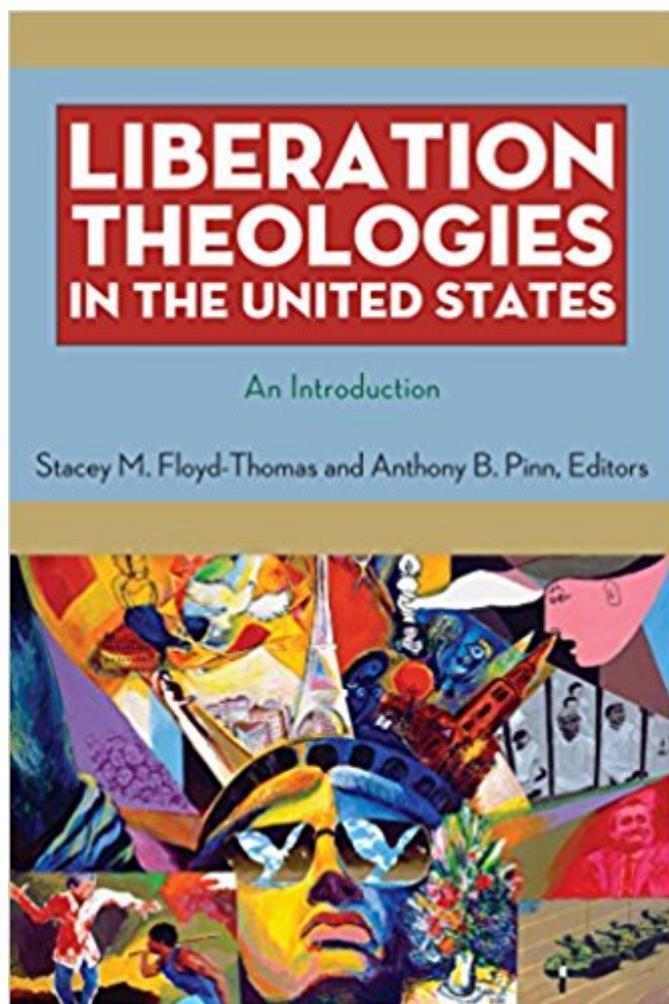


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Liberation Theologies In The United States: An Introduction



Synopsis

In the nascent United States, religion often functioned as a justifier of oppression. Yet while religious discourse buttressed such oppressive activities as slavery and the destruction of native populations, oppressed communities have also made use of religion to critique and challenge this abuse. As Liberation Theologies in the United States demonstrates, this critical use of religion has often taken the form of liberation theologies, which use primarily Christian principles to address questions of social justice, including racism, poverty, and other types of oppression. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Anthony B. Pinn have brought together a stellar group of liberation theology scholars to provide a synthetic introduction to the historical development, context, theory, and goals of a range of U.S.-born liberation theologies. Chapters cover Black Theology, Womanist Theology, Latino/Hispanic Theology, Latina Theology, Asian American Theology, Asian American Feminist Theology, Native American Theology, Native Feminist Theology, Gay and Lesbian Theology, and Feminist Theology. Contributors: Grace Ji-Sun Kim, Mary McClintock Fulkerson, Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Robert Shore-Goss, Andrea Smith, Andrew Sung Park, George (Tink) Tinker, and Benjamin Valentin.

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âœThis present book is inspired by this older liberation theology, but it is focused on the liberation theologies concerning the oppressed of America... and chiefly the oppressed groups previously overlooked... Each essay provides ample evidence that its group has long been oppressed and deserves its own liberation theology.âœ-CHOICEâœTo acknowledge the limits and gifts of our

theological past, to mourn and rage the depth of oppression, to gratefully accept our place in a lineage of struggle and hope, such is the blessing provided by the authors of Liberation Theologies in the United States. May their work be a catalyst for further acts of daring, compassion, and insight.â •Sharon D. Welch, Provost and Professor of Religion and Society, Meadville, Lombard Theological School" This book is a delight to read...[and] an exemplary account of the genre of liberation theologies."-Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher, Religious Studies Reviewâ œAn extraordinary resource for understanding the vitality of liberation theologies and their relation to social transformation in the changing U.S. context. Written in an accessible and engaged way, this powerful and informative text will inspire beginners and scholars alike. I highly recommend it.â •Kwok Pui-lan, author of Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology

Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas is Associate Professor of Ethics and Society at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. Her books include *Mining the Motherlode: Methods in Womanist Ethics*, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction and Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* (NYU Press, 2007). Anthony B. Pinn is Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor of Humanities and Professor of Religious Studies at Rice University, where he also serves as the executive director of the Society for the Study of Black Religion. His books include *Varieties of African-American Religious Experience*, *Why Lord?: Suffering and Evil in Black Theology*, and *By These Hands: A Documentary History of African-American Humanism* (NYU Press, 2001).

