

# A Comparative Study of the Social Function of Religion from the Latin American Revolutionary Church and the Social Theology of the Imam Khomeini Movement

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## Abstract

Imam Khomeini's reformative movement in the twentieth century with the support of the Iranian awakening is considered the most significant religious revolution of its time. In the face of this spiritual revolution, formed a theological movement in the Latin American region. The struggle against public oppression in Latin American society, social and economic injustice, the exploitation and colonisation of nations by international imperialism were the essential aim of the Latin American Revolutionary Church for its movement. But it failed to implement the goals of its action in establishing social justice and eradicating poverty and oppression in society. The present study primary question is 'What are the commonalities and differences between the Latin American Revolutionary Church and the social theology of the Imam Khomeini movement in the social function of religion?' The hypothesis is the most critical goal of Imam Khomeini's movement is to bring man to true happiness, and the only strategy to achieve it is creating justice in a monotheistic society. Despite aligning with its ultimate goals and operational plans, the Latin American Revolutionary Priests Movement has failed to produce the grounds for a human awakening in the Latin American region due to its disbelief in the expansion of justice in the context of monotheistic society and its school subscription with Marxism and Nationalist parties. Belief in the two components of religious democracy and Vilayat-e Faqih formed a vital strategy called the Islamic Republic for Iranian people that the followers of the Revolutionary Church can fill their vacancy through this strategy. The present study, with a descriptive-analytical method and based on library resources, has been done.

**Keywords:** Social Function of Religion, Revolutionary Church, Latin America, Imam Khomeini, Social Theology, Social Justice.

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### Introduction

In the twentieth century, with the beginning of forgetting the role of religion in the social arena, a significant change took place in two geographical areas and theological thought, which revived the semi-hidden role of religion in human life. Given the history of the twentieth century in the two geographical areas of Islam and Catholic Christianity, social uprisings and movements were the most critical challenges of governments in dealing with their societies. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Vatican formed the Second Vatican Council. It tried entirely to prevent the passivity and isolation of Christianity among its followers. They knew the reason for Church's teachings isolation among the followers, the Church's passive attitude to the social anomalies of human societies. Thus, the council's final article of association adopted an amended regulation that committed the Catholic Church to do any action to create justice, peace, and human rights (Ferrari, 1969: 10-13).

On the other hand, Imam Khomeini's theological revolution in the mid-twentieth century was closely related to the theological process of Latin American Christian priests. The main similarities between the two movements are restoring social functions in religion and opening a healing prescription to solve human social problems. But the Latin American revolutionary clergy movement has failed and isolated and has been unable to liberate the oppressed nations of the imperialist-dominated continent from cruelty and injustice. The present study aimed to analyse the symmetry and alignment of these two theological movements carefully and find gaps in the intellectual system of Latin American revolutionary priests. And by using Imam Khomeini's thought system to show a successful model of the Islamic Revolution of Iran for the rebellious young priests of Latin America. We are now witnessing the profound interest of the thinkers of the Latin American revolutionary priests in acquainting themselves with the ideological foundations of Imam Khomeini as the leader of the most significant religious movement in modern times. However, the region's poisonous atmosphere of Islamophobia and Iran phobia prevents some Christian thinkers from approaching these principles. This paper can open new horizons in the academic space. The research issue is about the Imam Khomeini movement and its regulations based on social theology. So far, the application of these two issues has not been discussed and researched independently.

### 1. Conceptology

#### 1.1. Social Function

The function is the Latin root and means task and operation. This concept

in sociology refers to a result that can be expressed and expected theoretically or can be deduced and observed empirically in human societies (Tavassoli, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 216). The social function can be theoretically or empirically and practically appropriate or inappropriate or positive or negative, each of which can be a factor in the society's survival or disruption. Whenever a function answers the basic needs of communities following the social system, it is considered a desirable and appropriate function. And whenever it interferes with the durability and survival of the components or the whole social system, it is called a harmful and inappropriate function (Boudon, 1990 AD/1369 SH: 112). The most important social functions of religion from the perspective of Western religious sociologists are: Creating social solidarity, giving meaning to life, legitimising the ruling system, stimulating a sense of community and social unity and regulating individual behaviour for the good of all, stability and survival of society, creating values and organising plans and organising the seemingly arbitrary nature of the world (Skidmore, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 142). According to the theological views of the Latin American Revolutionary Church and the social theology of Imam Khomeini, we will examine the three social functions of religion comparatively. These functions cause success or disruption in their followers' religious community in the permanence and survival of social movements in their region. These social functions of religion are social and economic justice, reform of human social life, legitimisation of the order in human societies.

### **1.2. Social Theology**

One of Islam's social theology branches explains the doctrinal teachings and theological principles about social issues. Its propositions have direct or indirect consequences on the social dimensions of humans and affect the type of social behaviour and the institutions of society. Therefore, any discussion of the social aspects of prophecy, Imamate, religion, politics, government, faith and its role in community health, etc., put in the scope of social theology (Amin, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 5).

