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Liberation Theology's Use of the Exodus as a Soteriological Model

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LIBERATION THEOLOGY'S USE OF THE EXODUS AS A SOTERIOLOGICAL MODEL

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This investigation studies the soteriology of Latin American liberation theology particularly in the light of its use of the ancient Hebrew Exodus from Egypt as a liberation model.

Chap. 1 briefly traces the historical and theological developments on the South American continent, from its discovery to the present, in an effort to provide a better understanding of the circumstances and currents of thought which led to the emergence of liberation theology.

Chap. 2 shows that liberation theology takes its starting point from a decided commitment to create a new and more human society, through the radical change of the present unjust social order seen as oppressive and sinful. In its struggle on behalf of the poor and marginalized, liberation theology differs essentially from earlier forms of social Christianity where advantaged groups endeavored to express their faith in bettering the lot of the poor. Liberation theology is a movement from within the marginalized: it aims at liberation of the oppressed by the oppressed themselves. The Exodus of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage provides the paradigmatic text *par excellence*, as liberation theologians attempt to articulate their concerns.

Chap. 3 endeavors to demonstrate that the Exodus, though central in the faith of Israel, is not the center or foundation of all the OT, but rather an integral part of a larger story, a segment of redemptive history. Consequently, it should be viewed not only as an isolated socio-political event but also as a religious one. The liberated slaves were the covenant people of Yahweh, and the interpretation that Scripture gives to this event looks not so much to Israel's new political situation, or to

her relation to the former oppressor, but rather to her renewed relationship with Yahweh and her new responsibilities to the world.

This investigation concludes that liberation theology, in spite of its timeliness and virtues, has, due to its absorbing preoccupation with the historical, neglected the transcendent — thus weakening the possibilities of a greater impact. In a justified reaction against an excessive verticalism in much of traditional theology, it has tended to go to the opposite extreme of an excessive horizontalism, emptying the Gospel of much of its saving content.