

Activity 12. Liberation Theology in Latin America

Source: http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/151379.Gustavo_Guti_rrez, accessed June 16, 2010.

Background: Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino is a Peruvian Roman Catholic theologian and Dominican priest who is considered a founder of Liberation Theology. Liberation Theology is a religious movement in Latin America that demands social justice for the poor and for indigenous people. His writings, including *Praxis and Politics*, have brought him into conflict with church and government officials. In the passages that follow he blames the capitalist social order for poverty and injustice.

Instructions: As you read these passages consider the argument that the Roman Catholic Church is obligated by its religious philosophy to come “into conflict with those that wield power.” Write a paragraph where you explain your view on whether organized religious groups and religious figures should be involved in political activism and the transformation of society.

A. “The denunciation of injustice implies the rejection of the use of Christianity to legitimize the established order. It also implies, in fact, that the church enters into conflict with those that wield power.”

B. “The poor are a by-product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible. They are marginalized by our social and cultural world. They are the oppressed, exploited proletariat, robbed of the fruit of their labor and despoiled of their humanity. Hence the poverty of the poor is not a call to generous relief action, but a demand that we go and build a different social order.”

“Charity is today a ‘political charity’ . . . it means the transformation of a society structured to benefit a few who appropriate to themselves the value of the work of others. This transformation ought to be directed toward a radical change in the foundation of society, that is, the private ownership of the means of production.”