



**Liberation Theologies:  
A dialogue between Christianity and Islam**

by Francesco Frau

*Through the application of the World History methodology, the article aims to discover the continuities and discontinuities between Christian Liberation Theology (CLT) and Islamic Liberation Theology (ILT). The paper is divided in three parts: the first analyses the Christian Liberation Theology which is made up of Black Liberation Theology, Latin American Liberation Theology and Feminist Liberation Theology; the second section shows the fundamentals of ILT and the last part indicates that, in spite of natural dissimilarities, both the monotheistic religions elaborated a similar theology that aimed to offer a new point of view to the oppressed communities.*

**Keywords:** Islamic Liberation Theology, Christian Liberation Theology, World History, XX century, people's theology

*Attraverso l'utilizzo del paradigma della World History methodology, l'articolo si pone come obiettivo quello di scoprire le continuità e le discontinuità tra la Teologia della Liberazione Cristiana (TCdL) e la Teologia Islamica della Liberazione (TIdL). L'elaborato si compone di tre parti: la prima analizza la TCdL, formata dalla Teologia Nera della Liberazione, la Teologia della Liberazione latino-americana e la Teologia Femminista della Liberazione; la seconda sezione mostra le caratteristiche principali della TIdL mentre l'ultima parte dimostra come, nonostante le naturali dissimilarità, entrambe le religioni monoteiste abbiano elaborato una teologia simile che mirava ad offrire un nuovo punto di vista alle comunità oppresse.*

**Parole chiave:** Teologia Islamica della Liberazione, Teologia Cristiana della Liberazione, World History, XX secolo, teologia popolare.

## Introduction

In all the academic articles that have focused on the Islamic Liberation Theology, scholars have used similar models of comparison, referring to the Latin American Liberation Theology as the only Christian theology.

This article aims to analyse the Islamic Liberation Theology through another point of view, according to which the Christian Liberation Theology is a composite theology formed by the Black Liberation Theology, the Latin American Liberation Theology and the Feminist Liberation Theology. This consideration is possible through the application of the World History methodology.

In the first part of the work, the paper explains the cornerstones of the Christian Theology, as the definition of “liberation” and its implication on the human context, the interpretation of the roles of God and Jesus in the liberation process and the relationship between Christianity and Marxism. The choice to analyse separately the Feminist Theology is not because it was not part of the Christian Liberation Theology, but because a separate examination shows that the feminist theological elaboration was created as a critical aspect of the Christian Liberation Theology. Feminist Liberation Theology was articulated during the 1960s and the 1970s by European and American feminist theologians that criticized the dominant theology, which they considered against women.

The American feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether criticized (1936–) black theologians on the basis of three elements. Her first critique was about the nature of the Black Theology. According to Ruether, in fact, since its aim was to become as the white church and the white theology, it did not exist as a single entity. Black Theology was the «expression of oppressed people, it has often overreached the dominant culture and it has underestimated, when it has despised, its traditions»<sup>1</sup>. The second aspect that Letty M. Russell (1929–2007) criticized concerned the differences between the Black Theology and the Feminist Liberation Theology: while Black Liberation Theology was racist and separatist because it considered God as a black figure, the latter did not provide inequality between men and women, because it referred to God with both masculine and feminine adjectives. For this reason, according to Russell, black theologians should have used a universalistic theology, which had to be able to engage white people and show them their role of oppressors<sup>2</sup>. The last negative element considered by Russell was the separation between black and feminist movements in the United States. According to the feminist theologian, in fact, sexism and racism had to be considered as «inter-structural elements within the overarching system of white male domination»<sup>3</sup>. Also James H. Cone (1936–) was aware of the fact that Black Liberation Theology marginalized women’s issue; he acknowledged that “his” theology was conceived by black men, although black churches were organized and attended by women. Cone explained the reasons why women had been marginalized:

Some Black male theologians are blatantly sexist and thus reflect the values of the dominant society regarding the place of women. Others regard the problem of racism as the basic injustice and say that feminism is a

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<sup>1</sup> Letty M. Russell, *Teologia Femminista*, Translated by Anita Sorsaja, Editrice Queriniana, Brescia, 1977, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 157–158.

<sup>3</sup> James H. Cone, Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: A Documentary History Volume One: 1966-1979*, vol. I. II vols. Orbis Books, Maryknoll (NY), 1993, p. 317.

middle-class White women's issue. Still others make the controversial claim that Black woman is already liberated<sup>4</sup>.

By admitting that the black Church was sexist, the American theologian supported the elaboration of a Black Feminist Liberation Theology inside Black Liberation thought because, as Frances Beal (1940–) wrote in her essay *Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female* (1969), woman in American society was the «slave of slave»<sup>5</sup>. The reason of the double discrimination, related to both race and gender, black women had to face was, according to Bale, related to politics and economy:

If we are talking about building a strong nation, capable of throwing off the yoke of capitalist oppression, then we are talking about the total involvement of every man, woman, and child, each with a highly developed political consciousness<sup>6</sup>.

A theological interpretation of women's "jeopardy" was given by Jacquelyn Grant (1948–) who, as Ruether, stated that since «Black men's acceptance of the patriarchal model is logical and to be expected»<sup>7</sup> women were marginalized. According to Grant, since black theologians adopted the white patriarchal model, they clouded women's historical role during slavery and post-slavery period. For this reason, the church had an important role in black women's emancipation:

If the liberation of women is not proclaimed, the church's proclamation cannot be about divine liberation. If the church does not share in the liberation struggle of Black women, its liberation struggle is not authentic. If women are oppressed, the church cannot possibly be "a visible manifestation that the gospel is a reality" for the gospel cannot be real in that context<sup>8</sup>.

Latin American Liberation Theology privileged a dialogue to the contemporary Feminist Liberation Theology. Yet, Latin American feminist theologians underlined how the South American Liberation Theology was characterized by «patriarchal structures, androcentric vision, and *machist* attitude»<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, Latin American theologians included women in their theological debate. Women were considered as poor people, both subjects and objects of their analysis:

If LT (Liberation Theology) wants to be the interpretation of the world of the poor and consciously assume the horizon of reflection the interests, hopes and struggles of the oppressed, it ought to promote women's self-expression. If not, LT runs the risk of becoming merely rhetorical by abstracting itself from the concrete faces of the people who formally make it possible and verify it, including women<sup>10</sup>.

