was able or willing to expend in putting together a group. For instance, a Catholic parish in an interface

area in North Belfast responded that they were willing to organise a group; they suggested a date in four weeks' time and a room was booked. As the date approached, the church called to say that no one had responded in that four weeks to a note in the parish newsletter advertising the session, and the session would therefore not go ahead.

Another challenge was that, in parishes where such groups existed, many followed a strict format such as a book study, a study guide or another highly scheduled 'programme' and were hesitant to interrupt that format. Concern was also raised over what was regarded as the awkwardness of the topic. As mentioned earlier, much depended on the initial contact. For example, an organiser of a cross-community women's group in an East Belfast interface area was initially hesitant to engage with the topic. The dynamics of the area and the obvious care needed to sustain relationships within the group made this entirely understandable. She asked detailed questions about the format and what the discussion topics would be, making clear that she did not want the group to engage with the issue of inter-communal violence. After some discussion and assurances that the format would be informal and non-provocative, a date for a session was agreed upon, but it was eventually cancelled in the run-up to celebrations of the 12th of July and not re-scheduled.

In spite of these examples, where the sessions went ahead, the results were positive. An analogy from the biblical text can be taken from the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-23. In the text, the seed is thrown widely and without particular thought to where it might land, but simply in the hope that it will produce results. The quality of the seed is not in question, nor is the competence or the motives of the sower. Regardless, the seed is productive in one area and not productive in another.

In terms of the implications for this thesis project, this examination of the unpredictability of results suggests two things: first, theological reflection on social reality might very often not be the first priority- or even a high priority- for many people of faith in the divided context. This does not reflect on the quality or rigour of the reflection itself, but on the context where theologians are seeking to reflect. There are many reasons why clergy and churches might choose to decline to be involved in such endeavours, many of them entirely reasonable. Furthermore, it reasserts the fact that the process of theological reflection- as well as other factors of

post-conflict social reconciliation- is a human endeavour, predicated on many human variables. Though there is pressure for success and results, it is worth remembering LeBaron quoted earlier: 'No strategies are universally applicable'[1]. Similarly Dwyer's warning that though there is a temptation toward 'replicatable processes', undue emphasis should not be on 'replicable processes for use in all contexts, as if peacemaking were a General Motors car to be disassembled... [2]. All 'ground' is different; not every 'seed' takes root in every 'ground'. However, where the 'seed' finds room to root, transformation of hearts and minds- and therefore the possibility of social transformation- can result.

Secondly, recalling what was discussed in chapter 3- that during Northern Ireland's conflict and subsequently, reconciliation initiatives and social transformational visions very often did not emerge from the institutional churches but from groups and individuals *within or alongside* the churches- it is notable that it was in groups facilitated and sponsored by 'para'-church organisations- Corrymeela and CCCI- that the group sessions finally went ahead. This project, in small measure, therefore seems to confirm the analysis of Brewer *et al* and Ganiel that what was evident during the conflict looks likely to continue into the future. Then, as now, energy and enthusiasm to engage in the type of socially-transformative theological reflections suggested by this project came more often from 'para-church' organisations- and more often from individuals within those organisations- than from within the structures of the institutional churches[3].

This observation is not meant to denigrate or criticise churches in Ireland, but merely serves to record the observations of this project. It is up to the churches- their hierarchies, clergy and lay members- to reflect on the state of their own 'ground' and decide how best it might produce well and to what end. If they perceive 'stones', 'weeds' or 'pests' are hindering their ministry toward being integral parts of envisioning transformation in the divided context, it is up to the whole people of faith- whether in the churches or alongside them- to facilitate their own

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[1] LeBaron, *Bridging Cultural Conflicts,* 202.
[2] See Minow and Chayes, eds. *Imagine Coexistence,* 259.
[3] The process of setting up the five group sessions of this project was immeasurably aided by Dr. Inderjit Bhogal OBE, leader of the Corrymeela Community, for his personal support in endorsing the initial proposal given to the coordinators of the home cell groups. Gratitude is also due to Ms. Olive Hobson of CCCI for liaising with the Community Outreach Committee of the Jethro Centre in Lurgan.

transformation. This project has sought to assert that theological reflection can play an integral role in that process.

3. Parable of the Talents- Matt. 25:14-30:
Putting Transformational Resources to Work

The third insight that came out of this project was, perhaps ironically, that transformation from such programmes and resources for theological reflection is dependent, not so much on their being developed, but on their being used. The most creative or innovative approaches need to be put to work.

An analogy from the biblical text can be taken from the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. In the text, a master prepares for a long journey by providing his servants with material resources, according to their individual abilities. Their task is to put the resources to work and create a profit. What is notable is that, in a sense, even though the amount of resources differed depending on the individual, the quality of the resources was not in question. The variable was the dedication needed to put the resources to work. When this dedication was present, the results were positive; when it was not- when the resources- for whatever reason- were not utilised, nothing came of them.

This reflection serves to illuminate an important aspect of the nature of reconciliation and conflict transformation work, in Northern Ireland as in other contexts. It has, in many ways, been a process of funding the creation of programmes and resources. When a particular project's funding comes to its conclusion, either a new source of funding must be found or- perhaps preferably- it is hoped that the objectives of the project will have become self-sustaining. Crucially, in the absence of dedicated project developers, workers, staff and facilitators- the primary purpose of sourcing the funding in the first place- there is little way of ensuring if the resources or techniques developed will be of ongoing use.

