

Book Reviews

Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 224 pp.

In *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*, Robert McAfee Brown has written the definitive work on Gutierrez' theological project. Throughout this eminently readable text, Brown makes lucid both the basic assumptions and subtleties of Gutierrez' work. He examines in detail Gutierrez' theological methodology, relationship to the Catholic hierarchy, and significance for the development of the liberation theology movement. By examining subjects as broad as the history of Catholicism in Latin America, the development of Catholic social teaching in the last one hundred years, and current social conditions in Peru, the author provides a solid background in light of which to present Gutierrez' life and thought.

An especially helpful aspect of this background is the book's treatment of Gutierrez' biography. Brown tells the story of how Gutierrez, a Peruvian of mixed Hispanic and Native American descent, came to study for the priesthood via a "Theological Grand Tour" which took him through Belgium, France, and Rome. Upon returning to Peru and engaging in pastoral work and teaching, he found that his traditional European theological training was appropriate to neither the practical nor the intellectual challenges raised by the harsh social conditions of Peru. In light of his ministry with the poor and his dialogue with other Latin American theologians and intellectuals, Gutierrez began re-thinking theology in a manner which addressed the social realities of his region. It was through his re-thinking that the theology of liberation first found a voice.

Brown also does his readers the service of analyzing the development of Gutierrez' project from his earliest essays to his most recent, and as yet untranslated, volumes. In so doing, Brown examines Gutierrez' work comprehensively. By drawing from the full range of his writings, Brown is able to evaluate Gutierrez fairly and to respond confidently to other interpreters who have read him only in part. This characteristic of the book is especially important in light of charges from certain segments of the Catholic hierarchy that Gutierrez is more a Marxist than a Christian. Drawing from the breadth of Gutierrez' writings and the story of his pious life, the author demonstrates the absurdity of such claims.

Throughout the book, Brown presents the life and thought of Gutierrez in an engaging and accessible way. Far from a typically dry volume of academic theology, the text locates its subject squarely within the vibrant context of Latin American Christians who are pursuing social justice as an implication of the Gospel. Brown treats Gutierrez as one such Christian whose pastoral activity is the soil from which the flower of his thought has grown. In this respect, the volume would serve well as an introduction to Latin American liberation theology. It portrays richly how and why this movement has arisen in response to the pressing concerns of an entire region.

The greatest significance of the book, however, is its comprehensive, lucid, and fair treatment of Gutierrez' theological project. By examining critically both the theological presuppositions and concrete social location of his thought, Brown has written a much needed book which will surely advance both the analysis of Gutierrez' work and the understanding of Latin American liberation theology.

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H. Eddie Fox and George E. Morris, *Faith-Sharing: Dynamic Christian Witnessing by Invitation*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1986.

Fox and Morris have written a book on evangelism which has been overlooked by the Christian community, a book with insights into evangelistic motivations, aims and techniques as well as sensitivity to the social forces which deprive certain individuals the opportunity to reach their full human potential. For them, evangelism involves more than membership recruitment but also includes the proclamation of a gospel that denounces the systemic creation of disenfranchised persons through racism, sexism, and exploitation.

"They argue that evangelism as faith-sharing must be based upon a sound, relevant understanding of faith as the foundation of Christianity. They define faith as "a centered, personal, relational response involving trust and obedience" (p. 24). Faith is centered on God. It is personal because God is revealed in a living person, Jesus Christ, who requires a personal response from each human being. Christian faith is also relational in that it makes possible a right-relationship with God. Trust and obedience are the vital dynamics of faith. "Ultimate trust leads one to obedience" (p. 27). Faith properly relates us to God. A proper relationship to God requires a proper relationship with the neighbor as well, they argue.

Fox and Morris define evangelism as faith-sharing and spreading the good news regardless of the results. Contemporary Christians have shifted from religious reasons for faith-sharing to institutional reasons. Not only have we shifted our reasons for sharing faith, we also have become discouraged from sharing our faith. We no longer want to risk getting out into the streets or witnessing door-to-door. Rather, we want to stay in our comfortable churches and share our faith there with people who may enter our sanctuaries.

Fox and Morris offer three reasons for faith-sharing. First, God is One Who always seeks humanity to establish a relationship of wholeness with all creation. Second, a need exists to recapture a true sense of human need and human worth, one which establishes positive relationships with God and with other persons. As we look around, we see the difference between the society that we have created and God's vision for the world that God created. Faith-sharing should move creation closer to God's vision. It is grace, not guilt, that motivates people to share their faith appropriately.

Third, faith-sharing should become a means to redeem society. Christians should witness that God sustains, fulfills and makes us whole persons. When we think of people who live in impoverished conditions, suffer from hunger, endure oppression, racism, and other indignities, we see ample reason for sharing the gospel in order to improve these conditions. Thereby, we share the gospel not only in word but also in action. Faith-sharing, argue Fox and Morris, is important for the wholeness of the entire creation.

Fox and Morris argue for a more biblically-based perspective of faith that would eradicate all barriers. Such a perspective, they argue, would provide the guidance that we need in fashioning our understanding and strategies for faith-sharing/evangelism. We are to spread the gospel of the kingdom of God by both word and deed and leave the rest to the work of the Holy Spirit and a decision by one to change one's life-style. The point of contact is between the gospel and the person's specific need, desire or motive.

I found this book informative and inspirational. Fox and Morris properly understand the institutional reasons which have transformed the witnessing life of the Church and they offer strong, biblically-based methods for correcting the present state of faith-sharing/evan-

gelism in the Church and moving toward methods of faith-sharing that emphasize God's grace, not human guilt. Faith-sharing based upon divine grace accomplishes three things. First, people have a positive reason to share their faith which, in turn, should make itself manifest in society positively as they go out to share the gospel with others. Second, persons tend to respond with more depth and commitment when offered a positive reason to give their lives to the Lord. Love breeds more love; guilt inflicts more pain. The grace of God is about replacing pain with love. Finally, the authors argue that faith-sharing must attempt to redeem society from its ills. Thus, a true strength of this book is its insistence on an ethical dimension in evangelism as faith-sharing.

This book would be a good resource for those who witness with little concern for emotional and physical wholeness as well as for those who address emotional and physical needs without witnessing to God's grace.

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ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED