



## **The Church and Poverty in Indonesia: A Theological Analysis Based on the Thought of Gustavo Gutiérrez**

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### **Abstract**

Poverty is a complex and ongoing issue that impacts various aspects of people's lives around the world, including in Indonesia. This article explores the challenges faced by Indonesian society in terms of poverty, despite a decline in the number of poor people in recent years. Liberation theology introduced by Gustavo Gutiérrez is highly relevant in this context, emphasizing the need for social action oriented towards justice and solidarity. Gutiérrez argues that the church should function as a place of worship and as an active agent of change in fighting for the rights of disadvantaged communities. Through education and empowerment programs, churches are expected to help people understand their situation and empower them to fight for their rights. Gutiérrez also highlighted that believers can achieve spiritual experiences by caring for others, especially those living in poverty. By creating communities based on love, justice, and solidarity, the church has the potential to significantly impact society. The church's concrete advocacy and social engagement actions reflect its commitment to justice and liberation. Therefore, the church can actively build a better world where everyone, especially marginalized ones, can experience God's love and justice daily.

### **Abstrak**

Kemiskinan adalah masalah yang kompleks dan berkelanjutan yang berdampak pada berbagai aspek kehidupan masyarakat di seluruh dunia, termasuk di Indonesia. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi tantangan yang dihadapi oleh masyarakat Indonesia dalam hal kemiskinan, meskipun terdapat penurunan jumlah penduduk miskin dalam beberapa tahun terakhir. Teologi pembebasan yang diperkenalkan oleh Gustavo Gutiérrez sangat relevan dalam konteks ini, menekankan perlunya tindakan sosial yang berorientasi pada keadilan dan solidaritas. Gutiérrez berpendapat bahwa gereja seharusnya tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai tempat ibadah, tetapi juga sebagai agen perubahan yang aktif dalam memperjuangkan hak-hak masyarakat yang kurang beruntung. Dengan melalui pendidikan dan program pemberdayaan, gereja diharapkan dapat membantu masyarakat memahami situasi mereka dan memberdayakan mereka untuk memperjuangkan hak-hak

mereka. Gutiérrez juga menyoroti bahwa pengalaman spiritual bagi orang percaya dapat dicapai melalui perhatian kepada sesama, terutama bagi mereka yang hidup dalam kemiskinan. Dengan menciptakan komunitas yang didasarkan pada kasih, keadilan, dan solidaritas, gereja memiliki potensi untuk memberikan dampak positif yang signifikan bagi masyarakat. Tindakan nyata yang dilakukan gereja dalam advokasi dan keterlibatan sosial mencerminkan komitmennya terhadap keadilan dan pembebasan. Oleh karena itu, gereja dapat berperan aktif dalam membangun dunia yang lebih baik, di mana setiap orang, khususnya mereka yang terpinggirkan, dapat merasakan kasih dan keadilan Allah dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.

## **Introduction**

Poverty is a multidimensional issue faced by countries around the world. Poverty has been an inherently social phenomenon from ancient civilizations to post-modern times. Even in historical times such as the Biblical era to the present day, poverty remains a reality experienced by many individuals. It can be said that poverty is a persistent problem faced by mankind. Amid globalization, challenges related to poverty are increasing and threatening the stability of social life.(Ngiso et al. 2023) This condition forces people to live in a situation full of uncertainty; poverty also triggers various other humanitarian problems. The adverse effects of poverty not only result in protracted suffering but also contribute to high rates of premature mortality. While various initiatives have been undertaken to tackle poverty, significant obstacles must be overcome to achieve sustainable solutions.(Purwanto and Pius X 2022)

Poverty remains a hotly discussed topic in Indonesia, despite a decline in recent years. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that the number of poor people in March 2024 reached 25.22 million, the lowest figure in a decade. Since 2014, the poverty rate has increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic but has declined again to reach its lowest point in 2024. In the last ten years, the number of poor people has decreased by around 3.06 million, with an average decrease of around 300,000 per year. In 2014, 28.28 million people (11.25%) were classified as poor, declining to 25.14 million (9.41%) in 2019. However, the pandemic caused an increase in 2020 and 2021 before the downward trend continued until 2024 when the number of poor people reached 25.22 million (9.03%). (“Tingkat Kemiskinan Indonesia Dalam Satu Dekade Terakhir | Indonesia Baik,” n.d.) The problem of poverty is not a problem that is handled by the government alone; it is a shared responsibility between the government and the religions in Indonesia to be involved in dealing with it.