A 2009 independent evaluation of the Church of Ireland's 'Hard Gospel' programme, conducted at the end of that project's initial three-year active phase (November 2005-December 2008), highlights both the successes and ongoing challenges of developing comprehensive programmes and resources to deal with sectarianism and division[4]. The evaluation notes that 'Hard Gospel' represented 'the

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[4] The report, 'Hard Gospel: What Difference Did It Make?' is available at http://ireland.anglican.org/archive/hardgospel/cmsfiles/pdf/HG-report-final.pdf.

most substantial denominational church initiative of its kind to have taken place in Ireland':

> The Church of Ireland demonstrated its commitment to the
> development and implementation of the Hard Gospel Project
> through the level of time and resources invested in ensuring it
> made a difference. The project was managed effectively through
> the Hard Gospel Committee and a high level of activity was
> stimulated and delivered by the small project staff team.[5]

It goes into detail of the activities, programmes, resources and materials that 'Hard Gospel' developed and disseminated. These are all noted as impressive and unprecedented. However, attention is drawn to the fact that the project 'faced challenges':

> ... the scale of the task, different expectations, barriers to change
> within the 'culture' of the Church and the danger of being reduced
> to the status of a marginal short-term project.[6]

The very scope of what its proponents hoped to achieve on an island-wide basis in a very short space of time was in and of itself an impediment:

> The pace of organisational change as a result of the project has
> been slow. It has taken three years for the beginnings of change in
> structures, policies and practices to become apparent. In spite of
> substantial time and resources being invested in research,
> discussion, committees and publications, this has produced limited
> change to date.[7]

Interviews conducted in the second year of the project with internal and external stakeholders reflected some concerns. One noted, 'The project has gone quite wide, but how deep has it gone? Does it just skim along the top of the Church or has it made real change?'[8] Another spoke to the culture of the Church of Ireland noting

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[5] 'Hard Gospel: What Difference Did It Make?', 4.
[6] 'Hard Gospel: What Difference Did It Make?', 5.
[7] 'Hard Gospel: What Difference Did It Make?', 5.
[8] 'Hard Gospel: What Difference Did It Make?', 20.

that it 'doesn't do conflict... there is a possibility that the Hard Gospel could be passed through deferentially, without any real change in behaviour.'[9]

The report eventually goes to the heart of the type of challenge large-scale transformational projects that wish to sustain themselves beyond their natural funding timescale and embed themselves within the organisational culture they wish to affect:

> A major challenge for any project of this kind is the danger of
> being reduced to mere project status for 'those who like that sort
> of thing.' When this happens, organisational change projects fail to
> have long-term impact. After a flurry of project activity the
> institution continues on as before, unaffected. [10]

The evaluation concludes with one major recommendation: for the Church of Ireland to put in place 'the necessary structures, strategies and resources to continue its Hard Gospel process as a long-term mainstream initiative within the Church...' Such actions, it was hoped, would 'create... internal change and practical action in local communities on diversity issues[11]

What this evaluation is alluding to is transformation- organisational and cultural. The final conclusions and recommendations point to an important point: in the case of projects and resources designed to promote theological reflection that hopes to lead to transformation, success must transcend conception and development and encompass implementation and application. In the case of the Hard Gospel, 2008 saw the end of funding and the financial commitment to its staff and workers. At present, there are no immediate means to evaluate the extent to which the resources are being used at parish level, where they might be in use or in what manner. The Hard Gospel maintains an internet presence, but the site is primarily a resource repository and no new material has been posted since April 2009.

Critically, it would appear that the Hard Gospel project has, in the intervening years, not become an integral part of the Church of Ireland's clerical formation. The Church of Ireland's theological institute in Dublin provides a module in 'ministry of reconciliation' as part of their non-residential Master in Theology course, which does

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[9] 'Hard Gospel: What Difference Did It Make?', 21.
[10] 'Hard Gospel: What Difference Did It Make?', 22.
[11] 'Hard Gospel: What Difference Did It Make?', 35.

address the Hard Gospel project, but the module is elective and non-compulsory[12]. This perhaps confirms the danger predicted by the independent evaluators of Hard Gospel 'being reduced to mere project status for "those who like that sort of thing."'

In terms of this issue of clerical training and resourcing to deal with reconciliation issues, perhaps the most relevant evidence for the subject here came from the findings of the Irish School of Ecumenics 'Visioning 21st Century Ecumenism' project in 2009. One finding stood out: ministers in the Church of Ireland reported being the least likely to feel that they had received adequate training and resources for promoting reconciliation[13]. When one reflects that the Hard Gospel project benefited from unprecedented levels of publicity, funding, resources, management and hierarchical approval, it could be argued that, realistically, of all the major Christian denominations in Ireland, Church of Ireland clergy were provided for to levels far beyond any other reconciliation initiative by any other church on the island. The disconnection between clergy's feelings and the actual provisions, then, is striking.

Duncan Morrow has analysed the phenomenon of resource use, under-use and misuse at the 'macro' level of international peace funding in his role as an academic and former director of the Community Relations Council. Speaking in 2012, he noted that post-conflict Northern Ireland had benefitted from 'one of the most generous peace programmes ever':

> Over £2 billion has been invested by the European Union, by the International Fund for Ireland, by the Irish government, by the Atlantic philanthropies and by various arms of the British government. This is quite a remarkable investment.[14]

However, Morrow drew attention that the majority of that funding (87%) came from abroad and that Northern Ireland had 'no mechanism for deciding how the stuff that came out of this will be sustained once that funding ends'...

> (There is also) no mechanism to talk about how that's going to be translated into what we do differently in policy and practice. We have to decide, not just how do we continue with projects, but

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[12] See the website for the Church of Ireland Theological Institute at http://www.theologicalinstitute.ie/.
[13] 'Visioning 21st Century Faith', 31.
[14] Duncan Morrow, speaking at the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland Observatory project's Community Convention, Belfast, 27 May 2012.

how do we translate what we learned into practical change moving forward.[15]

Crucially, Morrow's analysis concludes that Northern Ireland's post-conflict experience shows that a commitment to reconciliation has indeed moved beyond 'the notion of small-scale intervention, past the notion of mainstreaming into a comprehensive notion which is starting to define a whole lot of things about where the future is going'. This, Morrow stresses, must not be dismissed. However, he further concludes that that mainstreaming depends fundamentally on local communal cooperation, which is by no means guaranteed and that social, structural transformation has not occurred:

> What is also absolutely clear is that the 'buy-in' to this- and the context into which it is happening remains extremely, extremely vulnerable... This is the pattern we're starting to see: loads of pilot activity, loads of think tank activity, loads of small-scale mainstreaming, loads of promising activity around politics, but actually no institutional change. And what emerges is a serious gap.[16]

In terms of the implications for this thesis project, these examples suggest two things: first, it shows how delicate and ephemeral the task of implementing a vision of transformation in Ireland is. But beyond that, it also shows that the provision of admittedly-excellent resources does not guarantee either implementation or application. Effectively, transformation emerges from the human desire to make the

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[15] Morrow, 27 May 2012.

[16] Duncan Morrow, 'The Practice, progress and failings of community relations work in NI since 1990', a lecture given at the University of Ulster as part of the IPAC seminar series, 23 May 2012. It should be noted that the final months of the writing of this thesis (December 2012-January2013, but based on discussions that date back to 2008) saw the establishment of the Irish Churches Peace Project, a joint initiative of the four main Irish denominations (Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist) along with the Irish Council of Churches. Two points are notable about the news: first, it shows that the churches certainly maintain a public commitment to propagating good relations between their various constituencies in the post-conflict context. However, echoing Morrow's analysis, the fact that the majority of the £1.3 million in funding was coming from EU funding sources continues to press the question of how local peacemaking can become self-sustaining, as well as how much local peacemaking would occur without such outside funding being made available. See 'Churches recruit peace project staff', available at: http://www.presbyterianireland.org/News/Article/2013-(1)/Churches-Recruit-Peace-Project-Staff, internet, accessed 18 June 2013.

ongoing investment in the resources that the people of faith have at their disposal and that those resources- the 'talents'- hopefully work to engender and enable.

4. Parable of the Midnight Guest- Luke 11:5-8:
The Persistence of Dedicated Individuals and Groups

The final insight that came out of this project builds on the previous three, and concerns persistence. There was the persistence of continuing the task of setting up the action research in the midst of initial setbacks. There is the persistence needed to implement and apply resources developed to foster transformative theological reflection. Finally, there is the persistence that seeks to articulate the value of the task of transformative theological reflection as well as to continue to pursue the actual task of transformative theological reflection, often in the midst of general indifference from- historically and currently- the institutional churches and wider civil society.

An analogy from the biblical text can be taken from the parable of the midnight guest in the Gospel of Luke 11:5-8. In the text, the natural importance of persistence in prayer is explained against the absurdity of denying the means of hospitality to one who unexpectedly needs them. Alternatively, the text can be read, not as an illustration of the persistence needed to make one's requests known to God, but God's persistence in attempting to overcome the indifference displayed toward the demands of hospitality and justice.

In the case of either reading, what is notable is that the enquirer is not met so much with hostility as with indifference. The one being entreated demands not to be bothered. His own concerns and the comfort and calm of his own family are preeminent in his mind, and he is keen that the needs of the enquirer not disturb his own concerns. Understood against the cultural centrality of hospitality in the minds of the parable's audience, the actions of the one being entreated would be deemed unthinkable. Yet the parable declares that persistence overcomes the indifference and the enquirer will eventually receive his request.

In terms of the implications for this thesis project, it relates to some of the recent analysis mentioned earlier- by Brewer *et al*, Ganiel, Liechty and Clegg and Morrow- on the roles played by the churches before, during and after the conflict. Such analysis remarked upon how theological reflection in the Irish context on peacemaking, reconciliation and social issues related to conflict and sectarianism-

such as there was- emerged either from groups *alongside* the institutional churches or by specifically-motivated 'maverick' individuals *within* churches as opposed to emerging from the centralised structures or hierarchies of the institutional churches themselves.

In the case of the former, prominent examples of theological reflection of this type during the conflict in Northern Ireland are the thought and practice of the Corrymeela community, influenced by René Girard's work regarding spatial and temporal mimesis and scapegoating[17]. Former Corrymeela director, the late David Stevens, specifically applied biblical theological reflection to the divisions in Northern Ireland[18]. Stevens was also a prominent figure within the Faith and Politics Group, an independent inter-church group with membership across several Christian denominations[19]. The extensive theological reflections on communal symbolism and identity produced by ECONI/CCCI have already been explored in chapter 4. Finally, there was the 'Moving Beyond Sectarianism' project developed by Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg for the Irish School of Ecumenics, also extensively explored earlier.

Two prominent examples of the latter are the Rev. Ken Newell and Fr. Gerry Reynolds, founders of the Clonard-Fitzroy Partnership in 1981 and Laura Coulter, who oversaw the Presbyterian Church's 'Gospel in Conflict' Programme which, while officially sanctioned by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, received the majority of its funding from outside the church and owed much of its impetus to Coulter's individual efforts. In both cases, support for such efforts from their institutional churches was not hostile, but often muted or simply tacit. No official moves were made to silence or terminate their work, but neither were there concerted efforts to replicate or expand upon it[20].

The 'maverick' voices, as well as the 'para'-church voices, mentioned here demonstrate that creative theological reflective praxis during the conflict in Northern Ireland relied- and will undoubtedly continue to rely- upon persistence, dedication to

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[17] See Roel Kaptein, *On the Way of Freedom* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 1993).
[18] See David Stephens, *The Land of Unlikeness: Explorations in Reconciliation* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2004) and *The Place Called Reconciliation: Texts to Explore* (Belfast: Corrymeela Press, 2008). Both works served as resources of group theological reflection used extensively.
[19] Much of their theological output, which focused on reconciliation, inter-relational group dynamics and forgiveness is now available at: http://www.irishchurches.org/resources.
[20] See Ronald A. Wells, *Hope and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland: The Role of Faith-Based Organisations* (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2010), 133-160.

the importance of the process in the lives of the people of faith and greater society. In many ways, they represent those outside the house in the biblical text, raising their voices to those asleep within. Yet the importance of the issues raised by this type of reflection remains as important a task in the post-conflict context as during the conflict phase. The relative lack of concerted, ongoing efforts on the part of the churches to effectively foster this type of theological reflection is certainly not ideal, and perhaps indicates that this situation will continue to be the paradigm for this type of work in the Irish context moving into the future. It is a complex and demanding task.

As long as the Irish context continues to display the dynamics of a deeply divided society, however, the importance of the task remains. The implications for the Irish churches are considerable. Smyth notes:

> In the struggle to overcome violence, Christians must face up to their own responsibility for the fact that sectarianism has cost lives, that divided churches cost lives, and that this stifles the gospel of peace.[21]

Liechty and Clegg stress the decisions that the Irish churches at all levels must make:

> The Church has a choice. They can choose to play a role in the public and ongoing healing process in Northern Ireland or they can be consigned to oblivion... If they are to play a role then it is crucial that they lead the process of 'necessary judgment', starting with themselves.[22]

A possible example of the nature of this 'oblivion' is demonstrated by the fact that in a 24-page supplement published in May 2007 by the Belfast magazine *Fortnight* entitled 'What to Do about Equality, Good Relations, and a Shared Future', the word 'church' did not appear once[23]. The intervening years have not seen the perception of churches as integral actors in post-conflict transformation markedly change. It inevitably leads to the conclusion that, despite the cultural, sacramental, and communal richness that the churches have brought to their own communities, by

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[21] Geraldine Smyth, 'Churches in Ireland: Journeys in Identity and Communion', *Ecumenical Review* vol. 53, no. 2 (2001), 165.
[22] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 280.
[23] *Fortnight* magazine supplement, "What To Do about Equality, Good Relations, and a Shared Future?" May 2007, no. 453.

their never adequately addressing the full implications of the sectarian system on their communities or their own culpability in maintaining it, their role in post-conflict transformation process will be understood- by broader society and themselves-to be limited.

The final word on the persistence that the people of faith in the Irish context must display is best summed up by the 'Hard Gospel' evaluation: 'success can only be measured in terms of any change that actually takes place in the future.' The transformation of social structures that inhibit liberation, as well as of those social structures that inhibit reconciliation, remains the measuring rod.

Conclusion

The commitment to praxis as one of the key ongoing legacies of Latin American liberation theology was at the heart of the formulation of the action research of this project. In keeping with that commitment, this chapter sought to identify and describe insights taken from the clergy interviews and the group sessions that might serve to inform attempts to take the findings of this research forward.

First, the inter-relationship of the invisible, psychological barriers and the physical separation was described in chapter 3, but the action research indicated that, to many, the invisible sectarian 'barriers' are often more 'visible' than the physical separation barriers- which in turn are often *de facto* 'invisible'. A transformational approach sought to illuminate those *de facto* 'invisible' physical separation barriers to those for whom they were previously unnoticed. The account of the encounter on the road to Emmaus in the Gospel of Luke serves as an illustration of how the physical, incarnated Christ- 'invisible' to the disciples because of their emotional despair- becomes 'visible' through Christ's own reflection and the communal action of the breaking of the bread.

Secondly, the group sessions accomplished what they were designed to do-theologically reflect on a social reality in the light of faith for which theological reflection had not previously been prevalent. However, that success was predicated on many mitigating factors that make such results unpredictable. The desire to pursue such theological reflection is crucial. When a transformational approach's 'seed' encounters fertile 'soil'- as in the Gospel parable of the sower- outcomes can be positive.

Thirdly, resources developed to facilitate theological reflection, like those developed for this research and the more extensive and detailed ones of the 'Hard Gospel' project, depend not simply on being developed but on being put to use. The parable of the talents serves as a metaphor for this phenomenon- Those 'talents' that are implemented are often materially no different from those left idle. In the same way, transformational resources must be applied to theological reflection in an ongoing, sustained manner to be of an ongoing benefit.

Lastly, the culmination of these insights points to the need for persistence on the part of dedicated individuals and groups committed to theological reflections toward transformation. This commitment- reflected in the parable of the midnight guest- rests in the belief in the importance of the task. It is also manifested against the apathy and indifference of the many. Nevertheless, persistence is crucial, combined with a vision of hope and transformation and it can help illuminate the role that the churches in the Irish context can play in the post-conflict transformational process.

Conclusion

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This project has sought to explore how theology might be done with integrity in Belfast, a deeply-divided context. The separation barriers serve as evidence of just how divided Belfast is, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. The dynamics that have led to the barriers being constructed- the desire for security, the fear and lack of trust in a perceived threatening 'other', and desires to physically reinforce communal identities- are still present in many parts of the city. The barriers are both products of these dynamics and a perpetuation of them, constantly standing as a reminder of a violent history and an uncertain future. Whatever benefits the Good Friday Agreement has brought to Northern Ireland, those benefits are not seen by many interface communities as sufficient cause to reconsider their continued physically-reinforced segregation. For many, there is obviously still something or someone to fear, things to protect and threats to repel.

