

Black Liberation Theology

Preface: Very recently, because Barack Obama is running for president, his pastor of 22 years, Jeremiah Wright, has come under some scrutiny. Most of us have seen snippets of Wright involved in what can only be described as rants from his church pulpit (examples: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=vdJB-qkfUHc> or <http://youtube.com/watch?v=jc2FCJ7zWEQ>). When you understand what Liberation Theology is all about, the things which Wright has said make sense—from the perspective of Liberation Theology. This theology originally infiltrated the Catholic church in Latin America, and has found its way into many “Black” churches today. I have heard the number 10%, but I have no idea how accurate that is.

What you need to understand is, this is *not* traditional *Black church* teaching. This is not one culture being particularly demonstrative, while others of us have been raised in churches which are more staid and laid back. There is a theology here—a dangerous, anti-Christian theology—and understanding this theology explains some of the crazy things which Reverend Wright has said.

The original take on the Jeremiah Wright quotes was, these were just a collection of his most outrageous statements, all edited together, and endlessly looped (they were not). Obama, at one time, said, “What if someone took the 5 dumbest things that you have said and put them in an endless loop?” (not an exact quote). However, when Jeremiah Wright took questions at the National Press Club in April of 2008, he did not apologize or modify any of the statements which we heard. What he did was, justify some of them. Whereas, the original story was, these were outrageous statements taken out of context; it became clear that these are things which Wright clearly believes in, these are things which he teaches from his pulpit, and much of what he did at this speaking engagement was, explain *why* he believed these things. It appeared to me that Wright thought, all he needs to do is provide some context and justification for these remarks, and we would understand and see the logic of them.

Liberation theology is a relatively new movement where there is an attempt to merge Marxist and Socialist values with Christianity, using the Bible to justify Marxist and socialist doctrine. *The general tenor of the pronouncements of the magisterium, whether papal or coming from the Synod of Bishops, has been to recognize the positive aspects of liberation theology, especially with reference to the poor and the need for their liberation, as forming part of the universal heritage of Christian commitment to history. Criticisms of certain tendencies within liberation theology, which have to be taken into account, do not negate the vigorous and healthy nucleus of this form of Christian thinking, which has done so much to bring the message of the historical Jesus to the world of today.*¹ The idea is, the historical figure of Jesus was running around and setting up a variety of programs to feed the poor and to help liberate the people from oppression.

What some predominantly Black churches have done, it appears to me, is appropriated Liberation theology and have given it a distinct Afro-centric spin. This seems to be a trend within the Liberation Theology movement. They identify this or that group as being victims of oppression, and if there is a further commonality, such as race, that is incorporated into the mix.

For a long time, Catholicism has been firmly entrenched throughout Latin America. There are places in this world where 70–90% of the population is Catholic. At the same time, there were Marxist revolutionaries looking to take control. You cannot simply infiltrate a Catholic country and tell them what they believe is crap, so Liberation Theology was born out of, how do you make a revolutionary out of a Catholic? At the same time, there were Catholic missionaries who saw the thrust of their work more to aid the poor than to give them the gospel. *Starting in the 1960s, a great wind of renewal blew through the churches. They began to take their social mission seriously:*

¹ <http://www.landreform.org/boff2.htm> accessed May 6, 2008. Leonardo and Clodovis Boff; *Introducing Liberation Theology* published by Orbis Books.

lay persons committed themselves to work among the poor, charismatic bishops and priests encouraged the calls for progress and national modernization. Various church organizations promoted understanding of and improvements in the living conditions of the people: movements such as Young Christian Students, Young Christian Workers, Young Christian Agriculturalists, the Movement for Basic Education, groups that set up educational radio programs, and the first base ecclesial communities.²

The Boff's identify the poor. *Liberation theology was born when faith confronted the injustice done to the poor. By "poor" we do not really mean the poor individual who knocks on the door asking for alms. We mean a collective poor, the "popular classes," which is a much wider category than the "proletariat" singled out by Karl Marx (it is a mistake to identify the poor of liberation theology with the proletariat, though many of its critics do): the poor are also the workers exploited by the capitalist system; the underemployed, those pushed aside by the production process -- a reserve army always at hand to take the place of the employed; they are the laborers of the countryside, and migrant workers with only seasonal work.*³ As you can see, they are able to find a huge number of victims, and it should be clear by the language used—Karl Marx, proletariat, exploited by the capitalist system—that this is just a way for socialists and communists to appeal to Christians. In the very next paragraph, the authors write: *In the light of faith, Christians see in them the challenging face of the Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ. At first there is silence, silent and sorrowful contemplation, as if in the presence of a mystery that calls for introspection and prayer. Then this presence speaks. The Crucified in these crucified persons weeps and cries out: "I was hungry... in prison... naked" (Matt. 25:31–46).*⁴

The key is, you find victims or you find those who feel as though they have been victimized. It is clear that there are poor people throughout the earth. Jesus tells us, **"The poor you will have with you always."** The poverty which we find in some countries is overwhelming and heartbreaking. However, liberation theology does not require a true victim in order to gain a philosophical foothold. Liberation theology will thrive wherever you can convince any group of people that they have been, in some way or another, victimized, by their government, by some societal caste system or by another sub-group of people. We see this in Reverend Jeremiah Wright's church, where he rails against *rich white people* and against a government which develops diseases and drugs and targets Blacks with these things in order to destroy the Black race. The key to Liberation Theology is to find a set of victims, real or imagined, and then to present to them the *gospel of liberation*.

This does not mean there are people in this world who suffer greatly. According to Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, the following are conservative estimates of those in underdeveloped countries:

- five-hundred million persons starving;
- one billion, six-hundred million persons whose life expectancy is less than sixty years (when a person in one of the developed countries reaches the age of forty-five, he or she is reaching middle age; in most of Africa or Latin America, a person has little hope of living to that age);
- one billion persons living in absolute poverty; one billion, five-hundred million persons with no access to the most basic medical care;
- five-hundred million with no work or only occasional work and a per capita income of less than \$150 a year;
- eight-hundred-fourteen million who are illiterate;
- two billion with no regular, dependable water supply⁵

I have not verified these figures, but I have no reason to doubt them. There is great suffering and poverty in this world, and it should be clear the Liberation Theology, when it suggests that Communism or Socialism will bring prosperity to these people, that is a lie. We only need to look at the contrast between North Korea, one of the

² <http://www.landreform.org/boff2.htm> accessed May 6, 2008. Leonardo and Clodovis Boff. From the book *Introducing Liberation Theology* published by Orbis Books.

³ <http://www.landreform.org/boff1.htm> accessed May 7, 2008. Leonardo and Clodovis Boff. From the book *Introducing Liberation Theology* published by Orbis Books.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ From <http://www.landreform.org/boff1.htm> accessed May 6, 2008.

weakest economies in the world and South Korea, which the 5th strongest economy in this world, to see that socialism does not eliminate or reduce poverty.

It is unclear whether any sort of actual liberation ever takes place as a result of faith in Liberation Theology. Reverend Wright has been teaching his congregation for 40 years, and he is clearly better off; his congregants are probably better off financially than they were 4 decades previous (the United States has enjoyed great prosperity over the past few decades). However, they still perceive themselves as victims. Wright has, at various times, said things like, "We've got more black men in prison than there are in college;" "No black man will ever be considered for president;" "The government lied about inventing the HIV virus as a means of genocide against people of color;" and "We [in the United States] believe in white supremacy and black inferiority and believe it more than we believe in God."⁶ All of these things are lies, and they are designed by Pastor Wright to make his congregants feel victimized by their government and/or by racist white people.

Liberation Theology Side-by-Side Christianity	
Liberation Theology	Christianity
<i>This is more a movement that attempts to unite theology and sociopolitical concerns than a new school of theological theory.⁷</i>	There have been movements within Christianity forever to overlay social or cultural concerns upon Christian theology. Often the approach is to take a few passages here or there to justify this or that pre-conceived notion or political position.
<i>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.⁸</i>	Christianity is a relationship with God through the person of Jesus Christ. Our color, economic situation, location, upbringing and ethnicity are not issues, either before or after salvation. Paul writes, There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). Once you are in Christ (which occurs when we believe in Christ), our ethnicity, economic status and gender are unimportant issues.
Jesus Christ is the redeemer and liberator of the oppressed.	Jesus Christ is the redeemer and liberator of the oppressed. The key here is definition and application.
Because of who and what Jesus was, poor and oppressed peoples can be taken out of this social status and made free.	Being purchased by Jesus Christ means, because He died for our sins, He is able to purchase us from the slave market of sin. That is, we are sinful and separated from God and unable to purchase our own freedom from our slavery to sin. Jesus Christ has paid this price and, by believing in Him, we are removed from bondage to sin.

⁶ From <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=58928> accessed May 6, 2008.

⁷ <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txn/liberati.htm> accessed May 5, 2008.

⁸ <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txn/liberati.htm> accessed May 5, 2008.

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<p>We as individuals and as groups act to liberate the oppressed. Ideally, the government becomes involved to liberate the poor and oppressed as well.</p>	<p>Jesus liberates us from our bondage to sin. We are born with a sin nature; Adam's original sin has been imputed to us; and we commit personal sins. Jesus liberates us from the constant control of our sin natures (which will be eradicated from our resurrected bodies); His righteousness is imputed to us; and we will actually enjoy periods of time during which we do not sin.</p>
<p>The oppressed are those who are victims of society, social systems, big business and the government. The oppressed as those who are, in a sense, metaphorically <i>enslaved</i> by one or more of these institutions.</p>	<p>The term <i>oppressed</i> is applied in a number of ways. In the book of Judges, when another country would invade Israel and make Israel pay tribute to them, Israelites were called oppressed.</p> <p>One might consider an actual slave to be oppressed, but neither the Old nor New Testaments require the freeing of slaves (although Paul, on a one to one communication, encouraged Philemon to set free one of his slaves).</p> <p>On a spiritual level, an unbeliever can be seen as oppressed, as he is continually under the control of his old sin nature.</p>
<p><i>More of the world's poor are crowded into ever more hopeless conditions. Yet the earth's plenty is far from running out. In nation after nation, a tiny minority of the wealthy hold vast areas of fertile land. The deadly connection between land-ownership concentration and wretched poverty is absurdly obvious on every continent.</i></p> <p><i>An effective remedy to these horrible injustices depends on a precise understanding of their causes. After all, many "cures" have proved to be worse than the sickness. Liberationists have tried many ideological models, seeking clarity. Are the third world poor preyed on by raiders of the global economy, or by home-grown robber barons? Is the financial system to blame, or are we seeing the inevitable trauma of capitalism's march through history?</i></p> <p><i>The search for understanding has led back, as well, to the Bible -- and there, in the ancient economic laws of the Old Testament, may be found principles that, if applied mindfully of today's economic complexities, can provide the directions out of the Wasteland -- to the Promised Land of economic sanity and justice.⁹</i></p>	<p>There are laws which deal with land ownership in the Old Testament, and they are somewhat different than the laws which we have today. Land remained within the possession of a particular family forever. If they fell on hard times and had to sell their land, on the year of Jubilee (every 49th year) the land would be restored to the original family (ideally speaking; this was apparently never followed). There was also a system for freeing slaves as well.</p> <p>There are two things to keep in mind: the land model offered in the Old Testament was ideally under a theocracy, where God ruled over Israel. Secondly, this was no longer presented as an issue in the New Testament. Nowhere does Jesus, Paul or John speak of land redistribution, land rights, land barons, or economic justice.</p> <p><i>God promises a special blessing to all who gave to the poor (Prov. 19:17), and judgment to those who oppress the poor (Psalm 140:12). Robbing and cheating the poor are condemned (Hosea 12:7). Widows and orphans - who were especially vulnerable to oppression - came under special protection from the law (Ex. 22:22-23).¹⁰</i></p>

⁹ From <http://www.landreform.org/> accessed May 6, 2008.

¹⁰ From <http://home.earthlink.net/~ronrhodes/Liberation.html> accessed May 7, 2008 (slightly edited).

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<p>There is a clear emphasis upon victimology, whether those hearing the message are victims or not. Over the past decade, Jeremiah Wright has said, "We've got more black men in prison than there are in college;" "No black man will ever be considered for president;" "The government lied about inventing the HIV virus as a means of genocide against people of color;" and "We [in the United States] believe in white supremacy and black inferiority and believe it more than we believe in God."¹¹</p> <p>The idea is, to make victims out of his congregation, whether they are or not. Whether what he says is the truth or not is not the issue. Insofar as we know, the deacons of Wright's church do not chastise him and say, "What you have been spewing is nonsense; it is patently untrue; you need to clarify, edit and/or correct what you have said. Only truth should come from the pulpit." The money is rolling in, so no one in his church appears to be concerned that Wright teaches falsehoods as a basis for his theology.</p>	<p>First of all, it should be made clear that none of these statements are true, and the idea that a man of Wright's experiences and age has a right to feel as though these things are true, is nothing but pure, unadulterated pandering.</p> <p>Secondly, even though we have all received the imputation of Adam's sin, no author of Scripture rails against Adam and how he screwed us over. At no time does Paul comfort us and say, "It's okay to be sinful; it's not your fault." We are always made responsible for our own freewill choices and we are always accountable for our own decisions. Blame is never heaped upon Adam, Jewish apostate religious leaders, oppressive Roman aristocrats, or even Satan. Even during times when Israel was clearly under the oppression of a foreign government (as in the book of Judges), deliverance came through the freewill choices which they made, which was to turn toward God, to turn away from false systems of religion, and then to do as instructed.</p>
<p>This movement is not interested in us simply giving to the poor in some way or another. <i>"Aid" is help offered by individuals moved by the spectacle of widespread destitution. They form agencies and organize projects, the "Band-Aid" or "corn-plaster" approach to social ills. But however perceptive they become and however well-intentioned -- and successful -- aid remains a strategy for helping the poor, but treating them as (collective) objects of charity, not as subjects of their own liberation.</i></p> <p><i>The poor can break out of their situation of oppression only by working out a strategy better able to change social conditions: the strategy of liberation. In liberation, the oppressed come together, come to understand their situation through the process of 'conscientization,' discover the causes of their oppression, organize themselves into movements, and act in a coordinated fashion. First, they claim everything that the existing system can give: better wages, working conditions, health care, education, housing, and so forth; then they work toward the transformation of present society in the direction of a new society characterized by widespread participation, a better and more just balance among social classes and more worthy ways of life.</i>¹²</p>	<p>You will note that Liberation Theology is not interested in aid to the poor, even though this is seen as a Christian virtue (again, food for the poor was codified in the Mosaic Law).</p> <p>What is seen as virtuous is the poor and the oppressed coming together as a movement and becoming indoctrinated. They are to focus on the things which they do not have, which you will notice is better wages, better working conditions, etc. The 10th commandment warns us against lusting after those things which we do not have.</p> <p>Jesus did speak of giving aid and comfort to the poor on several occasions (Matt. 25:31–46 Luke 10:29–37)</p> <p>Jesus at no time tried to get the poor to organize as a group in order to better improve their conditions; and at no time did He try to get large groups of people to work toward the transformation of the present society into something greater. We are in the devil's world. We are not called upon the whitewash the devil's world. We are in a world corrupted by sin. At no time does God call upon humankind to improve economic conditions. Jesus Christ, in Holy Spirit 2nd Advent, will restore a perfect environment to this earth.</p>

¹¹ From <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=58928> accessed May 6, 2008.

¹² From <http://www.landreform.org/boff1.htm> accessed May 7, 2008.

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<p>Jeremiah Wright, at the National Press Club in April 2008 said that the Bible was written during 6 great periods of oppression. From the sermons which I have heard, he appears to view the United States government as oppressive and imperialistic, stretching out its evil tentacles throughout the world to further enslave poor people (despite the fact that the United States has freed more people than any other country in human history).</p>	<p>This is just factually wrong. A huge portion of the Old Testament was written during the time of David and Solomon, when the kingdom of Israel was at its zenith.</p> <p>Not once did Jesus or Paul speak against the Roman government; they never called it oppressive and they never advocated any sort of rebellion against the Romans. Jesus told His followers that they needed to pay their taxes and Paul told the churches that they needed to obey Roman law.</p> <p>The book of Judges does deal with several sets of oppression by foreign governments over Israel, and political action or activism was never presented as a solution. Turning to God, turning away from false systems of religion (Liberation Theology comes to mind) is always presented as the first step.</p>
<p>Jeremiah Wright has made our soldiers out to be imperialistic oppressors in foreign lands.</p>	<p>Jesus, when speaking to a Roman soldier, could have <i>let him have it</i> for being such an evil oppressor. Instead, Jesus said, "Nowhere in Israel have I found such a great faith."</p> <p>Paul told the Romans that Roman soldiers did not wield their swords in vain (i.e., that capital punishment under the Roman government was legitimate).</p>
<p>In essence, liberation theology explores the relationship between Christian, particularly Roman Catholic, theology and political activism, particularly in areas of social justice, poverty and human rights. The main methodological innovation of liberation theology is to approach theology from the viewpoint of the economically poor and oppressed. According to Jon Sobrino, S.J., the poor are a privileged channel of God's grace.¹³</p>	<p>There are several things which we focus upon as believers: we are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; this involves learning Bible doctrine in our local church. Another focus for believers is evangelism—we tell others about Who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us.</p> <p>This does not mean that we are opposed to social justice (whatever that means) and human rights or that we support and encourage poverty. This is simply not the focus of the church or of individuals in the church.</p>
<p>According to Phillip Berryman, liberation theology is "an interpretation of Christian faith through the poor's suffering, their struggle and hope, and a critique of society and the Catholic faith and Christianity through the eyes of the poor."¹⁴</p>	<p>Our focus is not upon the economically downtrodden. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" not <i>the poor in economic wealth</i>. Since the economically poor will always be with us, it is not the focus of Christianity to somehow fix that.</p> <p>On the other hand, there is a place in Christianity for missions to areas of economic poverty where the mission both helps out the poor and proclaims the gospel to them.</p>

