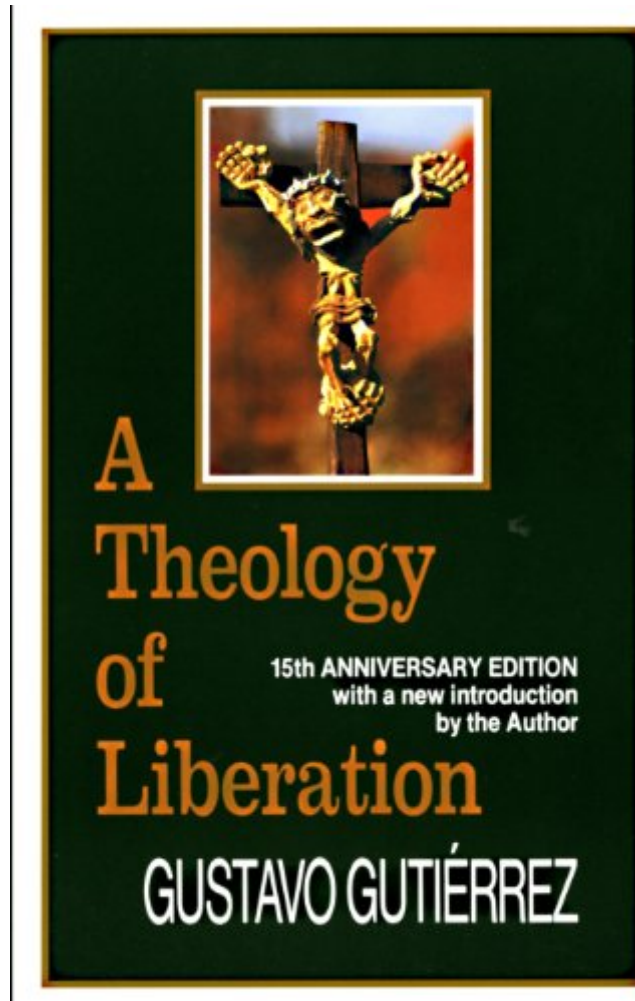


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A Theology Of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition



Synopsis

A pioneering and prophetic approach to theology based on creating an option for the poor at the expense of those who either maintain the status quo or abuse the structures of power for their own ends.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A Theology of Liberation is a recognized classic in its field, which, one can even say, the author, Peruvian Dominican monk, Gustavo Gutierrez, literally invented the field since he coined the term "Liberation Theology" in a 1969 paper on the subject, shortly after the 1968 Medellin conference of Bishops, at which he was a consultant. The book may be one of the first full explorations of what is now called "contextual theologies", presentations of Christian theology "from the underside", from the point of view of the severely, chronically disadvantaged peoples of the world. The long and the short of this book is that the importance of Gutierrez message deserves its weighty title, but Gutierrez weakens his case by slighting contemporary and historical theology and ignoring some central "theological" issues. But the book has reached the status of "classic" and for that reason deserves to be read today. What may surprise some people is the fact that Gutierrez is not

presenting a radical point of view. The book follows hard on a decade of dramatic moves by the Catholic Church, beginning with Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, the first addressed to the whole world, rather than to the Catholic faithful. The eventful half decade ended with the close of the Vatican Council II, under Pope Paul VI and his 1968 encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, which stated that the economy of the world should serve everyone, not a privileged few. Thus, Gutierrez is firmly within the heart of Catholic teachings, when he speaks for the disadvantaged of the almost entirely Catholic continent of South America. The sense of "contextual theology" is that doctrines grow out of the circumstances and practice (praxis) of a particular part of the world.

Originally written in 1971, this revised edition contains a new introduction, in addition to the original, and the reworking of portions of the first edition. While many similar ideals had been circulating prior to its publication, and were expressed in the Vatican II Council documents (1965) and the Medellin Conference (1968), *A Theology of Liberation* marks the official launching of the liberation theology movement and Gustavo Gutiérrez is seen as its father. Since then liberation theology continues to spread, morph and influence the Christian community not only in Latin America but throughout the world. While not embraced in totality, many of its ideas have filtered into the evangelical church and are expressed in the latest round of the social gospel. In *A Theology of Liberation* we find the roots of this social agenda being espoused by key Christian leaders and organizations today. *A Theology of Liberation* is a dense, detailed, intense and difficult volume to comprehend. Esoteric language is often used and uncommon words found throughout. It probably doesn't help that the book was originally written in Spanish and translated and retranslated into English. I found it redundant, repetitive and contradictory at times, nevertheless key concepts emerge. Some of the most important ones are: Liberation theology is not a call for social and economic development (which is rejected) but a call for revolution (pp. 16-17), a permanent culture revolution (p. 21) that may include violence (p. 64). It is a rejection of capitalism and promotion of socialism (pp. 17, 20, 54-55, 65-66, 116, 158-159). There must be liberation from capitalistic countries, especially the United States, and overthrow of private ownership of property (p. 150).

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