

“The Land Is Mine” What Does Theology Have to Do with Land Reform?

*João Paulo Thomaz de Aquino
Andrew Jumper Graduate Center
and JMC Seminary*

This article presents the historical links between the Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST) and the Catholic Church and provides a critical introduction to the hermeneutics of liberation theology. Then, it uses narrative analysis to demonstrate that, by repeatedly presenting characters who are wealthy landowners and homeowners, the gospel of Luke proposes a theological and an ethical point. The theological point is that God is the true owner of land as an economic good. The ethical point is that, since God is the supreme owner of land, persons who own real estate should use it in altruistic rather than selfish ways.

Introduction

The Gospel of Luke presents God as the ultimate owner of land and teaches that landowners should manage their land in a manner that acknowledges God’s ownership. This thesis will be defended against the background of liberation theology—its interpretation of the Bible, and the resulting practices that emerge from such readings—with a specific focus on their manifestations in Brazil. Thus, after an introductory analysis of liberation theology’s hermeneutics, this article will present a study of a typical character of the gospel of Luke—the proprietor of land—and show its theological and practical implications.

The Theology and Practice of Agrarian Reform in Brazil

From January to April 2023, there were 56 invasions of private rural properties in Brazil carried out by the Landless Workers' Movement (MST).¹ In 2015, there were 182 invasions.² The MST itself, on its website, lists the tools it uses in its struggle for land.³

The MST was organized as a secular movement in 1984. Until that year, however, the main articulation of the landless in Brazil took place inside the structure of the Brazilian Catholic Apostolic Church,⁴ especially movements influenced by liberation theology. These movements within the Catholic Church gave birth to the MST.⁵ Moreover, rituals and other practices within MST camps are still heavily influenced by Catholic theology and practice in what MST calls the mystique of the movement.⁶ For example, "Occupying the Bible" is an MST publication that presents the Bible from a liberation theology perspective.⁷ Thus, one can say that although MST is an officially secular movement, it owes its creation and continuous drive to a spiritual dimension influenced by liberation theology, whose hermeneutics will be briefly criticized below.

The Hermeneutical Challenge of Liberation Theology

Liberation theology is the most influential theological movement born in Latin America. At the end of the 1960s, several influences became the ingredients of it, such as the Social Gospel movement, Jürgen Moltmann's theology of hope, Gilberto Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), and the sociopolitical situation of poverty and dictatorships throughout Latin America.⁸ These ingredients, added to large doses of Marxism, engendered liberation theology.

Many criticisms can be raised against several aspects of liberation theology.⁹ The focus of this section, however, is to analyze the "hermeneutics of liberation." This way of interpreting the Bible makes a critical, suspicious, and over-contextualized reading with radical applications. In general, liberation theologians in practice do not attribute authority to the biblical text in its canonical form but wish to read what is behind the text and reconstruct the history that they consider correct based on the dictates of the quest for the historical Jesus and the ideology they adopt.¹⁰ Juan Luis Segundo, for example, spends several pages in *The Lost and Recovered History of Jesus of Nazareth* to establish the point that the Jesus who interests him is not the post-Easter Jesus found in the "propagandistic" canonical gospels, but the pre-Easter Jesus found through critical reconstruction.¹¹

This critical hermeneutics is conscious.¹² There is a criticism toward the canonical form of the text and a disregard for traditional exegesis.¹³ Thus, in the hermeneutics of liberation theology the sacred text has no final authority and is read with the aim of finding the subversive meaning or the revolutionary historical Jesus that lies behind the dominant and oppressive traditions that have been imposed upon the canonical texts.¹⁴ Instead of reading the text or applying it to today's reality, liberation theologians seek to reinterpret and resignify the text in light of today's struggles.¹⁵ For many liberation theologians, there is an assumption that God will use the ancient text to speak something new that fits the context of the oppressed readers.¹⁶ Indeed, it is the oppressed people themselves who read the scriptures and extract meaning for their own reality.¹⁷ In this process, scholars and priests function as interpreters who live alongside the poor, as facilitators and as editors who publish the results of these grassroots readings.¹⁸