As was stated earlier, wanting safety and security for oneself and one's family in ones' own home in a modern European city is not unreasonable. Yet for many people in large parts of Belfast, intimidation and sporadic violence are common occurrences. I and my family became acutely aware of this during the writing of this thesis, when we were subjected to ongoing intimidation in our neighbourhood in North Belfast where we had bought a house. For three years we were made to feel unwelcome and unsafe, mostly at the hands of a small group of teenage young men.

Initially, as we were newcomers to the neighbourhood, our neighbours were pleasant and polite. But since we were not part of the deep pattern of local relationships common to such areas of working-class Belfast- and obviously made no presumptions to be- we would never have been considered 'from' the area by locals. Over time it became clear that not being 'from' such an area imposed limits for being 'in' such an area.

Many of our difficulties came as a result of having to be especially conscious of the needs of our son, who has autism. He is intelligent, creative and very funny, but his ability to play and interact with other children has always been challenged. This is particularly the case when other children are loud, aggressive, impatient and physical. He can become overwhelmed quickly in such situations, leading to what we

call a 'meltdown'. It quickly became apparent that certain local children found it amusing to cause such a 'meltdown', something that can affect our son deeply for hours.

It was often at this point that my wife would have to intervene and tell other children that they would have to leave our home or garden. They didn't always leave gracefully but would often act aggressively and with disrespect. It became apparent that, for certain children, tormenting my wife in this way was part of the amusement.

Over time, stones were thrown at our windows. If it snowed, a crowd of young men would stand outside and throw snowballs at our picture window for hours. The tyres of our car were slashed. Fireworks were put through our letter box. Graffiti was daubed on our fence and on our home.

Our efforts to deal with this were very often frustrated. The perpetrators and their parents ignored us. The police, on the occasions when they did come round when we phoned, sympathised with us but made it clear that there were limits to their abilities to stop the behaviour. We tensed up every time someone walked past the front window, always wondering when the next 'incident' would be.

Exhausted and debilitated, we eventually sold the house. For various reasons relating to mental and physical health, the strain of living in the area was becoming more than we were able to bear. We made the difficult decision that my wife and the children would move back to the US while I remained behind to complete the final year and a half of my doctoral studies. Skype and email made the time and distance bearable, but the sense of loneliness and loss- for all of us- were always near the surface. My wife deeply missed many friends and loved ones in Belfast, and we both regretted the loss of our life in Belfast, our home for 11 years.

These experiences, occurring during this thesis project, helped me to personally understand the emotions and feelings that lead people to seek after safety and security, in whatever form. However, I'm also aware that family had options that many others did not. Most people living along Belfast's interfaces very often do not have the ability to move, to leave the country, to rebuild a life elsewhere. This is, perhaps, the main reason why the issues surrounding the separation barriers involve 'liberation'. The political, cultural and economic marginalisation perceived by many in

areas where the barriers proliferate are serious obstacles to any conception of living well in the midst of such realities. The constant reality of the 'other' community- who very often represent the perceived threat which the existence of the barrier is intended to mitigate- is the foremost reason why the issues involve reconciliation.

This thesis sought to answer two interrelated questions. The first was: *How might a transformational theology be formulated that is informed equally by the legacy of Latin American liberation theology and theologies of reconciliation?* The second was: *How might such a theology benefit efforts to formulate a reflection on a specifically physical aspect of sectarianism and segregation in Belfast, Northern Ireland: the separation barriers?*

To answer the first question, the project was envisioned as being fully informed by both the idea of liberation and reconciliation, forming a 'transformational' methodology. The 'liberation' aspect is derived from the legacy of Latin American liberation theology, a specific expression of a practical theology with a distinctive focus, priority, method, and direction. The *focus* was theological reflection in the light of social analysis. The *priority* was the annunciation of the place and worth of the lived experience of the whole people of God in the theological process, and the nurturing of the consciousness of the people of God. The *method* was one attentive to praxis and the community involved in a cyclical process of reflection and action. The *direction* was toward the most poor and the most marginalised within society. These elements combined to form a new theological endeavour. In the work of such foundational theologians as Gustavo Gutiérrez, it was a theology of life- life lived out in the constant reality of death, *the ongoing process of living well in the midst of ongoing structural political oppression and economic marginalisation.* In such a context, Latin American liberation theology reflected on the life prophetically announced by the biblical text and the people of God- life in the process of transformation. Thus, this basic four-component methodology of Latin American liberation theology forms an underlying basis of a 'transformational' theology.

Yet although this 'liberation' component begins the process of theological reflection on social reality toward socio-political transformation, it is not a sufficient vision of transformation in the post-conflict divided context. In such a context, marked by sectarianism, contested identity, contested space and a legacy of violence,

transformation must encompass reconciliation, and the understanding of reconciliation must be broad enough and rigorous enough to encompass liberation's understanding of overcoming the structural oppression. Reconciliation, then, is *the ongoing process of living together well after violent conflict and in the reality of ongoing structural sectarianism and deep social division.* Liberation theologies that have emerged from divided contexts show the importance of reconciliation in any conception of social transformation. In such contexts, a 'transformational' theology is understood as *the ongoing process of exploring theological reflection in the light of liberation and reconciliation*

The second question was addressed by examining a social reality in light of this transformational approach. This social reality was the separation barriers in Belfast, a burgeoning network of walls, fences, gates and buffer zones running through and between many areas of the city. These barriers are a physical manifestation of much deeper sectarian dynamics: a desire for security; a fear and a lack of trust in a perceived threatening 'other', and the desire to reinforce communal identity in the midst of the perceived threatening 'other'. While there has been theological reflection on these three dynamics of division, the separation barriers have not formed an integral part of that reflection. This appears to be despite the fact that the barriers are not only the products of those distorted desires, but perpetuate and reinforce those desires in a physical manner.

