

## THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

### The Bible and liberation: friend or foe? Some issues in feminist and liberation theologies

#### *Introduction*

SINCE THE EARLY THIRD CENTURY the Christian Church has regarded the collection of ancient texts that we refer to as the bible as Holy Scripture, and Christian theology has sprung from or related to this canon. The biblical texts have, however, always proved themselves open to a wide variety of interpretations as to their nature and meaning. In this article we consider examples of how some significant feminist and liberation theologians interpret the bible, giving attention to their method and to where they locate authority for their interpretation. Despite the fact that biblical interpretation by feminists and liberationists is frequently not taken seriously by Western male theologians, I hope to demonstrate that the questions raised by these contextual theologies are profoundly significant, both in terms of the pursuit of theological truth, and in terms of contemporary Christian discipleship.<sup>1</sup>

Feminist and liberation theologies share some common characteristics, but differences are apparent in the area of biblical interpretation. From even a cursory reading of feminist theology or liturgy it is apparent that the bible presents feminists with a 'problem' of interpretation. How are Christian feminists, both committed to the liberation of women and to the bible as Holy Scripture, to interpret texts which seem to indicate that females are subordinate to males, second in creation and first in sin?<sup>2</sup> In comparison, an initial reading of the work of liberation theologians from Latin America tends to indicate that they favour certain biblical books over others, but that generally biblical interpretation is not a 'problem' for them and the position they advocate. We turn our attention first to liberation theology.

#### *Some liberation theologians and their use of the bible*

For the purposes of this article, the term 'liberation theology' refers to theology being done in Latin America understood as 'the reflection in faith of the church that has taken to heart the "clear and prophetic option expressing preference for, and solidarity with, the poor"' (Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, 1987, p 44). Liberation theology emerges from the experience of exploitation and poverty which is the lot of the vast majority of Latin Americans. Whilst the primary source for this theology is the Christian base communities (*comunidades eclesias de base*), in the West we receive this theology as mediated through the written work of clergy and professional theologians—people who have taken the 'option for the poor' advocated by the Latin American bishops at Medellin, Colombia in 1968. Liberation

theology is contextual and it cannot easily be reduced to one single system; it does, however show some recurring characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

Liberation theology is oriented to the here and now, to the experience of God in the present moment in history. The poor and the oppressed experience God's love for them as they struggle for justice and liberation, and they challenge other Christians to live out a commitment to social and spiritual transformation. Theology, then, is a second-stage activity of reflection on the first-order activity of liberating practice (Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, 1987, p 23). Accordingly, biblical interpretation in liberation theology places emphasis on the meaning of scripture in the light of present experience and praxis. The distinctive method by which this tends to be done has come to be known to us as the 'hermeneutical circle'. Segundo gives the best known account of this in his book *The liberation of theology* where he writes, '... each new reality obliges us to interpret the word of God afresh, to change reality accordingly, and then go back and reinterpret the word of God again, and so on' (Segundo, 1975, p 8).

Where then is authority claimed in liberation theology? Gutiérrez finds authority for his theology in the bible, with apparent ease. He writes,

... an option for the poor is an option for the God of the kingdom whom Jesus proclaims to us . . . The entire bible, beginning with the story of Cain and Abel, mirrors God's predilection for the weak and abused of human history. (Gutiérrez, 1988, p xxvii)

Gutiérrez claims, then, the bible as a source book for liberation and evidence of God's preference for the poor. But can it be this simple? It is interesting to note that in his magisterial and closely referenced work, *A theology of liberation*, Gutiérrez does not refer to Romans 13, a potential 'problem text' for this point of view. It would seem only too easy to refute an argument that claims a consistent stance in scripture. In the case of liberation theology, whilst it might be claimed that the prophets consistently denounce the oppression of the poor, much of the Wisdom literature can equally be understood as claiming divine sanction for the *status quo*.