The name that Segundo gives to this process of interpretation, practice, transformation, and reinterpretation of the Bible is the "hermeneutic circle."¹⁹ In this process, an update of interpretation is not only desired, but is a precondition for a fruitful reading.²⁰

The book from liberation theology that most interacts with the scriptures on the land subject is *Theology of the Earth* by M. B. Souza and José Luis Caravias. Regarding the community of goods in Acts, they defend a communistic interpretation and commend a direct application, that is, living in a communist way "constitutes an imperative for all Christians today."²¹ They also contend against the possibility of private property.²²

For these authors, the poor themselves, with the full support of the Church, are those who must fight for better living conditions and access to land (agency of the individual). Land reform therefore becomes the eschatological target and everything that gets in the way of that target is considered part of the sinful and oppressive structures that Jesus Christ fought against. Thus, for them, the Church has the obligation to get involved in the struggle for agrarian reform and class struggle, providing peasants with education, care, and the means to carry out the "necessary revolution" to change the current economic system.²³ To make it clear what the authors mean by "being revolutionary," they themselves present the revolutions in Nicaragua and Cuba as examples.²⁴

Two excellent examples of the fruits of the hermeneutics of liberation are found in one of the latest issues of *Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana*. In the first example, José Ademar Kaefer deconstructs the text of Genesis 37–50, completely subverting the text in its canonical form and presenting Joseph's brothers as the true representatives of the oppressed people, while Joseph is

presented as a representative of the oppressive kingly court.²⁵ In the second example, Esteban Arias Ardilla proposes a reading of the “myth” of Genesis 3 in which the serpent represents peasant liberation movements against the oppressors who come in the name of God.²⁶

The main point of this section is to raise aspects of the hermeneutics of liberation theology that deserve criticism from a biblical perspective. The most relevant points of criticism are: (1) their contempt for the Scriptures in their final version as the Word of God; (2) a critical and deconstructionist interpretation influenced by a “reader response” approach from the perspective of the oppressed; (3) the prioritization of certain biblical texts over others (canon within the canon); (4) a “proof-text” approach which manipulates biblical texts to prove Marxist theses and not to hear what God really has to say through a healthy exegesis; and (5) an existentialist way of justifying particularized interpretations based on a supernatural encounter with Jesus or with the Holy Spirit mediated by an encounter with the poor.

It should be noted that liberation theology does uncover some real problems, such as (1) the distance between theologians and their theology in relation to the most needy people; (2) the reality of oppression and injustice experienced by many people in the developing world; and (3) the fact that sometimes there is indeed a reading of the Bible that wrongly privileges and justifies abuses by those who hold power. However, despite this helpful emphasis, when considered as a hermeneutic, the theology of liberation has failed to provide a solution that does justice to the nature of the Bible as the Word of God.

Thus, in the remainder of this article we will present in an introductory way how theologians can promote a biblical reading that is aware of issues of agrarian social injustice, but that does so based on evangelical assumptions, hermeneutical principles, and theology.

A Study of the Lucan “Landowner”

Up to this point, I demonstrated a close association between the Landless Workers’ Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra or MST) and the Roman Catholic Church, specifically highlighting the theological roots of this movement in liberation theology. Additionally, I offered a preliminary examination of some of the hermeneutical issues within liberation theology. In the remainder of this article, I aim to provide a pathway through which a rigorous study of the scriptures can offer insights into the agrarian question.

Many specialists in narrative comment on the importance of repetition.²⁷ A narrator can use repetition for creating types of characters and, through them, convey his or her worldview. John Roth, for example, affirms that Luke uses "the blind, the lame, and the poor" as typical characters.²⁸ My main thesis in this article is that by using repetition, Luke presents the proprietor of land as a typical character. This character can be referred to as "landowner," "householder," "*oikodespotēs*," or "*paterfamilias*." An analysis of this typical character reveals three primary uses: (1) the property owner as a representative of God or Jesus; (2) the property owner as a selfish individual who is punished for his selfishness; and (3) the property owner as someone who shares his possessions and is blessed. Each of these are dealt with below.

