**Reflections on "Faith as Freedom" by Gustavo Gutiérrez**

Many years ago, in the early 1980s, I had an experience that came to symbolize for me the controversies surrounding the early years of liberation theology. I was at a hotel attending the annual meeting of a professional society and, during a break between sessions, was having a conversation with Gustavo Gutiérrez in the lobby. A journalist standing nearby recognized Gustavo, approached him, and requested a few minutes of his time for an interview. After asking if I would mind, Gustavo graciously agreed. As I watched from the side, the journalist launched into the interview: "Father Gutiérrez, are you a Marxist?" Without skipping a beat, Gustavo answered: "I'm a Christian." Not content with the response he had received, the journalist then simply paraphrased his initial question: "But are you a follower of Karl Marx?" "I'm a follower of Jesus Christ," answered the Peruvian theologian. At that point, the journalist realized that the interview was going nowhere (or, rather, was not going where he wanted it to go) and walked away in a huff, thus ending the very short interview.

This anecdote reveals, I think, the stark contrast between the foundation of Gustavo Gutiérrez's theology of liberation, as he conceives it, and the image of that theology in various sectors of the public at large, the church, and the academy—at least in the first heady decades of the intellectual movement. Often considered the "father" of liberation theology, Gutiérrez published *Una teología de la liberación* in 1971, with its English translation appearing in 1973 as *A Theology of Liberation*.[25] That work has, of course, become a theological classic considered the "magna carta" of liberation theology. Indeed, this year (2023) marks the fiftieth anniversary of the English translation, an event that will be commemorated by Orbis Books with the publication of a special anniversary edition of the book. This *Horizons* article "Faith as Freedom" reflects, then, Gutiérrez's thinking in the years shortly after that seminal monograph. Gutiérrez would go on to publish other works that would further develop the themes laid out in the early 1970s (and in earlier essays and speeches). Perhaps his most well-known book subsequent to *A Theology of Liberation* appeared in 1986, *Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente: Una reflexión sobre el libro de Job*, published in English the following year as *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*.[26] In this response, I will try to locate the *Horizons* article in the context of Gutiérrez's intellectual project, focusing on what I consider to be the most salient aspects of that project,

[25] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, rev. ed., trans. and ed. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

[26] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and examining how the article sets forth key elements of Gutiérrez's theology of liberation while leaving some of his key insights to be developed in later writings. I will also reflect on ways in which those insights might be developed further in our contemporary context. In so doing, it will become clear (I hope) that the Peruvian Dominican theologian's theology of liberation is a deeply Catholic, Christian, scriptural theology that cannot be dismissed as simply a "politicization" of the Christian faith or a theology of revolution. Though such mischaracterizations were more prevalent in the early years of liberation theology, they have hardly disappeared from the public imagination, even in these years of the Francis papacy. One should also note that such mischaracterizations do not come only from critics of liberation theology but also from its putative supporters. Indeed, in the anecdote I recount previously, it was not altogether clear to me whether, had Gustavo "admitted" to being a Marxist, the journalist would have seen the admission as cause for condemnation or celebration.

## I. Between *A Theology of Liberation* and *On Job*: An Integral Theology

On the surface, at least, the contrast between Gutiérrez's *On Job* and the earlier *A Theology of Liberation* is almost as stark as that between the journalist's impression of liberation theology and Gutiérrez's own articulation of his beliefs in that interview many years ago. Whereas the earlier book systematically developed the theological and sociopolitical implications of liberation theology, *On Job* is a deeply moving reflection on the possibility of even talking about (and to) a God of love in the face of innocent suffering. If *A Theology of Liberation* was a call to transformation, this later book seemed to ask, How can the innocent victims continue to believe, hope, and pray even when there appears to be no hope of transformation? Given the differences between these two works, one might be tempted to conclude that the Peruvian theologian had changed his mind, leaving behind the call to social transformation of his earlier days in favor of the more "spiritual," contemplative approach of *On Job*. In this short response, I would like to argue against such a dichotomous interpretation of Gutiérrez's two most popular works because it's precisely such an interpretation that has often resulted in misconceptions like those reflected in the journalist's questions in my anecdote. Although these two seminal works emphasize distinct dimensions of liberation theology, these dimensions are inseparable and integrally related. I will suggest, further, that Gutiérrez's 1975 article in *Horizons* can help us understand the integral relationship between *A Theology of Liberation* and *On Job*.