The Boffs seem to be more realistic in their assessment of the bible. Although they interpret the scriptures from the point of view of the oppressed they concede that '... this is not the only possible and legitimate reading of the bible'. They describe liberation theology as selecting those themes most enlightening for the poor, such as liberation from the house of bondage, the kingdom given to the poor, the church as total sharing. They write: '... they may not be the most *important* themes in the bible (in themselves), but they are the most *relevant* (to the poor in their situation of oppression)' (Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, 1987, pp 32-33). They raise, then, the issue of selectivity in the use of the bible and justify this on grounds of relevance.

Relevance may be considered the central issue, because liberation theology tends to be less concerned with attempting to establish what the

biblical text originally meant than with discerning what it means for the poor in their situation today. Put another way, the poor seek to interpret their lives in the light of the scriptures and seek texts that have direct relevance to their lives. The Boffs list the books 'most appreciated by liberation theology' as Exodus, the prophets, the gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and Revelation (Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, 1987, p 35).

Segundo gives us a more detailed critical examination of the issue of the selection of biblical texts. He writes that liberation theology is well known for its preference for the Old Testament and for the exodus event in particular. He argues that this is because the liberator God who is closely connected with the historical and political liberation of the Israelites is most clearly revealed in this event. In comparison, the New Testament does not focus on liberation from political oppression (Segundo, 1975, p 111). He gives the two common theological justifications for selectivity with texts as, firstly, that the exodus event is the key to the interpretation of scripture as a whole and, secondly, that the pedagogical principle of the bible as a whole demands partiality. Segundo dismisses the first explanation as naive and easily refuted but considers the second to be more adequate. He explains that we can only understand and appreciate the word of God if we read it as divine revelation, as perceived by the Israelite community, in response to their questions asked from their specific situation and problems (Segundo, 1975, p 113). It is clear that Segundo takes a liberal approach to the bible when he writes (in relation to the relation between Jesus and the Old Testament), 'God's revelation never comes to us in pure form . . . it is always fleshed out in historical ideologies' (Segundo, 1975, p 116).<sup>5</sup>

Segundo suggests two ways of relating this succession of biblical ideologies to the contemporary historical situation.<sup>6</sup> Either we seek out the biblical situation most like that of the present day and accept the ideology that scripture presents as the correct response of faith, or we invent an ideology that we regard as the one which ' . . . would be constructed by a gospel message contemporary with us. What would the Christ of the gospels say if he were confronting our problems today?' (Segundo, 1985, p 117). Segundo favours the second way as less unrealistic and more creative, but does not have any easy answer to biblical interpretation. He accepts the ideological element in both the bible and its interpretation. Ideology, he claims, is the means by which the faith is incarnated and kept alive.

Segundo is concerned to delve into issues of biblical criticism. It is more common however to find the bible being used in Latin American liberation theology as a direct source of inspiration and validation, as with Gutiérrez. For example, in a recent book, a collaboration between Jorge Pixley and Clodovis Boff, *The bible, the Church and the poor*, the more usual approach is shown. The bible is presented in both its Old and New Testaments as supporting an option for the poor in history: ' . . . the God of the Bible, through the prophets and finally through the incarnation of the Son of God, made a preferential option for the poor . . .' (Pixley and Boff, 1987, p 237).

From what has been observed then, the reader may find an interesting contradiction in the position of the bible in Latin American liberation theology. Those who write in advocacy of liberation theology use biblical quotations as proof-texts for their argument, so the bible represents a *prima-facie* source of authority for them. Yet we also learn that biblical interpretation in itself is not a first-order task in the liberation struggle. For example, Mesters writes, '... the principal object of reading the bible is not to interpret the bible, but to interpret life with the help of the bible' (in Rowland, 1988, p 131). The primary text, in liberation theology, may be regarded as the life experience of the poor whilst the biblical text and theology itself become secondary. Can liberation theology have it both ways? Can it legitimately say that the bible comes second, and then use the bible as source of authority?