However, the Christian Liberation theology is not the only "Liberation Theology". At the end of the colonial period, Islam elaborated a liberation theology that assumed a very strong political meaning.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ivi*, p. 279.

<sup>5</sup> *Ivi*, p. 286.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 325–326.

<sup>8</sup> *Ivi*, 328.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Curran, Margaret A. Farley, Richard A. McCormick, *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, Paulist Press, Mahwah (NJ), 1996, p. 90.

<sup>10</sup> Elina Vuola, *Limits of Libeartion. Feminist Theology and the Ethics of Poverty and Reproduction*, Sheffield Academic Press, New York (NY), 2002, p. 146.

The second part of article describes the Islamic Liberation Theology as a monolithic theology, which presents common elements with the Christian Theologies, in particular with the Black Liberation Theology and the Feminist Liberation Theology.

The article attempts to examine the continuities and discontinuities between the two liberation theologies and will demonstrate, through the paradigms of the World History methodology, the connections between two different religions that, although born in different social, economic, political and cultural context, they are linked to each other by the same purpose of Liberation.

## **Christian Liberation Theology**

Christian Liberation Theology is a complex theology formed by three similar categories: Latin American Liberation Theology, Black Liberation Theology and Feminist Theology, the purpose of which is the physical, cultural and spiritual liberation. It is unconceivable to consider the three theologies separately, because they are based on the same theological system and principles.

According to James Cone, a pioneer of the Black Liberation Theology, «Christian theology was not static, but takes on the color of the victims, proclaiming that the condition of the poor is incongruous with him who has come to liberate us»<sup>11</sup>. The Christian Liberation Theology assumed different characteristics depending on the contexts where it was born. In this section, the article aims to describe the Christian Liberation Theology and to underline the peculiarities of the interpretation of liberation in the religious context. Also the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff (1938–) argued:

the liberation theology was born as intention of answer to the oppressive society challenges and as an original contribution, from the perspective of the faith, to the bigger process of liberation that developments in other fields of the people's life<sup>12</sup>.

That is why it is appropriate to use the expression “Theology of Liberation” and not “Theology of Freedom” when we refer to the Christian Liberation Theology, because it was the result of the analysis of the present with the belief that God and risen Jesus are the liberators.

A different approach to and interpretation of Liberation Theology was given by feminist theologians. A definition of Feminist Liberation Theology was elaborated by the Spanish feminist nun Teresa Forcades (1966–), who wrote that «The feminist theology is a critical theology»<sup>13</sup>. This critique was born in the same time in which the patriarchal theology had established his cultural hegemony, excluding women from the study of the Bible and the debate about God. Since «their voice, insight, experience, wisdom, and faith were considered unnecessary to the understanding of the tradition»<sup>14</sup>, women were absent in the theological discussions, there were no female models (except the Virgin Mary) to follow, and God was masculinized.

## **Liberation**

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<sup>11</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll (NY), 1986, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Teologia della cattività e teologia della liberazione*, Editrice Queriniana, Brescia, 1977, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Teresa Forcades, *La teologia femminista nella storia*, Nutrimenti, Roma, 2015, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity: From the Reformation to the 21st Century*, Columba Press, Dublin, 2003, p. 27.

The aspiration of liberation was an element omnipresent in the human history. The meaning of liberation is different and depends on the case in which this right is claimed. In Christianity this word was connected to the action of God and His son.

Between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, in fact, the Black Liberation Theology was born in the United States. Despite the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment, approved in 1865, black segregation continued to be a crucial issue in the United States. Although the law formally recognized equal rights among all American people, in fact, Afro-American were still considered as an inferior race. The proof of their unequal status was the entry into force of the “Jim Crow’s laws”, which discriminated Afro-American people on the basis of the color of their skin.

In this social context,

African American theologians struggled over issues such as the relation between liberation and reconciliation, God’s goodness and human suffering, African religion and black theology, and the spontaneous faith expressions of African American people versus the rigid theological systems of the white academy<sup>15</sup>

About this approach Cone affirmed: «Christian Theology is a theology of liberation. [...] Christian theology is never just a rational study of the being of God. Rather it is a study of God’s liberating activity in the world, God’s activity in behalf of the oppressed»<sup>16</sup>.

Cone started a new phase of the Black Liberation Theology because, through his works, the movement joined the theological debate. According to the thinker, in fact,

Black theology is a theology of liberation because it is a theology which arises from an identification with the oppressed blacks of America, seeking to interpret the gospel of Jesus in the light of the black condition. It believes that the liberation of the black community is God’s liberation<sup>17</sup>.

In a similar way, in Latin America, between August 26 and September 6, 1968 the *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano* (CELAM) that took place in Medellin, elaborated an important final document that became the founding act of the Latin American Liberation Theology. The words that emerged from the document, *liberación* (liberation) and *desarrollo* (development), were historically, politically and socially placed inside Latin American context: economic development, in fact, was considered by Latin American governments as a priority. Yet, according to Latin American bishops, development should include not only economic policies but it should also have been directed to the poor local population. Social and economic policies had to be addressed to the marginalized and the excluded in society; consequently, the church had as a duty to serve the poor and to denounce the power if this was oppressive and against them. This behavior would lead to the start of the liberation process for the oppressed people throughout the identification of God and Jesus as liberators. In 1986 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the instruction *Libertatis Coscientia*<sup>18</sup> to clarify

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<sup>15</sup> Dwight N. Hopkins, *Introducing: Black Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll (NY), 1999, pp. 10–11.