God and Jesus Represented as Landowners in Luke

In most instances where a character who owns land appears in the gospel of Luke, this character symbolizes God himself. In Luke 10:2, God is figuratively portrayed as the "Lord of the harvest."²⁹

In Luke 12:35–48, Jesus is depicted as a "lord" (vv. 36, 37, 41, 42 [twice], 43, 45, 46) who attends a wedding feast. This "lord" has slaves (vv. 37, 43, 44, 47) who must be ready to open the door and serve him upon his arrival. This reflects the image of a Roman *domus* (house) or *familia* (family).³⁰ The willingness of this master to reverse roles and assume a servile position to serve his slaves is unexpected and remarkable (v. 37).³¹ It becomes clear that the character of the master represents Jesus himself (v. 40).

Peter understands that he and the other apostles are the slaves in the parable and asks if there are others as well (Luke 12:41). In response, Jesus tells another parable. In this, Jesus is represented by the lord who leaves the slaves in the care of a steward (*oikonomos*) to provide them with daily food.³² The rewards and punishments administered by the Lord are striking. In the case of faithful slaves, the Lord entrusts them with all his possessions. Conversely, in the case of negligence, selfishness, and abuse by the steward, the text literally states that the Lord "will cut him in two and will place his part with the unbelievers."³³

Again, in the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9), God is presented as a *paterfamilias*. After searching for fruit on the fig tree for three years without finding any, the vineyard owner instructs his vinedresser to cut down the fig tree (v. 7).³⁴ The vinedresser intercedes for the fig tree, promising to care for it carefully for one more year, hoping that it will bear fruit; otherwise, the owner can cut it down (vv. 8–9). Again, a landowner represents God the Father as someone who demands what is rightfully his and punishes when he does not receive it.³⁵

In the same chapter, one finds another representation of God as the *oikodespotēs* (Luke 13:22–30). Jesus instructs his followers to strive diligently to enter through the narrow door because at a certain point, the “master of the house” will close the door and not allow anyone else to enter, despite their pleas. Once the door is shut, there will be a great banquet inside the house with the patriarchs and people from all corners of the world. Thus, Jesus himself is represented as the master of the house who does not allow entry into the kingdom for those who practice iniquity.³⁶

In Luke 14:15–24, Jesus tells a parable in which a certain man identified as *kurios* (vv. 21, 22, 23) and *oikodespotēs* (v. 21) invites many people to a great banquet. The problem is that these people, instead of coming to the banquet, offer weak excuses for not attending.³⁷ Considering that they had already confirmed their attendance when invited, what they are doing is a serious breach of etiquette, possibly stemming from a collective decision not to attend the feast.³⁸ Again, Luke presents the figure of a demanding *paterfamilias* who becomes angry (*orgistheis*, v. 21), compels people to come to his banquet (*anagkason*, v. 23), and does not give a second chance to those who initially refused to attend his feast (v. 24).

The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) also represents God in the role of a successful head of the family (*pater*, vv. 12 [twice], 17, 18 [twice], 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29).³⁹ This man’s possessions are referred to as *ousias* (v. 12), *bion* (vv. 12, 30), and *agrō* (v. 25).⁴⁰ The man has hired workers (*misthioi*) and slaves (*paidōn*) who have an abundance of bread (vv. 17, 26). Even after gathering one-third of everything he had, he still has the means to provide fine clothing, a ring, and sandals for his son (v. 22) and to slaughter a fattened calf to celebrate his return (v. 23), throwing a grand feast with music and dancing (vv. 24–25). In summary, once again, God is characterized as a rich landowner. However, this time, there is an emphasis not on the strict demands but on his love for both of his sons.

In what is possibly the most challenging parable in Luke, the parable of the dishonest manager (Luke 16:1–13), God is again represented as “a certain rich man” referred to as a lord (*kurios*, vv. 3, 5 [twice]).⁴¹ He has a dishonest manager. This manager was squandering (*diaskorpizōn*) his possessions, but the parable does not make explicit whether it was due to incompetence or corruption.⁴² Before leaving his post, the dishonest manager calls some of his master’s debtors and grants them impressive discounts on their debts, so they will help him later in his times of need. Considering that only after this action the manager is referred to as dishonest, it becomes clear that he acted corruptly in making these agreements. However, the owner of the estate is more impressed by the manager’s

cleverness than by his corruption, and commends him. This parable, therefore, also presents God as the ultimate owner of all land and wealth.⁴³

Another text that uses the image of a field owner to represent God is Luke 17:7–10. Jesus poses a rhetorical question that reveals much about the context and expectations of the relationship between masters and slaves at that time. The text makes it clear that it was expected for a servant who had worked all day in the field to return home, prepare the food, and serve his master during the meal before he himself could eat and drink.⁴⁴ Thus, God is again represented as the landowner who has the right of being served.

