

MIGUEL A. DE LA TORRE, *Reading the Bible from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002). Pp. xii + 196. Paper \$20.

In this volume De La Torre presents an introduction to the interpretation of the Bible from the perspective of what he terms “the margins” and from the method of what might be characterized as ideological criticism. D.L.T. deals with a set of questions that entered the field of biblical studies with the methodological and theoretical transformation of the 1970s, emphasizing and problematizing the presence and representation of asymmetrical relationships of power (social class; gender; ethnicity and race; sexual orientation) not only in texts and interpretations but also in the discipline and among interpreters. In terms of content and audience, the volume proves comprehensive and basic, with a concentration on the U.S. context. In terms of location and perspective, the volume lies squarely within the framework of liberation hermeneutics.

As the various chapters of the book readily show, D.L.T. is indeed wide-ranging and thorough in his overview of interpretive developments. In chap. 1, he sets the foundations for the volume as a whole by arguing, first, for diversity in interpretation on sociocultural and sociopolitical grounds and by way of a center/margins duality, and, second, for the priority of the margins in the reading of the Bible against the usual reading from the center. In chap. 2, D.L.T. outlines the defining élan and characteristics of the reading from the center—modernizing; self-centering and self-justifying; spiritualizing. In the next two chapters he addresses the uneven relationships of power operative in both center and margins and their respective readings: race and class in chap. 3; gender and sexual orientation in chap. 4. The following two chapters shift the focus to the person and work of Jesus. In chap. 5, D.L.T. contrasts the image of Jesus at work in the center and its reading with the variety of images emerging from the margins and its readings, and in chap. 6, he offers a similar contrast in terms of salvation. He brings the volume to an end in chap. 7 by outlining how the center can read the Bible from the margins, thus providing a summary of the findings by way of conclusion. Throughout, the level of argumentation proves highly descriptive and decidedly elementary.

As D.L.T.’s line of argumentation repeatedly affirms, he opts for an uncompromising liberation stance in his evaluation of readings within the center/margins dichotomy. This stance is developed in two moves. First, given the diversity of interpretation clearly evident in such a dual framework, marginal readings are preferable on account of the hermeneutical privilege of the oppressed. Why? Because this is a principle laid down by the biblical texts themselves, a principle that marginal readings heed and follow in various ways. To wit: It is the oppressed, given their sociocultural and sociopolitical position, who are able to recognize in the Bible a God who sides with the oppressed. Second, given the presence of problematic texts within the Bible itself, marginal readings in accord with the fundamental message of Jesus are preferable. Why? Because it is Jesus who provides the ultimate criterion in and for any reading of the Bible. In effect, not only has God chosen the sociocultural and sociopolitical margins for revelation in and through Jesus, but also Jesus constitutes the highest revelation of God, and that revelation is with and for the oppressed. Consequently, it is in the margins that proper reading of the Bible takes place, and thus it is from the margins that the center must learn to read the Bible.

This is not a volume that seeks to carve a new path in interpretation from the perspective of ideological criticism or to enter into critical dialogue with previous ideological criticism in biblical interpretation or ideological studies in general. That is simply not D.L.T.'s objective. Rather, he seeks wide compilation as well as broad dissemination of biblical readings from the margins. Similarly, this is not a volume marked by critical nuance and reflection in its reading of biblical texts or its approach to biblical interpretation: the former are often presented as straightforward and unproblematic; the latter conveys no critique of marginal readings and no sense of how such readings, admittedly varied as they are, relate to one another. Again, that is simply not the author's aim. Rather, he speaks in broad strokes and bold tones. Within such parameters, the volume does constitute a very good resource. As a primer to ideological criticism from the perspective of liberation hermeneutics, broadly understood, the volume proves a very welcome addition to the literature.

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JOHN FOTOPOULOS, *Food Offered to Idols in Roman Corinth: A Social-Rhetorical Reconsideration of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1* (WUNT 2/151; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). Pp. xiv + 298. Paper €54.

This volume is a revised and enlarged version of John Fotopoulos's doctoral dissertation undertaken at Loyola University, Chicago. F.'s book is a contribution to the understanding of the issue of eating meat offered to idols in the context of Roman culture and society and its influence in Corinth. F.'s remarkably straightforward style with complex and clear methodologies makes the book accessible as both a reference work and an occasion for further research.

Fotopoulos begins his dissertation with a helpful overview of research on the issue of food offered to idols. He discusses how each of the major cults in Corinth (chaps. 2–5)—for example, the cult of Asklepios, the cult of Demeter and Kore, the cults of Isis and Serapis—made their mark on the life and practices of the people in Corinth, including the church members. According to F., not all these cults and their rituals affected the church's practices, especially the problems encountered by many church members with idolatry. Although F. argues that there is not enough evidence for temple dining facilities in and around Corinth, he adds that "a number of the temples outside of the forum mentioned by Pausanias in his tour of the city and the surrounding area have not yet been found since only a small percentage of Corinth's estimated 640 hectares has been excavated" (p. 129). In addition, of the temples found and studied, many were not built before the composition of 1 Corinthians in 56.

On the other hand, F. also argues that there are similarities in terminology and content between the cults of Isis and Sarapis and that reflected in 1 Corinthians. "Sarapis and Isis were both referred to as gods and lords in connection with invitations to their ritual meals." F. observes that "these points bear remarkable similarity to the context of Corinthian Christian idol food consumption." It is also known that the gods to whom food



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