

The Preferential Option for the Poor: A Comparison of the Interpretations of Gustavo Gutierrez and Saint Pope John Paul II

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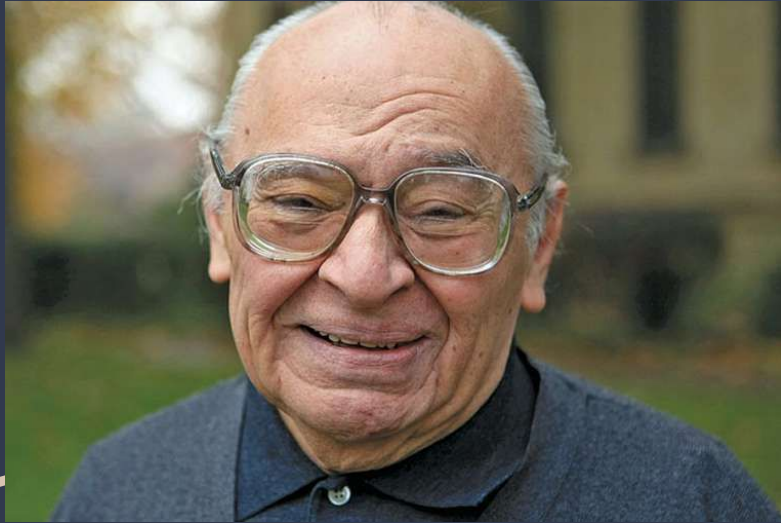
Theological definition:

- A prioritized commitment to solidarity with materially poor and socially excluded persons.
- A Christian ethical obligation in imitation of the God of the Bible, who has demonstrated a commitment to those people most in need.

Research question:

What are the similarities and differences in the interpretation of the preferential option for the poor in the thought of Gustavo Gutierrez and John Paul II?

Gustavo Gutierrez,
OP



Saint Pope John Paul II



Key terms:

Option: Commitment
(translated from Spanish)

Ecclesial: Pertaining to the
Catholic Church

Magisterial: Pertaining to the
official teaching office of the
Catholic Church

Relevance

Theory of “Bifurcation”- I disagree

Lack of comparative studies between Gutierrez and John Paul II

Methods

Academic discipline:
Theology

Textual criticism

Social and theological context

Widespread destitution in Latin
America in the mid-20th
century

Theology of liberation

Key terms:

Epistemology: Theory of knowledge; makes claims about who produces knowledge and what kind of knowledge is valued

Hermeneutic: An interpretive lens through which one views the world

Comparison of terminology

“Preferential option for the poor” (Gustavo Gutierrez)

“Option or love of preference for the poor” (Pope John Paul II)

Comparison of epistemology

“Preferential option for the poor” (Gustavo Gutierrez)

- Option = commitment

“Option or love of preference for the poor” (Pope John Paul II)

- Option = “primacy in the exercise of Christian charity”

Conclusions

Disagree with Curnow: There is no “bifurcation”

Expand our understanding of “charity”

Impact on development work through Catholic-run programs

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