## **2. Latin American Revolutionary Church**

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Vatican formed the Second Vatican Council and tried to prevent the passivity and isolation of Christianity among its followers. According to the council statement, attention to the social functions of religion was necessary to break out of the Catholic Church isolation. The announcement sparked the formation of the Latin American Revolutionary Church in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1967 and spread to other Latin American churches within a year. The turning point

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in this theological movement was the Council of Churches in Medellín-Colombia in 1968, which caused the formation of liberating theology in the Catholic Church in Latin America. Most of these theological thought followers are found in the Jesuit Church, including Camilo Torres in Colombia and Pope Francis (the current Pope).

### **2.1. Revolutionary Church in Latin America - Historical Background - Theological Principles**

The emergence of the Latin American Revolutionary Church is rooted in the historical presence of Christianity in that geographical area. In the 11th century, with the Umayyads fall in Andalusia and the Granada conquest and the defeat of the Muslims, formed a unified Catholic government. By exerting his influence in the Vatican, the King of Spain made al-Khandour VI the second pope of Spanish origin (Mojtahedzadeh, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 103). On the other hand, Christopher Columbus, with the help of the Franciscan clergy, could approve his conquest plan to the Catholic King of Spain (Dussel, 2009: 26). Franciscan priests were the first Christian missionaries to arrive in Latin America (Labrado, 1987: 146). The Spanish conquerors in all the conquered lands, by force of bayonet, placed the cross next to the Spanish flag and justified all their conquests by expanding the holy rule of the Pope (Washburn, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 25). The cruel of the region natives caused the Christian bishops to form the first council of Latin American bishops in 1583 AD in Lima, the capital of Peru, with the presence of all the bishops of the Latin American region to confront the oppression of the Spanish conquerors (Mojtahedzadeh, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 188). The formation of this council by Jesuit priests was a turning point in the shape of the Latin American Revolutionary Church. From the beginning, Jesuit missionaries promoted the teachings of the Catholic religion with a revolutionary approach. They put the social policies of faith at the forefront of their work to combat oppression, corruption, poverty and discrimination alleviation based on human dignity (Vilar, 1977: 65). Simultaneously with the failures of the central governments in Latin America, which was affected by the great French Revolution in Europe and the weakening of the Catholic monarchs in Spain (Rooy, 1997: 76), the leaders of the Catholic Church, who saw the isolation of Christianity and Church doctrine in the successive failures in the Latin American region, have no choice but to consult the council to pull the Church out of the abyss of the individual declaration into social doctrine. Therefore, in a historical action, they invited all the leaders of the Catholic Church to attend the second meeting of his church leaders, the Second Vatican Council (Ferrari, 1969: 10-13). The most important influences of the Second

Vatican Council in the Latin American region were the formation of the Latin American Conference and Episcopal Council and the first step in the shape of the Revolutionary Church. In August 1967, eighteen Latin American bishops, led by the Archbishop of Brazil, Helder Camara, convened the first Latin American Council of Priests in Rio (Gheerbrant, 1974: 36). They issued a statement expressing the deplorable state of poverty and social injustice of Third World citizens due to the performance of global imperialism and the world capitalist system in colonising and exploiting nations under the support of ruling governments and the silence of theological institutions systems (ibid.). In September 1967, 270 Argentine priests wrote a letter to the Archbishop of Brazil declaring that the Rio Declaration could establish the Latin American Revolutionary Priests movement for the Third World (Concatti, 1969: 140). The letter was signed by 400 Argentine priests and another 500 Latin American priests at the first meeting of the Third World Revolutionary Priests Movement (MSTR) in May 1968 as an annex to the Rio Declaration (Martín, 1992: 102-115).

Accordingly, regional conferences were held repeatedly in the Latin American region. The most important of these were the two Colombian Medina Conferences and the Puebla Conference, which marked a turning point in shaping the Latin American Revolutionary Church (Concatti, 1969: 76). Such a process led to revolutionary thinking among Latin American priests, a theological thought that considered socio-political liberation its main goal (Granz and Elson, 2007 AD/ 1386 SH: 414).

Due to the prevailing conditions in the region and their claiming spirit and anti-oppression, the followers of the Revolutionary Church have based their revolutionary movement on three important theological principles. They have found all social activities on these three principles.

### **2.1.1. Contextual Theology**

The first theological principle regarding the theologians of the Revolutionary Church is should deeply relate theology to specific social and cultural conditions. Based on the concept of "Sociology," this theology discusses the subject and all its components are associated with the social and cultural environment of specific regions (Gutiérrez, 2004: 75). In their view, theology can be dynamic when social environment cognition production components are limited, whether this cognition is related to the ruling class or the opposite class, a critical class against the ruling class. Hence, awareness can change the related theological components (Gutiérrez, 2006: 140).