Such questions may trouble the Western reader, but the use of the bible does not seem to be problematic, on the whole, for the liberation theologians. Perhaps this reflects the religious context from which their theology emerges. In general we may say that most Latin Americans are still consciously or unconsciously embedded in Christian religious symbolism. The bible then may come second to life, but it is not ultimately optional, as it may be for us in the West. The liberation theologians seem not to have to justify their option for the bible.

Selectivity in the use of biblical texts to support their approach may or may not be justified by the writers, but whether taken as a whole, or just in favoured parts, the bible tends to represent for Christian theologians of liberation a source of authority for their convictions and a resource for the liberation struggle. This is not necessarily the case for feminist theologians, to whom our attention is now turned.

*Some feminist theologians and their use of the bible*

As is the case with liberation theology, feminist theologies come in various forms. We concentrate here on writers from North America and Europe, but the feminist approach to theology is in evidence throughout the world.<sup>7</sup> Feminist theology emerges from women's experience of oppression. Feminist theologians advocate the promotion, and the re-visioning, of the full humanity of women (recognizing that the ideal of 'full humanity' itself has tended to be defined from a male perspective). For feminist theology, women's experience represents the starting point for reflection and source of validation.

For Christian feminists, the bible is problematic. Throughout Christian history, the bible has been used to justify and enforce the subordination of women to men.<sup>8</sup> Yet it is also the case that the bible has inspired women and men to struggle for change, as Fiorenza writes:

At the same time the Bible has not served only to legitimate the oppression of white women, slaves, native Americans, Jews and the

poor. It has also provided authorization for women who rejected slavery, colonial exploitation, anti-semitism and misogyny as un-biblical and against God's will. (Fiorenza, in Russell, 1985, p 129)

For women then the bible has functioned as authority both for accepting oppression and for struggling for liberation. This double-edged function of the bible causes issues of biblical interpretation and authority to occupy a dominant position in the agenda of feminist theology.

In taking a brief survey of the range of interpretations and hermeneutical techniques to be found in feminist theology, I shall make use of Tolbert's useful discernment of the three distinctive ways of responding to the bible shown by feminist theologians, within the reformist movement. (There is of course, also a movement amongst Western feminists beyond that of reform, in which the bible and the Christian tradition have been abandoned altogether as essentially androcentric and beyond feminist redemption.)<sup>9</sup> The three categories that Tolbert discerns within the reformist stream are, 'the remnant standpoint', the argument for a 'prophetic-liberating tradition of biblical faith' and the 'reconstruction of biblical history'.<sup>10</sup> She notes that these categories are drawn more distinctly than they appear in reality and that individual theologians may cross and combine categories in their work.

Tolbert describes the 'remnant stand-point' as '. . . the conscious effort to retrieve texts overlooked or distorted by patriarchal hermeneutics', in order to '. . . uncover the counter-cultural impulses within the text' (Tolbert, 1983, p 122). This is a widely used technique readily apparent in much feminist theology and devotional writing, which attempts to rescue liberative and egalitarian texts from patriarchal translation, interpretation and being overlooked by lectionaries and preachers.<sup>11</sup> Diversity exists in this approach between those writers who seek to prove that the bible is not 'really' as sexist as it has been made to seem, and writers who, despite accepting that the text is thoroughly patriarchal, still find 'usable' traditions within it.<sup>12</sup>

Amongst the former group, a great deal of work has been carried out, often focussing on stories about women, the historical Jesus, feminine-gender language for God in the bible, and reinterpreting of texts used to justify female subordination. This has been a rich area of research, though, in the case of the historical Jesus, it is vulnerable to changing opinions in historical scholarship. It is an approach often favoured by those who take a 'high' view of biblical inspiration<sup>13</sup> and functions somewhat as feminist 'apologetics' for the Bible.<sup>14</sup> This approach often depicts Jesus as the friend of women who treats them as equals and entrusts women with the good news of the resurrection,<sup>15</sup> and may emphasize the discontinuity between Jesus and his prevailing culture: 'But in matters of attitude toward women Jesus was very different from his peers. He took an egalitarian, feminist position on women' (Swidler, 1979, p 352).

