

Presentation on The Methodology of Gustavo Gutiérrez's Liberation Theology

ST829: Theological Methodology

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Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (New York: Orbis, 1973 [1971]), xiii-255.

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The Background and Context

Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian born, Roman Catholic theologian and Dominican priest, is considered the father of liberation theology committed to the processes of liberation in Latin America. In *A Theology of Liberation* (1971), Gutiérrez is authoring an attempt at critical reflection on Christian *praxis* (commitment to theological-political-historical reality) post-Vatican II (1962-1965)¹ and post-Medellín or CELAM II (1968),² which have greatly influenced his socio-politico-theological agenda,³ in which the church denounces injustices (e.g., oppressive societal structures) in Latin America, while simultaneously announcing the politicizing function of the Gospel within a commitment to liberation in solidarity with the oppressed people of Latin America (i.e., being a church for/of/with the poor) enabling them to control their own destiny and build a new human order.

Gutiérrez's theological studies at various European universities enabled him to study under names such as Henri de Lubac, Marie-Dominique Chenu, and Yves Congar. As to be expected he was also greatly influenced by Catholic theologians including, but not limited to Edward Schillebeeckx, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, and Johann Baptist Metz. In contact with Protestant theology he became acquainted with the works of Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Gerhard von Rad, as well as with the works of social scientist François Perroux and Paulo Freire, and the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch, who has also influenced Moltmann and Pannenberg in the Biblical themes of eschatology, promise and hope.

From the aforementioned list, I would like to point out two people's philosophies that have helped me better understand Gutiérrez's liberation theology: Karl Rahner's famous phrase "anonymous Christianity," which asserts that people of other faiths (or no faith at all), whether

¹ At Vatican II there was something like a return to the posture of the first centuries: the state was considered incompetent to intervene in the area of human liberty regarding religion, which the great Christian authors saw as a natural and human right not something that was overseen by the Church, such as in the fourth century when the "proclamation of the gospel message was then protected by the support of political authority." Gutiérrez, 144)

² It was at the Episcopal Conference at Medellín, Colombia, that Latin American bishops wrote of a new phase of history that was burgeoning. This new epoch has been described as "a transformation that . . . has come to touch and influence every level of human activity, from the economic to the religious" (Medellín, "Introduction," 4; Gutiérrez, xvii). At Medellín the bishops agreed that the church should take "a preferential option for the poor," a phrase the Gutiérrez has popularized.

³ Technically, the term "liberation theology" came into existence at Chimbote, Peru, in 1968, before Medellín and before he published his book.

they know it or not, are anonymous Christians, and Ernst Bloch's book *The Principle of Hope*, which in part asserts that human beings actively hope for the future which subverts the existing order, contribute to Gutiérrez's "political dimension of the gospel," which asserts that "the theology of hope becomes creative, when it comes in contact with the social realities of today's world..." (126), and his value of salvation being a liberating praxis (32) based on his notion of "one call (single convocation) to salvation."

Main Outline and Content

The content of Gutiérrez's book is broken down into four parts not including a lengthy introduction (30pp) in which he discusses two major points: (1) the challenges Latin Americans face and (2) the longing for liberation from servitude. The longing for human dignity via liberation theology in Latin America has embodied "a new stage" within the theological reflection of the church, which "strives to be in continuity with the teachings of the [Catholic] church" (xliv); albeit, liberation theology itself is "a radically new interpretation and transformation of Christian faith,"⁴ which is a necessary consequence when the Lord speaks in the signs of the times and when the poor are the subjects of theology.⁵

In part one, "Theology and Liberation," Gutiérrez defines these terms vis-à-vis his reflection on the theological meaning of human liberation throughout history. Theological reflection is a critical reflection on humanity, which means that the reality of subjectivity produced from intersubjective relations of human beings is open to criticism via theological reflection.⁶ Theological reflection is also critical of the political-historical reality of society as well as the church, which influences theology to grow or change. Lastly, theology linked to praxis interprets "historical events with the intention of revealing and proclaiming their profound meaning" (10).