In defense of the principle of contextual theology, the theologians of the Revolutionary Church say: "Ecclesiastical theology in Latin America has the right to adopt schools such as Marxism for its theological systems



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and make the necessary changes to adapt them to their environmental context” (Bonino, 1975: 76).

As a result, the theologians of the Latin American Revolutionary Church consider the uniqueness of the context and conditions of their region in comparison with other Christian theological systems is new and innovative (Granz and Elson, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 323-320). Therefore, contextual theology is one of the main issues in the conflict between Latin American theologians and the Vatican Church (Boff, 2013: 86).

### 2.1.2. The Principle of Liberation and Salvation

According to the theology of the Revolutionary Church, salvation is one of the essential principles and foundations of the church movement for free from oppression. In their view, salvation is the joint function of God and human beings throughout history that drives human relations ultimately to socialised. One of the most critical concerns of this standard practice is that human beings become like "Brothers and Sisters." To eliminate the unjust social system that oppresses and exploits and alienates people; and act to stop oppression using all social tools (Granz and Elson, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 332). According to them, the concept of salvation must be interpreted in terms of political ideas (ibid., 372). True liberation and freedom are regarding the release from the cruel and domination of the colonialists and their ruling collaborators. Freedom is the struggle to create a society based on social justice (Gutiérrez, 2006: 247).

Pope Francis says in his papal statement: “This is the salvation which the Lord hath proclaimed unto us by the Church, unto all men. Through redemption, God has created a way to unite with every human being at all times. But the important thing is that God has decided to call human beings to salvation as a nation, not as a solitary creature. God has considered us in a complex system with personal relations in a social society” (Papa, 2014: 112).

Gustavo Gutierrez believes salvation and redemption are Christianity's fundamental issues and considers Christian theology to reconstruct the teachings of salvation and freedom. He argues that, in the past, the Church has wrongly emphasised the quantity of salvation. It tried to ensure the entrance of many people to heaven, so deliver them. But today, especially in Latin America, salvation must be interpreted qualitatively. That is, it must be seen as a theological commitment to social change because this approach is the only way to confront God truly (Gutiérrez, 1970: 39).

Theologians of the Latin American Revolutionary Church, in contrast to the Vatican, who see emancipation as the inner and individual freedom of human beings, consider freedom as the true freedom of human beings

and personal salvation at the expense of social liberation (Gutierrez, 2004: 73).

### **2.1.3. Preference of the Poor and Love of Neighbors**

God's choice in favour of the poor and love of neighbours is one of the essential principles of Catholic theology.

Attention to the poor in the principles and foundations of the revolutionary church theology was a new development in interpreting the scriptures. The monopoly of interpreting the scriptures, especially on poverty, was removed from the elites. The poor, afflicted racial minorities, women, and other dispossessed people could correct the elites' reading of the interpretation and distortion of texts favouring authoritarian regimes and against the oppressed (Concatti, 1969: 35). In the Revolutionary Church theology, attention to the poor and the oppressed is derived from the source of Christian theology in understanding the truth of Christianity and practising it. The Church is obliged to support the needy in human society. Because, God has unequivocally endowed the poor, all Christian principles and missions must begin with healing the pain and suffering of the poor and deprived (Núñez Bustillos, 2019: 124-137).

In his papal proclamation, Pope Francis considers the attention to the poor as the most crucial social element of Christian evangelism. He emphasises that attention to the poor is not just paying attention to the word poverty and personal view of the poor, but also its social inclusion (Francisco, 2014: 120).

## **3. Principles and Foundations of Social Theology of Imam Khomeini Movement**

The leadership of Imam Khomeini's divine uprising was when the tyranny of Muslims had severed the threads between religion and society. As one of the Islamic scholars, he considered the relationship between religion and community very close. He believed that all monotheistic religions have a mission to educate human beings in all its dimensions and bring them to happiness; it would not be achieved except in the context of society (Mousavi Khomeini, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 18, 274).

### **3.1. Fundamentals of Theology (Monotheism) of Imam Khomeini**

According to Imam Khomeini's social theology, the Islamic Movement of the Iranian people was formed based on monotheism. Its content is current in all aspects of life because the only deity of man and the whole world is God Almighty. Therefore, in this society, personalism, utilitarianism and hedonism are condemned, and all individual and social acts of human beings are defined based on monotheism (ibid., 6, 81).

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### **3.2. Monotheism in Rulership Is the Essential Principle of Imam Khomeini's Theological Movement**

According to Imam Khomeini, like other Shia theologians, monotheism has different levels, including monotheism, in essence, attributes and actions. The main monotheism level in Imam Khomeini's social theology, which is the pillar of his movement, is monotheism in rulership and legislation (Mousavi Khomeini, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 1, 253).