But this last aspect of the argument seems to be weak. Is it likely that Jesus was radically discontinuous with the culture into which he was born? Whilst

the behaviour of Jesus towards women was progressive it is not clearly feminist, as we understand the term.<sup>16</sup> Further, as the argument that Jesus was a feminist hinges on maligning his fellow Hebrews as sinfully sexist, feminists concerned to oppose anti-semitism are wary of taking this path. Despite some weaknesses and problems, the retrieving of biblical texts for and about women has been a significant feminist theological development that affirms the experience of women as made in the image of God.

The second approach to the bible, as discerned by Tolbert, is that of arguing for a 'prophetic-liberating tradition of biblical faith'. As with liberation theologians, some feminists argue that this tradition, present from the exodus texts, through the prophets into the gospels, is the central tradition, by which other biblical books are to be judged (Tolbert, 1983, p122). Rosemary Radford Ruether is a theologian whose work illustrates this type of approach:

Its [biblical religion's] foundational myth in the exodus is that of a slave people liberated from the most powerful ruler on earth . . . Here God is not the divine sanctifier of rulers, but one who takes the side of those who have been oppressed and forced into servitude and liberates them . . . This perspective is continued on prophetic renewal movements reflected in Hebrew scripture, as well as in the teachings of Jesus. (Ruether, 1985, p 41)

This is a version of the familiar canon-within-the-canon approach to biblical hermeneutics, whereby what is considered central judges the rest and texts which are not consistent with the central tradition (problem texts) can be marginalized. Advantages of this approach seem to be that, firstly (as Tolbert indicates) reformist feminists can claim the essence of Christianity for women and for men as the prophetic call for liberation from all kinds of oppression, and secondly that Jesus is not portrayed as being radically discontinuous with the Old Testament biblical tradition. It does, however, seem important to ask, what are the criteria by which this prophetic-liberation tradition is judged as central and authoritative? As with liberation theology, it cannot be claimed that this is the only possible option. It seems most honest to admit that when a feminist decides that this is the key biblical tradition, she does so because of extra-biblical faith criteria, rather than because such an approach is self-evident.

Ruether advocates the prophetic-liberation tradition approach, but rejects a simplistic claim that this is the 'true biblical faith'. She judges the biblical prophetic tradition as in fact controlled by men and as neglectful of the liberation of women from oppression. Whereas men can claim biblical precedent and authority for liberation struggles, women find that in the bible their own liberation is ignored. Radford Ruether gives the example of the exodus tradition, in which women initially play an active part, as rebels against Pharaoh's command (Exod 2), but when the law is given at Sinai the

'people' are told to stay away from women for three days (Exod 19,14-15). She concludes that in the written account of the tradition, women are not included in the word 'people' (have become 'invisible') and further, come to represent a source of pollution (Ruether, 1985, p 44). She traces in both biblical accounts and in renewal movements in subsequent Christian history—including contemporary third world liberation movements—the story of '... promise of liberation and the betrayal of women' (Ruether, 1985, pp 41-56). Women, she concludes, cannot trust their liberation to men, but must shape their own liberation movements and, we could add, the records of them. The claim that the prophetic-liberation biblical tradition is central and authoritative needs then, to be qualified and critiqued if it is to be used by feminist theology, unless the sexism in this tradition itself is to be ignored.