Wibowo and Setio argue that theology should be oriented toward liberating oppressed communities, such as those who experience poverty and discrimination. By placing the liberation of society at the center of its attention, theology can break away from the boundaries that separate spiritual and material aspects. This focus allows theology to be more relevant and integrated with the reality of social life, not trapped in the dichotomy between the spiritual and physical worlds.<sup>1</sup>

In Indonesia's increasing poverty issues and the demand for the realm of theology to provide solutions, liberation theology introduced by Gustavo Gutiérrez is again relevant to be discussed. Liberation theology focuses on a contextualized theological approach to social problems such as poverty and oppression. Gutiérrez argues that God is a figure who feels suffering, is present, and lives amid poverty. Therefore, theology must play an active role in thinking about and voicing the struggle for the poor and oppressed as part of its responsibility for social justice.<sup>2</sup>

## **Metode**

The author uses the literature study method or literature review in this research. A literature study is a search for information sourced from books, media, experts, or previous research results to compile the theoretical basis used in research. One of the important sources in literature studies is reference books, which help researchers obtain relevant information to support their research. Researchers can integrate various existing scientific views through a literature review to strengthen their research analysis and findings. (“Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines” 2019)

This research uses a comprehensive approach with a literature review method to explore the theme of liberation theology and its impact on the church's role in overcoming poverty. The main focus of this research is to critically examine the literature that discusses liberation theology from the perspective of Gustavo Gutiérrez and explore its relevance in the context of poverty alleviation. This research involves an in-depth analysis of various theories used by previous researchers to understand and explain the concept of liberation theology. In addition, this research highlights literature studies that emphasize the church's role in overcoming poverty, as Manao and Amtiran explain that the church has an important role in poverty

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<sup>1</sup> Wahyu S. Wibowo and Robert Setio, *Teologi Yang Membebaskan Dan Membebaskan Teologi* (Yayasan Taman Pustaka Kristen Indonesia, 2016), vi.

<sup>2</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Orbis Books, 1988), 5.

alleviation. In this case, an in-depth literature review that discusses how the church encourages and empowers its people to contribute to reducing poverty is conducted. This approach opens up opportunities for further investigation into applying liberation theology principles in daily religious practice to achieve the goal of poverty alleviation.(Manao and Amtiran 2021) The author will also use textbooks that discuss liberation theology in general and liberation theology according to Gustavo Gutierrez, as well as journals that discuss liberation theology and liberation theology according to Gustavo Gutiérrez.

## **Discussion**

### **Gustavo Gutiérrez's Theology**

#### ***Background of Liberation Theology***

Gustavo Gutiérrez was born in Lima, Peru, in 1928 as a mestizo, a descendant of Latin American Indians who are often considered an oppressed group. He came from a relatively poor family. In 1959, Gutiérrez earned a Ph.D. in theology from the University of Lyon, France, and was ordained a priest. He began his ministerial career serving poor congregations in Lima and teaching theology and social sciences at the local Catholic University. Around 1960, Gutiérrez became chaplain of the National Union of Catholic Students in Peru. After returning to Peru, Gutiérrez faced the reality of poverty and suffering of the people there. He felt that the theology he had learned in Europe did not fit the situation of society and the church in Peru, so he tried to find a relevant theology to these conditions. Gutiérrez was also concerned about the Catholic Church's attitude of siding with the oppressor in socio-political contexts instead of being neutral. His disappointment with the socio-political conditions and the church's attitude led Gutiérrez to develop a new theology that could respond to the challenges of Peruvian society at that time, which was full of oppression, poverty, and denial of human rights. Religion was encouraged to provide a theological response to the social context.(Natalie 2000)

In 1971, Gustavo Gutiérrez introduced his work entitled *Teología de la liberación* in Latin, later translated into English in 1973. In this book, Gutiérrez expressed his ideas on liberation theology as a response to the challenges and struggles of society in Peru.<sup>3</sup> In the 1971 edition of *Teología de la liberación*, Gutiérrez was influenced by the views of “Marxism,” which emphasized the economic aspect (social conditions) as the basis for liberation theology.(Kleeb 2015a)

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<sup>3</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xiii-xiv.