He believes that establishing a government and political system is one of the essential human needs according to the reason and nature argument. People obey the one who owns everything and controls everything. He is the Almighty God, the owner of all beings and the creator of the heavens and the earth. So, all ruling and changing, he has done it on his property. Now, if God leads a person and considers his rule to be obeyed by the prophets, then man will also need to follow him (ibid., 2008 AD/1387 SH: 181-182).

### **3.3. Vilayat Is the Most Crucial Pillar of Monotheism in the Foundations of Imam Khomeini's Movement Social Theology**

Imam Khomeini considers the rule of the prophets and Imams is derived from monotheism and believes that their guardianship is a formative guardianship of a great and spiritual authority whose perception is beyond human capacity and beyond the intellect, mysticism and intuition, which is specific to the Prophet and the Imams. Without reasoning and self-cultivation, human beings will not achieve this degree (ibid., 2013 AD/1392 SH: 42). Legislative guardianship means that Imams are God's substitutes in legislation and his reasoning over human beings. That is, God argues against his servants because of their existence, manners, behaviour and speech in all aspects of life. Imams should have justice in all government areas (ibid., 2009 AD/1388 SH: 2, 476). Accordingly, in the foundations of Imam Khomeini's social theology, the Caliph of God in the monotheistic society has missions that are referred.

### **3.4. The Missions of God's Successor in a Monotheistic Society**

In Imam Khomeini's theological principles, the position of the divine caliphate is the most critical in a monotheistic society that guarantees the survival of that society and human well-being (ibid., 2016 AD/1395 SH: 197-199). Therefore, he considers the mission of a perfect human being as a substitute for God over people in society as a severe duty and states two essential tasks for such a position in a monotheistic society.

#### **3.4.1. The Spread of Monotheism in Human Society**

Imam Khomeini believes that the perfect man, according to the divine wisdom, has scientific and objective knowledge of the intrinsic affairs and manifestations of the names and deeds of God. He is the absolute mortal



and eternal and has no boasting and superiority, but he is considered a good name and a great name. Such a perfect man can invite people to the straight path of theology and godliness because his way is explicit and is originally dedicated to the Prophet and consequently belongs to the prophets and Imams (ibid., 2015 AD/1394 SH: 293).

### **3.4.2. Humanisation Based on Monotheism**

In the foundations of Imam Khomeini's social theology, one of the crucial missions of the perfect man is humanisation based on monotheism. He states that an ideal human being fully preserves and records the bounties of the upper world and bestows blessings on people. Therefore, Prophet is perfectly human, and it is the meaning of the Last Prophet. Consequently, it can take all beings from complete existence to the last minor manifestations (Ardabili, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 2, 354). On the other hand, a monotheist human being must be a follower of a perfect man to achieve the goal, which is happiness in the light of a monotheistic society (Mousavi Khomeini, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 531).

### **3.5. A Monotheistic Society from Imam Khomeini's Point of View**

According to Imam Khomeini, a society can guarantee human well-being whose foundations are based on monotheistic principles, which is the desire of all prophets, human intellect and nature (Mousavi Khomeini, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 236). All the prophets and Imams tried to make humanity blissful by being in a social system. Therefore, they had to create a just social system by implementing laws and rulings to fulfil the goal of their resurrection, which is to bring men to perfection and happiness (ibid., 2013 AD/1392 SH: 70). In his view, only monotheistic principles can formulate the complete program of human happiness and perfection (ibid., 2015 AD/1394 SH: 138). Therefore, such a society must have two axes: the rule of divine law and justice.

#### **3.5.1. Characteristics of a Monotheistic Society According to Imam Khomeini**

##### **1) The Rule of Divine Law**

Based on the monotheistic worldview, Imam Khomeini introduces the belief in God's formative and legislative rulership and the rule of divine laws as the first feature of a monotheistic society (Mousavi Khomeini, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 368). He knows one of the essential features of the divine laws ruling as the comprehensiveness and uniqueness of these laws that consider everyone equal to the practice of divine laws (ibid., 1999 AD/1378 SH: 9, 425). He thinks the rule of religious laws in society is a means of achieving justice in the community and the basis of education and guidance of human beings (ibid., 2013 AD 1392 SH: 62).

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### **2) Establishing Justice and Fairness**

According to Imam Khomeini, justice and fairness, along with monotheism, is one of the main principles of Islam and a pillar of monotheistic society (ibid., 1999 AD/1378 SH: 2, 267). He considers justice as one of the most virtuous divine names and attributes, the manifestation of which in the truths of human existence is one of the most apparent manifestations of God Almighty (ibid., 2005 AD/1384 SH: 112).

According to him, man as an individual is a subject of justice; therefore, society, which is the place of human upbringing, also becomes the subject of justice to teaching human society in the right path of perfection (ibid., 1999 AD/1378 SH: 5, 388). Accordingly, the fulfillment of justice in society is the essential duty of the divine prophets, so they tried to fulfill social justice in the community and inner justice for the individual (ibid., 1999 AD/1378 SH: 11, 386). Therefore, establishing social justice and preventing cruelty has been the divine prophets' most important goal and duty (ibid., 3, 113).