The third approach as outlined by Tolbert, is the

... reconstruction of biblical history in an attempt to show that the actual situations of the Israelite and Christian religions allowed a greater role for women than the codified writings suggest. (Tolbert, 1983, p 123)

This approach focusses on history rather than text and claims that the biblical writings are themselves patriarchal versions of what really happened. Fiorenza may be seen as one of the most significant proponents of this theory.<sup>17</sup> She would claim that the early movement around Jesus was counter-cultural and egalitarian, (from evidence gleaned from the gospels, some of the letters, and in the later 'heretical' movements outlawed by the developing patriarchal church), but that this original gospel has been presented to us in a patriarchal version, as well as being interpreted and translated via patriarchy. This approach has been influential in feminist analysis despite relativizing the authority of our written scripture. By claiming to dig back to 'what originally happened', problems for women such as the choosing of twelve male apostles can be accounted for as later patriarchal mis-accounts of the egalitarian Jesus-movement.<sup>18</sup>

An advantage of this approach is that it can deal frankly with the sexism of the biblical texts without having to twist non-sexist meanings from them. This is not a system of feminist apologetics. Some biblical texts are rejected as not consistent with the Christian gospel as understood and believed by feminists. Selectivity of texts is accepted and justified on these grounds, as Fiorenza writes:

... *the* litmus test for invoking scripture as the Word of God must be whether or not biblical texts and traditions seek to end relations of domination and exploitation ... if we claim that oppressive patriarchal texts are the Word of God then we proclaim God as a God of oppression and de-humanization. (Fiorenza, 1984, p xiii)

This approach then, takes very seriously the patriarchal bias of the biblical text, whilst still finding something behind that, in biblical history and event, that can inspire and validate the feminist, and every other liberation struggle.

There are, however important questions to be asked. This third approach may be accused of a kind of historical fundamentalism. Does earlier (nearer to the historical Jesus movement) necessarily mean more authentic and authoritative? Also, it would seem precarious to base a whole approach on historical claims that can never be proved, and which require some considerable education to understand. This hermeneutic does however represent a potential means by which feminists can account for all of the bible.

It becomes clear then, that at the heart of feminist theology lies a claim that the experience (of subordination) of women is the starting place for theological reflection. As with liberation theology the primary text is life. However, for both these schools of theology this basis in experience or praxis and an advocacy stance lead to the accusation of lack of academic objectivity and credibility. Space does not permit detailed discussion of this, except to note the counter-argument.

Ruether notes the 'experimental base of all theological reflection', claiming that scripture and tradition are themselves codified collective human experience (Ruether, 1983, p 12). Previous codified experience (tradition) is either renewed or discarded through the test of present experience. Experience for her includes experience of the divine, oneself, the community and the world. Ruether claims that the novel issue in feminist theology lies not in its use of experience *per se*, but in its use of women's experience, for so long excluded from formal theological reflection and formulation. Feminist theology, she claims, '... makes the sociology of theological knowledge visible, no longer hidden behind mystifications of objectified divine and universal authority' (Ruether, 1983, p 13).

Tolbert also comments on this issue and claims that all interpretations are subjective in that they are influenced by the concerns and interests of the interpreter. She suggests that '... the fiction of an objective reading of a text asserts itself when the biases guiding the interpreter match closely the biases undergirding the evaluating group' (Tolbert, 1983, p 118). Tolbert's comment may help to illumine the difficulty of meaningful dialogue between feminist or liberation theology and Western academic theology. The theology of the former may appear to be subjective because it mis-matches with the unacknowledged bias that is in much Western theology.

#### *Divergence between feminist and liberation theologians*

Feminists and liberationists may agree that experience of oppression ('reality') is the valid first text of theology, but have other areas of disagreement. They tend to agree on the evils of poverty, but disagree on the significance of sexism. Fiorenza, amongst others, argues that the contem-



porary liberation theologians in Latin America often dismiss feminist theological work as middle class and peripheral to the struggle of oppressed people (Fiorenza, 1984, p 43). She claims that this ignores the fact that women and children dependent on women represent the majority of the world's poor. We have seen previously how Ruether claims that throughout history women have been betrayed by liberation movements that have failed to address injustices between women and men. We have also seen the feminist claim that the bible cannot be used as authority in liberation unless the oppressive aspects of the scriptures for women are acknowledged.