The total social process of liberation includes three levels of meaning fully realized in Christ: (1) political liberation; (2) human liberation; and (3) liberation from sin. Political liberation emphasizes the oppressive aspects of the economy, society, politics, and culture, which result in social inequalities that yearn for revolution. Human liberation emphasizes the conscious responsibility of the poor to own their own destiny in order to flourish. And the emphasis of "liberation from sin and admission to communion with God" is scripture, which inspires the actions of humanity: Christ came to liberate us so we can be free to love. Gutiérrez quotes Bonhoeffer: "[F]reedom is not something man has for himself but something he has for

⁴ Rebecca S. Chopp and Ethna Regan, "Latin American Liberation Theology," in *The Modern Theologians*, 3rd ed., eds. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 472. Gutiérrez records and concurs with the words that John XXIII dictated to Cardinal Cigognani just before the Pope's death: "It is not that the Gospel has changed: it is that we have begun to understand it better." Peter Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII: Shepherd of the Modern World* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 499; Gutiérrez, xlv.

⁵ The reason for this, according to Rebecca S. Chopp and Ethna Regan, is based on God's presence. "Gutiérrez's argument is worth underscoring at this point: the option for the poor depends not on an interpretation of history but on God's own choice." Chopp and Regan, 476.

⁶ See Chopp and Regan, 472.

others.... [F]reedom is a relationship between two persons.... Only in relationship with the other am I free.’ ”⁷

In part two, “Posing the Problem,” Gutiérrez champions a radical approach to the problem of Christian incontextuality. He seeks abandoning a simple reformist attitude in favor of social radicalization, which implies deracinating the socio-political culture. To accomplish this goal one must transcend the distinction of planes model of New Christendom, which teaches that within the kingdom of God there are two planes—the church/sacred, the spiritual/earthly, or the world/profane. Within this model, the church has two missions: evangelization and inspiration of the temporal sphere, which, politically speaking, priests are prohibited from directly intervening.⁸ However, Gutiérrez is calling for a change in the distinction of planes model affecting theological reflection and pastoral action in support of the church directly intervening in the temporal order.⁹ Moreover, he seeks the rediscovery of one call or a single convocation to salvation, which “reaffirms the possibility of the presence of grace—that is, of the acceptance of a personal relationship with the Lord—in all persons, be they conscious of it or not” (45).

In part three, “The Option Before the Latin American Church,” Gutiérrez discusses five evidences of the revision of the new presence of the Latin American church called to struggle against unjust structures and construct a more just society chosen from Medellín. For the sake of brevity I will discuss the first three. (1) The church, particularly bishops and priests, is called to prophetically denounce the exploitation of Latin America.¹⁰ This situation of injustice has been called “institutionalized violence.” Moreover, it is a “sinful situation” because “ ‘where this social peace does not exist, there we will find social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities, there we will find the rejection of the peace of the Lord, and a rejection of the Lord Himself.’ ”¹¹ This reality results from dependency on the developed world of the West, in which the locus of decision-making is structurally capitalistic ensuring that Latin American countries remain in a condition of neocolonialism (64). (2) The church is obligated to fulfill the need for a conscientizing evangelization. That is, the clergy has the duty to “ ‘educate the Christian conscience, to inspire, stimulate, and help orient all of the initiatives that contribute to the formation of man.’ ”¹² The hopeful consequence of this for Latin Americans is to become masters of their own destiny. (3) The church must be transformed into a poor church—the church of the poor. “At Medellín it was made clear that poverty expresses solidarity with the oppressed and a protest against oppression” (70). With that said, the Christian community in Latin America

⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall, Temptation* (New York: MacMillan, 1966), 37; Gutiérrez, 24.

⁸ “Lay persons’ position in the Church, on the other hand, does not require them to abandon their insertion in the world. It is their responsibility to build up both the Church and the world.” Gutiérrez, 37.

⁹ The effect of the Puebla Documents’ holistic vision of integral liberation can be seen in the collapse of the two planes model into one: “The idea of integral liberation insists that ‘spiritual’ and ‘earthly’ belong together and can never be divorced from each other, as has often happened in classical theology. To fight economic and political injustice is a spiritual act.” Kärkkäinen, 87.

¹⁰ The prophetic task of the church is both constructive and critical; it points out elements that are humanizing, but it also must point out the dehumanizing elements.

