author to parallel Jesus’ own strategies of challenging his own disciples to conversion. At least, it is presented as a "pilgrimage model" drawn from Jesus' encounter with the disciples at Emmaus (chap. 9).

A book well worth reading more than once, although it hardly represents the final statement of Fr. Arbuckle who has since written another book on Out of Chaos: Refounding Religious Congregations.

Renato A. Ocampo, S.J.


Phillip Berryman (PB) is known as one of the most knowledgeable of U.S. commentators on the Latin American scene, and one who has special expertise in Latin American liberation theology (LT). Two books on Central America and a good number of articles in America, Commonweal, Theological Studies, The National Catholic Reporter, and other journals have preceded this book-length survey of liberation theology as a "revolutionary movement."

"What I have attempted here," PB says (p. 7) "is to make this movement intelligible to a general public, drawing on twenty years of my own experience. While serving as a Catholic priest in a barrio in Panama City in the 1960s, I went to South America to seek out Latin American theologians. Although I resigned from the priesthood in 1973, my work, especially as American Friends Service Committee representative in Central America from 1976 to 1980, has kept me close to the Latin American church. What I have learned there, the ideas of the theologians as well as commitment like Archbishop Romero's, has been a kind of compass for my own life, however errantly I may follow it." These lines from the book's introduction seem to me useful, to know what kind of work a reader of Liberation Theology should expect. "In this book I have tried to root liberation theology in events, and to show its practical impact at the village and barrio level. Nevertheless, my aim is not to tell the story of the churches in Latin America — that can already be found in many fine recent works — but to explain as clearly as possible the ideas of liberation theologians" (p. 8).

PB posits an initial description of liberation theology in these terms:

Liberation theology is (1) an interpretation of Christian faith out of the suffering, struggle, and hope of the poor; (2) a theological critique of society and its ideological underpinnings; (3) a critique of the practice of the church and of Christians.

The book fleshes out this description as it comes alive in the experience, the practice and theological reflection of Latin American Christians and
Christian communities.

PB traces how the movement of LT begins: Vatican II, Camilo Torres, Medellin, the first efforts of theologians (Gustavo Gutierrez, especially), Christians for National Socialism, — these are some landmarks. “Going to the poor” tells us what is involved in the new theological and pastoral approach to the poor, efforts of dialogue and conscientization, and the emergence of “the option for the poor” as shorthand for the task of solidarity with the poor as translating God’s will for the Latin American Church.

PB next lines up LT’s interpretation of major Scriptural motifs, and tells us how in the comunidades de base the Bible reveals to the new communities their own reality as ecclesial. The basic ecclesial communities (CEBs) thus emerge as “a new model of the Church,” and “popular religion,” long downgraded by liberal western approaches, is re-evaluated and more deeply understood within the context of popular culture as a whole — a culture not comprehended by outsiders. The social and political impact of the CEBs is considered, and their relationship with the wider Church.

PB then takes up what is fundamentally characteristic of the practitioners of LT: linking-up with grass-roots realities and popular movements; their intended audiences; the inter-relationships in their work between experience and theory, between social theory and theology, between Church, history and the Kingdom of God.

After describing the changing contexts in which LT has been “done” from the early 1970s to the present, and the various reactions and events which have influenced its course, PB discusses themes connected with the political impact of LT, the relationships between Marxism and marxist thought and analysis with LT, and the central theological concerns of Latin American LT: the God of life and contemporary idolatries, Jesus Christ in his human life and death, Church and Kingdom, and the Eucharist within the liberation process.

Before rounding off the overall survey of LT, we are given a brief introduction to other lines of LT: Third World, Black, Hispanic and Feminist theologies, and then PB takes up the major lines of criticism against LT as developed by Michael Novak and by Cardinal Ratzinger and the Congregation on Doctrine.

The book ends with a “forward look” on the future of LT. PB sees the movement of history, in Latin America and elsewhere, as on the side of LT. “Much of what is central to LT is already enshrined in official Catholic teaching.” (One might note how true this is, not only of the second of the two Vatican instructions on liberation, but also of Pope John Paul II’s major encyclical on development, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis.) The thrust of LT is visible, e.g., in the US Bishops’ social pastorals: they are, in a way, the North American perspective on LT; between their concerns and those of LT there is surely a clear affinity.
PB’s book is a really well-informed, remarkably comprehensive (one can think of almost nothing relevant which has not been touched on) and strongly sympathetic survey of Latin American LT as a movement — from its beginnings to the present. Without in any way concealing its decisively “pro-LT” stance, it attempts a “rather objective” presentation — in the sense of trying to give opposing positions fairly. Some features and theses of LT are evaluated and criticized, if from a more friendly stance. Novak and the Ratzinger texts are rebutted, as might be expected, from a pro-LT viewpoint.

Instead of footnotes, there is an excellent section giving references for each chapter, — really a select bibliography, and also a detailed and helpful index.

The present reviewer has not read all the many “pro-LT” introductions in English now in print, but of PB’s book one could say, as the TV ad says of a certain beer, that this is “probably the best one” in the market today.

C. G. Arevalo, S.J.


The stated goal of G. Florez in this work is “to apply Fr. Lombardi’s vision of the Church to the situation of the Church in Asia.” In Part I a synthesis of the reality of Asia is presented under the heading “The Signs of the Times in Asia.” Parts II, III, and IV deal with the actual mission of the church in the context of Asia; these three parts correspond to the three functions of Jesus as priest, prophet, and king-servant; in this framework they center around liturgy, evangelization, and service to man. One short chapter, entitled “Through ‘Kenosis’ to ‘Apotheosis’,” serves as the conclusion to the book.

Florez begins each chapter with a scriptural quote and theological reflection. He then attempts an integration of theology and the concrete realities of Asia. He concludes with pastoral applications for specific Asian situations. It should also be noted that a “Foreword” is presented by the respected Pietro Rossano, a man of many achievements in missiology and interreligious dialogue.

Looking at the work in greater detail, one sees that the first two chapters present “Asia” and “Christianity in Asia”; these make for an interesting contextualization. Here Florez depends heavily on two authors — R. Buultjens and R. G. Wilson — whose works date from the early 1970s; their data is updated through recent periodicals and magazines. Generally, the overview/context is well presented.

The bulk of the book (chaps. 3-11) is structured around the three-fold