It is in this area that we note Fiorenza's criticism of Segundo's biblical method. Fiorenza examines the hermeneutical circle, as he explains it, and finds it inadequate. Segundo describes the circle as beginning with experience of social reality that leads to suspicion about our real situation. At the second level we apply our ideological suspicion to theology, at the third level we experience theological reality in a different way, which leads us to the suspicion that '... the prevailing interpretation of the bible has not taken important pieces of data into account' (Segundo, 1975, p 9). Fourthly, we have our new way of interpreting the scriptures at our disposal. Fiorenza sees Segundo as sharing with 'neo-orthodoxy' the presupposition that scriptural traditions are meaningful, although he does not, in contrast, claim that meaning and liberation are found in the content of scripture, but rather in the process of learning to learn.

Her point of disagreement with Segundo is that this model does not take into account that

... both the content of Scripture and the second-level learning process can be distorted . . . . Segundo's model does not allow for a critical theological evaluation of biblical ideologies as 'false consciousness'. (Fiorenza, 1984, p 52)

Fiorenza argues for the necessity of critically evaluating both the biblical text and the process of interpretation within scripture and tradition. Failure to do this, she claims, is one reason why '... liberation theologians' use of the bible often approximates that of scholars who seek texts as proof of their position' (Fiorenza, 1984, p 52). She claims that liberation hermeneutics must take account of the fact that the process of interpretation of the scriptures is not necessarily liberative.

It is clear that Fiorenza is altogether more critical than Segundo of the nature and function of the biblical texts. She does not see biblical texts, even those of the liberation tradition, as necessarily meaningful. She is suspicious of both the 'prevailing theological interpretation' and of the 'data' that has yet to be taken into account. Fiorenza represents to us a theologian who treads the difficult path of attempting to take fully into account the oppressive nature of much biblical material and interpretation, whilst still seeking to make intellectually honest use of the bible as scripture.

*In conclusion*

In the course of this article, some different approaches to the bible and differing hermeneutical techniques have been examined, from the work of Latin American liberation, and Western feminist, theologians. In both these theologies life experience and theological reflection are brought together. The hermeneutics used are those of engagement, not detachment. Authority comes primarily and fundamentally from experience of life as it is lived. The bible helps us to interpret life. However, whereas liberation theologians tend to be able also to claim direct authority from the prophetic biblical tradition to support their cause, feminist theologians find the bible (including the prophetic tradition) to be a more problematic resource. Christian feminists who name sexism as a sin are confronted with layers of sexism in their own sacred text.

Feminist theologians have developed different ways of understanding and overcoming the sexism of the bible, as we have seen, in order to reconcile their own experience with the biblical tradition. Feminists claim that there is an egalitarian tradition in the biblical text, when correctly interpreted, or in the history behind the patriarchal text, but without the ease with which the liberation theologians claim a biblical imperative and authority for their cause.

That feminists have been led to ask more challenging questions of biblical interpretation and meaning than liberation theologians reflects the fact that male theologians of liberation have not taken fully into account the oppression of women by men (and women's greater poverty) throughout all social classes, and in their own liberation struggles. They have not tended to bring this female experience of reality to their biblical reflection. There are signs that the moral case of women is slowly gaining credibility with the male liberation writers,<sup>19</sup> but it takes much more than mentioning the case of women to incorporate our experience into a theology.

Are feminist and liberation theologies, and their ways of interpreting the bible, gaining credibility in the theological dialogue of the wider Church? They seem to be gaining practitioners, who find in them a way of understanding their experience of their faith and of the world, and who find their moral cases compelling. These theologies intend to be engaged with life, they seek to evoke conversion. The 'advocacy' stance of feminist and liberation theologies calls us into new ways of living as Christian disciples which realize the freedom promised in Christ as including freedom from sexism and poverty.