### **4. The Common Ground between the Two Theological Views on the Ultimate Goal and Social Functions of Religion**

Although the distinction between the theological foundations of both views has caused the intermediate goals and strategies to achieve the ultimate goal to be compromised, both opinions on the ultimate goal and social function of religion have similar views.

#### **4.1. Human Happiness and Perfection, the Ultimate Goal of Both Theological Perspectives**

The final goal is the most critical typical joint of the Revolutionary Church and the social theology of Imam Khomeini's movement. In the foundations of Imam Khomeini's social theology, man's achievement of absolute perfection and the position of God's caliph is that this goal is per human nature and inner desire (ibid., 2003 AD/1382 SH: 297) and the creation of a monotheistic society is not the ultimate goal of religion. Instead, it is the central goal and the basic strategy to achieve the ultimate goal (ibid., 2004 AD/1383 SH: 7). Also, in the foundations of the social theology of the Revolutionary Church and based on the principle of salvation and freedom, the final goal is human happiness and perfection. They consider human happiness and model as one of the fundamental pillars of Christianity. From beginning to end, Juan Luis Segundo believes that Christianity is based on the true satisfaction of man, hope, looking to the future and moving towards it that caused the spiritual revolution of the believers and transforming society today (Segundo, 1970: 128). Jorge Mario Bergoglio (Pope Francis) believes that all the efforts of Jesus, the Son of God, were

to achieve the glory and perfection of the Father. Therefore, we must unite with Jesus, pursue Jesus goal (Francisco, 2014: 256-271). According to Gustav Gutierrez, the purpose of Christ's mission is not merely personal salvation but the fulfillment of the hope of human well-being in the light of social justice and the education and the realisation of peace and tranquillity for all humanity (Gutierrez, 1989: 78-82).

#### **4.2. The Fulfilment of Social Justice, the Common Point of the Two Theological Views in the Social Function of Religion**

According to the statements and documents of the ecclesiastical councils, social justice has been the chief concern of the Revolutionary Clergy. They considered the belief in establishing social justice in society as the most critical factor in achieving human dignity. The priests of the Revolutionary Church declared that Christ is the only saving force that can respond to the cries of the poor that have ascended to heaven, stand against cruelty and injustice, and be the inspiration of social justice (Dussel, 2009: 276). According to them, there are four main foundations for social justice. First, the class conflict in the world must be eliminated (Concatti, 1969: 110-108). Second, action to establish social justice is not an individual activity but requires the unification of all members of society. The first, step is to confront the misconceptions of the ruling capitalists. With the support of nature, all people must unite and challenge the false utopia of the capitalist system that pursues the class conflict (Francisco, 2014: 142-171). Third, priests, missionaries, workers, lawyers, teachers, and all people must renounce indifference to injustice in society. They should understand the pain of the poor and weak people and take responsibility for poverty removal in the community following the benevolent Samaritan<sup>1</sup> (Gutiérrez, 2004: 185). Finally, it isn't easy to establish social justice in society without relying on the people. Trust in the elites of society cannot develop the foundations of social justice because they do not want to be popular. However, they work for the people but have nothing to do with them (Francisco, 2014: 201-204).

In the social discourse of Imam Khomeini, justice is the principal value and virtue of human societies of all ages (Mousavi Khomeini, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 16, 224).

Imam Khomeini considers social justice as the direct human path that leads man to true happiness. He believes that if we connect servitude directly to the position of nearness to God, which is absolute perfection, the direct line is social justice in an objective allegory. It covers man's path

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<sup>1</sup>. It is a moral story from the Gospel of Luke in which Christ explains the meaning of the word "Neighbor" or "Mankind" in the form of this parable.

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to absolute perfection from the defect point of servitude to the dignity ideal of lordship (ibid., 2003 AD/1382 SH: 147). Imam Khomeini considers the beginning of justice individually as the first step in establishing social justice in society. He says after the internalisation of justice in the community, justice in society will establish. Then, it can be implemented and pursued in the whole society and finally in all communities and among all nations (ibid., 1999 AD/1378 SH: 9, 72).

Imam Khomeini considers the establishment of social justice as the basis of Islam and Islamic society (ibid., 9, 42). According to him, the reform of human society is conditional on forming a just government (ibid., 15, 162). Suppose a government form based on Islam, social justice in all its dimensions will be fulfilled in society without other systems' corruption (ibid., 5, 72). Imam Khomeini believes that with forming a government, the reform of human society and social justice are fulfilled. Still, Islam's view of the formation of a government is instrumental. The fulfillment of the Islamic government is a tool for establishing social justice in society. It is impossible without the refinement and self-improvement of the governmental elements - the people and the rulers. Therefore, he says correcting behaviour, and self-discipline is necessary for everyone in any rank and position (ibid., 1999 AD/1378 SH: 8, 284).

