

## VANTAGE POINTS OF THE HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED IN NORTH AMERICA

### *A Response to Gustavo Gutiérrez*

Latin American liberation theology, born officially less than twenty-five years ago at the second general conference of Latin American bishops held at Medellín in 1968, is widely recognized for insisting that the experience of the poor majorities should have primacy in thinking about everything in heaven and on earth, on the character of society and the world, our God, our hope for salvation and the mission of the Church. This shift has involved more than a new content in theology; it has also involved a new way of doing theology. As Gustavo Gutiérrez articulated it in his first visit to the CTSA, "an oppressed and believing people [has] a right to think. And doing theology is participating in this right to think—to think one's faith in the Lord, a right to think one's liberating experiences."<sup>1</sup>

The poor have the right to describe and interpret their own experience and their faith, to be fully incorporated into the political process and into the Church as active subjects of history and of theology, active doers rather than mere passive receivers, speaking for themselves in the debates over the nature of God and of society, and over the future of the world and of the Church, and, all importantly, having a voice in decision making. As Gustavo has reminded us here today, this option for the poor involves a global option, requiring not only peace and justice commissions as part of the mission of the Church, but the total reformation of the Church in terms of the option for the poor, as the only way for all to the truth and to salvation.<sup>2</sup>

In many ways, it seems to me, we here in North America are only beginning to glimpse the meaning of this global challenge for the Church. It is true that many Christians have been in the forefront of struggles for justice and peace in the U.S. and Canada, and that this witness has had a significant impact on our societies, on theology, and on the Church. Yet there has been a tendency to see these issues as pertaining primarily to specific constituencies—women, or minorities, or the Third World, or environmentalists—and to be the business of specialized peace and justice committees and offices, and of the specialized tradition of

---

<sup>1</sup>Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Voice of the Poor in the Church," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 33 (1978) 30.

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent brief overview of Gutiérrez's ecclesiology, see James Nickoloff, "Liberation Theology and the Church," *Religious Studies Review* 18 (1992) 8-12.

Catholic social teaching. Global questioning of the social order which manifests different kinds of oppression and exploitation has generally been avoided, as has consideration of the global challenges to the renewal of the whole life of our Church posed by the experiences of suffering and oppression in North America as well as throughout the Third World, and the Second World too.

In this context, the best response I can give to Gustavo's inspiring presentation on the option for the poor is to suggest some ways of thinking about this option in our own context. So in light of experiences of struggling for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in North America, I offer a series of meditations—admittedly incomplete, partial, and provisional—as probes to test our shared understanding of this history of struggle and faith, and its implications for doing theology and for the whole life of our Church in North America. First, I offer some hermeneutical guidelines for reading the signs of the times, which themselves reflect lessons learned in the struggles of our time. Second, I identify two radically different ways of interpreting experience in North America, and implications of the choice between them. And, third, I conclude with an affirmation, in the midst of growing suffering, death and destruction, of signs of hope.

#### I. WHICH EXPERIENCES? WHICH VOICES?

(1) *There is no one, right place to stand to interpret the social order characterizing our societies and our world, or any major intellectual, cultural or religious tradition within it.* In the first place, it is characteristic of large scale, complex social systems that they differentiate people into significantly different constituencies with significantly different experiences of everyday life, grounding different sensibilities, perceptions, hopes, and faiths informed by different traditions and combinations of traditions interpreted in different ways. In other words, the dynamics of social order—and *disorder*—mobilize and channel different resources and constituencies in different ways, confronting them with related yet different challenges in making sense of their lives and developing strategies to survive, and flourish if possible.

And this diversity and multiplicity has been powerfully magnified by the expansion of this system to cover the whole world, so that all cultures and the subcultures within them are now in contact, although seldom on terms of their own choosing or in unfettered dialogue with the other constituents.

Thus, no one experience is singularly definitive for the whole, unevenly developing social order.

(2) In the midst of such vast changes and the deep conflicts marking our world, *the hermeneutical privilege of the oppressed has been confirmed again and again.* And we have all had the experience over and over again, against the background of the reigning ideologies, of the revelatory power of the historically marginalized in exposing significant realities of the societies in which we live and of the traditions that have nurtured us, in envisioning a different future, in struggling for it, and in articulating the hope and faith which nourishes this

struggle.