<sup>16</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, (op. cit.), pp. 1–3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ivi*, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Libertatis conscientia*, AAS 79 (1987) 554–599; Documenta 60.

that the meaning of the word “liberation” had to be related only to the spiritual side of humankind. The pioneer of the Latin American Liberation Theology, the Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez (1928–) oriented freedom towards love, the only means to lead the humankind towards liberation. Latin American theologians stated that only freedom, in itself, had not any importance if it was not the result of liberation. In a country where people lived without any means of support, and wealth was unfairly distributed, the population was free to starve. The French theologian Christian Duquoc (1926–2008) resumed the concept of freedom, considered in an individualistic way, in his book *Libération et Progressisme*:

Liberation, therefore, defines freedom: the fighting movement started by poor or by oppressed to get away from economic misery, cultural suffocation and political non-existence, represents the pragmatic. And not ideal, framework of freedom<sup>19</sup>.

A different approach was adopted by Feminist theologians, who wanted to free Christian institutions and the official theology from misogyny, “phallocentrism” and male chauvinism. In particular, the creation of a new feminist liberation’s hermeneutic had as its purpose the liberation of the Holy Scriptures, traditions and customs from the androcentric and patriarchal supremacy, and the development of a new balance between the sexes.

### **God of oppressed**

The liberation process was considered as a manifestation of God and His presence between the oppressed. This concept was elaborated in different ways since God was not an anthropomorphic figure, but He assumed the body of the oppressed and acted on the side of the last.

In the United States, Cone explained this concept in view of Afro-American condition, saying that «The blackness of God means that the essence of the nature of God is to be found in the concept of liberation»<sup>20</sup>. His statement was not accepted by all the Black theologians. According to Major Jones, in fact, affirming that God was black meant to make God an exclusive of black people and to lose his universal meaning. However, according to Cone, God, through his angels, had addressed his message to the oppressed and slaves. In the book of Matthew, for example, the first people who knew that Jesus was born were shepherds (marginalized in that period by the society) and, when Jesus had come back to life, an angel announced to women (considered as the reasons of the existence of sin) what had happened. Cone thought that as God, through Moses, had saved and defended his people during the period of slavery in Egypt and was with the Jews in their process throughout freedom, in the same way he will liberate the black people oppressed by the white power. The black active resistance, according to Cone, was legitimized because

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<sup>19</sup> Christian Duquoc, *Liberaçione e progressismo. Un dialogo teologico tra l'America Latina e l'Europa*, Cittadella, Assisi, 1989, p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op. cit., p. 63.

«Black rebellion is a manifestation of God himself actively involved in the present-day affairs of men for the purpose of liberating people. Through his work, black people now know that there is something more important than life itself»<sup>21</sup>.

According to Latin American theologians, humanity had been liberated by God from spiritual slavery (sin) and from corporal slavery (poverty). CELAM's bishops stated that the conquered people had to be considered as Israelites in the Egyptian land. The process of liberation carried out by God and described in the Bible, particularly in the book of Exodus, is the key to understand the liberating agency of the Lord. In fact, the Jews found mercy in Yahveh, that released them from the chains of slavery because «horse and rider he has thrown into the sea» (Exodus 15,1). In Latin American context, 'horse' and 'rider' had an important meaning, because they were interpreted as the inhuman and dehumanizing capitalism (horse) and as the corrupted and despotic military governments of the extreme right (rider).

The theological meaning of the Exodus did not consist in a geographical transition, from a place to another place, but represented the political change, the destruction of oppressive institutions. Another important Brazilian theologian, Hugo Hassmann (1933–2008), wrote: «Exodus is a mode of existence with which one relativizes all type of situation, not for to deny their values, but because are partial mediation of the definitive liberation»<sup>22</sup>. Also Gutiérrez used the political-theological interpretation of the liberation's salvific act described in the Exodus, that he defined as a «broke-up with exploitation and misery, the begin of the construction a right and brotherly society, the suppression of the disorder and the creation of the new order»<sup>23</sup>. Another important element that fueled the debate and the conflict between Latin American theologians and the Holy See was the conception of God as a present being in history. In other words, God would not only be "in Heaven" but he would act in everyday life. Arguing about some aspects of eschatology, Gutiérrez affirmed that God, in his message about the last goal of the humanity and the community, acted in three temporary phases: in the past God repeated his liberator actions throughout history (he is referring to the Exodus); during the present prophets give an interpretation of the current facts in view of what will happen in the future, and in the future God will free again his people<sup>24</sup>.

## **Jesus the Liberator**

In the black Christology, the son of God was considered as a liberator. Black people had as a model Jesus because of his suffering on the cross. Cone added to this interpretation of the figure of Jesus Christ the concept of active resistance, affirming that:

in Christ, God enters human affairs and takes sides with the oppressed. Their suffering becomes his; their despair, divine despair. Through Christ the poor man is offered freedom now to rebel against that which makes him other than human<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, The Seabury Press, New York (NY), 1969, p. 38.

<sup>22</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Teologia della cattività e teologia della liberazione*, op. cit., pp. 81–82.

<sup>23</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teologia della liberazione: prospettive*, Editrice Queriniana, Brescia, 1972, p. 153.

<sup>24</sup> *Ivi*, p. 161.

<sup>25</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op. cit., p. 36.

At first Jesus was not considered by black people as a conceptual identity, as an elaboration of theology, but as a living reality, a living figure that had understood what the suffering black people were experiencing. He was considered as the actor that was able to conduct oppressed people towards freedom<sup>26</sup>. Jesus was not only the son of God but had a human part (he was True God and True Man). Since in Black Liberation Theology Jesus was considered as a political leader, Cleage Jr. (1911–2000) in his book *The Black Messiah* [1968] wrote: «Jesus was the nonwhite leader of a nonwhite people struggling for national liberation against the rule of a white nation, Rome»<sup>27</sup>.

In a similar way, Latin American theologians analyzed Jesus in his historical context, as a part of his society, and exalted his political commitment, while the dominant Christology continued to consider only his divine part. The consideration of Jesus' human side was not against the dominant theology, but it enhanced it because he assumed the role of true God and true Man. Jesus, in fact, was not isolated from the problems that his people had.