¹¹ “Peace,” no. 14, in *Medellín*; Gutiérrez, 64

¹² “Peace,” no. 20, in *Medellín*; Gutiérrez, 69.

is living in a post-Medellian period. So, rather than trying to protect these statements from misinterpretations, it is more important to exegete them according to concrete reality, which will confirm their validity within the scope of the Christian community (73).

In part four, “Perspectives,” Gutiérrez demonstrates the significance that the Christian faith and church have for the oppressed vis-à-vis the challenges posed against the seriousness and scope of liberation theology. Observing Gutiérrez’s pedagogy, he attempts to accomplish this goal of Christian significance via a holistic endeavor, affecting doctrines of theology, anthropology, soteriology, eschatology, hamartiology, Christology, and ecclesiology. In this subsection, I will only have time to address the first two (theology and anthropology), so that I can deal adequately with the other five (soteriology, eschatology, hamartiology, Christology, and ecclesiology) as arguments and claims in the subsequent section.

Theology. Humanity is the living temple of God, and when we meet others we meet God. To know God which is to love God is to establish just relations with others, especially in recognizing the rights of the marginalized (110-11). “The God of Biblical revelation is known through interhuman justice. When justice does not exist, God is not known; God is absent” (111). But it is not sufficient to say that the love of God cannot be divorced from the love of one’s neighbor; it must be added that love for God is necessarily expressed through the love of one’s neighbor; thus, God is loved in and through one’s neighbor (115).

Anthropology. While theological reflection criticizes the values of society and the church, it also makes explicit the values of faith, hope, and love intrinsic to its *raison d’être*. This reflection should contribute to a more concrete commitment to the process of liberation with its ultimate goal of creating a new humanity (81). In *The Power of the Poor in History*, Gutiérrez goes on to say that the creation of new human persons from “nonpersons”—the human being who is not considered human by society—will be authentic *only* if this endeavor is undertaken by the oppressed themselves.¹³ “It is from within the people that the culture of oppression is on its way to being abolished. Indeed this is the only way in which a genuine social and cultural revolution can be carried out.”¹⁴

Key Arguments and Claims

The scope of Gutiérrez’s arguments for and claims about liberation theology extends to a panoply of doctrinal issues with significant implications on the doctrine of salvation, future-orientation, sin, the redeeming work of Christ, and the function of the church. I address them in that order.

Soteriology. Gutiérrez promotes widening the scope of salvation from the quantitative approach (“salvation of the pagans”) to the qualitative approach (“universal will of salvation”). In this latter, intensive aspect of salvation, people are saved when they open themselves up to God and others, whether they know it or not. Salvation “embraces all of human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ” (85). Thus, there are not two histories—one sacred and the other profane; rather, history is one. It is also important to note that in the Exodus

¹³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 193.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

the political action (liberation) of Israel is also part of the salvific process. In repudiating Egyptian oppression, the Israelites were fulfilling their humanity via continuing the work of creation—“the first salvific act”—via their labor. And the same goes for us today. “To work, to transform this world, is to become a man and to build the human community; it is also to save” (91). So, to labor is to save and to save is to labor.

Eschatology. Eschatological promises are historical promises and historical promises are temporal promises. For too long the “hidden sense” of redemption as “spiritual” has devalued temporal realities. But “it is only in the temporal, earthly, historical event that we can open up to the future of complete fulfillment” (96). There is an assumptive aspect to Gutiérrez’s eschatology that should not be overlooked. Following Bloch, he asserts that human beings hope for and dream of the future; however, it is an active hope which subverts the existing order (123). He warns us: “if this hope does not take shape in the present to lead it forward, it will be only an evasion, a futuristic illusion” (124). More importantly, we have a political ally in Jesus. Jesus, following the prophetic mantra of “mercy not sacrifice,” focuses on temporal, authentic, and social actions. “For the prophets this demand [of mercy] was inseparable from the denunciation of social injustice and from the vigorous assertion that God is known only by doing justice” (134).

Hamartiology. Sin, according to Gutiérrez, is not an individual, private reality, which turns a blind eye to the injustices of this world, such as interdependence, exploitation, and imperialism. Sin, rather, is a social injustice breaching fellowship with God and others. Thus, “[s]in demands radical liberation, which in turn necessarily implies a political liberation” (103). Of course, this radical liberation is found only in the great Liberator—Christ. Liberation theology is evangelizing in Christ’s name that he has set us free.

