

Book Reviews

Expanding the View: Gustavo Gutierrez and the future of Liberation Theology. Marc Ellis and Otto Madura (eds.), Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York.

In 1988 over one hundred theologians from around the world gathered at Maryknoll, New York to honour Gustavo Gutierrez, the "father of liberation theology" on his sixtieth birthday. The gathering coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the Medellin conference and the fifteenth anniversary of the publication in English of Gutierrez's book, A theology of liberation. During the month long conference, it became clear that Liberation Theology had become a global phenomenon. The resulting volume, The future of Liberation theology included over fifty papers of theologians from twenty-four countries. The current book, Expanding the view contains fifteen papers from the original volume and makes them available in a paperback edition.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on some of the recent ideas of Gustavo Gutierrez. Gutierrez reminds his readers of the greatest distance that the church has travelled since the 1968 Latin American Bishops' conference at Medellin. It was at that conference that the realisation that the "poor" had been absent from discussions about church and society became apparent. The irruption of this "invisible" majority into history and church consciousness has led to repercussions throughout the world. This expanded view of the identity of the church has been embraced in Africa and Asia as well as among the marginalised people throughout the world. Liberation Theology has now become a world-wide phenomenon.

A reporter recently asked Gutierrez whether he would write A theology of Liberation today as he had done two decades before. He responded imaginatively by saying that his book had been a love letter to God, the church and to the people to whom he belonged. Love endured and grew deeper and changed its manner of expression over the years.

The second section deals with some matters of dispute in Liberation Theology. McGovern, a Jesuit professor of philosophy, writes a searching article about the key topics of dependency theory and Marxist analysis for Liberation Theology. The author notes that early liberation theology was much impressed by the dependency theory. One example of this was Prebisch's argument concerning the "core-periphery" model for understanding economic problems in Latin America. Latin America was kept poor because the economy was controlled by the "core" nations of the United States and Europe. In recent years Gutierrez has remarked on the provisional nature of such theories and the fact that dependency theory and Marxist theory are often in opposition to one another (p.81). McGovern then explores the positions of various liberation theologians towards Marxist analysis. The author notes that most liberation theologians feel that Marxist analysis is a "useful tool" for understanding conditions in Latin America. Gutierrez, for example, argued that Marxist analysis and the atheistic Marxist world-view can be separated. In recent years however, Gutierrez has warned against an uncritical use of marxist categories and has been highly

critical of some Marxist societies which blatantly dent human rights. The third section of the book focuses on the future of liberation theology as a global phenomenon. Sister Maria Bingemer of the Pontifical University of Rio de Janeiro presents a moving paper on the role of women in future Liberation Theology. The author writes in a poetic style. She begins her article by drawing a distinction between first world women and third world women when writing Liberation Theology. She notes that the face of the poor has changed over the past twenty years with the realisation that the majority of the poor are women. Although numerically more numerous in their attendance of worship than men, women's presence in the church and theology has largely been a silent one. She notes that the unique experience of women has been diluted under subjects like "theological anthropology" and only recently have women active producers of theology rather than mere objects of theological reflection. Bingemer feels that most theology is rigid, predictable and overly rational. She argues that the entry of women into theology would make theology unpredictable. She asserts that the primacy of rationality in Liberation Theology needs to be replaced by the primacy of desire. She writes: "The presence of women in theology brings back into the front, the primacy of desire for which purely rational concepts do not allow. Moved by desire, a totalising force, she does theology with her body, her heart and hands, as much as with her head (p. 178).

I found the book an informative set of papers with one shortcoming. The choice of documents does not reflect the world-wide phenomenon of Liberation Theology. The writers included are primarily Latin American and north American representatives. No doubt the narrowing of the global theme has to do with the intended readership being in the Anglo-American world. Despite this criticism, the book is a fitting tribute to Gustavo Gutierrez, that great evangelist who has taken good news to the poor.

Reviewed by Mark Hestenes (Practical Theology, University of South Africa).

Moya: the Holy Spirit in an African context, by Anderson A, Manualia Didactica 13, Softcover, 1991, 152 pp, ISBN 0 86981 693 4.