In *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez famously defined liberation theology as "critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of God."[27] That definition itself must be unpacked because each word is crucial and, especially, the *relationship* among the words is crucial. A failure to appreciate the significance for Gutiérrez of the integral relationship among the different elements of the theological task will inevitably result in a reductive reading of his theology. Thus, much has been made of his emphasis on praxis as foundational—and appropriately so—that given this emphasis is one of his most important contributions to Christian theology. Yet I would argue that, conversely, too little attention has often been paid to his specification of foundational praxis as "Christian" and to his insistence that the theological task be undertaken "in the light of the Word." What is specifically *Christian* praxis, and what is the nature of *the Word*? In his writings, Gutiérrez himself offers an answer. He suggests that the Word (Scripture) reveals two principal characteristics of divine love: 1) God's love is gratuitous and universal, and 2) God's love is extended preferentially to the poor. Specifically, Christian praxis is a praxis rooted in God's love as thus defined and will, in turn, be judged in the light of that gratuitous, universal, and preferential love.

Having briefly adumbrated Gustavo Gutiérrez's understanding of the theological task as this was already set forth in *A Theology of Liberation*, we can now turn to his 1975 *Horizons* article to see how that article, specifically, represented a significant articulation of the various integral elements of his theology as those had been developed in *A Theology of Liberation*. The article also articulates dimensions of the theological task that, though present throughout Gutiérrez's writings in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, will not appear in their fully developed, most profound form until *On Job*.

As the title indicates, the article "Faith as Freedom" introduces the theme of freedom as central to Christian faith and theology. As Gutiérrez explains, this theme has been at the heart of the Christian life from the very outset. The relationship between faith and politics has also been a topic that has concerned Christians from the beginning. What Gutiérrez and other liberation theologians contribute to this historical conversation, however, is their insistence on both the *critical* role of faith vis-à-vis politics and the *social-structural* character of that relationship. To this end, Gutiérrez begins his article with an extended analysis of the Latin American sociohistorical context in which Latin American Christians and the church find themselves, and he draws on European political theology to help articulate the critical function of Christian faith in post-Enlightenment society. Here he delineates the structural, systemic dimensions of freedom and oppression. Previous understandings of the relation of faith to politics tended to view faith as existing on a separate plane from politics. To a great extent, this separation immunized politics

[27] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 19–20.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

from critique. While lay Christians might become engaged in sociopolitical action, the church as such was to limit its concerns to the "spiritual" sphere. In turn, the church's absence from sociopolitical conversations often functioned to legitimize oppressive structures; silence, after all, is consent. This separation of the "spiritual" and political spheres ended—in dramatic fashion—at Medellín (at least in the official teachings of the Latin American Church).[28]

On the other hand, a corollary of liberation theology's *critical* understanding of the relationship between faith and politics is that the exercise of Christian freedom, whether on the part of the laity or the ecclesial institution, will often involve Christians in conflict; if the sociohistorical context is such that the society is divided between the powerful and the powerless, then to support the liberation of the powerless is to incur the wrath of the powerful. Thus, justice (or freedom for *all*) is a precondition of Christian reconciliation. Here Gutiérrez clearly sees conflict not as something Christians should seek out, but as the tragic, inevitable consequence of the Christian's solidarity with the poor and oppressed (much as Jesus's own conflict with the religious and political elites of his time were not something he desired, but simply the consequence of his solidarity with the outcasts). It's important to note that, in his analysis of sociohistorical forms of oppression, Gutiérrez here never limits himself to an economic class analysis, but includes other forms of oppression, for example, gender, culture, and race—and this already in the 1970s. His *Horizons* article demonstrates, therefore, that, already at that time, he rejected a reductively economic Marxist class analysis and was influenced by his dialogue with other theologians of liberation in different marginalized contexts, thus being attentive to what today we might call intersectionality.

Following the social analysis that provides the context for his subsequent theological analysis, Gutiérrez articulates a spirituality of liberation rooted in the gospel, the person of Jesus Christ, the preferential option for the poor, and the "*ecclesia*." As important and indispensable as is his social analysis, the focus of the article is his articulation not only of a theology of liberation but of an integrally related spirituality of liberation rooted in that sociohistorical context, in the light of the Scriptures, that fosters the evangelizing mission of the church. (In other words, if Gutiérrez had been the Marxist suggested by that journalist, he could never have written this article and, in any case, Marx would have scoffed at any notion of a liberating *faith* or a *theology* of liberation.)