Christology. Christ’s death and resurrection redeems us from sin and all its consequences: hunger, misery, oppression, hatred, etc. (ibid). This redemption can also be considered a commitment of solidarity with the poor and remonstrance of oppression. This is the deepest meaning of Christian poverty in Christ.¹⁵ “Christian poverty, an expression of love, is solidarity *with the poor* and is a protest *against poverty*. This is the concrete, contemporary meaning of the witness of poverty. It is a poverty lived not for its own sake, but rather as an authentic imitation of Christ....” (172, emphasizes his).

Ecclesiology. Borrowing from Freire, Gutiérrez believes that the normative state of utopia in Latin America involves *denunciating* the existing order and *annunciating* a new society in faith. This utopia cannot come to fruition if either the church does not critically reflect on the theological meaning of human liberation through historical praxis or if it does not take a stance or is ambiguous about its position “regarding both the present state of social injustice and the revolutionary process which is attempting to abolish that injustice....” (151).¹⁶ This annunciation is in vain if it is not the annunciation of the gospel. The annunciation of the gospel has a politicizing function, which “is made real and meaningful only by living and announcing the Gospel from within a commitment to liberation, only in concrete, effective solidarity with people and exploited social classes” (153). Moreover, the purpose of the church is not to save souls, but

¹⁵ This third meaning of poverty is preceded first by material poverty, and secondly by spiritual poverty—“an attitude of openness to God and spiritual childhood.” Gutiérrez, 171.

¹⁶ “Any claim to noninvolvement in politics . . . is nothing but a subterfuge to keep things the way they are.” Gutiérrez, 151.

to be a poor church with preferential option for the poor, in order to empower those who were once impoverished to one day be masters of their own destiny fulfilling their own humanity in historical praxis.

Relation to Christian Tradition and Contemporary Theology

In the first part of this section, I will examine the seminal historical-theological relation between the liberation theology of the Catholic church in Latin America via Gutiérrez's text/influence compared to that of the Catholic church prior to Vatican II. In the second part of this section, I will examine the place of the text in contemporary theology.

The traditional mentality of the Catholic church has been to distinguish grace from nature, the sacred from the secular, the church from the world, and the spiritual from the material. Influenced by Augustinian theology, this Christendom model is "primarily a mental construct" (34) concerned only with Christian interests. Scholasticism, mainly through the efforts of Aquinas, sought to reconcile the categories of grace and nature by teaching that "grace does not suppress or replace nature, but rather perfects it..." (35). This became known as the New Christendom model, which seeks to put more emphasis on the temporal sphere; however, the church continued to remain the center of salvation. It was not until recently that the world began to break away from the tutelage of religion (41), through a process of secularization, in which the liberated church, in holistic fashion and historical-theological praxis, learned from some of the more positive effects of secularization, including atheism, such as viewing humanity as an agent of history responsible for its own destiny (42). Theology as praxis as a form of theological and dialectical reflection and action,¹⁷ under the tutelage of Gutiérrez and others in Latin America, has shifted primarily after Vatican II from the traditional church model of theology as wisdom with an emphasis on metaphysical dualism (two-level approach to reality) identified with the Augustinian heritage of the West.¹⁸

Liberation theology in Latin America is a type of local theology known as contextual theology. With Vatican II the Catholic church officially supported "the need to adapt theological reflection to local circumstances..."¹⁹ The local context in Latin America today, as well as when Gutiérrez penned his book, is the concrete, historical-political reality that the poor and oppressed are victims of "institutionalized violence" from which Christ came to liberate. At this point theology of hope under liberation theology as local-contextual theology creates opportunities for the impoverished to subvert the oppressive paradigm. Gutiérrez's theology of hope is similar to Moltmann's. I will dodge the temptation to explicate their differences; suffice it to say, Moltmann's book, *Theology of Hope*, originally published in 1967, seems to have had a powerful influence directly and indirectly (via Ernst Bloch) on Gutiérrez's contextualization. One practical difference I will point out between Moltmann and Gutiérrez is that Moltmann's contextualization seems theoretically global (universal) and Gutiérrez's seems practically local (to Latin