¹³ Taken from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_theology accessed May 5, 2008.

¹⁴ Taken from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_theology accessed May 5, 2008.

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<p>The poor are seen as a special class of people and the rich are seen as those who have exploited the poor. What comes to my mind is Jeremiah Wright's rant against living in a nation ruled by <i>rich white people</i>.</p>	<p>We are all equal before God. In James 2, he warns against giving preferential treatment to the more affluent in a local church.</p> <p>Unbelievers, rich and poor, are in need of Jesus Christ as their Savior. Believers, rich and poor, begin with the same operating assets and the same chance to grow.</p>
<p>Liberation theology is simply an attempt of socialists and Marxists to twist Scripture in such a way to support a socialist revolution or a socialistic approach to society's ills. They take a verse here or there—and in many instances, a half of a verse—and use this to justify a Marxian type revolution.</p>	<p>Believers, ideally speaking, look to understand the entire Bible as the Word of God. Each verse is to be seen in its historical and literary context. We have noted all kinds of religious evil which have resulted from taking this or that verse out of context; or emphasizing one passage above all others.</p>
<p>Liberation of the poor is an economic and social liberation. In a Latin American country, this may be a move toward a socialist government, which is defined as fair and equitable. In the US, this might involve a great deal of whining about the government and rich white people.</p> <p><i>The second general conference of the episcopate of Latin America, held at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968, spoke of the church "listening to the cry of the poor and becoming the interpreter of their anguish"; this was the first flowering of the theme of liberation, which [then] began to be worked out systematically.</i>¹⁵</p>	<p>True liberation is of the soul. Our economic status is irrelevant. We are to believe in Jesus Christ and then grow spiritually, and God will take care of the rest of our needs. Jesus told His disciples: "No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and he will love the other, or else he will be devoted to the one, and he will despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Because of this I say to you, do not worry about your life--what you shall eat, or what you shall drink--nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap, nor do they gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they? Which of you by worrying is able to add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothes? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither labor, nor spin; and yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. But if God thus clothes the grass of the field, which exists today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we put on?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matt. 6:24–33).</p>

¹⁵ <http://www.landreform.org/boff2.htm> accessed May 6, 2008. Leonardo and Clodovis Boff; *Introducing Liberation Theology* published by Orbis Books.