I sought an introduction to liberation disciplines for a class and found this resource to be very helpful. The histories, notable persons and references for further reading expanded one's knowledge while giving the reader an opportunity to view faith and life from someone else's perspective.

Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation HUSTL (2004), edited by Miguel A. De La Torre and *Liberation Theologies in the United States, An Introduction* LTUS, (2010), edited by Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Anthony B. Pinn are anthologies of recent writings on eleven and ten different contextual theologies respectively. Both are fairly recent and both have approximately the same cost per page, based on prices at the time of this writing. I used both books as textbooks in a course on contextual theologies, and on average, the writing in the two was fairly uniform, but also fairly general. An important question if you are interested in the subject is whether you buy both books, one of the two (and which one) or none of these two books. One easy answer is that if you

have some training in theology and you have already read a fair amount on at least two different contextual theologies, especially, Latino, Black, and Feminist, you will already have gone deeper into this subject than these books can take you. If you have a good background in classical Christian theology, but know nothing about contextual theology, you really should read one of these books. If total price is an issue, and you are willing to take a used copy, HUSTL is cheaper from resellers, since it's been around a few more years. This is a good thing, because this title has several other advantages. The first is that it has a 25 page combined Bibliography versus individual article Bibliographies in LTUS, totaling about 10 pages. The second is that HUSTL contains essays on general topics where various contexts tend to agree. If you have no theological background, this makes HUSTL even more of an advantage. The third is that HUSTL address thirteen contexts, while LTUS addresses only ten (of course, that means LTUS dedicates more pages to each). HUSTL adds Postcolonial Theology, Environmental Racism, American Hispanics (as distinct from theologies from Latin American countries). The fourth is that the relative quality of the authors. This is a close call, since some few authors, such as Tink Tinker (Amerindian Theology), Andrew Sung Park, and Stacy Floyd-Thomas (Womanist Theology) appear in both collections. On balance, HUSTL has a few more heavyweights among their writers, such as Dwight Hopkins on Black Theology, Justo L. Gonzalez on Latino Theology, Daniel T. Spenser on Homosexual Theologies and Musa W. Dube on Postcolonialism. The last consideration is that Miguel A. De La Torre has considerable experience writing and editing in this field. He has some weaknesses as a scholar, but he is a strong advocate of all flavors of contextual theology. The one advantage for LTUS is that it is more current. It is a very fast-moving discourse, so five or six years can make a difference. I would not be surprised if a 2012 issue of a book of this type will include the context for the dissenters against churches who have liberalized their stance regarding homosexuals. One surprise with this book is that in addition to a traditional feminist theology, growing out of the woman's rights movements, the theologies of each of the three main U.S. minorities, Black, Hispanic, and Asian has split into men's and woman's camps. The women in each camp have different issues than the men, and they were not received very warmly by the white feminist theologians. This brings up an important point. The tone in most essays in both books tends more to the polemical than to the scholarly. What that means is that there is no consideration of whether or not their complaints about main stream male Euro-American theology are warranted. May it not be that it is the church and not its theologians who are not paying attention to minority needs? There is certainly no one in either book which is pushing back with worries that what is being preached here is no longer Christianity, but post-modernism spinning out of control. That is, the book never addresses any of the theoretical

issues which may define the boundaries of conceptualism. What is to prevent me from coming up with a Liberation Theology of Bruce. (This is not as bizarre as it sounds, since some feminists make the point that autobiographies are important resources for theological thinking.) I suspect both authors use the word "Liberation" in the title to attract attention, since "Liberation" theology usage arose in South American theologies addressing economic oppression. The term was invented by Gustavo Gutierrez in 1968. The broader, more inclusive term, which several authors in this book use, is "contextual theologies", theologies arising out of a unique social context, where the inhabitants of that context feel their traditional church is not addressing their spiritual or practical needs. Two "contextual" theologies which are not "liberationist" are those people who leave a mainstream denomination which adopts policies which recognize persons in same-sex relations as ordained (rostered) leaders and those who address ecology from a theological point of view. To be fair, neither book addresses these two cases, so the authors (or more likely the book publishers, are not straying too far from an honest use of the term.

I used this text for a class in Liberation Theology. Love it!

If you are a man of the gospel spreading the good news of Jesus Christ, this is a great book to add to your library.

Much needed foundational resource for my dissertation on Liberation Theology. I have reviewed it and will be able to use it.

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