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Expanding the view: Gustavo Gutiérrez and the future of liberation theology

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desk, within arm's reach, as a complement to other exegetical resources. With just a few minutes of reading there is the potential of an insight or observation which could make the Sunday morning sermon more inclusive, uplifting and life-giving for all who come to worship. Seminary students will find this commentary helpful in evaluating their own experience, understanding their own interpretive stance and visioning their future roles and responsibilities as preachers, teachers and pastoral care-givers. For men and women, lay and ordained, who are involved in Bible study, this book will be a tremendous asset.

I commend the authors and the editors of *The Women's Bible Commentary* for their scholarly research, for the honesty and sensitivity of their writing. Also to be appreciated are the brief, but excellent, bibliographies at the conclusion of each writer's work. Although I would have preferred the articles on the everyday life of women to precede, rather than follow, each of the Testaments, it is easy for me to suggest that readers may wish to read those first.

This book raises questions, challenges assumptions, and encourages reflection. It is, indeed, "informative", but also insightful and invigorating. Buy it and read it. You'll see!

Judi Harris

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Expanding the View: Gustavo Gutierrez and the Future of Liberation Theology

Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, Editors

Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990

xiv + 226 pages

This volume is a mini-version "festschrift" of *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutierrez*. It appeals to a wider audience than the latter—in particular, that of the classroom. The work is divided into three Parts: "Liberation Theology After Twenty Years"; "Interpretations, Disputed Questions"; "Looking Toward the Future".

Part I contains only one essay, penned by Gutierrez himself—which also appeared in his 1988 edition of *A Theology of Liberation*. This piece is vintage Gutierrez! He writes of God, his faith, the gospel, his people and church with passion, clarity and inspiration. In a word, it is a "tour de force"!

Leonardo Boff understands liberation theology as one of conflict, i.e. always at odds with power elites. In this sense, it is a kindred spirit to the biblical prophetic tradition. According to Boff, reflection upon historical action is still a very delicate, problematic question for the critics of liberation theology.

Rosemary Radford Ruether delivers a brief, yet exacting critique of Reagan-era America for its attempts to write-off Latin American liberation theology and North American black and feminist theologies. For Radford Ruether—like Gutierrez—the truth-claims of liberation theologies are not so much in well-reasoned, correct words as in praxis, i.e. “how one commits one’s life” (76).

Gregory Baum—the only Canadian in this volume—critiques the classic socialist view of identity. It focusses excessively on peoples’ economic status much to the detriment of human ethnic and religious backgrounds. Baum suggests that the neoconservative movement appeals to people because it acknowledges their ethnic and religious heritage. He also lauds liberation theology because it sees community as fundamentally religious and identity as Latin American, not national. He is not overly optimistic about the present Canadian context: “The lack of a strong collective identity makes Canada vulnerable to increasing economic and political dependency on the United States” (107). Baum is also greatly indebted to Paul Tillich for the latter’s terms, “myths of origin” and “myths of destiny”.

Francois Houtart provides readers with a concise summary of Cardinal Ratzinger’s opposition to the theology of Gutierrez. If Houtart is correct, then one wonders whether Ratzinger would be able to remain a critic of Gutierrez should the cardinal come to live among the poor—like Gutierrez—in Latin America!

Edward Schillebeeckx grapples with the often violent, historical relationships between Christianity and the other world religions. He also issues a clarion call for understanding the Christian faith community as universal in the sense that it “is an open community” (136). According to Schillebeeckx, the church has been wrong to universalize what is not universal. That means historical, cultural-conditioned liturgies, languages, theologies, and so on are not to be universally imposed upon the whole church.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza believes that, thus far, Latin American liberation theology has failed to give significant attention to their poorest of the poor—women and children. She encourages feminists to deconstruct biblical scholarship with all of its white, male, Western-world methods of interpretation and epistemology in order to develop new methods in these fields. Schüssler Fiorenza also provides a well-articulated rationale for feminist reader-response criticism as a legitimate method for deconstructing and reconstructing biblical texts.

Part III consists of three essays on possible future trajectories of liberation theology.

Maria Clara Bingemer contends that, in Latin America—as in several other regions of the world—women experience the double-edged sword of oppression on account of gender and socio-economic status. She predicts a rising tide of women doing theology as a faith community in Latin America. Bingemer applauds a theology constructed out of desire rather than one of rationalism.

Robert McAfee Brown begins with personal reminiscences of the past, zooming in on his initial encounter with liberation theology and theologians. It is not possible to confine liberation theology to cerebral activity—its foundational locus is living, real-life experiences. He sees the immediate

need for North American Christians to re-create a new liberation theology after correctly hearing Third World theologies and taking ownership of the oppression we have caused the Two-Thirds World. This new liberation theology has already taken wing with a growing number of contextual theologies. McAfee Brown sums up aptly the significance of Gustavo Gutierrez: "the total congruence between what he writes and what he lives remains his supreme contribution to the rest of us" (205).

Pablo Richard gives kudos to Gutierrez as a continuing source of strength, vision and inspiration for liberation theologians whenever they have grown weary and disillusioned. He predicts progress in biblical studies because of liberation hermeneutics. He also hopes for a more equal, respectful relationship between intellectuals and the common people. Richard believes that the only future for theology is liberation theology and the next century belongs to the Two-Thirds World.

This volume is recommended reading for seminarians, professors, pastors, church leaders and laity. It stimulates, critiques and challenges the reader by raising important theological questions in such a way as to engage us in continuing debate, dialogue—as well as action.

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The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion

Northrop Frye
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991
88 pages

The Double Vision gives us the parting words of Canada's premier literary critic and educator. An ordained United Church minister, Northrop Frye (1912–1991) was perhaps best known for his internationally acclaimed *Fearful Symmetry* (1947) and *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). He more recently gained recognition for his studies of the impact of the Bible on Western literature, *The Great Code* (1982) and *Words With Power* (1990). In *The Double Vision* (title borrowed from William Blake), Frye summarizes his understanding of faith, an understanding implied throughout his writings but given perhaps its most explicit expression here. On this subject, as on so many others, Frye is refreshingly original.

What makes Frye's approach to the Bible (and, hence, faith) "original" is, ironically, also what links him to classical Christianity: both exhibit a stubborn indifference to the question of the historical reliability of biblical narratives and intense preoccupation with their literary, metaphorical