Black pentecostal-type churches are probably part of one of the fastest growing religious movements in South Africa. There is a perception among Western scholars that the proliferation of African indigenous and pentecostal churches has resulted in a weak or impoverished theology regarding concepts of the Holy Spirit and power amongst these churches, which concepts and resulting practices occupy a central place. The issues are the central concern of this book. The author presents a sympathetic approach to what has possibly been a much maligned movement, and certainly a misunderstood one.

This is a study of Christian pneumatology in Africa, particularly in independent Spirit-type churches and Black Pentecostal churches. Christian theology has not entered Africa in a vacuum. The understanding of the Holy Spirit is therefore evaluated against the backdrop of the traditional African world view with its spirituality and holistic ideas of God, power, the spirit world and ancestors. The book begins by giving an outline of this world view and its influence on doing theology in Africa. The more recent contributions of African Theology and Black theology to the subject are also briefly considered.

The main part of this book deals with how these churches have entered into the vacuum. The characteristic features of this pneumatology are described, including their historical and theological origins in Western and American Black Pentecostalism and slave religion. Pentecostals have tended to emphasise the discontinuity between themselves and the indigenous churches, whereas this book highlights their essential continuity. Pneumatology is not as much written as it is enacted in manifestations, particularly baptism in the Spirit, speaking in tongues and in prophecy. These practices are discussed in some detail and then compared with what are seen to be the key traditional concepts of power and the spirit world, especially the ancestor cult.

In the final chapter, the manifestations and concepts are assessed by giving some attention to Biblical concepts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit and 'power'. The parallels in the African churches are then briefly compared and considered. The author's preliminary conclusions point to a relevant dynamic, and contextual African pneumatology which is possibly closer to the Biblical pattern than the imported Western pneumatology, and more appropriate to Africa's existential needs. As a result, the reader will be enriched in the understanding of Africa and her daughters and sons.

'In this study, we have a valuable contribution to pneumatology in an African perspective. Anderson not only gives full recognition to the pneumatological significance of these churches, but also provides us with a penetrating description and analysis of the characteristics and manifestations of a spirit-type pneumatology'

Reviewed by Prof I. Daneel (Department of Missiology, UNISA)

Itumeleng J. Mosala, Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989) 218 pages.

Mosala's book is a remarkably significant study for African theological reality and praxis. It is provocative and definitely one of the challenging studies on Biblical hermeneutics in third world theology. Particularly, it is a challenging critique against South African black theologians for drawing their Biblical hermeneutical assumptions from white theological and intellectual frameworks.

According to the author, Black theology has hardly become an autonomous weapon of oppressed blacks in their struggle for liberation. He therefore contends that, "unless black theologians break ideologically and theoretically with bourgeois biblical hermeneutical assumptions, black theology cannot become an effective weapon of struggle for its oppressed people" (p.5).

Mosala then sets himself the task of developing what he calls "a distinctive biblical hermeneutic of liberation for black theology" (p.3). The effective analytical tool he employs to achieve this is historical materialism associated with Karl Marx - a methodology which, ironically, is also rooted in Westernism. Such a historical-materialist reading, according to Mosala, is necessary for uncovering the class, racial, cultural and gender struggles behind the Biblical texts. Included in his hypothetical assumptions is the assertion that, the texts of the Bible are

sites of the struggle; and, for the Bible to liberate the oppressed, the oppressed must first liberate the Bible (pp. 172, 193). He therefore commends to his colleagues, the historical-materialist reading by contending that, black theologians must read their own history as a struggle and interpret the biblical texts in the light of this historical struggle. Mosala distinguishes three different modes of production; the communal, tributary, and capitalist. These provide the context of the black struggle and must inform black theological hermeneutics. Texts from Micah (chs. 4 and 5) and Luke (chs. 6 and 7) are used to illuminate and support the author's hypothetical assumptions and to point the way to a new biblical hermeneutics of liberation.

Having supported his hypothesis with the materialist reading of the Biblical texts, Mosala becomes convinced that the Bible is a ruling-class document and represents the ideological and political interests of the ruling class (cf. p. 121). With such a judgement made, it is not surprising to see Mosala becoming ideologically suspicious of such theological statements as: "The Bible is the 'Word of God'"; because according to him, by definition, the "Word of God" cannot be criticized let alone challenged in the light of the black experience (p.17). Therefore, before the Bible can be used hermeneutically in the struggle for liberation, Mosala contends, it must first be de-ideologized (p.121). To do this, Mosala urged not to appropriate the biblical texts unproblematically; but rather to "struggle with the dominant forces within the texts to get beyond them to the suppressed oppositional forces" (p. 187 emphasis added).

Differently put, Black Theology must transcend the ideological limits that the biblical text imposes on its story by using the history, culture and the struggle of the black people as a hermeneutical tool. For Mosala then, black history, black culture and the black struggle become a sources for deciphering the biblical texts (pp. 164-5). However, to say that the black struggle against apartheid must inform black hermeneutics of liberation is not just enough. According to Mosala, the struggle against the vicious circle of apartheid is appropriated differently by different theologians; and, it is the form a black theologian appropriates this struggle that ascertains the manner that theologian uses the Bible. In other words, it is the ideological location of the theologian that influences his/her biblical hermeneutics.

Therefore, in an "epilogue" (pp. 190-193), Mosala does not just speak of a "plurality of biblical hermeneutics", but also, a "plurality of black theologies of liberation" and he identifies three nuances. First, there is a bourgeois-orientated Black theology which seeks to restore the former black ruling class positions. Such a theology, which takes its roots from Ethiopianism, shares ideological and political interests of the "royalist counterparts in the Bible" (p. 191).

Secondly, there is a Black theology which emerged out of the perspective of middle-class, mission-trained blacks. Mosala traces the historical roots of this theology to the prophetic tradition in black society, and sees the Black Consciousness movement and philosophy which gave rise to Black theology in the early 1970s as a continuation of this tradition.

But Mosala condemns these two theological trends in favor of a third one which, according to him, draws insights from the perspective of the black working class; and takes its historical roots from the struggles of the lowest and poorest

members of the black community (pp. 191f). Thus for Mosala, "the social, cultural, political, and economic world of the black working class and peasantry constitutes the only valid hermeneutical starting point for a black theology of liberation" (p.21).

Black Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa is an outstanding contribution to the discussion on biblical hermeneutics anywhere; and so far, the best in Africa. Doubtlessly, it has raised the African biblical hermeneutical discussion to a high level of scholarly sophistication. With this book Mosala has taken South African black, and indeed all liberation orientated theologians who claim to be spokespersons for their own communities to task. They are seriously challenged not to uncritically accept for example, such biblically held truth as "God sides with the oppressed", because, within Israelite society itself, there were oppressor classes as well as oppressed classes. There is no doubt that with such an analysis, Mosala has made a vital contribution by extending the hermeneutical field of vision as well as bringing home the significant truth that the South African Black theologian cannot identify with the struggle for liberation until his or her intellectual beliefs in the cross of Jesus Christ takes on an existential dimension.

I would like to conclude on a critical note. Already, I have alluded to the fact that although, Mosala accuses black theologians of using Western intellectual framework in theological hermeneutics, he himself is not free from that bondage when he chose to employ a methodology associated with orthodox Marxism. I agree more than anyone else that, in contemporary Africa, theological hermeneutics cannot avoid Marxist analysis of society just as a business today cannot avoid using modern computers. However, I am also aware, like most African theologians, of the limitations of orthodox Marxist analysis when it comes to the question of culture which plays no small role in Mosala's theology. Because of its narrowness, rigidity and even dogmatism, orthodox marxism only sees the oppressive and negative elements in culture, and does not appreciate the importance of popular cultural resistance against domination and oppression.

Perhaps, it is here that certain African theorists can be a source of inspiration and inform our theological-hermeneutical praxis. For instance, by insisting that cultural resistance has always been an integral part of African people's struggle for liberation, Amilcar Cabral may help in developing a corrective to the Marxist tools of analysis to make them more pertinent to the African situation. By maintaining that, liberation is "necessarily an act of culture," Cabral has left much to posterity and his praxis would continue to serve as an invaluable source. Like Frantz Fanon, Cabral has taught us that during the struggle of God's people for full humanity, "Culture is not put into cold storage."

Reviewed by Emmanuel Martey.

Book Announcements.

Black Methodists and white supremacy in South Africa, by Daryl Balia.

In this book Balia delves into the history of the early African Christians in South Africa and comes up with moving accounts of inspired evangelism. He writes