The theological lens through which the barriers were investigated was idolatry. The Hebrew understanding of Idolatry was that it was the conscious act of making something, building a physical object that represented divine power and blessing. To have such an object represented the attempt to control the divine will and divine blessing, which the biblical text and the Jewish law forbade. Latin American liberation theology drew on this Hebrew understanding, using it as a reflection on structural oppression in their context. Idolatry has also been used in theological reflections in the Irish context, with a pronounced debt to the divided context. Idolatry was used to critique the 'other', to self-critique one's own community's beliefs about itself and the 'other' and as a personification of supernatural and demonic understandings of sin and social division. The separation barriers, however, rarely figured in any of these Irish critiques.

This thesis sought to formulate a transformational reflection on the barriers, one that attempted to move beyond the Irish contexts more-common reflections on idolatry as boundary maintenance to examine the idolatry of the boundaries themselves. This was done through focussing on the similarities between the demand for separation barriers and the embrace of idolatry in the biblical text. A transformational reflection was developed from the incident of the golden calf in Exodus 32, the demand for monarchy in 1 Samuel 8:1-22, the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9 and the injunctions against child sacrifice in Leviticus 18:21. The reflection highlighted how something is being constructed as a response to fear and lack of trust, a desire for security and a desire for identity reinforcement, as well as the importance of a prophetic critical reflection regarding the consequences of idolatry and who bears the greatest cost of it. This served to draw out similarities between the desire for idols in the text and the separation barriers in Belfast's social context.

This reflection served as the primary resource for the action research component of this research. A number of local clergy were interviewed and five group sessions were held. The clergy's responses indicated, although the majority of them had reflected on social and sectarian division, as well as on the dynamics of the conflict that the barriers physically represent, the physical reality of the barriers themselves has not played a central role in that reflection. Moreover, a desire- or indeed a need- to develop theological reflections specifically on the barriers as part of their local ministry was not immediately apparent. Conversely, the results of the group sessions indicated that a theological reflection on the barriers, despite participants' initial comments regarding feelings of alienation from both the topic of the barriers and the communities where barriers are most commonly present, eventually elicited engaged and creative discussions surrounding the separation barriers in the light of a reflection on idolatry.

Thus, a transformational approach, as it was implemented, served the process of allowing theological engagement with a social reality with which, historically, theological reflection has been limited. The conclusions that can be drawn are four-fold. First, the 'invisible' barriers in the hearts and minds of people- in part due to the level of theological reflection they have received- have effectively become 'tangible' and easily 'visible', while the actual physical barriers have become nearly 'invisible'.

Like the account of the meeting on the road to Emmaus in the Gospel text, the physical and incarnate is present but unrecognised. However, as was described in the accounting of the group session reflections, theological reflection can serve to illuminate that which had been previously overlooked.

Secondly, a transformational theological reflection 'worked' in that it resulted in theological reflection done by people of faith in the Irish context, but those results were unpredictable. Due to the dynamics of conflict that the Irish churches have played a role in perpetuating, finding churches and groups interested in reflecting on social realities in the manner this project envisioned was not a straightforward process. Like the parable of the sower in the Gospel text, much depended on the 'ground' onto which the 'seed' was thrown. Where the project was embraced, however, it produced a result.

Thirdly, putting theological reflections and resources to work in the local context was as important- if not more important- as the development and quality of the reflection and resources. The best programmes and materials are only of value if there is a sustained commitment to see them implemented. As was shown in the action research component, much was dependent on the desire of local people of faith to engage with the process of reflection. Like the parable of the talents in the Gospel text, enthusiasm on the part of those using transformational resources remains a key component of any conception of success.

Finally, persistence and a belief in the importance of the task remain critical ingredients of moving transformational theological visions forward in the Irish context. Like the parable of the midnight guest in the Gospel text, this persistence is worked out in the reality of apathy and indifference of many. This indifference does not detract from the importance of the task of visioning transformational theologies in contexts of division but rather- given the legacy of violent conflict and the ongoing sectarianism and deep social division in the Irish context- in some senses serves to underline it.

Thus, the final conclusion of this thesis is that a transformational theology is formulated by a parallel commitment to living well and living together well, and by emphasising the need to confront the physical and social structures of both marginalisation and estrangement. Such a theology benefits efforts to formulate a

reflection on the separation barriers in Belfast by theologically engaging with the reality of the barriers as physical structures of both marginalisation and estrangement, as were the idols of the Hebrew Bible. A biblical reflection on how the 'idols' we construct have consequences for both our liberation as well as our reconciliation forms the basis for a transformational vision of the divided context.
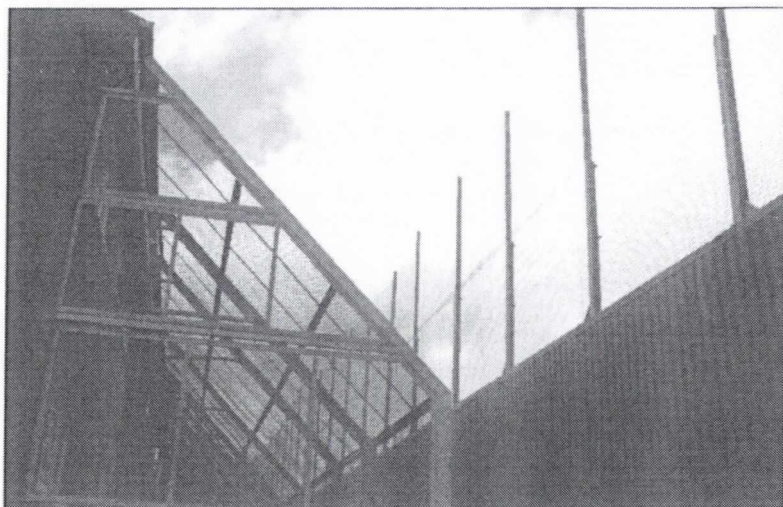
Appendix