¹⁷ "Theology cannot remain only with reflection; nor can it be reduced to practice. Good reflection leads to action, and action is not completed until it has been reflected upon." Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis, 1985), 92.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

America).²⁰ Regardless, they both are contextual. *A Theology of Liberation* as contextual theology appears on the contemporary scene (1971, in Spanish) a few years after *Theology of Hope* (1967), but before other contextual theological watersheds, such as Elizabeth A. Johnson's *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (2002).²¹

Method and Way of Argumentation

As stated above, Gutiérrez's theological methodology is unequivocally contextual (or practical, as in practical theology). He is employing the (contextual) resources of Vatican II, Medellín, and others, which thematically speak of the longing for liberation from servitude, to construct a holistic praxis in which to criticize modern injustices. As any good contextual theologian he starts with the needs of a localized people and then looks holistically to theological-historical-political praxis to suffer in solidarity with the people in the interests of liberation. "[T]he starting point is the committed action of Christian people [to serve others. Moreover] only from the ground of commitment does one have access to the reality of biblical truth...."²² Thus, there seems to be no historical-theological truth without historical-theological praxis. That is, truth can only be found in concrete, historical events in which humans are personally involved. Praxis (as committed thought and action) then is dialectic. In particular, historical-theological praxis as thought must traverse the boundaries of theory into an involved commitment as action to be worthy of the name.²³ At this point, I would like to make clear that praxis as committed involvement to thought and action is not new. For better or worse, when seen as involvement in the cause of social and political liberation, it is a Hegelian-Marxist principle. Gutiérrez's novel contribution was to employ it and baptize it in *theological* praxis inspired by scripture.

Gutiérrez claims that the entire Bible, starting with the story of Cain and Abel, reveals God's affinity for the poor (xxvii). It is important to note that is not by happenstance that God's predilection for the weak things of this world elicits his gratuitous love as action. This is meant to be an example for us today. He goes on to say that the same revelation is given in The Beatitudes "for they tell us with the utmost simplicity that God's predilection for the poor, the hungry, and the suffering is based on God's unmerited goodness to us" (ibid.). His biblical method has a moral consequence: as Christ suffered for and with the poor to liberate them so should we suffer with them in order to assist in their liberation. The struggle of the prophets and *the Prophet* is inspiring: "Since liberation theology is a critical reflection on the word of God received in the church, it will make explicit the values of faith, hope, and love that inspire the praxis of Christians" (xxxiii). But just so that we are not misled to believe that the Bible is the

²⁰ There seems to be no theological distinction here that prohibits them from understanding global intercontextualization and local contextualization as being a missional "glocal" interaction.

²¹ The exception being James H. Cone's book, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970).

²² Samuel Escobar, "Liberation Theology," in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 331.

²³ Robert McAfee Brown rightly notes that "praxis" as practice should not be seen as a contrast with "theory," but as a special affinity between them, in which "a 'praxis situation' is one in which theory and practice are not separable." Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 65.

epistemic starting point for theological praxis, Gutiérrez encourages us via Par Yves Congar to start from social realities. “ ‘Instead of using only revelation and tradition as starting points, as classical theology has generally done, it must start with facts and questions derived from the world and from history.’ ”²⁴

It is worth noting that Gutiérrez’s style is neither ambiguous nor argumentative. His lengthy introduction features clear prose, which lucidly delineates both the *need* for liberation theology, as well as its *challenges*. This balanced approach towards liberation theology enables the reader to take the subject more seriously, viewing it less quixotic than realistic. Moreover, although he takes a solid stance by affirming liberation theology, he is not defensive, and thus, he does not argue a theology of liberation from sacerdotal authority based on ecclesial orthodoxy. Rather, his style of arguing his dialectical method of theological praxis as orthopraxy is unequivocal and direct on all matters contextual.

Moreover, his organization and argumentation appear fluid. Gutiérrez starts his thesis by defining his terms (theology and liberation). He moves on to a systematic description of the total social process of liberation. He then “poses the problem” of Christian incontextuality followed by the solution of transcending the distinction of planes model affecting theological reflection and pastoral action. And finally he wraps up his thesis by demonstrating that the seminal doctrines of the Christian faith have a lot to say about the church’s relationship with the poor, which, when taken to heart, assuage the challenges posed against the seriousness and scope of liberation theology.

