

Liberation Theology and Global Healthcare Equity

By: Olivia Nunez

Paul Farmer

Dr. Paul Farmer works in undeveloped countries with victims suffering social injustice and structural violence. Dr. Farmer believes that healthcare is a human right that has been denied to those who living in poverty. He applies the simple tactic of “observe, judge, and act” to bring the benefits of modern medical science to those most in need of them and to serve as an antidote to despair. Therefore, co-founded Partners in Health (PIH), a non-profit organization that delivers healthcare to the world’s most impoverished places, partnered with local governments to bring about global change.



Partners
In Health

Gustavo Gutierrez



Gustavo Gutierrez is a Dominican priest and theologian who coined the term “preferential option for the poor”, which can be understood using the poor as a reflection on society’s unjust structures as they face political oppression governed by the wealthy. It is theorized that the true evil is human actions. Fr. Gutierrez theologizes liberating the poor from oppression caused by human actions so we may all live the salvation of God’s will to be free from our sins.

Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology has always been about the struggle for social and economic right. Fr. Gutierrez suggests that we turn to the poor for political reformation to understand the moral foundations of structural violence because God speaks through the poor. Dr. Farmer suggests reforming the healthcare system and making it equitable. Global healthcare equity is making advanced modern medicine accessible for everyone in need of it, not just allowing those in developed countries. Therefore both, strive to accompany the poor their struggles for survival by being present through chaotic circumstances, unexpected problems, and difficult situations with no easy solutions.

Partners in Health

PIH values the theological virtues and apply it to practice. Restoring faith in global health by providing resources and research to new develop change. Providing hope with the company of the poor, through despair. Through charity, local volunteers take on the responsibilities of their own and neighbor’s human rights; health.



PIH Haiti

Dr. Farmer has done research on the study of healthcare in Haiti. Upon his observation there were significant Haitians who were affected by HIV and tuberculosis. Farmer was able to analyze the situation by critiquing and judging flaws within the healthcare system in Haiti causing the likelihood of untreated preventable cases. Actions were done by testing different approaches to change the probability of both HIV and tuberculosis. Changes that were implemented to decrease developing diseases such as: increasing medical staff, training local volunteers to accompany patients, offering options of transportation, and creating a local clinic. Haiti’s population living below national the poverty line is 59% with a total population of 10.9 million and the life expectancy of 63 years compared to the United State’ population of 327.2 million with the life expectancy of 78 years. The PIH local clinic in Haiti and many other countries has changed healthcare equity.



Conclusion

Poverty is not some accident of nature but the result of historically given and economically driven forces. This leaves the countries unable to develop economically because they are globally marginalized. Nonetheless, the poor has never been an preferential option for others because the option of charity can be used as a moral justification. By valuing the theological virtues, we can see social changes in undeveloped communities that have a “preferential option for the poor.”