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<p>Emphasis is placed on those parts of the Bible where Jesus' mission is described not in terms of bringing peace (social order) but bringing a sword (social unrest), e.g. Matthew 10:34, Luke 22:35-38 and Matthew 26:51-52. These passages are interpreted as a call to arms to carry out what proponents see as a Christian mission of justice -- literally by some. Marxist concepts such as the doctrine of perpetual class struggle are also significant.¹⁶</p>	<p>What many cults and movements do which are associated with the Bible, is take a set of Scriptures and make them preeminent over all others. When Jesus Christ speaks of the gospel of peace, this is not world peace, but peace between man and God. When He speaks of bringing a sword between families, it speaks of Christianity as sometimes dividing families (which is true in societies which are distinctively anti-Christian; for instances, today, a person in a Muslim family who believed in Jesus Christ might become divided from his family; this is not the case for all conversions to Christianity, however).</p>
<p>As suggested above, there may be a situation where we are called upon to revolt against our government, assuming that it reaches some great point of injustice.</p>	<p>Paul tells us to try to live peaceably among all men. He also tells us to obey governmental authorities. No where in the Bible are we called upon to revolt against an oppressive government. Paul told us to obey earthly authorities, even though the Roman government was at enmity with the new Christian movement.</p>
<p>The type of society and the systems in place by a society are seen as the problem. The society itself is seen as oppressive and/or racist. The social institutions which are in place serve to maintain this status quo and these social institutions are evil, along with the men who enforce them.</p>	<p>The type of society and the type of political system is never made an issue of in the New Testament. We are to obey the governments that we are under and to recognize proper authorities. Believers in the New Testament are never urged to demonstrate, protest, rebel against their government. Paul, when unjustly accused and imprisoned by the Roman government, went through the proper steps allowed to him as a Roman citizen, eventually appealing to Cæsar.</p>
<p>Liberation theology seems to lean in the direction of Communist and socialist governments. So governments and administrations can be seen as being evil; but certain types of governments and specific candidates, politicians and movement leaders can be seen as liberators and good.</p>	<p>Christianity leans toward law and order through the government, but there is nothing in the Bible which points toward democracy or towards a dictatorship.</p>
<p>Liberation theology leans toward a government which sees that wealth is more fairly distributed. It is wrong in their eyes if a Black man works hard and is barely getting by, whereas a rich white executive is not working as hard, but making a lot of money. This is seen as an inherent economic injustice which government should seek to cure.</p>	<p>Although free enterprise does not appear to be specifically endorsed in the Bible, Jesus used many examples from a free enterprise system (such as the man who hires people throughout the day at different times, but chooses to pay them the same wage; he is not faulted for doing this).</p>

¹⁶ Taken from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_theology accessed May 5, 2008.

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<p>There may be times when political action is called for: demonstrations, marches, sit-in's.</p>	<p>There is an exception to this: believers are to gather together periodically as a local church for the teaching of the Word of God (along with other activities). We are also to share our faith (the reason for the hope which is within us). These are activities that believers should respectfully take part in, regardless of governmental restrictions. This does not mean that we go out of bounds, such as deciding that our church needs to meet in the middle of a street or in front of a building in order to block traffic into the building. Part of our freedom does not mean that we, as a teacher, get to evangelize our pupils as a group day in and day out. We might speak to an individual student in a one-to-one setting about Jesus Christ; we might even, in some circumstances, witness to a class. However, the classroom is not a forum for us to proclaim the gospel or to teach Bible doctrine. The same holds true for any business or workplace.</p>
<p>The amount of activism one is expected to be involved in within the workplace is unclear. However, there would be nothing wrong with a history teacher putting a liberation theology slant to his or her teaching.</p> <p>Liberation theology would support teaching that certain <i>freedom fighters</i>, like grass roots Communists, were good for certain countries and that these men (like, say, Che Guevara or Fidel Castro) were liberators and heroes.</p>	<p>The example of the history teacher: a history teacher should, for instance, teach the importance of the Christian faith in the founding of our country. On the other hand, history teacher should not interpret all history from a Christian perspective, even if he is able to. We know, by means of the Bible, when the Germans began to imprison and execute Jews, that their doom was assured, because God has promised that He will deal with anti-Semitism (those who curse you will be cursed). However, that would not be appropriate to bring up. It would be reasonable to discuss, <i>why did the Nazis target specific groups of people like the Jews.</i></p>
<p>Some sort of political activism is strongly encouraged.</p>	<p>We are not specifically banned from political involvement. It would not be out of line, for instance, for a believer in Jesus Christ to run for office or to speak about his or her political views. It would be inappropriate for a pastor to do this from his pulpit. Electioneering within a church would be inappropriate because of its focus on earthly solutions.</p>
<p>It is the duty to clean up and/or fix the world.</p>	<p>As R. B. Thieme Jr. often said, we are not called upon the whitewash the devil's world. We might as believers, come to some sort of political consensus as to what is right and wrong in the political arena. That should not become the focus of the church. Furthermore, political considerations should not be or the focus of an individual's life.</p>