Gustavo Gutiérrez explained that the basis of the liberation theology he popularized was rooted in Marxist thought, and he used Marxist terms in structuring his theology as a response to realities in Latin America. He explained this further in the revised edition of his book *A Theology of Liberation* in 1988. According to Gutiérrez, liberation theology was born from his personal experience and reflection on the poverty and oppression in Latin America. Therefore, to understand liberation theology, Latin America's social and political context at the time must be considered. In a 2003 interview, Gutiérrez emphasized that liberation theology comes from a historical context and changes over time, adjusting to the current situation. (“Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutierrez | America Magazine,” n.d.)

### ***Hermeneutic Gutiérrez***

In his early works, Gustavo Gutiérrez adopted a social justice and humanitarian perspective to build his theology. He emphasized action “praxis” rather than theory in classical theology which focuses on doctrine. Gutiérrez's views were heavily influenced by Marxism, which led him to emphasize liberation for those who are socially oppressed and living in poverty. His first-hand experience of poverty in Peru also motivated Gutiérrez to interpret Scripture and develop a “theology of work” based on social justice and solidarity with others. (Kleeb 2015b)

Gutiérrez explains that Marxist theory emphasizes the importance of “praxis,” which is action based on experience to build a better life structure. This Marxist framework became the foundation for Gutiérrez in developing his liberation theology. He emphasized that social situations or conditions must be used to formulate theology and interpret Scripture so that concrete actions can be taken to solve existing problems.<sup>4</sup> Rebecca S. Chopp explains that liberation theology integrates political theory and discipline while emphasizing human experience. Liberation theology aims to shape a better future, especially in building a just and prosperous society. This theology ignores traditional foundations in interpreting biblical texts, as its emphasis on action “praxis” makes the resulting theology an action.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 156.

<sup>5</sup> Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 134.

### ***Concept of Salvation and Liberation***

Gustavo Gutiérrez states that the concept of salvation is not limited to the orthodox Catholic faith based on the thought of Thomas Aquinas, who, according to him, only emphasizes the spiritual aspect without paying attention to the physical aspect. Gutiérrez argues that an encounter with God occurs when believers care for orphans, as God loves them. Salvation is a tangible manifestation of God's love for those who suffer, not an abstract concept but a concrete action. Believers are called to contribute to salvation by forming good communities where God's grace and kingdom are present in just people's lives. Building a socially just society reflects faith and a calling for those who receive God's grace.<sup>6</sup>

Gutiérrez explained that salvation is a gift of liberation given by God through Christ (Galatians 5:1). This liberation includes freedom from sin and self-centered selfishness so believers can focus more on loving God. Love for God is realized through loving others, which is done by fighting for justice in their lives so that they can experience a better life. Gutiérrez emphasized that God gave salvation to believers throughout history through the concrete actions of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> The goal is for believers to bring liberation to society and the world through concrete actions based on their faith in Christ. Gutiérrez also emphasized that those who have received this grace thoroughly understand God through faith in Christ.<sup>8</sup>

Gutiérrez explained that God gives salvation to believers in history through the concrete actions of Jesus Christ so that they can bring liberation to society and the world through concrete acts of faith. Those who receive this grace fully understand God through faith in Christ. Gutiérrez referred to Matthew 25:31-46, which highlights the Christian call to proclaim salvation by caring for the poor because through caring for them, believers will meet Christ in the grace of salvation. He also emphasized that salvation and creation are closely linked. Salvation is a call for believers to renew the broken creation by bringing justice and love, especially to those who are poor and suffering. Since the Old Testament, God has been working out salvation for His people, as seen when God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt in the Book of Exodus.<sup>9</sup>

In Exodus 3:8, “Therefore I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to lead them out of the land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with

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<sup>6</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, “TEOLOGÍA DE LA LIBERACIÓN,” n.d, 103-106.

<sup>7</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Kindle Locations 265-269). Orbis Books, 1990. Kindle Edition.

<sup>8</sup> Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Kindle Locations 602-607). Orbis Books, 1990. Kindle Edition.

