

Gustavo Gutiérrez, theologian once investigated by Vatican, now featured speaker there

by [David Gibson](#) in the [June 10, 2015](#) issue

Decades ago the Vatican doctrinal office investigated and censured liberation theologians. In May, Gustavo Gutiérrez, 86, the Dominican priest from Peru who is known as the father of liberation theology, was a featured speaker at a Vatican event.

The liberation theological movement, which focuses on the poor, emerged out of the church's social justice ferment in the 1960s, and it was viewed by conservatives as a Marxist version of the gospel. Gutiérrez was never condemned, though he had "a very critical conversation" with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he told reporters at a Vatican press conference.

"Liberation theology, from the first line of the book until the last line, is against Marxism," Gutiérrez said at a May event in his honor at Fordham University in New York City. The book he referred to is his landmark 1971 work, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*.

For Karl Marx, Christianity was "oppression," he said. But the 85-year-old Gutiérrez said his life's work is committed to the view that "Christianity is liberation."

Gutiérrez recalled an American evangelical Protestant who came to visit him and immediately asked him what liberation theology's position was on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"My friend," he responded, "do you think liberation theology is a political party, and I am its general secretary?"

Gutiérrez said perhaps the time for the name liberation theology has passed.

"I am not exactly concerned by the future of liberation theology," he said. "My main concern is with the future of my people, and of my church." —Religion News Service; added sources

*This article was edited on May 27, 2015.*