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<p>The Christian church is to bring justice to the poor and oppressed through social activism. The social activism may press upon the government to make certain that a variety of needs are met.</p>	<p>Jesus said, “The poor you will have with you always” when it was suggested that the oil used on His feet might be sold and the money given to the poor.</p> <p>This does not mean that we ignore the plight of the less fortunate. We do not give a hungry man the gospel and tell him, “Be filled; be satiated.” Missions and soup kitchens are legitimate and appropriate, as long as Jesus is proclaimed as the True Liberator.</p>
<p>Liberation theology is a fairly recent philosophy which has its roots in the 2nd Vatican Council (1962–1965), is often called Christian socialism, and has been spread largely throughout Latin America and the Jesuits. This theology has been officially rejected by the Catholic church.</p>	<p>The fundamentals of Christianity go back to Jesus walking this earth (and actually to the beginning of time). We believe in Jesus Christ and we are saved (in the Old Testament, they were to place their faith in Jehovah Elohim and they were saved).</p> <p>The Reformation simply brought us back to the fundamentals of the faith, where the words of Scripture were seen as superceding the traditions of men (at that time, the Catholic church).</p>
<p>In general, what appears to be the case is, a Marxist spin is overlaid upon Scripture.</p>	<p>Ideally, we apply Scripture to our lives and thinking; we do not take a philosophy of some sort and superimpose it upon the Bible.</p>
<p><i>Using methodologies such as Gutierrez's, liberationists interpret sin not primarily from an individual, private perspective, but from a social and economic perspective. Gutierrez explains that "sin is not considered as an individual, private, or merely interior reality. Sin is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of brotherhood and love in relationships among men."</i></p> <p><i>Liberationists view capitalist nations as sinful specifically because they have oppressed and exploited poorer nations. Capitalist nations have become prosperous, they say, at the expense of impoverished nations. This is often spoken of in terms of "dependency theory" - that is, the development of rich countries depends on the underdevelopment of poor countries.¹⁷</i></p>	<p>Sin, in the Bible, is seen first as an individual matter; and all sin is against God (David writes Against You and You only have I sinned; and he wrote this after committing adultery and then having the woman's husband killed).</p> <p>There is a collective nature of sin—when a nation as a whole turns further and further from God, this nation is often put under economic hardship. The automatic result of a nation which buys into Liberation Theology will be more economic hardship and not less.</p> <p>A client nation to God (e.g., early Israel, Great Britain in the past century, the United States in this century) will find itself under great discipline if it turns as a whole toward false doctrine like Liberation Theology.</p>

¹⁷ From <http://home.earthlink.net/~ronrhodes/Liberation.html> accessed May 7, 2008. The author, Ron Rhodes, is quoting Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1971), 175.

Liberation Theology	Christianity
<p><i>Development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin. All the nations of the Western world were engaged in a vast process of development; however, it was interdependent and unequal, organized in such a way that the benefits flowed to the already developed countries of the "center" and the disadvantages were meted out to the historically backward and underdeveloped countries of the "periphery." The poverty of Third World countries was the price to be paid for the First World to be able to enjoy the fruits of overabundance.¹⁸ This is a philosophy which sees life as a zero-sum game (which is also how liberals tend to see this world). If Charlie Brown is prosperous, this means that Lucy must have taken a personal financial hit.</i></p>	<p>Israel, under the Law of Moses, did have a program to feed the poor. When a field was harvested, small portions of the field were not harvested so that the poor could come and pick the food for themselves. It should be clear that the poor in Israel had to work in order to eat.</p> <p>Israel also had voluntary slavery. If you fell so far into debt that you could not pay your debt, you could become a slave and pay your debt that way (and there were time limits placed upon this).</p> <p>In the New Testament, Paul told the Thessalonians, If anyone does not desire to work, neither shall he eat (2Thess. 3:10b).</p> <p>This does not mean that we ignore poverty and disaster and think, "That's just too bad." Missionary work may involve improving the conditions of a poor area; but this is secondary to evangelization. The fundamental concept is, you do not simply evangelize people who are hungry. If one of you says, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (James 2:16).</p>

¹⁸ <http://www.landreform.org/boff2.htm> accessed May 6, 2008. By Leonardo and Clodovis Boff. From the book *Introducing Liberation Theology* published by Orbis Books.