### **4.2.1. Convergence of Two Views on Economic Justice**

Economic justice and the elimination of poverty and class conflict in society have been some of the most critical concerns of the theologians of the Revolutionary Church from the beginning of its formation (Gutiérrez, 2003: 181).

The essential factors in establishing the Revolutionary Church movement in the Latin American region are the people poverty, a significant class conflict in society, the exploitation of Latinos by foreign colonisers despite the apparent independence of Latin countries, and the silence of church leaders and Vatican representatives in the region (Villanueva, 1995: 93).

The theologians of the Revolutionary Church initially focused the motivation of their reform movement on the Church (Esteban, 2007: 142). Their most crucial criticism of the Vatican Presidents was that they had forgotten the teachings of Christianity and the biblical commandments on social justice and the protection of the poor and oppressed. They willingly or unwillingly collaborate with the plunderers of the rights of the oppressed indigenous people. Their silence in front of them caused the weakening of deprived people (Francisco, 2014: 57).

Theologians of the Revolutionary Church in their doctrinal charter, based on the two critical theological principles of "Salvation and Liberation"

and "Preference of the Poor over the Rich," state the establishment of economic justice, poverty alleviation, and elimination of class conflict in society are the garments of the Christian mission (Gutiérrez, 1975: 91). They believe that God chose his son Jesus to be the absolute deliverer of all human beings from worldly vices such as poverty and fornication at all times (Boff, 1978: 128).

The clergy of the Revolutionary Church attributes the disbelief and distrust of the people to the Church in Latin America are the result of the Christian clergy's disregard for poverty, discrimination, and reluctance to help the implement social and economic justice (Violencia, 1978: 182). They say that the Bible expects us, Christian Pastors, not to disregard social and economic justice. In this case, we may preach the lesson of God's ignorance in prayer ceremonies. It is undoubtedly the reason why people do not trust your Church (ibid., 21).

They believe, a gospel that leads us to disregard compromise with imperialism and colonialism and exploitation or to accept injustice and discrimination; that gospel is in pure opposition to the gospel of Christ (Gheerbrant, 1974: 159). The only thing we should be afraid of is the betrayal of the Bible, which is a betrayal of social justice and our conscience (ibid., 168).

In the foundations of Imam Khomeini's social theology, justice in the economy, distribution of welfare and wealth are the primary examples of social justice in society. The most fundamental function of the concept of social justice in his theological thinking is the equitable development of the economy and livelihood in the community. He considers two social classes, "Oppressor" and "Oppressed" due to unjust economic systems in society. He always finds it his duty to defend the oppressed class (Mousavi Khomeini, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 44). Imam Khomeini believes that the only way to achieve a just and prosperous economy is to implement the economic laws of Islam. The system of fair economy in Islam is based on the implementation of two important financial principles, namely the sanctity of usury and the acceptance of property rights of individuals, the performance of which can play a crucial role in solving problems and inequalities of society (ibid., 1999 AD/1378 SH: 5, 451).

Imam Khomeini considers one of the most critical factors in creating class conflict in society as individual freedom in the unlimited accumulation of wealth and does not accept the soul of accumulating wealth, both legitimate and illegitimate (ibid., 10, 349). The elimination of class conflict is not an obstacle to the free economic activities of individuals. Because Islam, unlike the socialist schools, respects the private property of individuals and



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allows them to engage in economic activities freely. Provided that they pay the financial rights of the Islamic system and the production of their wealth does not lead to the accumulation of personal wealth and amassing wealth (ibid., 36, 8).

Imam Khomeini's view differs from the theologians of the Church. Imam Khomeini considers reducing the social class conflict, minimising poverty and maximising social welfare as the goal of economic justice. While class society has no place in the Revolutionary Church theologians' attitude, their ultimate goal is to eliminate the class conflict. It is the socialist school thought in their foundations. This thinking ultimately leads to the individuals' deprivation of their private property rights. This method practically does not eliminate the class conflict and leaves the dependent governments free to plunder public rights (ibid., 36, 8).

### **4.3. Differences between Two Theological Perspectives on Operational Principles and Strategies**

The difference between the two theological views is how society creates a platform for the emergence of social and economic justice. According to Imam Khomeini, a monotheistic community is the only suitable ground for spreading justice (ibid., 2015 AD/1394 SH: 138). But Revolutionary Church theologians deny the rulership role of monotheism in creating a justice-oriented society and think creating such a society is impossible in this world (Horacio, 2010: 67). This subject is the difference between the theological foundations of the Latin American Revolutionary Church and the social theology of the Imam Khomeini movement.