### **Marxism and CLT for a new Church**

The black theologian debate about Socialism and Marxism was carried out again by, in fact,

the revolutionary attitude of Black Theology stems not only from the need of black people to defend them-selves in the presence of white oppression, but also from its identity with biblical theology. Like biblical theology, it affirms the absolute sovereignty of God over his creation. This means that ultimate allegiance belongs only to God. Therefore, black people must be taught not to be disturbed about revolution or civil disobedience if the law violates God's purpose for man. [...] Through disobedience to the state, he affirms allegiance to God as Creator and his willingness to behave as if believes it. Civil disobedience is a duty in a racist society<sup>28</sup>.

This topic is connected with the relationship between Black Liberation Theology and Socialist-Marxist thought. The pioneer of the Black Liberation Theology, tried to demonstrate the need to prefer a double methodology based on both Christianity and Marxism: «Christianity and Marxism must be redefined in the light of their origins and of the history and culture of oppressed peoples and in their current liberation struggle»<sup>29</sup>. According to Cone, the Socialism was a means against the exclusion and submission of black people. Cornel West (1953–) gave an important analysis of Cone's thought related to his ideas on Marxism. He underlined that Cone was the only black theologian that used the Marxist paradigm against white American imperialistic power. He argued that «if this is the social vision of Black theologians, they should drop the meretricious and flamboyant term 'liberation' and dropt the more accurate and sober word 'inclusion'»<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Rosino Gibellini, (ed.), *Teologia Nera*, Queriniana, Brescia, 1978, p. 144.

<sup>27</sup> James H. Cone, Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology*, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>28</sup> James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>29</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, op. cit., p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> Cornel West, *Black Theology and Marxist Thought*, Theology in the Americas, New York (NY), 1979, p. 5.



He continued:

Marxist thought, like Black Theology, does not elaborate on the ideal society. [...] A dialectical methodology does not permit this elaboration. [...] Human liberation occurs only when people participate substantively in the decision-making process in the major institutions that regulate their lives<sup>31</sup>.

In a similar way, the use of the Marxist paradigm was an important aspect of the Latin American Liberation. Theologians, especially Boff and Gutiérrez, used the sociological and economical doctrine elaborated by Marx (while they did not use the Marxian elaboration). The use of Marxist thought was not against the teaching of the Gospel, because they did not consider the religious critique advanced by Marx in *Thesen über Feuerbach*. Marxist teaching was used as an instrument to understand the social issues that Latin America was living in that particular era. This choice, adopted by Latin American theologians, did not mean that Liberation Theology was a political theology. While they used a sociological and economic paradigm, they kept the Bible as first source of interpretation. Marxism was employed just as secondary source, not fundamental for the elaboration of the Liberation Theology. The first assumption is that the liberator is God and not Marxism, since the latter is considered only as a social model because it was similar to the first Christian communities, where people lived together sharing all the aspect of everyday life. This is the reason of the birth of the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs), in Latin America (especially in Brazil), communities where all people lived together, while the priest had the duty to educate them to be enough autonomous. The final purpose of the communities was the complete liberation of the people from oppression and need.

### **The Feminist Liberation Theology: a theological approach**

After the Second Ecumenical Council and the birth of feminist movements in the second part of the twentieth century, feminist theologians started an all-encompassing analysis of theology that, according to Elisabeth Shlüsser Fiorenza (1938–), had as a purpose not only the removal of the patriarchal point of view from the interpretation of the Bible, but also the construction of hermeneutical theory models, useful for the elaboration of a feminist cultural paradigm<sup>32</sup>. This project began between 1895 and 1898 with the American thinker and activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902). She published the *Women's Bible* (1895), where she stated that the Bible was a political instrument in the hands of men used against women. For this reason, women had the duty to reinterpret the Book and free the society and the institutions from androcentric views. Since the Book had been 'corrupted' by men, inserting women's subjection, the new interpretation of the Bible was the key for liberation. The work of Stanton was appreciated and considered valid by the post-Christian feminist theologians who were against all the women who used and believed in the androcentric Bible; otherwise, feminists that were part of the neo-orthodox model<sup>33</sup> and those of the "sociology of knowledge model"<sup>34</sup>, argued that, in opposition to

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity*, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> The neo-ortodox model focused its attention on the form and not on the Bible's content.

<sup>34</sup> The goal of the "sociology of knowledge" model was the construction of the *Lebenszentrum*, the "centre of the life" that meant the creation of a new equal tradition and a new culture.

the post-Christian feminists, the Bible had adaptable elements to Feminist Liberation Theology and was not completely androcentric.

As the American theologies, also Feminist Theology started its deconstruction of the dominant thought through the Bible interpretation, considered as the first source of the new theology. Women in the Old Testament were described in different ways. In the traditional Jewish and Christian interpretation, women had not an important role in society because they were the daughters of Eva. The first point of view underlined by feminist theologians was the Creation. While the second chapter of the Genesis affirmed that woman came from a man's rib, the first said that «God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them» (Genesis 1, 27). The second chapter, therefore, had to be read and interpreted considering also the first one. This meant that man and woman had the same dignity, the same moral goodness. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind the biblical experience of Judith, a warrior, a political guide that personified all the people of Israel. The relevant aspect of this story was the fact that it was not an historical text, but a theological teaching in which a woman became the symbol of Israeli unity. Another interesting aspect was the female personification of wisdom: in Greek and Hebrew languages, the word "wisdom" was female and people often used to refer to "Lady Wisdom".

In the New Testament women's honor was restored. Notable were the episodes when Jesus released the sinful and saved her from the stoning, or when he stopped a woman's bleeding that had affected her for thirteen years. From both the examples it emerges that women were considered impure and, for this reason, marginalized. However, Jesus took care of them, did not take into consideration the "old law" but had mercy for all, in particular for the last. The new social position of women was affirmed especially through his rising: the Gospel said that the first people that knew that Jesus resuscitated were women. Mark described how Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary, the mother of James, received a message by an Angel, who announced them that Jesus did not die. In the same way John described the mission of Mary Magdalene: while Peter and John himself, after seeing the empty tomb, returned to the other disciples, Mary Magdalene

was standing without at the tomb weeping: so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew, Rabboni; which is to say, Teacher. Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God (John 20, 11–17).