<sup>9</sup> Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 85.

milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites” (NIV), Gutiérrez explains that the term “deliverance” is at the heart of the salvation that God worked for the Israelites. This salvation meant delivering them from slavery in Egypt to a fertile land flowing with milk and honey. Gutiérrez emphasized salvation's socio-economic and suffering aspects, where God works so that His people can enjoy a better life. They are also called to positively impact society by showing love to those suffering and poor so that they can be freed from suffering and poverty. In this regard, Gutiérrez emphasizes physical and social liberation and focuses less on spiritual salvation, the reconciliation between sinful man and the Holy God.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Church***

Gustavo Gutiérrez states that the church is not a community separate from the world but is at the center of it. The church has a relationship with the world and vice versa, so the two are interconnected. The church needs to open itself and be present to serve society. One of the roles of the church is to free people from the chains of poverty and various other social problems, such as injustice and oppression. Gutiérrez also emphasized that the church must be involved in community development, as the community of believers is called to bring global liberation, especially in efforts to change systems that oppress weak groups.<sup>11</sup>

According to Gutiérrez, God's salvation project will be meaningless if the church closes itself off and does not get involved in addressing social problems in society. The church must understand its role in changing people's lives to create a better society. Gutiérrez also explains that believers can encounter God through relationships with the poor and oppressed (See Matthew 25:31-46). This encounter encourages believers or churches to strengthen further solidarity with others, especially those who are poor and face social problems.<sup>12</sup> Gutiérrez emphasized that if one calls oneself a Christian and is part of the church, then loving one's neighbor should be part of one's life. He also reminded us that the early church in the Book of Acts had already modeled a life of love, where caring for others testified their faith.<sup>13</sup> For Gutiérrez, the entire Christian life begins with conversion. This conversion means overcoming the problem of personal and social sin and embarking on a new way of life. Conversion also means leaving the old way of life to enter a new one, in which a Christian must care for his or

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<sup>10</sup> Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Kindle Locations 806-809). Orbis Books, 1990. Kindle Edition.

<sup>11</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Density of the Present: Selected Writings* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999), 176.

<sup>12</sup> Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Kindle Locations 87-90). Orbis Books, 1990. Kindle Edition.

<sup>13</sup> Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Kindle Locations 111-114). Orbis Books, 1990. Kindle Edition.

her neighbor as a form of theological action. Gutiérrez links personal conversion to the act of caring for one's neighbor. According to him, caring for others, especially the poor, is a fruit of conversion because believers will encounter God through this act. He also emphasized that the church is a community tasked with building a new society that cares for one another (for all people), emphasizing justice, love, and other values. Thus, the church's presence in the world will improve life. Gutiérrez emphasized that the church is not separate from the realities of the world, and the surrounding community must feel its presence for the church to properly fulfill its calling in the world.<sup>14</sup>

In Psalm 133, Gutiérrez explains that the people of God or the church as a community should live in harmony. This harmony includes solidarity between members, with attention to love and justice within the community. Through harmony, warmth will be created amid the community, which blesses the surrounding environment, even the world. Gutiérrez also emphasized that a living church gives life to the world, especially those impoverished. Giving life to the poor means helping them out of poverty so they can live freely and with dignity.<sup>15</sup> Gutiérrez emphasized that the church has a clear calling to proclaim God's salvation by spreading love and compassion. This call includes liberation from poverty and suffering, an important part of the church's mission. In Gutiérrez's view, the church is treated like a social institution, primarily focusing on social ministry, especially to the poor, while the spiritual ministry aspect is neglected. In addition, Gutiérrez emphasizes the church's ministry to the poor but pays little attention to others, including the rich. The church should serve spiritually and include all people without exception. (Gustavo, n.d.)

### ***Eschatology and the Kingdom of God***

According to Gutiérrez, eschatology or things to come refers to the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, which includes a political element, namely the reign of God. This government will establish justice in human life, and social problems will no longer exist. Gutiérrez emphasizes that the main focus of the Kingdom's rule will be the poor, so those living in poverty will tangibly feel the Kingdom's presence (see Matthew 5:13-16; 25:31-46).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Kindle Locations 131-132). Orbis Books, 2003). Kindle Edition.

<sup>15</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Kindle Locations 132). Orbis Books, 2003). Kindle Edition.

<sup>16</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Kindle Locations 2759-2763). Orbis Books, 1991. Kindle Edition.