Finally, another parable in which God is portrayed as a proprietor of land is Luke 20:9–18, where a certain man plants a vineyard as an investment and leases it to some tenants who are supposed to pay him for the lease. The man is referred to as *ho kyrios tou ampelōnos* (Luke 20:13, 15). The tenants mistreat the slaves he sends and murder the vineyard owner's son in order to take the vineyard for themselves. The lord, then, destroys (*apolesei*) them and passes the vineyard to others.⁴⁵

From this very brief analysis of the use of the landowner figure representing God, we can draw the following conclusions. First, Luke assumes the nearly absolute rights of the *paterfamilias* that were so common at the time. An *oikodespotēs* had total control over his house, including managers and slaves in his distant properties. In the texts here analyzed, the master of the house exerts strong leadership and punishes severely those slaves who do not act as he expects. At the same time, this master is extremely generous with slaves who perform their roles well. Also, in harmony with the expectations of the time, several times we find this master practicing hospitality by hosting banquets for his guests. This master demonstrates paternal love for his children, hospitality for his friends, and impressive generosity for his faithful slaves.

Second, through the persistent use of the typical landowner character to represent God, Luke is proposing that God is the true owner of all land. Every Roman *paterfamilias* is merely a tenant of the land, which ultimately belongs to God himself.

There are other parables and stories in Luke that use the same typical character but not representing God. Our thesis is that these other texts have the purpose of teaching land ownership ethics. In other words, considering that God is the true owner of the land, those who possess land beneath him must use their properties in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. Luke presents this point through characters who are rebuked for selfishly using their fields and praising those who use their homes and properties to benefit others beyond themselves. These two are respectively the focus of attention below.

The Selfish Landowner Is Rebuked

A second way in which the typical character of “owner of land” is used by Luke is by presenting him not as a figure pointing to God but as a negative example of someone who uses their possessions solely for self-benefit and is punished for it. The first instance of this occurs when a Pharisee invites Jesus to dine at his house in Luke 7:36–50.⁴⁶ Despite the invitation, the contrast between the woman’s treatment of Jesus and the lack of hospitality by the Pharisee makes clear that the purpose of the invitation was not to share his home lovingly but rather to test Jesus.⁴⁷

In Luke 12:13–21, a man from the crowd asks Jesus to command his brother to divide with him their inheritance. Given the limited context, it is impossible to determine whether or not the request is just. However, what stands out is Jesus’ response in three points. First, he addresses him somewhat distantly as a “man” and poses a rhetorical question through which Jesus asserts he is not the judge or divider between the brothers. Second, Jesus strongly warns against all greed (*pasēs pleonexias*), since life (*zōē*) is more than possessions (*hyparchontōn*).⁴⁸ Third, Jesus tells the parable of the rich man (Luke 12:16–21). In this parable, obviously, the owner of the house does not represent God, especially since God appears in the parable as a character.⁴⁹ A landowner with an abundant harvest has no place to store it and decides to tear down his existing barns and build larger ones to store not only his wheat but also all his goods (v. 18). The next part of the plan is congratulating himself and feasting abundantly for the rest of his life (Luke 12:19). After presenting the death of the man without having time to carry out his plans and enjoy his possessions, Jesus applies the parable by saying, “So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).⁵⁰ This man thought he could use his land only for himself and was punished for it.⁵¹

In one of the previous parables dealt with before (Luke 14:15–24), there are two characters worth noting here, as they are also landowners presented as negative examples. These are the first two guests who decide not to attend the feast. The first one bought a field (*agron*) and decided to visit his new property right on the scheduled date for the banquet (Luke 14:18). The second one bought “five yoke of oxen” and decided to try them out. In both cases, the material possessions of wealthy landowners prevented them from accepting the Lord’s invitation to the banquet that illustrates the Kingdom of God.

