

The Jesus of liberation theology, firmly rooted in the struggles of the first century, inspires Christians to continue his work and mission in all centuries throughout history, believing that history is exactly the venue into which God's kingdom comes and in which God's will can increasingly be done.

Through the years I have found that there are many pictures of Jesus afoot in the Christian world. My sketches here in this chapter are just that—simple impressions drawn with a few lines; for detailed portraits you'll need to read elsewhere. Perhaps we could summarize using this table:

Type of Christian	Focus/Problem	Good News
Conservative Protestant	The human race is guilty of sin and wrongdoing.	Jesus' death pays the full penalty for human sin.
Pentecostal	The human race is held down by disease and poverty.	Jesus teaches us how to receive miracles and healings from God through faith in God's promises.
Roman Catholic	The human race is enslaved by the fear of death.	Jesus' resurrection defeats death and liberates humanity.
Eastern Orthodox	The human race is spiritually sick and needs healing; it has dropped out of the "dance" of creation.	Jesus' entry (or incarnation) into humanity and history brings God's healing to the human race and all of creation.

Liberal Protestant	The human race suffers from ignorance of the teachings and ways of Christ.	Jesus' example and teachings inspire us to work compassionately for social justice.
Anabaptist	The human race is divided and violent and needs to learn the ways of Christ in community.	Jesus convenes a learning community of disciples who seek to model lives of love and peace.
Liberation Theology (nonviolent)	Humanity is oppressed by corrupt powers, systems, and regimes.	Jesus commissions and leads bands of activists to confront unjust regimes and make room for the shalom of God.

This table is far from complete; I can think of at least one new Jesus that is arising from within the evangelical tradition in recent years. And there are many crossovers and hybrids among these visions of Jesus as well. For example, most Pentecostals share a close affinity with what I'm calling Conservative Protestants in their attention to human guilt and the forgiveness Jesus' death brings. Many Catholics share a concern for social justice with Liberal Protestants and Anabaptists and Liberationists. Furthermore, each of these groups has nuances, sub-streams, counter-streams, weaknesses, problems, and minority opinions that my simple table doesn't begin to show.

In the end, the purpose of this table and this whole chapter is not to further distinguish, delineate, or divide these various