Gutiérrez also explains that the Book of Job contains an eschatological element regarding God's justice for the poor and those who suffer. Just as Job was eventually freed from his suffering and poverty, the poor will also be freed from their hardships. As such, they can feel close to God and enjoy His justice. When the poor are freed from poverty and suffering, the presence of God's Kingdom becomes evident in this world, with justice as one of its main characteristics.<sup>17</sup> Gutiérrez explained that the Kingdom of God is present in the world when justice is realized in the lives of every individual. One of the main elements of the Kingdom of God is justice for all human beings. This justice includes the creation of social equality in society, where everyone is treated fairly regardless of social status.

Gutiérrez explained that Latin America needs to experience liberation and restoration. This process will realize the Kingdom of God, especially when justice is served in poor and suffering communities. Gutiérrez quoted Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (NIV), emphasizing that Christians are called to seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness. This righteousness includes love for God and neighbor, emphasizing caring for those living in poverty and suffering.<sup>18</sup>

Gutiérrez asserts that the Kingdom of God and the eschatological concept are closely related. In Mark 10:35-45, Jesus teaches that the Kingdom of God is related to service and love for one another. This eschatological concept emphasizes the presence of the Kingdom of God amid humanity, where love, service, and justice become real in everyday life.<sup>19</sup> Gutiérrez also referred to Paul's teaching in Galatians 5:21, which states that those who belong to the Kingdom of God are not focused on themselves and do not forget their neighbor. God's grace leads to the conversion of believers to experience life renewal as citizens of the Kingdom of God, which includes the relationship between believers and God and others. This relationship is reflected in concern for those in need, such as the poor and oppressed.<sup>20</sup>

Gutiérrez explains that in Luke 18:25, Jesus teaches that the Kingdom of God is a government of God in which the conditions of caring for one another can be realized, and there is no more suffering that haunts human life. Gutiérrez emphasizes the eschatological aspect as the final condition of physical restoration and the Kingdom of God as a political rule in this

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<sup>17</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Kindle Locations 608-611). Orbis Books, 1987. Kindle Edition.

<sup>18</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Kindle Locations 1502-1503). Orbis Books, 1991. Kindle Edition.

<sup>19</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Kindle Locations 49-50). Orbis Books, 2003). Kindle Edition.

<sup>20</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Kindle Location 2388). Orbis Books, 1991. Kindle Edition.

section. Gutiérrez sets aside the aspect of reconciliation and relationship with God that is restored in the eschatological period. Gutiérrez also leaves out the aspect of the Kingdom of God that speaks of spiritual life.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Spirituality and Acts of Concern in the Postmodern Era***

Zacharakis explained that Gutiérrez observes a stark contrast between individualism and social equality in today's postmodern era. Those in the upper echelons, considered superior, have gained the legitimacy to exploit the weaker individuals below them. The spirit of this postmodern age has also permeated the church, transforming it into an institution that judges others for their sins.(Zacharakis 2021)

Kristenson explains how Gutiérrez views spiritual life as inseparable from social action. This spirituality includes self-reflection and the transformation of people's lives.<sup>22</sup> For Gutiérrez, caring was not just the beginning but an act that would bring about revolution. God has given His people this privilege as a radical change in a sinful world.(Editor 2024) Gutiérrez criticized the ruling orders that possess certain powers to oppress society, including the church, under the existing leaders, who only enjoy everything for themselves and maintain the status quo at the center of public discourse life.(Office 1975)

Individual lives should remain interconnected in the postmodern era, characterized by many life experiences. Moreover, the church should not isolate itself from the world; if it does, it will cease to fulfill its divine calling to convey true belief (orthodoxy) while emotionally understanding the surrounding environment (orthodoxy). This includes supporting those facing life difficulties with appropriate actions (orthopraxy) to create a comprehensive community life.<sup>23</sup> Gutiérrez invites us to understand both the exclusive and the inclusive realms of spirituality, which welcomes those grappling with life's challenges as God extends a hand to the marginalized. This starkly contrasts the spirit of the postmodern era, which is individualistic and measures everything according to personal feelings or thoughts.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Kindle Locations 2643-2647). Orbis Books, 1991. Kindle Edition.

<sup>22</sup> Olle Kristenson, "Pastor in the Shadow of Violence: Gustavo Gutiérrez as a Public Pastoral Theologian in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s," n.d., 17-18.

