DICTIONARY OF THIRD WORLD THEOLOGIES
Edited by Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah
Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books
Reviewed by James H. Kroeger

This volume is a compendium of over 150 terms and phrases related to various dimensions of Third World theologies; more than 100 authors contributed to the signed articles. Its two editors are Asians living in Western countries: Fabella from the Philippines belongs to the Maryknoll Sisters in New York; Sugirtharajah from Sri Lanka lectures in biblical hermeneutics at the University of Birmingham, England.

The editors provide an extended explanation of their focus and use of “Third World” (Introduction: xxi-xxiii). They note that “we decided to adopt Third World because it still encapsulates a particular way of existence and experience. We find it a suitable semantic metaphor to convey a relationship, especially the unequal relationship that exists between strong and weak. It is about a people who have been left out and do not have the power to shape their future” (xxii). Entries reflect this perspective, “viewing everything through the prism of a Third World lens” (xxi).

Each of the topics is handled in a short entry varying from one-third page to four pages. Many—but not all—entries include a short bibliography of up to five items. Topics reflect both the diversity and commonalities of Third World theologies. For example, under “Christologies” one finds African, African American, American Indian, Asian, Asian American, Caribbean, Hispanic, and Latin American entries (41-56); “Ecclesiologies” and “Liberation Theologies” each include African, Asian, and Latin American sections (72-78; 127-133). Several uniquely local topics are included: Burakumin Liberation Theology (33), Chipko Movement (40), Dalit Theology (64-65), Han/Han-puri (96-97), Mestizaje Consciousness (140-141), Minjung Theology (143-144), Mujerista Theology (150), and Pachamama (158).
For all the rich diversity of this expensive volume ($50.00), the selection of entries seems strangely selective. Surveying the Asian context, one finds entries on Indonesia, Myanmar, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam, yet no entry on India or the Philippines (where over 60% of Asian Christians live and have developed unique theological insights). No entries appear on Persecution/Suffering, Evangelism/Evangelization, Refugees/Migration, and Youth—all key issues in the contemporary Third World. Other essays miss significant elements: People's Movements (166-167) does not mention the 1986 People Power in the Philippines; Martyrdom (136-137) misses the Chinese martyrs and those of the Sudan and Algeria. Also, the perspective and experience of the Pacific region and the insights of evangelical theologians are missing; almost exclusively, the volume reflects "liberationist" Third World theologies.

Two helpful lists comprise the final sections of the book: "List of Contributors" (241-248) and "Selected English-Language Journals on Issues in Third World Theologies" (249-261); minor inaccuracies in names and addresses have crept into these listings. The recommended bibliography for the individual entries (noted above) relies predominantly on materials published in the West; more representative references are readily available.

Given the challenges involved in gathering materials for a book of this nature, the editors and publisher are to be commended. Probably a more extensive dictionary-encyclopedia of two or three volumes is ultimately needed, one in which these—and additional—pivotal topics of Third World theologies are further explored, one in which a larger group of advisors with diverse expertise is assembled. While readers certainly welcome this book as an important introductory volume, they also wait for a more comprehensive resource.