Not surprisingly in this perspective, these new voices have, in various ways, challenged the content of previously authoritative statements and policies in every significant domain, and the authorities and experts who propounded these views. Moreover, they have challenged the social structuring of the quest for knowledge, the established ways of mobilizing and channeling attention, resources, study, teaching, and teachers, and the development of future experts and authorities. They have challenged the institutionalized "knowledge" producing process in universities and seminaries, and the kind of rationality and "authority"—in the social sciences as well as theology—sustained by these hierarchical structures.

Surely many here can testify to the profound changes these "new" voices and the experiences they refer to have wrought in who we are, what we do, and how we are organized to do it. Our Church, our professional associations, our culture and our politics more broadly have been forever changed.

(3) However, *the number of these distinct voices of historically marginalized peoples has been rapidly growing within and among the poor and oppressed, as "new"—at least as they appear to others—groups emerge speaking of their pain and hopes.* In North America, we have all been influenced by several distinct categories of voices since the irruptions of popular movements in the 1960s: African-Americans, indigenous peoples, Hispanics, and other peoples of color, women, poor and working class people in workplaces and local communities, gays and lesbians, and "Third World" peoples. These voices have spoken of the class divided, and of the racist, patriarchal, and imperialist character of elite projects for ordering the world in our lifetimes.

In addition, two other categories of voices have emerged as crucial: those speaking on behalf of all who yearn for peace, clearly naming the militaristic character of elite projects for managing the world; and those speaking on behalf of the earth, exposing the ecologically devastating character of these projects.

But surely this list is not exhaustive. For example, it seems to me that hope for the future requires learning to listen much better to the many different voices of those who have lived in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, under really existing socialism. For us Christians in particular, it seems crucial to listen to the voices of all the "others," crushed and marginalized in the historical "advance" of Western, "Christian," capitalist civilization, and who are in recent years are reasserting perspectives and priorities rooted in their own traditions. And regularly, it seems, we are suddenly confronted with yet other new voices, like the Kurds, whose struggle seems to speak of still other experiences of oppression and of the struggles for life on this earth.

(4) *This profusion of voices has vastly complicated this hermeneutical privilege of the poor and oppressed.* For even the voices within a particular constituency do not all say the same things. And voices from different constituencies often say quite different, sometimes even conflicting things. Accordingly, in recent years feminist theologians, for example, have been devoting urgent attention to differences *among* women—poor and working class

women, First World and Third World women, women of color and white women, lesbian women and straight women, Christian women and Jewish women, and women of other faith traditions and no tradition at all. And a similar profusion of different voices is evident within Latin American liberation theology.<sup>3</sup>

The sheer number of voices, reflecting different social contexts and different racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, has confirmed the simple fact that we have no agreed-upon categories, no single theory or doctrine, no single discourse which can express this rich diversity of experiences and perspectives.

(5) Moreover, *the world is changing massively and rapidly, further complicating every effort to speak authoritatively about any aspect of life on this earth*, about the economy, politics, family and community, the Church and its mission, the nation and the world, about all of creation and its Creator.

(6) In this context, it is increasingly clear, *no intellectual, moral, religious, philosophical, cultural or scientific tradition can be fully adequate to addressing the issues before us*. For in so many ways our global context at the end of the twentieth century is qualitatively new. However inspiring or suggestive, how could any tradition be fully adequate to the new questions confronting the world?

Each tradition confronts radical challenges to dialogue with others, and major questioning of foundations. Indeed, the very foundations for human subjectivity and knowing are changing under the cumulative effects of the pressures and developments listed above. And so are the forms of knowledge and of knowledge producing institutions, vastly complicating not only every effort to say something definitively but every attempt at clarifying the character of knowledge and authority.

(7) For all of these and other reasons, *every interpretation, every analysis, every doctrine, every theory is by definition partial*, in two senses: it is an interpretation from a particular point of view reflecting a particular social context and particular experiences and interests; and it is incomplete, at most considering only some perspectives and touching on only some dimensions of the infinitely complex and mysterious life of the world and the spirit(s) which guide it.