The last parable in this second group is the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). Another rich man functions as the main character and a negative example. He is called “rich” three times (vv. 19, 21, 22). Jesus’ description of

this man shows an imperial level of wealth. The door of this man's house is a very large gate.⁵² What is striking is that, for no specific reason other than enjoying his abundant wealth alone while having a needy beggar at his gate, this man goes to hell.⁵³

In this second group of parables, the typical character "landowner" is presented not as representing God but as people who own properties, who use them for selfish or non-altruistic purposes, and who suffer divine condemnation for such a behavior. These consequences range from a shameful rebuke from Jesus to torments in hell. In this way, Jesus challenges landowners and homeowners not to think only of themselves. The next group of texts does the same but, this time, using positive reinforcements.

The Altruist Landowner Is Commended

The third use Luke makes of the paradigmatic character "landowner" points to positive examples. In Luke 5:29, for example, Levi, a tax collector (*telōnēs*) called by Jesus to be his follower, offers a great banquet in his house with many guests.⁵⁴ Being a tax collector, Matthew was certainly someone of great wealth, as evidenced by the size of the reception he hosted in his home. However, what stands out here is not Matthew's ostentation but his hospitality.⁵⁵

Both the negative and positive aspects are represented in Luke 14:1–14. One of the main Pharisees invites Jesus to a banquet at his house (Luke 14:1). Everything at that banquet revolved around selfishness. Everyone, both guests and host, aimed to use the banquet as an opportunity to gain more honor for themselves. Jesus addresses these desires. Afterward, rebuking the guests for selfishly choosing their seats, Jesus turns to the host and advises him that when hosting a banquet, he should not invite those who could reciprocate the favor but should invite instead those who could not repay him (Luke 14:13).⁵⁶ This is an interesting example because we have a man who was practicing hospitality towards Jesus and others, but apparently, the criterion for choosing the guests was a selfish one. Jesus subverts the banquet pattern of the time and calls that important Pharisee to invite people who are normally considered socially low because it would be a way of making an investment with future reward.

The last occurrence of a successful homeowner presented as a positive example is that of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10.⁵⁷ He is a chief tax collector (*architelōnēs*) and rich (*plousios*).⁵⁸ In addition to hosting Jesus in his home, Zacchaeus is commended as a positive example for deciding to give half of his possessions to the poor and to repay fourfold those he had unjustly wronged. From his attitude, Jesus acknowledges Zacchaeus' salvation (Luke 19:9–10).

Each *oikodespotēs* in this group demonstrates some form of altruistic use of their home and wealth. An owner who understands that Jesus is Lord uses his or her property in a way that benefits not only themselves but also the needy whom Jesus continuously served.

Final Considerations

The first part of this article provided an introductory critical analysis of liberation theology and its methods of biblical interpretation. I have shown that liberation theology does not consider the final form of the canon and engages in a behind-the-text reading that depends on an imaginative reconstruction of a Jesus created in the image and likeness of Marxist heroes. Additionally, liberation theology does not seriously engage with the biblical text through exegesis. As a result, it proposes ecclesiastical action in the world based more on Marxist ideology than on what Jesus actually taught through his words and example. The Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil is an example of this heterodox theology applied in a practical way.

Despite that, like other heterodox movements, liberation theology plays an important role in provoking discussion about the biblical conception of material possessions, especially land ownership. What does God think about this issue, and how should the church act in relation to the real problem of land concentration in the hands of a few wealthy landowners to the detriment of a mass of poor people?

The introductory answer presented in this article is that the Gospel of Luke, using the typical character "landowner," proposes, first and foremost, that God is the true owner of all land. He is the *oikodespotēs par excellence*, and all human land ownership is derived from this fundamental reality. Thus, Luke rediscovers and develops one of the central statements of the Jubilee in Leviticus 25: "the land is mine" (Lev. 25:23).⁵⁹ As in Leviticus, this fundamental theological point has ethical implications for how someone is supposed to use land ultimately belonging to God. Luke confirms the right to private property but asserts that, along with this right, there must be a practical sense that the land indeed belongs to God. Therefore, any field or house entrusted to someone should be used to serve the Kingdom of God through hospitality and/or by generating wealth that blesses not only the owner. The de facto owner will judge and reward or punish people based on this criterion: whether the use they made of the entrusted property was selfish or altruistic.