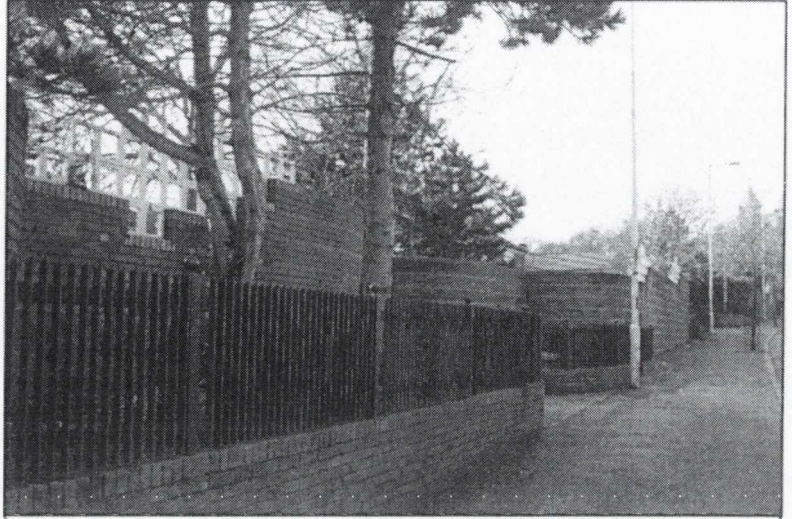## Photographic Examples of Separation Barriers in Belfast

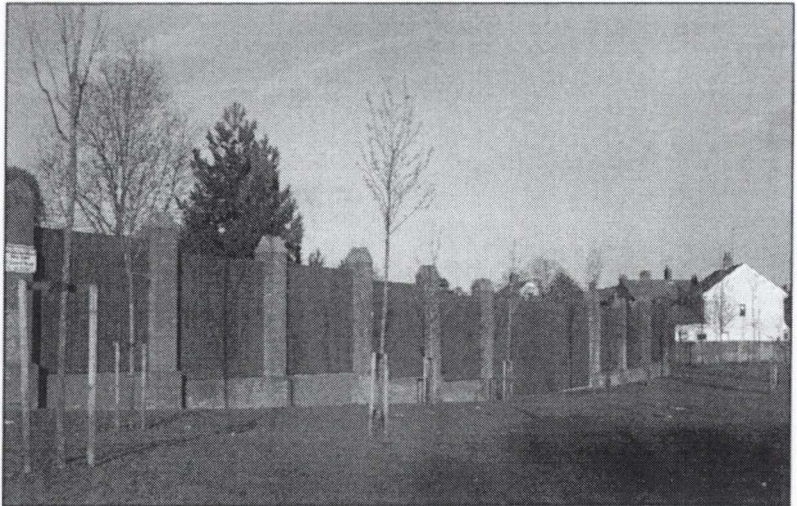*Photo 1: Cupar Way, West Belfast, seen from Shankill side*

Photo 2: Bombay Street, West Belfast, seen from Falls side

Photo 3: Crumlin Road, North Belfast

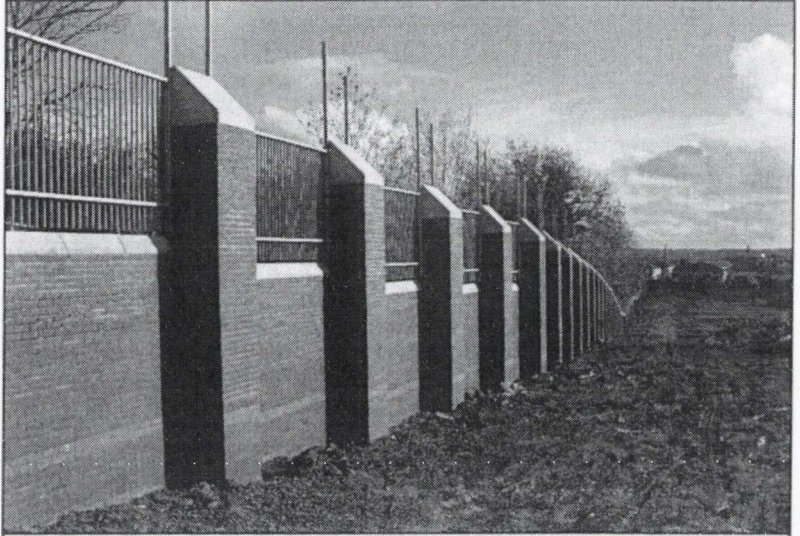*Photo 4: Lower Alliance Avenue, North Belfast*
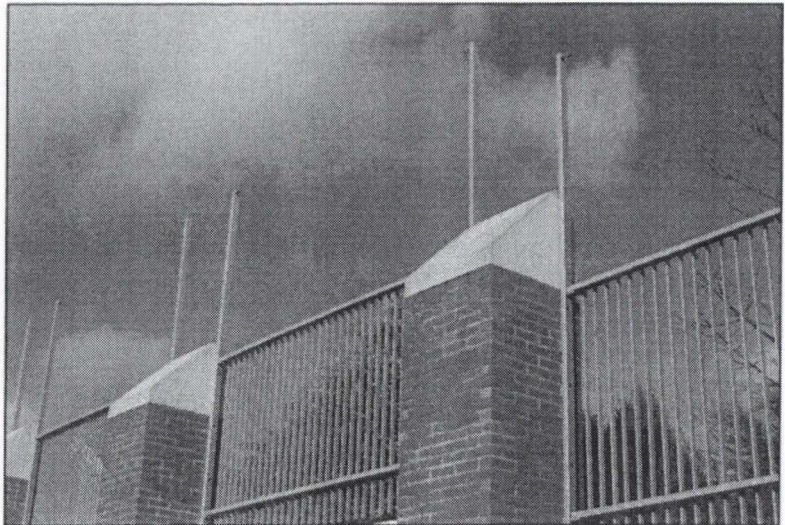
Photo 5: Hillview Road, North Belfast

