

## 5. LIBERATION THEOLOGY

The theology of liberation has assumed three basic forms to date: Marxist, black, and feminist. The single thread common to these forms is that of oppression: oppression of the poor, oppression of blacks, and oppression of women.

### MARXIST LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Liberation Theology in its Marxist form originated in Latin America in 1965, the same year that Vatican II ended. Most of the influential thinkers within this new theological movement studied in Europe, where they were influenced by the "political theology" of such writers as Jurgen Moltmann, John Baptist Metz, and Karl Rahner.

However, these early proponents of the theology of Liberation tended to react against "North Atlantic" theology (from Europe or the United States) as being irrelevant to the Latin American situation, which to a large extent was characterized by oppression of the poor.

Gustavo Gutierrez of Peru has stated that Liberation Theology is "based on the Gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America; it is a theological reflection born... of shared efforts to abolish the current unjust situation and to build a different society, freer and more human." For Gutierrez, the task of theology is to "elucidate the meaning of solidarity with the oppressed."

In 1968, at a conference in Medellin, Columbia, the documents produced severely criticized the liberal capitalist system with its "erroneous concept of the property rights of the means of production"; the exercise of authority in Latin America, "justified ideologically and practically", which "frequently acts against the common good and favors privileged groups"; "the increasing domination of international commerce" due to "the international monopolies and international monetary imperialism" and "institutionalized violence provoked by those who hold to their privileges."

However, when the Medellin program was not implemented by the church, the radical thinkers in the movement became frustrated and called for the theology of liberation to become a prophetic theology; i.e., a theology of conflict. This could be done, they felt, only as theology accepts the Marxist analysis of society as the historical scene of the class struggle.

Thus liberation Theology began with a mild emphasis on progress from under-developed nations and peoples to developed; moved on to an emphasis on the need for change from dominated to dominating classes; and finally arrived at a call for revolution by the oppressed against the oppressors.

Marxist Liberation Theology endorses the use of violence by those on whom violence has been committed in the form of restrictions, humiliations, injustices; who are without prospects or hope, and whose condition is that of slaves.