(8) *Singly and together these developments have contributed to the plurality and ambiguity which mark our age*, to borrow the title of a book by our colleague David Tracy, who has addressed this reality so forthrightly.<sup>4</sup> The honest confrontation with the complex, partial, incomplete character of the interpretive process in our own experience, and in the history of every religious,

---

<sup>3</sup>In his introduction to the new edition of his book, Gutiérrez points to the new voices that are transforming Latin American liberation theology. See "Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View," in *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, trans. and ed. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1988) xvii-xlvi.

<sup>4</sup>David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987).

cultural and social analytical tradition, confirms the open-ended character of the interpretive process. And, as has often been noted, it contributes to an apparently endless uncertainty and debate about everything important, to relativism in factual claims, values, and beliefs. Intellectual debates are indeed endless. We are constantly encountering new data and insights, new angles from which to view issues, new analyses, and new theories. At this level, it seems clear, there can never be any final closure.

(9) Nevertheless, *in a hierarchically organized society, some voices, those of the powerful and privileged, speak more loudly than all the others.* Popular struggles have confirmed over and over again this insight: a defining feature of such societies, at the heart of this kind of social order—some, a few, speak authoritatively for all, legitimating their authority with reference to direct divine revelation, tradition, office, and/or science. They claim to be able to see the whole more clearly—society, the world, life, the past, the present, the future, and beyond into the heavens—and to be able to speak about what is right and good for all. Indeed, they claim to know what is better for average people—the overwhelming majority—than they do for themselves. And thus they claim the right to make decisions for all, and often the right, and duty, to impose them on others “for their own good.”

Moreover, their voices are, and have long been, most powerful in defining and managing the character of reason in general and of expertise or authority, and the process of the production of knowledge and of knowledge elites, historically in seminaries and more recently in universities, think tanks, corporate boardrooms and associations, and government commissions, and in general in the “educational” process and the media of communication.

This hierarchical organization of knowledge and of authority is an essential feature of hierarchically organized societies. And, in such societies, it is impossible not to hear these voices. Indeed, often they are the only voices that can be heard, as, for example, in the U.S. and Canada during the recent Gulf War.

With amazing regularity in our world, these powerful voices have been white, First World, upper class, and male, despite the fact that in recent years there has been a sprinkling of women and people of color. This characteristic of social order—which may be labelled the hermeneutical privilege of the affluent and powerful—necessitates the hermeneutical privilege of the oppressed for all involved in the quest for truth.

(10) Moreover, *not only do they speak louder, but in countless ways day in and day out elites impose absolute, definitive closure on the debates regarding the future.* For every day they make concrete decisions, in corporations and other major institutions, governments and international bodies like the International Monetary Fund, which presume definitive, absolute closure on the whole range of important questions, on the data, analyses, points of view and perspectives to be considered. These decisions have life and death implications for the poor and oppressed, for the future of life on this earth, and thus ultimately for all. There is then, at given moments, clear, unambiguous, definitive closure. Openness,

questions, debate, competing perspectives, all give way to specific, concrete claims that are translated into policies of major institutions.

And in this process the experiences of poor and oppressed peoples and of those in solidarity with them—their perspectives and their voices—are generally excluded from this process. So, from this point of view, there is closure in another important sense. Generally, the voices of the great majority are excluded, for example, from discussions concerning the so-called Third World debt. In other words, discussions, debates, and decision making among those who hold power are far from open; they are very exclusive. There is thus effective, material closure in these debates in every basic sense: in terms of the appropriate participants, and in terms of the appropriate definitions of issues, perspectives, judgments, priorities, and policies each time important decisions are made. This absolute closure was perhaps never clearer than in the decision making about the launching and conduct of the Gulf War. But it has also been evident in more mundane ways, for example, in the ongoing debates in Congress over taxation.

In this concrete historical process, then, imposing closure on analytic and theoretical questions is a daily fact, made inevitable by the imperatives of action by specific individuals and groups. Indeed, closure enforced by certain privileged groups is a defining feature of hierarchically organized societies.