#### **4.3.1. The First Difference between the Two Theological Views in Monotheistic Principles**

Imam Khomeini considers monotheism in government and legislative lordship as the pillars of the monotheistic society (Alah Bedashti, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 188). Based on these monotheistic principles, he considers the right of government and legislation exclusively to God. He believes that the ruling of the Prophet and his successors from the Imams and after the Vilayat-e Foqaha has been established based on this rule (Mousavi Khomeini, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 184-185).

On the other hand, theologians of the Latin American Revolutionary Church, in contrast to Imam Khomeini's theological principles of monotheism in government and legislation, believe that establishing divine and religious rule in this world is not possible (Gutiérrez, 2014: 92). They think that we may prepare the prologues of government, but in this world, we cannot reach the ideal government of God because, according to Jesus, the perfect government is possible in another world (Horacio, 2010: 67).

Although, they consider God owner and sovereign of all things, they believe that Christ gave the good news of his father's kingdom in heaven and did not seek kingship and rule on earth (Bresci, 1994: 106-108).

Theologians of the Revolutionary Church believe that although the gospel of Christ has a universal purpose, the ultimate goal of Christ is to establish a divine government in heaven (Gutiérrez, 2014: 180); therefore, in Christian teachings, there is no plan to form a government in the world. Of course, from their belief, it is possible to create social justice, poverty eradication and fair distribution of welfare in society in the light of a just government. It is possible through school participation with revolutionary movements such as Marxism and Communism (McGrath, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 1, 233) or government involvement with national parties (Bresci, 1994: 105).

#### **4.3.2. The Second Difference between the Two Theological Perspectives on Intermediate Strategies and Goals**

One of the specific points in the views of the Revolutionary Church theologians and the social theology of Imam Khomeini's movement is the application of operational strategies to achieve the true happiness of man, which is the ultimate goal. According to the social theology of both views, changing the social situation favouring the oppressed and implementing social justice in a society is possible with a just government. Still, the method of government formation is the same strategic difference between these two theological views. A critical point in the cause of this difference is the distinction based on monotheism in government and legislation, which has led the Revolutionary Church to convergence or divergence from the revolutionary schools and national parties. In adopting practical methods to change the social structure by the Revolutionary Church, deconstructive schools such as Marxism and Communism in Latin America had the most effect in adopting these practical methods. Hence, the Revolutionary Church put forward three operational strategies in creating a justice-oriented society. All three plans failed to help them build a just society because of the school's affiliation with revolutionary movements such as Marxism, Communism, and Nationalist parties:

##### **1) Social Revolution and Guerrilla Operations: The First Strategy of the Revolutionary Church in Common with Marxism to Create a Just Society**

Guerrilla and armed operations were the first methods some young Revolutionary Church priests used to reform their communities. This method strongly criticised the leaders of the Catholic Church in the Vatican (Gheerbrant, 1974: 121-142) and other priests of the Revolutionary Church.

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They called the followers of this method the Guerrilla Church (Torres, 1968: 134). Young clerics believed that armed action was a theological practice derived from the scriptures. They introduce this method as a strategic action based on poor preference and love for neighbours (González, 1967: 137-148). Also referring to the other words of Jesus, they introduce using a sword in establishing peace and justice in society as his mission (Matthew, 10, 34). Another element that plays a central role in the ideology of guerrilla operations is the revolutionary teachings of Marxism (Orlando, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 89). They believed that Marxists were fighting for the new society and that we Christians should fight alongside them (Torres, 1968: 120). To advance the goals of this uprising, we must have a common front with the Marxists, but it is not possible for us to unite with the Communist Party, although it is familiar to the enemy before us (González, 1967: 187-202).

### **2) Liberating Theology: The Second Strategy of the Revolutionary Church in Partnership with Marxism to Create a Just Society**

In the view of the theologians of liberating theology, Jesus action was an attack on the foundation of cruelty and injustice, but he never used his sword or armed uprising. Jesus is a liberating being, not a militant guerrilla who seeks to establish the kingdom of God on earth through struggle. Jesus Christ showed us through his words and deeds how to actively spread justice for deprived freedom (Gutierrez, 2014: 147). The leaders of this revolutionary method consider Marxism as an assistant to the "Christian Praxis." They have used Marxist social analysis to understand the specific circumstances of Latin America and its prevailing poverty and to find solutions to its problems. According to them, understanding the current nature of Latin American Society and ways to improve the plight of the poor is possible by using the social teachings of Marxism; because this school offers programs through which create a just society (McGrath, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 1, 233). According to them, the capitalist system is inherently evil, and the system of socialism, although very different from the kingdom of God, is an ideal system (Gutierrez, 1977: 86). According to Gutierrez, the abolition of the present government and the establishment of a new socialist system is the best way to act on the command of Jesus (Granz and Elson, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 313-337).

