

Explaining Liberation Theology

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Letter

T O T H E E D I T O R



the poor," the priority of labor over capital and the social sinfulness of "unfettered" capitalism ("The Case Against Liberation Theology," Oct. 21).

Yet the fundamental problem with Mr. Novak's assessment is that he has failed to grasp the foundation of liberation theology, which is, essentially, a commitment to a world striving for justice, peace and compassion — attributes of the kingdom promised in the Gospel. For many liberation theologians, this commitment has led to police harassment, exile, threats and even death.

Jürgen Moltmann, the noted German political theologian, has observed that those who read the Bible in a comfortable study after a solid meal read it differently than do those who read in shacks on empty stomachs.

Mr. Novak, from his study, writes theology in support of the American corporation and a construct he calls "democratic capitalism." Most liberation theologians live among the poor, and read the Scriptures through their eyes.

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Pope John Paul II, rather than constructing "a case against liberation theology," as Michael Novak states, has publicly endorsed several of its major tenets, including "the preferential option for