<sup>23</sup> Hendra Yohanes, "MODEL ORTODOKSI-ORTOPRAKSI-ORTOPATI: Usulan Model Berteologi sebagai Cara Hidup Kaum Injili di Dunia Pascakebenaran," *Jurnal Amanat Agung* 15, no. 1 (June 1, 2019): 77–80, <https://doi.org/10.47754/jaa.v15i1.376>.

<sup>24</sup> Akina Dwipayana, Esther Idayanti, and Daniel Runtuwene, "Perkembangan Spiritualitas Posmodern dalam Konteks Gereja" 4, no. 2 (2022), 218-222.

### ***The Call of the Church and the Poor***

Gutiérrez argues that Christ is present among the poor and marginalized. He believes that seeing the face of Christ in the poor is fundamental to the spiritual life of a Christian. Gutiérrez emphasizes that to follow Christ indeed, one must stand in solidarity with those who experience poverty and oppression. This goes beyond simply providing material assistance and joining their struggle to achieve justice. He cautioned that many church members have not fully realized this calling and encouraged Christians to focus on personal aspects of faith and engage in social actions that support justice for the poor. This includes criticizing social structures that oppress and ignore basic human needs.(Dear, n.d.)

The church's call to care for the poor is a deep commitment to justice and solidarity. Gutiérrez emphasizes that the church should function as a place of worship and as a proactive agent of social change. Churches are expected to engage in efforts to address poverty and injustice in society, emphasizing concrete actions that show concern for the marginalized. It invites the church to stand in solidarity with the poor, dares to criticize oppressive social structures and fight for public policies that support the welfare of society. These actions include advocating for the rights of the poor and raising awareness among congregants on social issues, with education as a tool to foster understanding of the importance of social action. Gutiérrez also reminded that the church must actively engage in social and political change to address the structural causes of poverty. He believes concrete action is needed to change the conditions that oppress the poor. This includes advocacy for public policies that support the well-being of the people and efforts to eliminate existing injustices.(Humphrey 2011)

Gutiérrez emphasized that the spiritual experience of believers can be gained through caring for others, especially those living in poverty. In this context, the church is called to build communities based on love, justice, and solidarity, reflecting the values of the Kingdom of God. Communities formed with these principles set an example for others and serve as a platform for concrete actions that support the poor. By carrying out this calling, the church can serve as an agent of change that brings hope, facilitates liberation, and realizes justice and love in society. Churches should function as places of worship and actively participate in social and political change. Gutiérrez calls for the church to address the structural causes of poverty, such as economic injustice and oppressive power. In his view, the church's social action should reflect a commitment to justice and liberation, making it an integral part of its mission to create a better world for all people.(Tataung and Palar 2024)

According to Gutiérrez, the church is essential in educating and empowering the poor. By running social and educational programs, churches can serve as agents of change that help people understand their conditions. Through education, the church provides knowledge and builds awareness of individual rights. These programs can cover various aspects, such as training in relevant skills and access to information needed to overcome daily challenges. In this way, the church contributes to creating a more educated and empowered society. In addition, churches can support small businesses owned by the poor, which is one effective way to improve their economic well-being. Through mentoring and capital assistance, churches can help people develop small businesses that create jobs and increase income. By empowering people through skills and business support, churches help individuals and strengthen the community. Thus, the church's role in educating and empowering the poor is critical to realizing social justice and improving the quality of life, following the teachings of Gutiérrez's liberation theology.(Alloteh 2024)

## **Conclusion**

In the Indonesian context, amidst the continuing challenges of poverty, the church's call to care for the poor is even more urgent. Liberation theology, developed by Gustavo Gutiérrez, highlights the importance of social action focusing on justice and solidarity. Churches are expected to function as places of worship and as active agents of change in addressing social and economic injustice. By implementing education and empowerment programs, churches can help the poor to understand their situation and fight for their rights. This includes skills training and support for small businesses, which are instrumental in creating a more educated, empowered, and prosperous society.

Gutiérrez also emphasized that profound spiritual experiences for believers can be gained through caring for others, especially those living in poverty. The church can significantly impact society by building communities based on love, justice, and solidarity. The church's concrete actions, such as advocacy for the rights of the poor and engagement in social and political change, reflect an unwavering commitment to justice and liberation. Therefore, the church not only carries out its spiritual mission but also plays an active role in creating a better world where every individual, especially those who are marginalized, can experience God's love and justice in their daily lives. In this way, the church can drive positive social transformation, facilitate meaningful change, and uphold human rights for all.

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