### **3. Alliance with Popular and Social Parties: The Third Strategy of the Revolutionary Church to Build a Just Society**

They are another branch of revolutionary priests who, with an independence-seeking view, drew their theological line to achieve social justice outside the Marxist and communist teachings. To accomplish this goal, they believed

that they should unite with Nationalist and anti-imperialist governments. Because, according to Jesus teachings, the ideal government is not achieved in this time and this world (Horacio, 2010: 67). Accordingly, they believed that the Church must find its allies to, with their help, form a religious government and establish social justice in society (Bresci, 1994: 36). At that time, Peronism was the only socio-political current in which revolutionary priests based their religious movement on its principles. The Revolutionary Priests' Movement, whose movement goals were affiliated with the Peron Socialist Party, experienced five decades of history with this party. Whenever this party was in power, they were also at the top, and otherwise, they would be isolated (Horacio, 2008: 127).

#### **4.4. Islamic Government and Vilayat-e Faqih Are the Essential Strategies for Creating a Just Society**

Imam Khomeini's view on the forming of government as a central goal and the operational strategy in achieving the final destination is in contrast to the opinion of the theologians of the Latin American Revolutionary Church. He did not accept using guerrilla and armed operations to advance the goals of the uprising and to establish a monotheistic society and social justice in the community. He always introduced his movement basis on enlightening and informing the people and mobilising the strata (Mousavi Khomeini, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 189). Relying on his monotheistic principles, he rejects revolutionary schools such as Marxism in the people's religious movement process. He also advises those who have chosen Marxist methods to fill their revolutionary gaps to reconsider their approach. According to him, the result of Marxism and Communism is turning away from God and religion from society, which inflicts great harm to people (ibid., 1999 AD/1378 SH: 21, 66). He also does not accept establishing the movement and the government in alliance with the Nationalists; because, they go towards enemies humiliating and compromising in times of hardships and difficulties. To free themselves from daily political pressures, they turned their backs on all the national and patriotic claimed covenants and obligations (ibid., 24, 243).

##### **4.4.1. The Islamic Republic: The most Crucial Strategy of Imam Khomeini in Creating a Monotheistic Society**

Religious government is the essential strategy of Imam Khomeini in creating a monotheistic society and achieving individual to genuine happiness (ibid., 2005 AD/1384 SH: 1). In his view, the role of the people and rulers in creating a religious government is critical. Therefore, the two components of religious democracy and Vilayat-e Faqih are the essential components of forming a religious government in Imam Khomeini's view. In his view, the

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people's role in such a government is not legitimising the ruler because government legitimacy is exclusively religious. The comprehensive jurist's ruler has the Vilayat position before the people elected, along with the Imams and the Prophet (ibid., 2009 AD/1388 SH: 2, 459).

In his view, the role of people in determining their destiny is the role of legal legitimacy and acceptability (ibid., 1999 AD/1378 SH: 6, 13). Accordingly, Imam Khomeini calls the religious government based on the two pillars of Vilayat-e Faqih and religious democracy, the Islamic Republic, and invites everyone to establish such a government. He emphasises that our path is establishing the Islamic Republic, not a word, more minor, not a word, more (ibid., 5, 182).

### **Conclusion**

The goals of the Latin American Revolutionary Priests movement were: to fight public oppression in Latin American society, social and economic injustice, exploitation and colonisation of nations by international imperialism. On the other hand, Imam Khomeini's reform movement in the twentieth century, in support of the widespread awakening, is considered a religious revolution in its time. His significant goal is to create a ground for the rule of truth in favour of the oppressed, establish a monotheistic society, achieve human beings to true happiness. The only achieving strategy is to create fairness and justice and expand social justice by the Islamic Republic. The essential principle in the social discourse of Imam Khomeini's movement is "Monotheism in Rule," whose crystallisation is the rule of the Valy-e Faqih at the head of the religious government as the first pillar to achieve religious authority. Creating an internal revolution in the individual of society is the second pillar of establishing a religious government. Revolutionary thinking appears in their souls and responds positively to the invitation of the revolution leaders and gives it legitimacy and legal acceptance.

In contrast, the Latin American Revolutionary Church, despite its closeness to the purpose and social functions of religion and the social discourse of the Imam Khomeini movement, has not been able to save its oppressed nations from the domination of poverty and injustice. The main reason is the difference in the principles of monotheism in government and differences in operational strategy in common with schools such as Marxism and Nationalist and Socialist parties. Therefore, by examining the symmetry and alignment of these two theological movements and studying the gaps in the intellectual system of Revolutionary Priests, the present study can effectively help them use the principles of social theology of the Imam



Khomeini movement:

By creating a new opportunity for the Revolutionary Church on academic environment away from the political sensitivities of Latin America through Islamophobia and Iran phobia; by precisely manifesting the intellectual roots of the theology of revolutionary Christians in the scene of social theology of Imam Khomeini movement; drew the attention of their elites to the outstanding achievements of the religious revolution of the Iranian people. Those can be a suitable alternative to the teachings of Marxism and Communism on the scene of the spiritual revolution in Latin America and be a promising clear path forward for the revolutionary movement of the Latin American Church.

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