

Centering Liberation Theologies Around Poverty

In Ivan Petrella's *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic*, he discusses thoroughly the issues with liberation theology as we've seen it and why it's currently ineffective. He believes that centering liberation theologies around factors such as race and gender miss the mark, because they leave out class—a less obvious, yet more relevant factor that affects societies and people. By centering liberation theologies around poverty, Petrella claims that we get a more complete picture of how people are limited and oppressed by their economic means.

Petrella argues throughout his book that class is broad and encompassing, making it the ideal means through which liberation theologians should view oppression. He expresses this by saying, "Class is involved in all social arrangements of oppression; nothing occurs without implicating the material conditions that shape the way individuals and groups locate themselves, and are located, within their societies" (81). Class, in Petrella's argument, is the most accurate expression or indication of poverty that we will find, so it makes sense that it'd be the ideal lens through which liberation theologians look at it. He reiterates this by writing, "By grounding themselves in the perspective of the oppressed, therefore, liberation theologies are grounded in the broadest context available today and so come as close as possible to being the first truly global theologies" (134). Petrella argues that material poverty is global and something experienced by the world's majority, and although race and gender are important factors, class spans more of the world as far as oppression is concerned.