To enter into dialogue with feminist or liberation theologies is to risk conversion into new ways of understanding and of being as Christians. For women, particularly, this is a risky journey. To realise that our sacred text is, in whatever ways, sexist is often profoundly painful and disturbing. The most honest feminist theology does not avoid this disturbance, but confronts the paradox of the bible for women. Tolbert has written of this paradox of biblical faith: 'One must struggle against God as enemy assisted by God as

helper, or one must defeat the bible as patriarchal authority by using the bible as liberator', (Tolbert, 1983, p 120). This is the profound challenge that feminists bring to biblical interpretation, to their dialogue with liberation theology and to the rest of the Church.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For example, Harvey, whilst arguing for theological pluralism, writes of liberation theology, black and feminist theology '... where the use of the bible, for example, is often frankly pre-critical or fundamentalist' (Harvey, 1989, p 10).
- <sup>2</sup> For example: the creation account in Genesis 2, in which woman is created second, or Ephesians 5,21-23, in which male headship over women is compared to the relation of Christ and the Church, or 1 Timothy 2,11-15, in which women are told to keep silence in church and to be saved by childbearing because they are second in creation and first in sin.
- <sup>3</sup> See Rowland, 1988, p 126, for an interesting outline of some distinctive approaches.
- <sup>4</sup> The book of Proverbs tends to de-politicize poverty, by equating it with a lack of personal piety, or with laziness: see for example, Prov 10,4 and Prov 12,11 and 27.
- <sup>5</sup> As described by Dawes: '... liberal Christianity is surely best marked out by its recognition that the formulation of faith is always a human activity' (Dawes, 1990, p 117).
- <sup>6</sup> Segundo uses the word 'ideology' not in a pejorative sense but to refer to the '... system of goals that serves as the necessary backdrop for any human option or line of action' (Segundo, 1975, p 102).
- <sup>7</sup> See for example, the country of origin represented by the women involved in preparing, drafting and assessing *Through the eyes of a woman*, (Robins), for the YWCA, including Greece, Denmark, Germany, Indonesia, Nigeria, Ghana, Uruguay, USA, and many others.
- <sup>8</sup> See for example, the use of the bible in the recent publication *Leadership is male*, (Pawson, 1988), and the use of the bible in theology advocating the subordination of women, as catalogued by Radford Ruether in her 'Litany of disaffiliation from patriarchal theology' (Ruether, 1985, pp 137-139).
- <sup>9</sup> For example, Mary Daly has rejected Christian religion and symbolism in favour of Goddess religion, and Daphne Hampson advocates post-Christian religion.
- <sup>10</sup> Tolbert, 1983, pp 121-124; note that I have reversed the order of the first two categories.
- <sup>11</sup> For example, the 'Woman's creed' in *No longer strangers*, '... I believe in Jesus who discussed theology with a woman ... who received anointing from a woman ... who healed a woman ...' (Wahlberg, R. C., in Gjerding and Kinnamon, 1983, p 42-43).
- <sup>12</sup> See Letty Russell, chapter 3, 'Search for a useable past', (Russell, 1974, p 72-103).
- <sup>13</sup> For example, Mollenkott: '... I hold a very high view of biblical inspiration ...' (Mollenkott, 1984, p 110).
- <sup>14</sup> See for example the back cover of Swidler's book: 'Here at last is a comprehensive, one-volume commentary on what the bible *really* says about women' (Swidler, 1979).
- <sup>15</sup> For example, chapter 8, 'The women's Jesus', Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, 1986.
- <sup>16</sup> Hampson discusses this point and concludes: 'But that he [Jesus] had a feminist analysis of society is something for which there is no evidence' (Hampson, 1990, p 90).
- <sup>17</sup> See Fiorenza: *In memory of her*, 1983.
- <sup>18</sup> See Moltmann-Wendel's handling of this tradition (1986, p 82-83).
- <sup>19</sup> For example, Gutiérrez does not make specific mention of the oppression of women in his *A theology of liberation*, 1971; however, in the introduction to the revised edition he refers to women three times. When he notes '... the new presence of women ... among the poor of

Latin America' (Gutiérrez, 1988, p xx), we might note that, as women have always been the majority of the poor in Latin America, what is new in 1988 is his awareness of the female dimension in poverty.

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