

PREFACE

YOU HOLD IN YOUR hands the first textbook written on the fairly new academic discipline known as liberative ethics. To accomplish this goal, it was written from the perspective of different marginalized communities. This is not to say that this is the first time these perspectives have been voiced or presented in written form. Obviously, those who both originally and through the generations have participated in the practice of liberation theology—congregants, clergy, and scholars—were also engaged in ethical reflection. In true fashion of the liberationist model, this book merely attempts to put into writing what has become normative, over decades, among communities experiencing dispossession and disenfranchisement. Reflection on theological concepts makes no sense if it fails to be contextualized in the everyday lives of the marginalized and seriously considers their hopes and struggles for liberation. Following the lead of those relegated to the underside of history, this book attempts to reflect the praxis—the actions—that the oppressed of the world are employing as they seek their own liberation. What makes this work unique is that until now within the academy, a textbook dedicated solely to liberative ethics from multiple global perspectives, inclusive of US marginalized voices, has not existed.

The text examines how the tenets of liberation theology, originally a Latin American Catholic manifestation, found expression within different disenfranchised faith traditions and how these theologies contributed to the formation of an

ethical discourse. Instead of a diverse collection of essays where each contributor approached their task on his or her own terms, the authors made a concerted effort in this volume to create a unified textbook.

Therefore, each contributor to this textbook provides the reader with a basic overview, similar in format to every other chapter. Each chapter specifically explores (1) some of the basic tenets of liberative ethics within a particular group, focusing on its development and history; (2) why a need for liberation from specific structures exists; (3) issues and question with which the group wrestles; (4) some major themes faced by the particular group and the methodologies they employ; (5) leading scholars and figures within the movement; and (6) possible future trends.

I would be remiss if I did not end this short preface without expressing my gratitude to those who made this text possible. First, I wish to publicly thank Ross H. Miller, former senior acquisitions editor at Fortress Press, for approaching me with the idea of writing a textbook such as this one. Second, I wish to thank the contributors of this textbook, who willingly wrote their chapters according to my format and cheerfully responded to my critiques, making changes to their chapters in a timely matter. And finally, I want to lift up a couple of the contributors who worked around the clock, stepping in to write an entire chapter when the original writers who were asked were unable to fulfill their commitments.