Photo 6: Mountainview Parade, North Belfast
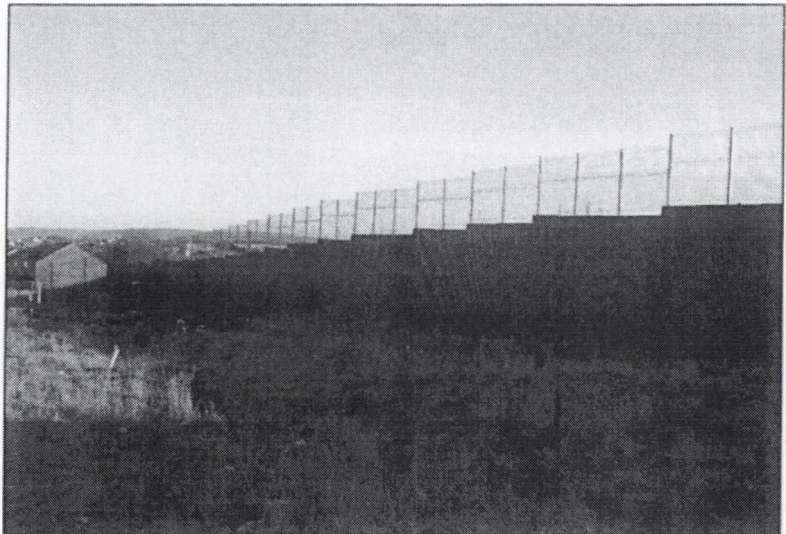*(prior to reinforcement)*

Photo 7: Mountainview Parade, North Belfast
(after reinforcement)

Photo 7: Mountainview Parade, North Belfast
(after reinforcement)
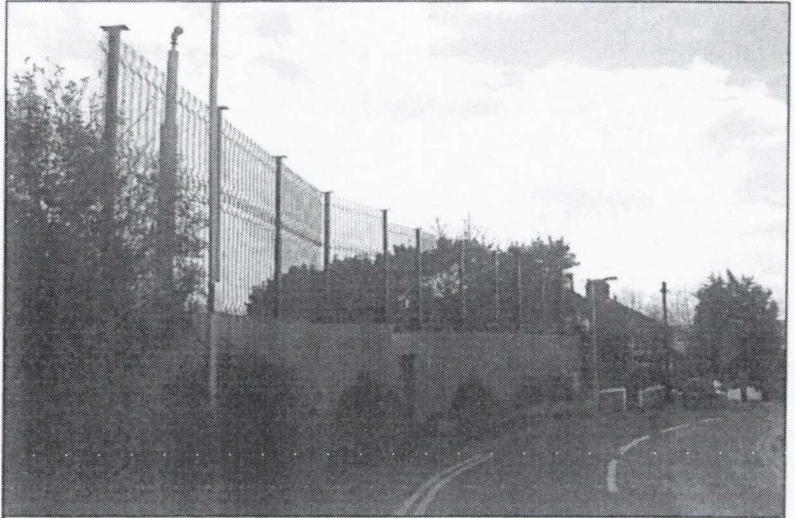
Photo 8: 'Buffer Zone' (unused ground) adjacent to separation barrier, Upper Alliance Avenue, North Belfast

Photo 9: Separation barrier adjacent to 'buffer zone' (see photo 8), Upper Alliance Avenue, North Belfast

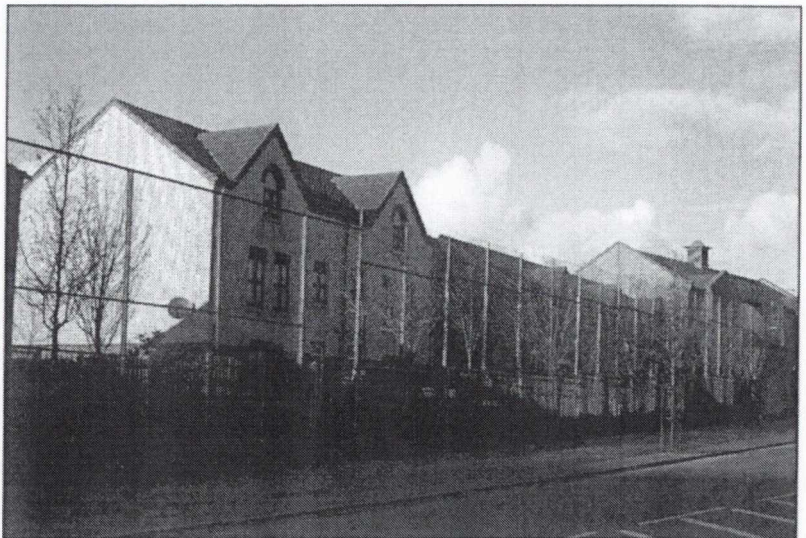*Photo 10: Serpentine Road, White City, North Belfast*

Photo 11: Steel fencing barrier, limiting access to front entrances of the houses, North Queen Street, North Belfast

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