This is an important passage, because it demonstrates that the basis of many people's faith comes from a woman's testimony.

## Islamic Liberation Theology

Over the last twenty years some scholars have introduced in the Islamic theological debate the concept of “Liberation Theology”. This terminology, which derives from the Christian Liberation Theology, has assumed in the Islamic context a different connotation because it can be described as a “political Liberation Theology”. This assumption derived from the analysis of two important scholars’ contributions, Farid Esack’s (1959–) *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Inter-Religious Solidarity Against Oppression* (1997) and Hamid Dabashi’s (1951–) *Islamic Liberation Theology* (2008), which gave a definition of “Islamic Liberation Theology”.

First of all, it is essential to define the terms “freedom” and “liberation” considering the Islamic context. The word “freedom” (*hurriyya*) and “liberation” (*tahrīr*) were introduced in the Islamic world at the end of the eighteenth century during the European colonisation. Their meanings differ from each other because “freedom” refers to the bodily sphere, while “liberation” refers to the freedom of both the body and the soul: a formally free person may be in a condition of inner slavery. In the Islamic Liberation Theology (ILT) *hurriyya* and *tahrīr* had an important role, because its goal was the full liberation of every man and woman. Islam, being a universalistic religion, aims to the liberation of all the Muslims. As the political thinker Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) have pointed out,

Islam approaches the matter from all sides and all directions and assures the absolute liberation of the inward soul, not based on moral considerations alone nor on economic factors alone, but based on both, for it recognizes both the practical side of life and the power of the soul’. He added: ‘since without complete liberation it cannot resist the factors making weakness, submissions and servility and will not demand its share in social justice, nor will it endure the burdens of justice when justice is given to it’<sup>35</sup>.

The Islamic Liberation Theology had as its purpose the liberation of all the Muslims by imperialism, colonialism, Marxism and capitalism, because they were the causes of their oppression all over the world. The instrument to reach this goal, according to this theology, was the use of God’s teachings in the Qur’an. Islam was considered the solution to oppression because, according to Qutb, the communion with God would guarantee the liberation of the oppressed<sup>36</sup>. The Qur’an was the source that Islamic theologians used for the elaboration of the ILT, because «it does so by engaging the Qur’an and the examples of the prophets in a process of shared and ongoing theological reflection for ever-increasing liberative praxis»<sup>37</sup>.

A first definition of Islamic Liberation Theology was given by the South-African scholar Farid Esack:

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<sup>35</sup> William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: a Translation and critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam*, Brill, Leiden; New York; Köln, 1996, p. 56.

<sup>36</sup> *Ivi*, p. 46.

<sup>37</sup> Farid Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 1997, p. 83.

«a theology of liberation, for me, is one that works towards freeing religion from social, political and religious structures and ideas based on uncritical obedience and the freedom of all people from all form of injustice and exploitation including those of race, gender, class and religion»<sup>38</sup>.

His definition was the result of the British imperialism in South Africa, which led many theologians and scholars to elaborate a new theology of liberation, as Christians had done in the Americas and in Europe.

Since the Islamic Liberation Theology, like the Christian Liberation Theology, was the consequence of a social, political, and economic unstable situation, it is difficult to identify the place where it was born, because several states and communities lived the same situation of external oppression. The two most important experiences where the ILT developed were the South African apartheid and the invasion of the Palestine State. This paper analyses only the first situation because, from an historical point of view, it is a dismissed case, whereas the Israel case is still an unsolved problem.

The colonial history of South Africa is characterised by white men's oppression over black people, considered as not being part of humankind: racism, in fact, remained always a constant element. During the twentieth-century British colonisation, social Darwinism influenced the colonial policies. The first idea of Apartheid was elaborated in 1911 by Maurice Evans who, in his work *The Black and White in South East Africa*, stated three main points: white people had to govern the nation; black people had not political rights, and segregation had to rule every space of common life<sup>39</sup>. According to Evans, the main purpose was to protect the white minority against the black majority, in view of the fact that white Europeans were considered, even by the Treaty of Versailles, bearers of civilisation. As Hoernlé said, «The white colonialists, [...] proudly called themselves 'Christians' in a heathen land. In imagination [...] they identified themselves with God's chosen people»<sup>40</sup>. The British domain did not stop after the formal end of the colonial period in 1931, with the adoption of the Statute of Westminster; by contrast, after the Second World War segregation became a real policy and, under the National Party, the parliament approved apartheid's dispositions that were valid until 1994. Discrimination was the result of decades of exploitation that black opposition movements, ideologically independent from Britain, could not destroy.

European capitalism, colonialism and imperialism were considered by many Islamic scholars and intellectuals as the 'Great Evil' that undermined Islamic society. Actually, Islamic culture had an important phase of crisis before the Western colonisation. After the Napoleonic invasion, in fact, many Muslim students used to visit Europe and America, but their opinions about these experiences abroad were not uniform: some students were enthusiastic about Western culture, while others felt that the Western world was corrupted and had no morality<sup>41</sup>.

As the Iranian intellectual Hamid Dabashi wrote, the European colonisation had made way for the American imperialistic power<sup>42</sup> and, for the Muslim people all over the world, this had meant to live

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> Saul Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919–36*, MacMillan Press Ltd, Hong Kong, 1989, p. 26.

<sup>40</sup> Alfred Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1945, p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> John J. Donohue, John L. Esposito, *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, p. 85.

<sup>42</sup> Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the empire*, Routledge, New York (NY), 2008, p. 25.

two-hundred years of both formal and informal slavery. According to Farid Esack, American capitalism «represents the most devastating form of terrorism»<sup>43</sup> because of the fact that «North rides with complete impunity on the broken South»<sup>44</sup>, which was convicted to economic deprivation since the United States controlled half of the natural resources<sup>45</sup>.

Dabashi considered globalisation as a “code-name”, which means a “global disposition of capital”:

The colonial edges of that capital have always been central to its operation. When the labor that capital abuses in its immediate neighbourhood is writ large and global it is called colonialism. When that colonialism is internal to the polity of capitalist modernity it is called abused labor. Structurally the abused laborers in London, Paris, and New York are identical in their relation of power to capital with colonized persons the world over<sup>46</sup>.