In part 2 of his article, "To Believe in Order to Understand," Gutiérrez begins by asserting that the option for the poor involves "a new spiritual experience in the heart of the praxis itself. This experience is the very matrix of the new

[28] Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), "Final Document of the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops," 1968.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

understanding of the word, God's gratuitous gift, which penetrates human existence and transforms it."[29] At the very heart of sociohistorical or liberating praxis is an experience of conversion that, in turn, becomes the basis for a new understanding of the word of God as a *gratuitous gift* that transforms human existence. For Gutiérrez, the two fundamental, integrally related principles of Scripture are: 1) the universality and gratuity of God's love, and 2) God's preferential love for the poor. Though, at first glance, these appear as mutually contradictory, they are in fact two sides of the same coin and imply each other: "The poor, the other, appears as a revealer of the totally Other."[30] The God who is mystery will be revealed—*must* be revealed—especially among those persons who themselves are mystery in our world: for example, among the poor in a world that idolizes wealth, among the powerless in a world that glorifies power, among the insecure in a world that obsesses over security and control. The crucified God will be revealed preferentially (first, though not exclusively) among the crucified people. In a world where love must be earned, the utterly gratuitous and universal love of God will be revealed especially among the unloved, among the destitute and the sinners, the prisoners, and the outcasts. Such is the stubborn logic of gratuity.

In a divided world, the gratuity and universality of God's love will be mediated by, instantiated, or manifested in God's (and our) preferential option for the poor. If spiritual experience is at the heart of social praxis, so too is praxis itself the necessary mediation of that spiritual experience. Our participation in God's own solidarity with the poor is itself the means of receiving the gift of God's universal, unconditional love. In other words, what Gutiérrez understands here by the Greek word "praxis" cannot be simply interpreted as the action of an autonomous self-directed agent. Praxis is also "reception," or receptivity to the totally Other revealed in, or mediated by, the human other. This is an essentially *sacramental* understanding of historical praxis itself, where the universal and supernatural (salvation, grace, divine love) is mediated, revealed, and made accessible to us in and through the natural, historical, particular, and concrete (historical praxis, solidarity with the poor). The truly radical character of Gutiérrez's theology is not that it "baptized" political revolution. Its radical character comes from his insistence that the poor are not just objects of charity, or even the agents of justice, but rather *the privileged locus of God's self-revelation in history*—not because of who the poor are (sinners like the rest of us), but because of who God is (universal and gratuitous Love). And solidarity with the poor is thus the privileged way of

[29] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom: Solidarity with the Alienated and Confidence in the Future." *Horizons* 2, no. 1 (1975): 38.

[30] Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," 39.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

encountering the universal, gratuitous love of God: "There is no other way to receive the gratuitous gift of sonship. It is to choose the cross of Christ, in the hope of his resurrection."[31] The option for the poor is not only an ethical option, but even more fundamentally an epistemological and—here's the truly scandalous point—a soteriological option: in the words of Jon Sobrino, there's "no salvation outside the poor." Those are words that will get people crucified, as they did Sobrino's own Jesuit colleagues at the Universidad Centroamericana in El Salvador.

Theology, in turn, is always a critical reflection on that praxis "confronted with the Word of the Lord lived and accepted in faith; this faith comes to us through the multiple, and at times ambiguous, historical mediations which we make and discover every day."[32] This confrontation with the Word is always critical because the supernatural always exceeds or transcends the ability of praxis to reveal fully the universality and gratuity of God's love: "The Word of the Lord interprets every situation and situates it in a wider perspective of the radical liberation by Christ the Lord of History."[33] Repeatedly and explicitly, Gutiérrez rejects the simple identification of Christian theology with any social project or form of social analysis:

> This is the manner in which the Theology of Liberation differs from such theologies as those of development, revolution, and violence, to which it is at times linked, and with which it is erroneously confused.. . . The Theology of Liberation does not intend to provide Christian justification for positions already taken, and does not claim to be a revolutionary Christian ideology.[34]

Precisely because it "places the political commitment to liberation in the perspective of the free gift of total liberation brought by Christ," liberation theology is more "self-critical and, therefore, more radical and global" than any theology of revolution.[35] At the same time, Christ's gift is always mediated by social structures and social praxis since the sin we are liberated from "cannot be found floating in the air, but is found in concrete historical situations, in individual and specific alienations."[36] Hence, theologians must draw on the insights of social analysis (though always critically, in the light of the Word)

[31] Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," 40.
[32] Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," 47.
[33] Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," 56.
[34] Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," 48.
[35] Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," 48.
[36] Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," 49.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in order to better understand how sin and its alienations are themselves mediated by and concretized in social structures that foster injustice.