Liberation Theology	Christianity
<p>A person who belongs to a church where liberation theology is taught is not necessarily a Christian. They may call themselves Christians, but they proclaim another Jesus. When Reverend Jeremiah Wright was asked, "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life, and no one cometh to the Father but by Me' or do you think that Islam is a way to salvation?" He answer, "Jesus also said, 'Other sheep have I who are not of this fold.'" I understand that to mean, people can be saved by other means than Jesus.</p> <p>One of the interesting things about listening to Reverend Wright is, he will take various passages out of context. This or that passage is taken to support his theology, and the context is ignored.</p>	<p>Salvation in Christianity comes through faith alone in Christ alone. Once a person exercises faith in Jesus Christ, they are saved forever. One cannot be saved by faith in Mohammed, Buddha or any other religious leader and/or founder. One cannot be saved by adherence to any set of doctrines; one cannot be saved by attempting to follow some set of laws, guidelines or principles.</p> <p>The complete quotation in context which Wright cited is this: "I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me, as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep. But I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves Me, because I am laying down My life so I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from My Father." (John 10:14–18). The key is, Jesus lays down His life on our behalf. The <i>other sheep</i> here are Gentiles, who would be called to the fold; but we all come to Jesus, the one shepherd, and we all come to Him in the same way, through faith in Him (John 3:16).</p>

It is completely understandable how a missionary from any denomination to an extremely poor country or people can become overwhelmed by their poverty. Invariably, a missionary is going to go from a more prosperous country and style of living to a less prosperous country. Sometimes the contrast is beyond one's imagination. It is here where a missionary must have a clear doctrinal perspective. If he ministers to 500 people and sees to it that they all get food, medical attention and better housing; and that they all go to the Lake of Fire because he never shares the gospel with them, then he has done that people a great disservice. A missionary must understand that first and foremost, the message of our Lord's sacrifice must be presented, no matter what the conditions. God sometimes has to bring people to a difficult place before they will listen to His Word. Simultaneous to bringing the good news of Jesus Christ, a missionary must understand and respect the customs, traditions and government of wherever he happens to be. It is not his job to try to change their culture so that it more closely approximates the culture from whence he came. If a missionary can, working within the culture that he goes to, help to make the lives of these people better, then that is a good thing. However, Paul, the great missionary, never urges local congregants to rise up against their government, their society or the systems of authority under which they find themselves. Paul would call for a break from the immorality and the false religious systems, but never did he suggest any sort of revolutionary activity.

A missionary has a very careful walk before him, and he must know Bible doctrine in order to maintain a proper balance. I personally recognize my own limitations when it comes to studying the Word of God; and I have found that, there can be a nice balance between an examination of the Word and physical activity. Both Paul and James spoke of doing side-work themselves so as not to depend upon the people to whom they ministered. Similarly, a missionary is going to have fairly long chunks of time (say, 4–10 hours) where he is not studying or teaching or proclaiming the good news of Christ Jesus. A missionary can use this period of time to put forth whatever effort he is able to improve the living conditions of those who have come to hear him speak. The key is not to overemphasize temporal conditions over God's eternal promises. The verse which he needs to memorize and teach to his congregation is: **Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you** (Matt. 6:33).

Bibliography

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_theology accessed May 5, 2008.
2. <http://youtube.com/watch?v=0YJW0nevW38> accessed May 5, 2008.
3. <http://www.landreform.org/boff2.htm> accessed May 6, 2008. Leonardo and Clodovis Boff; *Introducing Liberation Theology* published by Orbis Books.
4. <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&paged=58928> accessed May 6, 2008.
5. <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txn/liberati.htm> accessed May 5, 2008.
6. <http://home.earthlink.net/~ronrhodes/Liberation.html> accessed May 7, 2008; an excellent article by Ron Rhodes.
- 7.

For your further edification, Sean Hannity did a story on Liberation Theology, the transcript of which may be found here: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,354158,00.html>

You may also find this interesting: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,256078,00.html> which is the first interview with Reverent Wright on Hannity and Combes on March 2,2007.

Ron Rhodes wrote an excellent piece on this at <http://home.earthlink.net/~ronrhodes/Liberation.html> He seems to deal with a lot of *hot-button issues*, essays found at <http://home.earthlink.net/~ronrhodes/Downloadable.html> Although I have not gone through his entire website, what I read seemed fairly accurate.

Also see http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Front_Page/JC18Aa01.html (The Asia Times) for a more contemporary article about the Reverend Wright and Barack Obama.

From a Catholic perspective: <http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/ratzinger/liberationtheol.htm>