If economic imperialism played an important role and had good results for the rich world, especially for the United States, according to the father of the Muslim brotherhood Hasan al-Banna (1906– 1949) «The Western way of life [...] has remained incapable of offering to men’s minds a flicker of light, a ray of hope, a grain of faith, or of providing anxious persons the smallest path toward rest and tranquillity»<sup>47</sup>.

Also socialism and communism were not considered by Islamic theologians as possible solutions, because they focused their attention on material needs of humanity, rather than the spiritual necessities. This is the reason why the Pakistani statesman A.K. Brohi (1916–1987) criticised the concept of “Islamic Socialism”:

God is too all-comprehensive to be added to anything, and Communism which is assuredly based on the cult of Godlessness cannot survive for you to accept it, if you are to be a believer in God. You cannot have both together<sup>48</sup>.

Brohi and Mustafa Mahmud (1921–2009) showed as capitalism and socialism were not appropriate instruments for Islamic societies. On the other hand, the solution was to be found in Islam, which was considered by mu’ Ammar al-Qadhāfi the “third way”, since Muslims did not need «East or West in our creation, nor do we need them in our resurrection’ because ‘we will not allow ourselves to be molded into slaves of some new creator. We are slaves to no one but God, God is who created us»<sup>49</sup>.

Hasan al-Banna demonstrated how the Islamic principle of collective organisation had positive aspects, as the «condemnation of hatred and fanaticism», the refusal of the Holy War, and the struggle against every form of slavery and social injustice<sup>50</sup>.

During the colonial period, the underlying political and economic exploitation of Islamic Liberation Theology’s background brought up social issues as injustices and poverty.

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<sup>43</sup> Shadaab Rahemtulla, *Qur'an of the Oppressed: Liberation Theology and Gender Justice in Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>46</sup> Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology*, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>47</sup> John J. Donohue, John L. Esposito, *Islam in Transition*, op. cit., p. 60.

<sup>48</sup> *Ivi*, p. 112.

<sup>49</sup> *Ivi*, p. 84.

<sup>50</sup> *Ivi*, p. 63

Under Islam every person was considered equal to the other without any distinction, because

universal dignity contrasts sharply with the exclusive claims of those who pretend to privileged status denied to others and consign allegedly inferior mortals to permanent subjection, thus strangling the very spirit of the peoples, or most them, and reducing them to walking shadows<sup>51</sup>.

In addition, the matter of equality was linked to that of justice. The Islamic Liberation Theology, in fact, developed in a society where justice was not a right, but a white privilege while, as Qutb said, Islamic justice meant human equality<sup>52</sup>. People had to struggle for justice because this important social value would be realised only if all people were free and guided by the wisdom of Justice. This aspect was relevant in the ILT, because it was the Qur'an that encouraged people to proceed towards justice (Qur'an 4: 135), where Allah was named with the epithets *Al-ḥakam* (the Judge) and *Al-'Adl* (the Just). This revealed that Justice was God's prerogative: he was the Just and, despite being a man, also his last Prophet lived in harmony with his teachings. The goal of Islamic Liberation theologians was to create a new society as the Umma, in which people were free under God's protection. This did not mean that the ILT had as its purpose the creation of an Islamic State, but of a state governed by Justice according to God's teachings: «according to the Qur'an, the merit of Muslim nation is hinged on its discharging of this obligation of bearing witness, on God's behalf, to goodness and justice»<sup>53</sup>.

As well as in the Christian Liberation Theology, in particular in Latin America, justice was a utopian goal for Islamic theologians. During the colonial and imperialist period, the instrument of oppression was the economic situation: black people, in fact, experienced an unstable equilibrium in which economic decisions taken by the white population could have serious consequences for their lives. Qutb reminded that the Qur'an described poverty as the creation of Satan: «The Evil One threatens you with poverty, and bids you to conduct unseemly. Allah promised you His forgiveness and bounties» (Qur'an 2: 268). He pointed out that Islam had the duty to free every person from poverty since «no creature has power over any other creature»<sup>54</sup>.

In this case, the duty of *zakat* (charity) is a fascinating element: the condition of the poor, in fact, was considered as a collective issue that the state had to solve in accordance to the Prophet's words, which described how God gave and deprived people of their goods. It is possible to extend the meaning of *zakāt* to include the equal distribution of natural resources given by Allah for all the humankind and, as 'Umar Chapra (1933–) said, if a state did not have natural resources, another rich state would have had the duty to lend them for its survival<sup>55</sup>. According to Qutb,

the nature of the Islamic view of human life makes social justice a human justice that covers all the components of human life, not just the material and economic ones, and values in this life are spiritual and material at the same time, these two aspects being so unified that we cannot separate them<sup>56</sup>;

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<sup>51</sup> Ivi, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> Ivi, p. 107.

<sup>53</sup> Omid Safi, *Progressive Muslims: on Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2003, p. 39.

<sup>54</sup> William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism*, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> John J. Donohue, John L. Esposito, *Islam in Transition*, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>56</sup> William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism*, op. cit., p. 39.

this means that people were connected to each other and they could build an Islamic social justice characterised by three elements: «absolute liberation of the inward soul (*taharrur wijdānī*), complete human equality, firm social solidarity (*al-takāful al-ijtimā'ī al-wathīq*)»<sup>57</sup>.

The struggle against the white power and the creation of an equal Islamic society have been considered as the cornerstones of the Iranian revolution, which has become the model of resistance against the Western corrupted power. The Iranian revolution was a shock for all the Muslims because Iran became the first country where the Shia ruled a state that had been freed from a dynasty controlled by the United States. In a scenario in which many countries were ruled by colonial powers, Iran represented the fulfilment of the third way: Islam seemed to be a political possibility. By using the Weberian interpretation of religion, it is possible to affirm that the Iranian Shia was considered as a “popular medicine”, because people tried to adopt a solution to the social problems that the political power had not resolved. Religion became a social catalyst that guided people to *jihad* against the oppressors. South African Muslims started to look at Iran with interest, because Islam was used there as a communitarian and revolutionary instrument, and the theocratic leadership proposed a new political and social model whose slogan was «Neither the East, Nor the West»<sup>58</sup>.