Finally, Gutiérrez makes clear that this hermeneutical circle of praxis and theory takes place in an *ecclesial* context; the theologian's task is never that of an autonomous individual believer. The church is integral to the sociohistorical locus of liberation theology. At the same time, as sociohistorical, that church is also riven by some of the same ambiguities and temptations that characterize the larger society. As the Body of Christ, the church is called to become a church of the people "by taking root in the marginalized and exploited classes and cultures, or rather, by emerging from them, from their aspirations, their interests, their struggles, and their cultural categories. . . ."[37] In other words, the church too must make a preferential option for the poor if it is to be truly a universal church, "a Church of the people, a Church that makes the gospel message heard by all persons and that is a sign of liberation, of the liberation of the Lord of history."[38]

## II. Between 1975 and 2023: Reflections on How Far We've Come and Where We're Going

The framework of Gustavo Gutiérrez's theology of liberation was already laid out, then, in the early 1970s, in his classic work *A Theology of Liberation* as well as in "Faith as Freedom." Nevertheless, his publications during the following years reflected shifts in emphases and further nuances. The evolving sociopolitical landscape (e.g., the failure of Latin American revolutions to bring about real, lasting social transformation, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in Europe) necessarily informed the development of a theology of liberation. Likewise, increased dialogue with North American and European theologians of liberation, as well as critics of liberation theology, contributed to the clarification and expansion of ideas Gutiérrez had first set forth in his earlier works. For instance, if *A Theology of Liberation* emphasized the second principal theme of Scripture, God's preferential love for the poor, his books *We Drink from Our Own Wells* and especially *On Job*, published in the following decade, emphasized the first principal theme, the universality and gratuity of God's love.[39] (It's important to point out that, nevertheless, both of these themes are present in *all* of his writings.)

[37] Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," 59.

[38] Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom," 59.

[39] Gutiérrez, *On Job,* and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Also interesting were some clarifications and different nuances that appeared in the 1988 fifteenth anniversary edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, including Gutiérrez's new, extended introduction entitled "Expanding the View." Much had transpired in the intervening fifteen years since the publication of the first English edition. In addition to the changing sociopolitical circumstances mentioned previously, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had issued two "Instructions" on the theology of liberation.[40] Gutiérrez's new "Introduction to the Revised Edition" is an extraordinary theological document in its own right. Here, Gutiérrez summarizes the tenets of his theology, but now in light of his dialogue with other theologies of liberations and the criticisms Latin American liberation theology had received from the Vatican and elsewhere. Demonstrating an intellectual humility only rarely encountered in theological circles (but typical of Gustavo), he chooses not to engage the criticisms directly but rather to accept the responsibility of clarifying his own language so that it will be less likely to be misunderstood:

> But rather than point out the responsibilities of others, let me say simply that it is not easy to deal with sensitive and conflictual themes—like the very reality we are attempting to penetrate with the eyes of faith—and to find immediately and for good the clearest and most balanced formulas in which to express theological reflection on these themes. All language is to some extent a groping for clarity; it is therefore necessary to deal respectfully with other persons and with what they think they find in works written from this theological perspective. At every stage, therefore, we must refine, improve, and possibly correct earlier formulations if we want to use language that is understandable and faithful both to the integral Christian message and to the reality we experience.[41]

The need to clarify and refine language so that the *integral* character of liberation theology is clearly understood arises not only as a response to critics who read his theology as a reductive theology of revolution, but also from supporters who have done the same: "On the other hand, the theology of liberation has also stirred facile enthusiasms that have interpreted it in a simplistic or erroneous way by ignoring the integral demands of the Christian faith as lived

[40] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" August 6, 1984, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html; "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," March 22, 1986, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860322_freedom-liberation_en.html.