Notes

1. "The Landless Movement is organized in 24 states in the five regions of the country. In total, there are around 450 thousand families who conquered land through the struggle and organization of rural workers. The Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) is an autonomous, mass social movement that seeks to articulate and organize rural workers and society to achieve Agrarian Reform and a Popular Project for Brazil. [...] In Brazil, there are more than 90 thousand landless families camped out living under the black tarpaulin. Close to large estates, these families organize themselves collectively, and often live in camps for years." Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, "Quem Somos," February 1, 2023, <https://mst.org.br/quem-somos>.
2. Daniel Rittner and Gustavo Uribe, "Invasões No Campo Estão No Ritmo Mais Alto Em Sete Anos, Diz CNA," *CNN Brasil*, May 4, 2023, <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/nacional/invasoes-no-campo-estao-no-ritmo-mais-alto-em-sete-anos-diz-cna>.
3. "Land occupation, encampments, marches, fasting and hunger strikes, occupation of public buildings, encampments and demonstrations in cities, encampments in front of banks, vigils; the fight for popular agrarian reform and social transformation." Movimento Sem Terra, "Quem Somos."
4. The Brazilian Catholic Apostolic Church (ICAB) broke away from the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil in 1945.
5. Mirian Borges da Silva, "Influência da Teologia da Libertação no MST durante as décadas de 1970 e 1980," *Conversas & Controvérsias* 9, no. 3 (2022): 1–9; Claudiomiro Nascimento, "Igreja Católica e a Luta pela Reforma Agrária no Brasil," *Diálogos* 14, no. 1 (2010): 175–96; Marco Antonio Mitidiero Jr., "Igreja, campesinato e luta pela terra no Brasil," *Revista Geográfica de América Central* 2 (2011): 1–14; João Carlos Tedesco and Emerson Neves Da Silva, "Igreja Católica, questão agrária e a luta social no campo (1950–1980)," *Cadernos do CEOM* 33, no. 52 (2020): 105–21; Antonio Julio Menezes Neto, "A Igreja Católica e os Movimentos Sociais do Campo: a Teologia da Libertação e o Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra," *Caderno CRH* 20, no. 50 (2007): 331–41; Delze dos Santos Laureano and Gilvander Luis Moreira, "MST: 25 Anos de Luta por Reforma Agrária," *Veredas do Direito* 6, no. 11 (2009): 11–29; Pere Petit, Airton dos Reis Pereira, and Fábio Pessoa, "Camponeses, fazendeiros e a Teologia da Libertação na luta pela terra no Sul e no Sudeste do Estado do Pará: 1960–1980," *Tempos Históricos* 18, no. 2 (2014): 337–65.
6. Tedesco and Da Silva, "Igreja Católica," 118; Márcia Vidal Nunes, *Teologia da Libertação, Mística e MST: O Papel da Comunicação Grupal Libertadora na Organização Política do Movimento* (Fortaleza, BR: Imprensa Universitária, 2014); Alesandra Stefanello, "Teologia da Libertação e Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais

- Sem Terra: Gestos de análise em um entrelaçamento discursivo,” *Revista DisSoL: Discurso, Sociedade e Linguagem* 15, no. 7 (2022): 5–30.
7. Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), *Ocupando a Bíblia: Caderno de Educação no. 10* (São Paulo: Setor de Educação do MST, 2000).
 8. Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *A Teologia do Século 20 e os Anos Críticos do Século 21: Deus e o Mundo Numa Era Líquida*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Editora Cultura Cristã, 2013), 249–66; Harvie Conn, “Liberation Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. David F. Wright, Sinclair B. Ferguson, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1988), 387–91; Thomas L. Schubeck SJ, “Liberation Theology,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999–2003), 258–65.
 9. Richard Sturz, “Uma avaliação da Teologia da Libertação: O Pano de Fundo que deu origem à Teologia da Libertação,” in *Teologia da Libertação: Suas raízes, seus proponentes e seu significado hoje em dia*, ed. Harvie Conn and Richard Sturz (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 2009), 153; Kenneth Hamilton, “Liberation Theology: An Overview,” in *Evangelicals and Liberation*, ed. Carl E. Armerding (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1977), 9; Russell Shedd, “Introdução,” in *Teologia da Libertação: Suas raízes, seus proponentes e seu significado hoje em dia*, ed. Harvie Conn and Richard Sturz (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 2009), 6; João Batista Libânio, *Teologia da Libertação: Roteiro didático para um estudo* (São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1987), 269–79.
 10. Sturz, “Uma avaliação,” 154.
 11. Juan Luis Segundo, *A História Perdida e Recuperada de Jesus de Nazaré: dos Sinóticos a Paulo* (São Paulo: Paulus, 1997), 101–41.
 12. Hugo Assmann, *Theology for a Nomad Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975); Sturz, “Uma avaliação,” 164.
 13. Libânio, *Teologia da Libertação*, 228–29.
 14. “This community and contextual orientation to theological construction achieves its ultimate statement in the various forms of liberation theology (Third world, black or feminist theologies). Liberation theology completely reverses the evangelical view of authority. The Bible is no longer the normative standard for faith and practice; instead, the contextual situation becomes the norm. These theologians assert that the church must identify with oppressed communities and that doctrine is never final but is always culturally conditioned... Liberation theologians ask the right questions but arrive at the wrong answers.” Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 294. See also Augustus N. G. Lopes, “A Hermenêutica da Teologia da Libertação: Uma Análise de *Jesus Cristo Libertador*, de Leonardo Boff,” *Fides Reformata* 3, no. 2 (1998): 69–70.

15. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 4.
16. "The following five elements are important in the method and interpretation of liberation theology: (1) a living encounter with social-political reality in Latin America; (2) engagement in and commitment to the project of working for liberation; (3) social-critical analysis of political, economic, and ideological spheres as well as the social context of the biblical narrative; (4) theological-hermeneutical reflection on the word of God in this perspective and reformulation; and (5) liberative hermeneutics in activation of the transforming energy of biblical texts toward conversion and revolution in its messianic and eschatological character." Paul S. Chung, *Reclaiming Mission as Constructive Theology: Missional Church and World Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 46.
17. Hans de Wit, "'It Should Be Burned and Forgotten!' Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics through the Eyes of Another," in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation*, ed. Alejandro F. Botta and Pablo R. Andiñach (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 41.
18. See for example Ernesto Cardenal, *El Evangelio en Solentiname* (Managua, NI: Departamento Ecuaménico de Investigaciones, 1979). De Wit comments on the risks of "using" the Bible: "Use of a text—action as result of a reading process—is not the same as a rhetorical reading: the way texts persuade or convince readers by means of their argumentative structure. 'Use' many times takes place without any hermeneutical or interpretative mediation, just because of the status of the Bible as cultural heritage, fetish, exceptional object, holy book, and so on. We may think of the many instances in which the Bible as an object or as a product – its paper, its ink, the book as book, its covers, its images, its slogans, its magic—is used for health, success, bewitching, war, domination, oaths, conversion, and prosperity. Use is not always a natural sequel of interpretation; frequently use and interpretation contradict each other, do not coincide, are mutually excluding." De Wit, "It Should Be Burned," 47.
19. "In Jesus, we meet God. In the human word we read the word of God. In historical events we recognize the fulfillment of the promise. This is the basic circle of all hermeneutics: from the human being to God and from God to the human being, from history to faith and from faith to history, from love of our brothers and sisters to the love of the Father and from the love of the Father to the love of our brothers and sisters, from human justice to God's holiness and from God's holiness to human justice, from the poor person to God and from God to the poor person." Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor*, 15.
20. "If theology somehow assumes that it can answer to the new questions without changing its customary interpretation of the Scriptures, that immediately terminates the hermeneutic circle. Furthermore, if our interpretation of Scripture does not change

along with the problems, then the latter will go unanswered; or worse, they will receive old, conservative, unserviceable answers.” Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 9.