By using the words of Qutb, it is possible to say that the Islamic Liberation Theology aimed to liberate people from both spiritual and material slavery, two aspects that have been analysed by two important authors: Farid Esack who, in his book *Qur'an Liberation & Pluralism* (1997), analysed the ILT through the interpretation of the Qur'an, and Hamid Dabashi who, through his work *Islamic Liberation Theology* (2008), gave a strict political interpretation to the theology.

The first issue that Esack examined was the concept of hermeneutics. The absence of a clergy in Islam facilitated the personal interpretation of the Qur'an, because it was accessible to every Muslim. Esack, for example, was a South African Muslim that had lived during the apartheid exploitation and interpreted the Qur'an focusing on liberation, because

Hermeneutics assumes that every person comes to a text carrying his or her own questions and expectations and that it would be “absurd to demand from any interpreter the setting aside of his/her subjectivity and interpret a text without preunderstanding and the questions initiated by it [since, without these,] the text is mute”<sup>59</sup>.

That is why the author gave his definition of Islamic Liberation Theology, linked to hermeneutics:

The notions of an Islamic liberation of liberation and its hermeneutical keys emerged from the qur'anic reflections engaged in by Islamists in the many groups where young Muslims gathered to reflect on the relevance of the Qur'an and Sunnah [...] to their lives and to the struggle against apartheid<sup>60</sup> (Esack 1997, 83–84).

In the same way, after the 9/11, Dabashi analysed the ILT in order to demonstrate the end of «Islamic ideology» and the increase of an individual «ideological resistance to colonial modernity»<sup>61</sup>. Based on

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<sup>57</sup> Ivi, p. 40.

<sup>58</sup> Ali Rahnema, Farhad Nomani, *The Secular Miracle: Religion, Politics and Economic Policy in Iran*, Zed Books, London, 1990, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>60</sup> Ivi, pp. 83–84.

<sup>61</sup> Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology*, op. cit., p. 3.

this, he focused his attention on the political liberation, rather than the spiritual one. In any case, both the hermeneutics of Esack and Dabashi were complementary, because their main purpose was the active “liberating” action.

A relevant and interesting element that emerged in the South African theology, was the assimilation, as in the Christian Liberation Theology, between Israelites enslaved by the Pharaoh of Egypt and the oppressed South Africans. The action of Allah in the Exodus was considered by Esack an action of solidarity: God, in fact, was actively present, as it is shown in Medina’s Suwar. The key to understand the presence of God in the liberation process is to be found, as Marco Demichelis has stated, in the concept of *jihad* understood as «struggle of justice»<sup>62</sup>. In the Surah 13:11, in fact, the Prophet said that «God does not change the conditions of a people until they change what is in themselves». This means that the change had to start from the oppressed while Allah would be the guardian of his people. This aspect was linked to Dabashi’s theory that underlined the importance of political awareness and read the Iranian revolution as a real example of the presence of God in the *jihad* against the oppressors.

He argued that, since the militant Islam was a completed experience, it had to elaborate a new paradigm against the “West”. This is why the author changed the term “liberation” with “theodicy”, which «corresponds to the geographical transmutation of Islam beyond its imaginary, hitherto compelling, boundaries»<sup>63</sup>. The goal of the theodicy was to stop the imperial forces «expansionistic project by adopting a different paradigm from that of the United States and their supporters»<sup>64</sup>. This new concept was considered as a mission for the future of the part of the population that lived under the despotic control of the imperialistic power.

Another important aspect of the Islamic Liberation Theology was, as Esack has pointed out, the *jihad* of gender. Gender Theology is a new branch of (Christian and Islamic) theology, as the Ecology Theology. Since it is a new religious research field, it could be considered here as historically irrelevant. On the other hand, the Feminist Islamic Liberation Theology has an important tradition in Muslim women’s studies. As in the Christian Theology, women started a new exegesis of the Qur’an, in order to liberate the female gender from the male chauvinism and let women become active actors in Muslim life.

The first element that was taken into consideration was hermeneutics. According to the Pakistani politician Benazir Bhutto (1953–2007), in fact, the Qur’an was an evidence of sex equality, because «the first word of the Holy Book is “Read”. It does not say, “Men Read”; it says “read”. It is a command to all believers, not just to men. For in the religion of Islam in which I was brought up, there is only equality»<sup>65</sup>. A pioneer of the Islamic Feminist Liberation Theology, Amina Wadud (1952–), through the qur’anic exegesis showed that God’s words were not against women. God, in fact, considered the humankind formed by both men and women that lived the same life in his light. The thinker underlined the necessity of a new interpretation of the Qur’an, because the Holy book had been written during a particular historical context, and it needed to be adapted to the contemporary era. The essence of its message was, according to Wadud, still valid, but many practices were understandable only in view of the time when the Prophet had lived. In a global contemporary society where cultural

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<sup>62</sup> Marco Demichelis, "Islamic Liberation Theology. An Inter-Religious Reflection between Gustavo Gutierrez, Farid Esack and Hamid Dabashi", *Oriente Moderno*, no. 94, 2014, p. 136.

<sup>63</sup> Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology*, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>64</sup> *Ivi*, p. 198.

<sup>65</sup> Amanullah De Soudy, *The crisis of Islamic masculinities*, Bloomsbury, London, 2014, p. 68.



“contamination” is inevitable and Muslims live in several contexts that are different to the Arabic peninsula of the Prophet, a new critical interpretation has been considered as a priority.

