

*Beyond Borders: Writings of Virgilio Elizondo and Friends*. Edited by Timothy Matovina. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000. Pages, xii + 308. Paper, \$25.00.

Thirty years ago, it was scarcely possible to find a major theological book on the subject of U.S. Latino theology. It was hardly mentioned, seldom noticed, and rarely taken seriously by the academy. Thirty years later, especially as Church demographics become more Hispanic, the subject cannot be ignored. Now it is virtually impossible to talk about U.S. Latino theology without mentioning the name Virgilio Elizondo. Elizondo is considered by many to be the founder of U.S. Latino theology in the same way that Gustavo Gutiérrez pioneered the first works on liberation theology in South America. He also was recently named by Time magazine as one of the great spiritual innovators for the twenty-first century. Timothy Matovina's edited collection of the writings of Elizondo and others in the field makes an invaluable contribution not only to the current development of U.S. Latino Theology but also the ongoing work and dialogue of Christianity, culture, catechesis, and evangelization in the third millennium.

The work explores the thought of a man who was the founder and president of the Mexican American Cultural Center, a contributing editor in the internationally recognized journal *Concilium*, a pastor of San Antonio's renowned San Fernando Cathedral, a professor at universities throughout the world, and an internationally recognized lecturer. Matovina does a superb job of weaving together the theology of a people that owes much of its foundation to the life and work of Virgilio Elizondo. As Justo González notes, Elizondo "has been a mentor to an entire generation, not only of pastors and theologians, but also of musicians, liturgists, and lay leaders" (199); many of these people's voices are presented in this book. Elizondo's writing is a unique *mestizaje* of pastoral practice with intellectual reflection, an option for the poor with an openness to the rich and influential, a rootedness in his native San Antonio with an international experience spanning the seven continents of the world.

The book brings together fourteen of Elizondo's significant theological essays and other articles by some of the most noted and celebrated scholars from around the world from a variety of intellectual disciplines. Contributors include Gustavo Gutiérrez, Thomas Groome, Orlando Espín, Jeanette Rodriguez, Roberto Goizueta, Justo González,

John Coleman, Alejandro García-Rivera, Rosino Gibellini, Gloria Inés Loya, Anita de Luna, R. Stephen Warner, Carlos Mendoza, and Jacques Audinet. This list is but a sample of Elizondo's influence, but it speaks eloquently of a man who has been a leader, mentor, and guide to generations of Hispanic theologians in the United States.

While offering critical reflection on the universality of Elizondo's thought, the book chronicles personal experiences of the authors with Elizondo and the impact he has had on their own thought and development. As Matovina notes in his introduction, "Virgilio Elizondo is one of those rare theologians who has insights so imaginative that they influence grassroots devotees and pastoral ministers; scholars and activists, artists and poets, church officials and civic leaders, believers and even non-believers, in short, people of widely diverse perspectives, ages, and backgrounds" (6). More than just a festschrift, *Beyond Borders* chronicles the unfolding of a theology of a people.

*Beyond Borders* is not an exhaustive treatment of Elizondo's theological contribution, but it gives a very extensive introduction to his thought through essays, insights, personal testimonies, and anecdotes. The book is structured around five central themes: religious education as pastoral ministry; popular religion; *mestizaje* and a Galilean christology; sin, forgiveness, and the experience of God; and beyond borders (the wider implications of *mestizo* experience for theology, religious studies, the life of the Church, and the future of humanity). Within each of these sections are various introductory essays about a particular theme in Elizondo's writings, followed by selected essays previously published by Elizondo starting in 1971. It does not include excerpts from his popular books. The end of the volume contains a comprehensive bibliography of Elizondo's writings.

The book is an invaluable resource for pastoral workers, Hispanic theologians, and other scholars interested in the themes of culture, christology, popular religion, and religious education. Elizondo is a master of speaking to the simple person and the educated scholar. Part of his brilliance is his ability to make profound theological concepts accessible to those who have minimal or no formal education, while at the same time speaking with great intellectual sophistication. Throughout his life, Elizondo has built bridges between people of different faiths, cultures, and ideological persuasions. This work offers something to those who find themselves living "in-between."

While implicit through much of his writings, a more thorough and elaborate development of the christological dimensions of his writings could further enhance this work. Nonetheless, whatever else can be said about this work, it will be impossible to mention U.S. Latino theology now or in the future without mentioning this creative and pioneering theologian. As Alex Garcia Rivera aptly noted, "the next century, I believe, will see other theologians sailing down the territory that his great inquiring mind has already charted" (254). *Beyond Borders* should be required reading for all pastors, scholars, and especially seminarians who are seeking to respond to the complexity of a multi-cultural Church and the growing Hispanic needs of the Church in the twenty-first century.

*Daniel Groody, C.S.C.*