

REVIEW

AN EXCERPT OF "DEVELOPMENT AND LIBERATION IN THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION BY GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ

This paper includes extensive research and strong evidence. The author discusses Gustavo Gutiérrez's *Theology of Liberation*, focusing on the themes of development and liberation (1). The author first introduces a passage from Gutiérrez's work which discusses the Exodus as being a political movement of liberation by God (1). The author explains this passage, noting that, in Jewish scripture, historical liberation is understood to be "an act of salvation and of creation" (1). This means that "political liberation cannot be disentangled from spiritual salvation" (2). Thus, the way that God saves his people and the whole world is through political liberation.

The author goes on to discuss Gutiérrez's character as someone who devoted himself to the poor "with his whole being" (3). Next, the writer describes the Medellín conference of 1968 (3). The conference discussed the Church in Latin America and concluded that unfair political structures are sinful (3). Further, the plight of the poor is caused by selfishness (3). The bishops attending the council viewed Jesus' salvific act as a liberation of a world enslaved by sin (3). They also critiqued the economic situation that "hinders the development and liberation of Latin American countries" (4). The author draws a comparison between the conference's points and Gutiérrez's arguments in his work (4). Both views stem from "the transformation of theology" in Latin America (4). The writer argues that Gutiérrez's theology is done through the lens of those lower down in the social class (4). The writer then says that "the poor and oppressed" were unable to contribute to theology in Latin America pre WWII (5). After the war, liberation theology changed this (5). As "the 'organic' result of theological reflection on the ongoing process of liberation," liberation theology allowed Latin Americans to live their faith in a new way (5). The author concludes that Gutiérrez's ideas are persuasive "because he speaks for the poor and marginalized" (5). Gutiérrez's theology "is an authentic articulation of the indomitable hope of the people" (5).

This paper excerpt is well written and well argued. The author considers Gutiérrez's theology and personality to argue that his arguments are valuable and convincing. The writer notices the similarities between the *Theology of Liberation* and the Medellín conference and significantly

describes both theologies as “a distillation of the transformation of theology that was taking place in Latin America” (4).

However, the author fails to comment on Gutiérrez’s point that God wanted the Jewish people to experience both failure and success in order to know “the roots of their oppression, to struggle against it, and to perceive the profound sense of liberation to which they were called” (1). God’s apparent sanctioning of the Israelites’ struggles is troubling and deserves a response. The paper’s conclusion is also problematic. That the author perceives Gutiérrez to be speaking “authentically” about the poor and outcast, this does not strengthen the argument that Gutiérrez’s theology is right. The estimation of a person’s character does not determine whether his work is well-argued and well-evidenced. The author’s point that his theology does not come from prior reasoning but is a response to the people is a better argument. Overall, this paper would be strengthened by a deeper interaction with and evaluation of Gutiérrez’s arguments. A discussion of the implications of Gutiérrez’s views, both positive and negative, would have strengthened this paper.