[41] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, "Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View," 20.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the communion of the church." In a footnote to the new "Introduction to the Revised Edition," Gutiérrez provides an example of such a clarification, or refinement of language: "I have added to the body of the book a few notes that aim at revising and completing, as far as possible, aspects discussed in this Introduction. The section "Faith and Social Conflict," in chapter 12 [entitled "The Church: Sacrament of History"], is a reformulation of the section "Christian Fellowship and Class Struggle" found at the same point in the first edition.[42] One can infer, I think, that the replacing of "class struggle" with "social conflict" reflected Gutiérrez's sensitivity to the Marxist political connotations and etymological history of the phrase "class struggle" as opposed to the more broader term "social conflict," particularly in a chapter on the sacramental historical character of the church. This is a perfect example of refining one's theological language as a way to make misinterpretation less likely. In this same new introduction to *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez also addressed in a more explicit and detained way the import of dialogue with other theologies of liberation around the world for the evolution of his thought since the early 1970s:

> Black, Hispanic, and Amerindian theologies in the United States, theologies arising in the complex contexts of Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific, and the especially fruitful thinking of those who have adopted the feminist perspective—all these have meant that for the first time in many centuries theology is being done outside the customary European and North American Centers. The result in the so-called First World has been a new kind of dialogue between traditional thinking and new thinking. In addition, outside the Christian sphere efforts are underway to develop liberation theologies from Jewish and Muslim perspectives.[43]

This attention to the various forms of marginalization as *loci theologici* was later affirmed in CELAM's Puebla Document (1979), which explicitly expanded the definition of the poor to include races and cultures, and especially women.[44] Latin American feminist and US Latinx and mujerista theologians have been crucial participants in the development of liberation theologies. Dialogue was spurred by such initiatives as the organization Theology in the Americas (TIA), which held its first convention in 1975, and the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), created in 1976. In the light of these initiatives and many more, the theology of liberation became a global phenomenon, a fact that was increasingly reflected in

[42] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 174.

[43] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 21.

[44] CELAM, "Puebla Document: Third General Conference," 1979.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Gutiérrez's writings and, indeed, in his life as a theologian. Liberation theologies were emerging, often in parallel form, in numerous contexts throughout the world. (So, for instance, during the 1970s and 1980s, Gustavo would become a regular participant in the work of the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio, Texas, where he would develop personal and intellectual relationships with North American theologians.)

On the other hand, theological attention to some other forms of marginalization remained in its infancy, if present at all. For instance, LGBTQ+ theologies were only later important participants in the dialogue both among and within liberation theologies, though much work still remains to be done here.[45] Likewise, too little attention has yet been paid to Indigenous and African religions as resources for Latin American and US Latinx theologies. Though race has been an important topic of dialogue *between* these theologies and other liberation or contextual theologies (e.g., African American theologies), much work remains to be done in analyzing that topic and the role of racism *within* Latin American and US Latinx theologies.

A key aspect of what LGBTQ+, Indigenous, and African contexts contribute to liberation theology is their alternative theological anthropologies; all represent fundamental challenges to the dominant Cartesian individualistic anthropology in the West. It is at this fundamental level, I would submit, that liberation theologies must continue to develop in the coming years, for it is at this fundamental level that the globe faces its most daunting challenges.[46] To resist the cultural power of (post)modern individualism, liberation theologies would also benefit from expanding the global theological conversation even further. For example, if inherently relational, trinitarian theological anthropologies that resist modern Western individualism are central to liberation and contextual theologies, then similar challenges to individualism are posed by other schools of thought that we have not yet engaged in a sufficiently systematic way, both within and outside the Christian tradition itself.

[45] A fascinating exception here is Miguel Díaz's recent book, *Queer God de Amor* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022).

[46] That anthropology has certainly brought us many benefits, from unprecedented economic growth and political freedom to inconceivable technological advances. Yet the underside of these benefits has now also become inescapably clear: obscene economic inequality, environmental degradation, the abandonment of millions on whose backs our freedom has been built, a spiraling consumerism that destroys our moral fabric, increasing levels of anxiety, addiction, and depression among our youth, and so on. The antidote will not be an increased dose of individualism, an increased isolation of the individual behind ever higher walls and gates. That's the problem, not the solution. As Albert Einstein once observed: "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it."