(11) Thus, as is made clear every day in popular struggles, *the quest for truth must be linked fundamentally to the struggles for justice, peace and the integrity of creation*. Indeed, there can be no hope for truth apart from the struggles of poor and oppressed people to have a voice in describing life in society, analyzing the causes of its sins, articulating hopes for a better future, elaborating priorities and strategies for moving forward, in choosing among them, and in clarifying the faith that sustains them in this often (apparently) hopeless quest.

## II. NEW WORLD ORDER OR CHAOS?

In the light of these hermeneutical principles, some features of recent celebrations of a new American and a new world order sound familiar, echoing the extraordinary optimism of the early 1960s.

You will recall the mood if not the phrase “the end of ideology” with which leading American social scientists celebrated the overcoming of the historical bases of social conflict in the affluent society of the early 1960s. In the US already—and soon even in the Third World if only they would follow the good example of the U.S.—the economy was expanding with a growing number of good, well-paying jobs, income and wealth were being redistributed, and there were no longer any obstacles to the upward mobility of even the most historically disadvantaged.<sup>5</sup> Freedom of choice was maximized in the affluent society, and each held “his” fate in “his” own hands.

---

<sup>5</sup>For an overview of this perspective and responses to it in the 1960s, see Chaim Waxman, ed., *The End of Ideology Debate* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968).

Thus there was no longer any social basis for ideologically charged conflicts. The big questions concerning the direction and course of history had been answered; and the only remaining questions concerned minor, technical matters concerning fine-tuning the economy and aiding those temporarily disadvantaged, questions best left to the experts.

The one exception to this prognosis was, of course, world communism, which was seen as feeding on the frustrations of the poor of the Third World. But if it could be contained long enough (with whatever military force and Machiavellian interventions were necessary), poor countries, with the help of First World corporations and governments, could also develop rapidly along the path already pioneered by the U.S., thus exposing the fallacies of the critics of capitalism and the hollowness of dreams of an alternative, indeed the historical irrelevance of any such dreams.

You will recall, too, that this euphoria was so intoxicating and widely shared in the leading thought of the day that some Christians felt compelled to declare the "death of God" as an obstacle to the full exercise of "man's" freedom in this modern world of technological might and limitless individual freedom. In effect, salvation had come to earth. Of course, death remained a reality, but it was being pushed back further and further by modern medicine, and after a long, comfortable and fulfilled life, even it could be faced with serenity. And even those Christians who did not go so far began rethinking their faith in terms of individual growth and fulfillment in a grace-filled world.

You will not have to exercise your memories so much to recall, against the background of 1989 and the collapse of state socialism in Eastern and Central Europe and the Soviet Union, the influential voices declaring a new world order, and their tone of limitless optimism. Indeed, one prominent social scientist even declared "the end of history."<sup>6</sup> The great historical antagonist has succumbed. Traditional Western values, authorities and institutions have prevailed. Capitalism and freedom have triumphed. There are literally no alternatives. And there are no reasons to look for one. Free markets and free trade will bring freedom and prosperity to all.

Of course, there remain still some power-hungry despots, like Saddam Hussein. But, under American leadership, the allies prevailed overwhelmingly, confirming the power of the forces of freedom. Government leaders around the world are turning to the market to renew their societies. And soon all the world will be prosperous and free. Truly we live at the dawning of a new epoch illumined by a "thousand points of light."

It has been hard, perhaps impossible, not to hear these voices ringing so loudly with their experience of success and confidence, and their proclamations of good news in our history, in the early 1960s and again in the early 1990s.

But there are other experiences, and other voices . . . and in the early 1990s

---

<sup>6</sup>See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *The National Interest* 16 (1989) 3-18.

some things are very different from the early 1960s.

For the celebration of the end of ideology came *before* the irruptions of the historically marginalized, bursting out of their oppression and enforced silence in the various popular movements of the later 1960s and 1970s, in the vacuum left by the absence (in part a fruit of the purge of radicals in the 1950s) of other critical voices. But the declaration of the end of history comes *after* so many historically voiceless people had begun to find their voices, and to change forever what growing numbers of North Americans hear and see about our own society and its future.

