

Dupertuis, Atilio René. *Liberation Theology: A Study in Its Soteriology*. Andrews University Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 9. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987. xviii + 361 pp. Paperback, \$14.95.

In this published dissertation (completed in 1982), Atilio Dupertuis presents a critique of liberation theology's soteriology from an evangelical perspective. The aim of the study "is to examine the soteriology of liberation theology, especially in the light of its use of the Exodus model" (p. 14). The work is limited to the Latin American expression of liberation theology, giving major attention to Gustavo Gutierrez and his book, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973).

Dupertuis' work is divided into three chapters. The first examines the historical, social, and theological backgrounds that gave rise to this new theological movement. A brief account of Latin American history from colonialism to the present is provided, together with a discussion on the state of dependency and its consequences.

The second chapter examines the soteriology of liberation theology, particularly the use of the Exodus as the paradigmatic biblical experience. Major treatment is given to liberation theology's hermeneutical method and major concepts, such as praxis, violence, class struggle, conscientization, poverty, and the role of the social sciences.

Finally, the last chapter contains a critical assessment of liberation theology's soteriology. It presents an alternative view of the Exodus from a biblical perspective of salvation history, arguing that the Exodus, rather than being an isolated political event, is integrally related to the larger story of God's actions in history.

Dupertuis' treatment of the subject matter is comprehensive and detailed. Extensive footnotes provide additional information and commentary. The scope of the study is somewhat ambitious, at times falling prey to generalizations and simplification. The strength of the book lies in its extensive analysis of primary materials and its incisive critique from a biblical/theological point of view. The study fits within a growing literature of evangelical responses and critiques of liberation theology. The book is well written and understandable, even though one has to read through the footnotes to ascertain a large part of the author's opinions and evaluation.

Perhaps Dupertuis' major contribution is his insistence that the criterion by which any sound Christian theology should be judged is faithfulness to the normative role of scripture. The author consistently and convincingly applies this criterion to the examination of liberation theology's hermeneutics, conceptual framework, and exegetical analysis.

The author recognizes that liberation theology has made numerous contributions to European and North American theologies. Among them are its emphasis on the poor, the unity between orthodoxy and orthopraxis, and a concern for social justice.

At the same time he shows some of liberation theology's inherent limitations. Dupertuis points to its selective use of scripture, which is limited to only those elements that contribute directly to the process of liberation. And, he indicates, even those texts are often not fully examined exegetically or contextually. This is particularly true in the use of the Exodus, where liberation theologians have for the most part overlooked God's covenantal relationship with Israel as a condition for its liberation. The author also criticizes the soteriology of liberation theology for its overemphasis on human works and on historical progress at the expense of God's grace and transcendence.

Notwithstanding these positive elements, the study has some limitations. For example, in discussing the epistemological split between knowing the truth and doing the truth, Dupertuis states that the liberation theologians are "clearly saying that there is no truth outside or beyond the concrete historical events in which man participates as agent" (p. 118). This conclusion misrepresents and trivializes liberation theology's emphasis on correct knowledge as contingent on right doing; or, rather, on knowledge as disclosed in the doing. Moreover, it presupposes that knowledge is somehow untouched by human reason or social context.

Furthermore, throughout the study, the author is critical of liberation theology's use of Marxist social analysis without evaluating critically its utility as a mediating tool between theory and practice in the context of Latin America. The discussion of the social sciences is reactionary, thus neglecting to address substantive matters of their contribution to theological method. An unfortunate omission is an evaluation of the spirituality of liberation theology (see Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation*, pp. 203-208), which challenges the theory of its secular origins (see also Gustavo Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1984]).

Dupertuis also diminishes the political impact of Jesus' ministry (see pp. 272-279, n. 3). To say that Christ's message did not have political consequences is to fail to realize the radical nature of his mission. While Dupertuis agrees with social action which seeks to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and alleviate the oppressed, he is tentative about actions that contribute toward changing social structures that perpetuate such conditions. (Interestingly enough, while the author uses John Yoder's book, *The Politics of Jesus* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972], as evidence for Jesus' non-violent message, he selectively fails to use it as evidence for Jesus' radical message of social change).

More fundamental is the problem of conceiving what liberation theology is all about. Dupertuis argues that liberation theology is a school of thought (p. 284), when in reality it is better seen as a developing school of thought. The dependency of poor, underdeveloped countries around 1968 was the object of the new theological discourse. That explains why politi-

cal, economic, and social themes were so important to authors like Gutierrez in *A Theology of Liberation*. Only later were questions of ecclesiology, christology, and spirituality addressed. This means that to understand liberation theology's soteriology fully, as expressed by Gutierrez, for example, one would need to examine his recent works, particularly *Drinking from Our Own Wells*.

We are indebted to Dupertuis' contribution to the evangelical dialog with liberation theology and look forward to an updated volume that would take some of the above issues into consideration.

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Ellul, Jacques. *Jesus and Marx: From Gospel to Ideology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988. xvi + 187 pp. Paperback, \$12.95.

Jacques Ellul has been writing on the relationship between Christianity and revolution for half a century. *Jesus and Marx*, first published in French in 1979 as *L'idéologie marxiste chrétienne*, is a combination of previously published articles with some new material, forming a compact unit. To this reviewer, the last chapter, "Anarchism and Christianity," is the weakest link in an otherwise solid chain. That chapter does not pay enough attention to the overall biblical perspective, and especially to Paul's concept that "there is no authority except that which God has established."

Even though the book deals with several themes—politics, theology, freedom, poverty, etc.—its main thrust is to demonstrate the utter impossibility of mixing Christianity and Marxism in any meaningful way. And this Ellul does with unusual skill and meticulousity. He argues that contemporary Marxism is a conglomerate of scattered pieces of Marx's thought, that Marxism has lost its content and specificity and thus become an ideology in the worst sense of the term, and that Communism has become a mixture of all sorts of things, "a kind of ideological stew in which you can throw anything, as long as it agrees with the ideology of the clientele" (p. 18).

Ellul points out very forcefully that those who believe that Christians and Marxists can work together to achieve their goals have not paid close attention to the theoretical problem of the incompatibility of Marx's materialism with the affirmation of a transcendent God, and have at the same time been blind to Marxist practice, since "until now, without exception, in every country where it has been applied, Marxism has given birth to the worst sort of dictatorships, to strictly totalitarian regimes" (p. 13).