21. Marcelo de Barros Souza and José L. Caravias, *Teologia da Terra* (Petrópolis, BR: Vozes, 1988), 261.
22. De Barros Souza and Caravias, *Teologia da Terra*, 427.
23. De Barros Souza and Caravias, *Teologia da Terra*, 418, 428.
24. De Barros Souza and Caravias, *Teologia da Terra*, 430.
25. José Ademar Kaefer, “Uma análise literária e Sociológica Camponesa da Novela de José e Seus Irmãos,” *RIBLA* 89 (2023): 67–79. This issue of *RIBLA* is entirely dedicated to the peasant reading of the Bible.
26. Esteban Arias Ardila, “Adán y Eva primeros campesinos desplazados de su tierra: Una lectura alternativa de Génesis 3,” *RIBLA* 89 (2023): 62.
27. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 111–42; James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 42; Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation: The Gospel according to Luke*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991), 171.
28. S. John Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 25.
29. C. Kavin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 133–34.
30. See more details in Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 498–99.
31. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 379.
32. “The setting for the story is a large landed Roman Palestinian estate owned by a master.” W. Harold Mare, *New Testament Background Commentary: A New Dictionary of Words, Phrases and Situations in Bible Order* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2004), 104.
33. The Greek phrase could be translated “cut in two of the dismemberment of a condemned person” (BDAG, 253). For a more detailed discussion, see I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 543; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 504. Blomberg suggests that a possible canonical context is Jeremiah 34:18–20. Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 234.

34. François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:27* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 271.
35. For a good interpretation of this parable, see John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 280; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51–24:53* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1209; William Hendriksen, *Lucas* (São Paulo: Cultura Cristã, 2014), 209.
36. "'Owner' evidently refers to Jesus rather than God because the owner ate in their presence and taught in their streets (Luke 13:26)." Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1992), 379.
37. Trent C. Butler, *Luke* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2000), 237; Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 304.
38. "What unfolds, however, is a complete unraveling of the planned banquet. The usual advance invitation to the occasion has, as one might expect in such a close village culture, apparently permitted exchange of gossip about the meal, the invited guest roster, and the host. Otherwise, the circumstance of 100 percent declined invitations is wholly improbable. The parable proceeds to narrate a conspiracy of last-hour refusals to attend, therefore intentionally dishonoring the meal host." Carroll, *Luke*, 303. See also Hendriksen, *Lucas*, 252; Bock, *Luke*, 1272–73.
39. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 158–59; Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 130.
40. It is possible that Luke used "*meros tēs ousias*" (Luke 15:12) in the son's mouth and "*ton bion*" (Luke 15:12) to refer to what the father shared with them in order to emphasize the personality, the sacrifice and the effort made by the Father. Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 130; Bovon, *Luke 2*, 425; Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 439.
41. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant*, 94.
42. Cato presents, among others, the following responsibilities of an administrator (*vilicus*): "... maintain discipline... respect the rights of others and steadfastly uphold his own... if any one is at fault he should administer the punishment. He should take care that no one on the place is in want, or lacks food or drink; in this respect he can afford to be generous, for he will thus more easily prevent picking and stealing... Unless the overseer is of evil mind, he will himself do no wrong, but if he permits wrong-doing by others, the master should not suffer such indulgence to pass with impunity... He should lend money to no man unbidden by the master, but what the master has lent he should collect... He should state his accounts with his master

frequently. He should not keep any hired men or day hands longer than is necessary. He should not sell any thing without the knowledge of the master, nor should he conceal any thing from the master. First up in the morning, he should be the last to go to bed at night... Remember that while work may stop, expenses still go on..." Cato, *Agr* 1.5.

43. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 406.
44. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 351; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 645.
45. John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 217–18.
46. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 308.
47. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 230.
48. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 370.
49. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 394.
50. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 397.
51. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 360.
52. A “πυλῶν,” i.e., “an entrance that contains a gate or gates, gateway, entrance, gate, especially the large, impressive gateways at the entrance of temples and palaces” (BDAG, 897).
53. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 361.
54. François Bovon and Helmut Koester, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 190.
55. Carroll, *Luke*, 133.
56. Carroll, *Luke*, 301.
57. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 694; Bovon, *Luke 2*, 592.
58. Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 140.
59. For a more complete treatment of this, see João Paulo Thomaz de Aquino, “The Earth is the Lord’s: Land Justice in Luke-Acts” (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 2020).