According to Wadud, it was God that guaranteed equality: when the Prophet said in the Surah 9: 11: «And God did create you from dust; then from a sperm-drop; then he made you in pairs», this was the evidence that men and women were equal in «humankind function on a physical, social and moral level»<sup>66</sup>. The moral level, in particular, was a very important element because, in general, women were considered without any moral values, and incapable of distinguishing between Good and Evil. However, as Wadud showed, the Qur’an demonstrated gender equality regarding morality, since Adam and Eva were both considered responsible of the Sin:

Then began Satan to whisper suggestion to them, bringing openly before their minds all their shame that was hidden from them (before): he said: Your Lord only forbade you this tree, last ye should become angels or such beings as live forever. And he swore to them both, that he was their sincere adviser. [...] So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the Garden over their bodies. And their Lord called unto them: "Did I not forbid you that tree, and tell you that Satan was an avowed enemy unto you? They said: Our Lord! we have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost (Qur’an 7:20; 22–23).

The traditional exegesis of the Qur’an, however, was different from this interpretation, because it had been elaborated by men, whose misogynistic views had had significant consequences in society. According with this interpretation, after a girl had her first period, society had the duty to preserve her dignity and her pureness, because her honour was strictly linked to that of her family and of the whole society. According to the tradition, since woman had to be protected by external elements, her participation in public life was forbidden. However, the Qur’an did not provide women’s alienation from society. Their exclusion from the political and economic sphere derived from the fact that they were considered as “commodities”, since the Prophet had married several women for political agreements. Wadud argued that, since society had changed, women had the possibility to become active actors in the public sphere<sup>67</sup>.

The cases of Bhutto in Pakistan or of the Nobel prize Malala Yousafzai are important examples of how the Islamic society has changed. This signal of change can also be found in the new online social movement called *Stealthy Freedom*, in which women post and share their photos without *hijab*. This movement was born in Iran where, before the Iranian Revolution (1979), women were not forced to cover their heads. Women struggle against this disposition because it derives from a political decision, and it is not a “traditional dress”. *Hijab* is not part of Iranian life but an imposition, a signal of a patriarchal structure in which women are considered invisible. With this action, women are affirming their presence in a society that does not considered them as part of the human kind.

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<sup>66</sup> Amina Wadud, *Qur’an and woman*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 22.

<sup>67</sup> Omar Naseef, *Liberation Theology: Islam and the Feminist Agenda in the Qur’an*, AuthorHouse, Bloomington (IN), Milton Keynes, 2007, pp. 106–128.

## Conclusions

Oppression, injustice and human dignity were only some of the elements that are in the analysis of the liberation activity of God.

The existing literature on this topic has analyzed the Latin American Liberation Theology as the only Christian Liberation Theology. This assumption, as the paper has showed, is wrong because every Christian Theology was linked to each other by the purpose of liberating the humankind from spiritual and political slavery. Latin American LT focused its attention on economy and emphasized the importance of the concepts of social class and economic structures as the primary causes of oppression, by supporting the idea that an equal God would be the solution against poverty; in a similar way, the Black Liberation Theology considered the racial issue as a form of oppression and found in God its solution; in addition, the Feminist Liberation Theology integrated the two American theologies with its purpose of liberating Christianity from misogyny and male chauvinism. The three Liberation Theologies have to be studied as the evolution of one Christian Liberation Theology, because they have the same objective. Using Antonio Gramsci paradigm, it is possible to affirm that every Christian Liberation Theology acted to claim its own cultural autonomy in contrast with the dominant culture that forced oppressed people to live in slavery. Colonialism and imperialism, in fact, aimed to erase human dignity and justice, in order to create one dominant culture as in the Orwellian state.

Without any doubt, the parameters and the cultural-philosophical instruments used by liberation theologians were different, because the problems were different that they had to face. However, their final goal was the same and their approach could be used in several situations in which people lived in slavery and the Bible was considered not only as the Holy text but the Manifesto of a liberation movement.

This means that Christianity had not the exclusivity of the message of liberation. Also Islam, in fact, elaborated a Liberation Theology that, as the paper has demonstrated, was not a “copy” of the Latin American Theology, but had its own nature that included several elements of the Black and Feminist Christian Liberation Theology. If Christian Liberation Theology was the result of several steps in its formation, Islamic Liberation Theology was born as a monolithic theology. An important difference between the two Liberation Theologies was that the ILT was political, because the existence of Islam itself was related to politics. Islam, in fact, is *dîn-wa-dawla*, which means that it is at the same time a religion and a state. For this reason, the article has tried to examine in deep the ideas of Islamic political thinkers as Qutb, since their contributions have been at the basis of the ILT. As the American theologies, the Islamic Liberation Theology had as its purpose to liberate the oppressed people from imperialism and cultural hegemony, understood as American dominion. Following this view, it appears that the ILT was closer to the Black Liberation Theology, and not to the Latin American Liberation Theology, as it has been interpreted. Although Latin American theologians used Marxist economic and sociological paradigms, they were restricted by the Roman’s Holy See that, through the *cessatio a divinis* or intimations, forced them to silence. Contrary to the Latin American Liberation Theology, the Black Theology was born inside Protestant churches. On the other hand, Islamic and Black Theologies had in common the fact that both allowed the personal interpretation of the Holy books and did not have clergymen.

An important element of the Islamic Liberation Theology was its similarity with the Feminist Liberation Theology. The dynamics of liberation were similar, while the concept of subordination they elaborated was different. In Christianity, in fact, woman was considered inferior by nature, because she was incapable of distinguishing Good from Evil; according to the Islamic view, on the other hand, woman had to be protected by men because they could be victims of abuse. In both cases women were invisibles; since they were subjected to live in slavery, they had to fight together against the patriarchal power. In both religions, women used the Holy books as sources of liberation, considered as the only instruments capable to change their status. In Christianity the goal of feminists was the “re-appropriation” of their place in the Church and the change, inside the Christian community, of its culture and society; in Islam feminists elaborated a new exegesis of the Qur’an because they wanted to free the State from male oppression. The common goal between the two theologies was to liberate society from patriarchal power through the assurance of the recognition of equal sex dignity.

The syncretism between the two Liberation Theologies, although undeniable, fueled the theological and philosophical complexity of the real meaning of “Freedom” and “Liberation” that, in this case is nothing more than the aspiration of connecting man to God through the research of the original humanity, in which there were not man or woman, rich or poor, or oppressed and oppressor, but only souls guided by the breath of the Creator.

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#### **Article in review**

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