Lastly, I do believe that Gutiérrez was in fact faithful to the methodological guidelines he set out for himself. Throughout the book he indefatigably maintains “the poor” as his epistemic starting point. He went to great lengths championing the notion that the Christian church must become the church of the poor. He inculcated again and again that the church ought to denounce injustices in Latin America and be committed to liberation in solidarity with the oppressed enabling them to control their own destiny and build a new human order.

An Evangelical Assessment

An evangelical understands the Great Commandment to love God and others to be exemplified in Christ, which inspires us to love God and others. But most liberation theologians do not consider themselves evangelicals, if by “evangelical” we mean that Christ died for us as individuals in order to save us from sin and hell. As an evangelical in the aforementioned sense, I deeply appreciate Gutiérrez’s many contributions to systematic theology. For example, I welcome his holistic approach to liberation, which emphasizes the universality of God’s love (with qualification). I also welcome and applaud his employment of justice (and righteousness) in the prophetic sense whereby a lack of justice is not an impersonal wrong committed, but rather injustice is understood as God’s absence; the absence of shalom (well-being). I even encourage his baptism of historical-political praxis into historical-political-*theological* praxis, but with qualification.

A holistic praxis (historical-political-theological) seems to take all areas of human involvement more seriously than a mere social-political praxis. And like any praxis there is a necessary dialectic element of thought and action. It seems that theology steeped in

²⁴ Par Yves Congar, *Situation et tâches*, 72; Gutiérrez, 9-10.

contemplation without the checks-and-balances of committed involvement would reveal a shallow, disconcerted view of God.²⁵ However, I take serious issue with humankind being the starting point of praxis. As it has already been said, “Often [liberation theologies] are better at hearing the cries of the people than at listening to the biblical witness or to the testimonies of other churches.”²⁶ Liberation theology seems to have the opposite problem of traditional theology, which overemphasizes doctrine; rather, it overemphasizes contextualizing the needs of the poor. Moreover, it seems to force God to play favorites, when he has already stated that he does not have predilections (see Romans 2:11). Sam Portaro has this to say, “ ‘[W]hen we accept the idea of a divine bias, we are being unfaithful to our ministry to the whole people of God.’ ”²⁷ As a good evangelical I try my best to love God and others, but I fail to believe that God prefers [loves?] some more than others based on their social-political conditions. To be clear I do not believe that Gutiérrez is saying that “preferential option for the poor” is tantamount to “exclusive option for the poor.” “Preferential option” means exactly that—*preference* for the poor not exclusion of the rest of humanity for the sake of the poor.²⁸

If I may offer one more evangelical critique it is to offer my concern about his predilection to universalism via Rahner’s “anonymous Christianity.” While I appreciate the idea of salvation/liberation not being merely contemplative and spiritual, I think he goes too far in accepting the transformative aspects of praxis without *theology* as a means of salvation/liberation. That is, biblically speaking, individual faith as well as collective faith in Christ followed by good works, say, by meeting the needs of the marginalized and exploited, seems to be the normative way people are saved. To be sure, I am not saying there are no exceptions to this prescription leaving natural theology void of its power to save those who are ignorant of their Creator, although living according to their consciences (see Romans 1). But it seems that Gutiérrez is making the exception the norm, which I understand as being a good intention gone awry. Where is the biblical notion of faith *in* Christ for salvation? Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen shares some of the same concerns: “[P]overty in itself does not make a person Christian or Christ’s follower. Faith in Christ and obedience to his commands do.”²⁹

²⁵ “The dialectical process of reflection and action are both essential to the theological process. Theology cannot remain only with reflection; nor can it be reduced to practice. Good reflection leads to action, and action is not completed until it has been reflected upon.” Schreiter, 91-2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁷ Sam A. Portaro, Jr., “Is God Prejudiced in Favor of the Poor?” *Christian Century* (April 24, 1985): 404-5; Gutiérrez, 223.

²⁸ For a more exhaustive list of critiques against Gutiérrez’s Liberation Theology, including those posed by Rome (“Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez”) and some of Gutiérrez’s responses, please see Robert McAfee Brown’s book, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 131-156.

²⁹ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World: Christ and Reconciliation*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 89.

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