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Within Christianity, one intellectual resource that has not been adequately appreciated for its implications here is the Christian mystical tradition, with its emphasis on the intrinsic relationship between praxis and theory, between union with God and union with our sisters and brothers.[47] (It's no coincidence that so many mystics have ended up in prison, or worse.) The notion of *theosis*, or deification, is a theological current within Christian mystical theology that offers an important corrective to individualism and its correlative libertarian understanding of human freedom, as well as to a dichotomous understanding of the relationship between social praxis and prayer, between the option for the poor and openness to divine gratuity.[48] Mystical currents in the other Abrahamic religions, such as Sufism in Islam and the Kabbalah traditions in Judaism, also offer important intellectual resources. These all have important implications for theological anthropology and our understanding of the relationship between spirituality and social action—and, therefore, for liberation theologies.

Outside the specifically Christian tradition and the other Abrahamic religions, Eastern religions represent important opportunities for dialogue. Their ages-old insights can be important resources for the continued development of liberation theology since these bear directly on our very understanding of human freedom and liberation. In Buddhism and Hinduism, for instance, the emergence of movements such as Engaged Buddhism and Dalit theology, respectively, provide important avenues for religious dialogue and for comparative theology.

Beyond theology itself, moreover, developments in the natural sciences over the last several decades offer rich opportunities for dialogue; the discoveries of quantum theory have generated a dramatic paradigm shift from the Newtonian and even the Einsteinian worldviews—a shift that, arguably, is blurring the lines between science and spirituality. One might even say that science is finally catching up to what mystics of all religions have been teaching for millennia. The confluence of numerous forms of "nondual thought" and

[47] Gutiérrez himself draws extensively on St. John of the Cross in his *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, as does Miguel Díaz in *Queer God de Amor*. Another example of a Latin American theologian who draws on the mystical tradition is Maria Clara Bingemer in her *Simone Weil: Mystic of Passion and Compassion* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015). In North America, a major figure who consistently and powerfully articulated the relationship between mysticism and the option for the poor was the great African American theologian Howard Thurman. See, for example, the collection of Thurman's sermons in Peter Eisenstadt and Walter Earl Fluker, eds., *The Way of the Mystics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021).

[48] See, for instance, my (Roberto Goizueta), "In Christ: *Theosis* and the Preferential Option for the Poor," in Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Renewal of Mystical Theology: Essays in Honor of John N. Jones (1964–2012)* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2017), 219–37.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contemporary quantum mechanics (e.g., the quantum theory of entanglement) has important implications not only for Christian theology more broadly, but also for liberation theology because these are all schools of thought whose nondual worldviews challenge modern Western dualisms, whether between the individual and community, the personal and the social, the supernatural and the natural, Creator and creation, or the human being and the cosmos. Nondual thought also places the global environmental crisis right at the center of the theological enterprise and, *a fortiori*, at the center of any liberation theology. Yet, ironically, as science moves further away from Newton and Descartes, much of Western Christian theology remains beholden to Newtonian and Cartesian foundations that are simply presupposed.

At the same time, a specifically Christian contribution to nondual worldviews is Christianity's insistence on the ultimately personal foundation of nonduality. This insistence is particularly significant for liberation theologies or contextual theologies, at whose heart is the liberation of the *person*. What can that mean in light of notions of no-self found in nondual theologies and philosophies—or, for that matter, in some Christian mystics? How dare we propound no-self or egolessness in the context of those persons whom Gutiérrez calls "non-persons" (or non-selves) who struggle daily to affirm their very personhood in the midst of a society that denies it? How do we understand the nature of "personality" and "the self"? The Christian mystical tradition, Eastern Christianity, and, indeed, liberation theologies will have much to offer here.

In the Christian world, liberation and contextual theologies are especially well positioned to engage in dialogue with non-Christian religious traditions and with post-Newtonian science. For years, liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez have been questioning the Western individualism, materialism, and rationalism that have contributed to the subjugation and deaths of millions of people around the globe. As an alternative, Gutiérrez and others have put forth an inherently relational, integral understanding of the person and of the cosmos, rooted in the Trinitarian ground of all reality. At the heart of that reality is a divine love that maintains it in existence and that, as Gratuity, is manifested in a special way among the poor and outcast. This would be liberation theology's most important contribution to the dialogue between Christian theology and nondual theologies and philosophies, whether within or outside the Christian world. Indeed, this is Gustavo Gutiérrez's most enduring contribution: the universality and gratuity of Love is inseparable from that Love's preference for the poor.

ROBERTO S. GOIZUETA
*Boston College, USA*
10.1017/hor.2023.52

https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press