



# God and the Excluded: Visions and Blindspots in Contemporary Theology

*Joerg Rieger*

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Theology is fracturing along tension lines once hidden by the great modern consensus that reigned from Schleiermacher's day till our own. Now, all of it is in dispute: its starting point, its self-awareness, its claim to truth, its method and interaction with other disciplines and institutions in church, academy, and society.

Rieger offers an enlightening way to understand the chief strands or options in theology today and a valuable proposal for resituating theology around the crucial issue of inclusion. He sees four competing vectors at work in today's Christian theology: Theology of Identity (liberal theology, represented by Schleiermacher and founded in the self), Theology of Difference (dialectical theology, represented by Barth and founded in the Wholly Other), Theology and the Postmodern (postcritical theology, represented by Lindbeck and founded on the text), and Theology and the Underside (liberation theology, represented by Gutierrez and others and founded in the interests of the other person).

Further, Rieger goes on to propose that each of these is in some way exclusionary and elitist; the mass of humanity and the globe's most pressing problems do not invade this cathedral, and in some ways the market itself has replaced God. Religious thought can remain viable only when it is grounded in an openness that reaches beyond the global market and postmodern squabbles, critiques its own complicity in the situation, and resituates itself in express commitment to those left out of today's "gated community".

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