

Review: Rejection of Truth, Nihilism, Gramsci, Progressive Ideology, Vatican II; Webster: Advent of Liberation Theology; Its Theological Method

62. At this precise moment in American history it is imperative to understand liberation theology and how its allurements tempt even the most biblically based believers. We first consult:

Webster, Douglas D. "Liberation Theology." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Edited by Walter A. Elwell. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 635-37:

Liberation Theology. ["A religious movement, especially among Roman Catholic clergy in Latin America that combines political philosophy, usually of Marxist orientation, with a theology of salvation as liberation from injustice" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed.).] A movement that attempts to unite theology and socio-political concerns. It is more accurate to speak of liberation theology in the plural, for these theologies of liberation find contemporary expression among blacks, feminists, Asians, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans. The most significant and articulate expression to date has taken place in Latin America. Theological themes have been developed in the Latin American context that have served as models for other theologies of liberation.

The leading proponents—such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Juan Segundo, José Miranda—are responsive to the social perspectives of Kant [empiricist], Hegel [rationalist; sought change through logic: competing ideas are brought to synthesis, or agreement, through reasoning and argument], and Marx [communist: all property is owned by the state].

(Liberation Theology) is for the most part a Roman Catholic theological movement. After Vatican II (1965), a significant number of Latin American leaders within the Roman Catholic Church turned to liberation theology as the theological voice for the Latin American church.

Liberation theologians contend that their continent has been victimized by colonialism, imperialism, and multinational corporations ... resulting in the local economies of Latin America being controlled by decisions made in New York, Houston, and London.

Theological Method. Gustavo Gutiérrez defines theology as "a critical reflection on historical praxis" [Greek: *πράξις*, *praxis*: activity, deed, conduct: in the New Testament it always refers to deeds of the flesh, i.e., what people do]. Doing theology requires the theologian to be immersed in his or her own intellectual and sociopolitical history. Theology is not a system of timeless truths, engaging the theologian in the repetitious process of systematization and apologetic argumentation. Theology is a dynamic, ongoing exercise involving contemporary insights into knowledge (its validity), man (anthropology), and history (social analysis).

"Praxis" means the discovery and the formation of theological truth out of a given historical situation through personal participation in class struggle for a new socialist society. (p. 635)

Liberation theologians agree with Marx's famous statement: "Hitherto philosophers have explained the world; our task is to change it." They argue that theologians are practitioners engaged in the struggle to bring about society's transformation. In order to do this liberation theology employs a Marxist-style class analysis, which divides the culture between oppressors and oppressed. This is meant to identify the injustices and exploitation within the historical situation. Marxism and liberation theology condemn religion for supporting the status quo and legitimating the power of the oppressor. But unlike Marxism, liberation theology turns to the Christian faith as a means of bringing about liberation. Liberation theologians claim that they are not departing from the ancient Christian tradition when they use Marxist thought as a tool for social analysis.

Liberation theology claims the struggle is with man's inhumanity to man and not with unbelief. All communion with God is predicated on opting for the poor and exploited classes, identifying with their plight, and sharing their fate.