It is true that neoconservative and new right supporters of the Reagan-Bush agenda explicitly targeted these new voices as the causes of the problems facing America, and the world, and that they set out in various ways to silence and marginalize them once again. To an extraordinary extent, we know, helped in part by the pluralism among these "new" voices, these groups succeeded in disparaging them and marginalizing them once again from the centers of power: corporate board rooms and international agencies concerning the functioning of the world economy like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the leadership of both the Democratic and Republican parties, and the major media. We know too that, sadly, similar forces are operating within the Church, seeking to restore authority in speaking and decision making to the narrow circle of those who have traditionally held authority, and seeking to marginalize once again the "new" voices speaking of different experiences of good and evil in this world, of God and of the Church, and of our hope for the future.

However, these "other" voices, though politically weak, will not go away. And they are testifying to the groaning of the whole of the created world in all its parts . . . (cf. Rom. 8:22). In the light cast on our world by these voices, the agenda for the new world order is not desirable. Indeed, it is impossible. Perhaps more than the apostle Paul could have imagined, it is producing disorder and chaos on a world scale for millions of poor and working people—including the great majority in North America—and for the earth itself, and thus, ultimately, for all living beings on earth.

International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programs are draining capital out of poor Third World countries into First World banks, and destroying the very fabric of society, and now also in Eastern and Central Europe and the states of the former Soviet Union. In spite of the end of the cold war, the arms trade is flourishing; indeed, to the extent that the U.S. has a development agenda at all, it still turns on military spending, meaning that the economic health of the nation demands wars. American corporations are shifting jobs and technology around the world in the search for the lowest wages, the most compliant workforce, and the weakest environmental regulations, and in the wake of layoffs and shutdowns, workers and their families and communities are being devastated. Taxes on corporations and the wealthy are being cut, and ordinary people are being compelled to subsidize even more business for private profits. The gulf between rich and poor is rapidly growing wider throughout the world, and the

irrationality of this agenda for "order" is rapidly becoming more obvious.

A few statistics, culled from official government sources, confirm the magnitude of the devastation in the lives of the great majority of ordinary Americans in recent decades. Between 1977 and 1990 the average after-tax income of the top twenty percent of the population rose by thirty-five percent. And by the early 1990s *the richest one percent, about 2.5 million people, received nearly as much after-tax income as the bottom forty percent combined, nearly 100 million Americans.*<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, between 1977 and 1990 the after-tax income of the bottom twenty percent of Americans fell by ten percent. All in all, the average real income of the bottom sixty percent of Americans declined during the 1980s,<sup>8</sup> and *the top twenty percent of Americans now earn more than all the other eighty percent put together!*<sup>9</sup> In other words, we are living in the midst of "the largest transfer of wealth in the nation's history," say Donald Barlett and James Steele, two journalists whose *America: What Went Wrong?* has hit the nonfiction best-seller lists, confirming what millions of Americans already know from their experience.<sup>10</sup>

Yet now, having defeated all their opponents, all the liberals and radicals calling for more basic changes in the reigning agenda for social order, the proponents of this agenda have no one else to blame for its bad fruits. They try to blame others, of course, but who can believe claims that the 1960s welfare programs were responsible for the explosion in East Central Los Angeles or that "eco-terrorists" are exaggerating threats to the environment and seeking to ruin the American economy?

And so the new world order appears increasingly chaotic. Our times are marked by crisis: an economic crisis marked by the savings and loan catastrophe, bank collapses, industrial decline, and farm bankruptcies; a social crisis marked by an eroding infrastructure, widespread corruption and crime, decaying urban neighborhoods and rural communities, widespread violence, especially against women and against children, a crisis in education, a disappearing middle class and a growing gulf between the few rich and the many poor—all in the so-called First World of the U.S. and Canada; economic depression and extreme social polarization and conflict throughout the Third World, and increasingly in the Second World too; and an ecological crisis undermining the foundations of life

---

<sup>7</sup>Holly Sklar, "Who's Who: The Truly Greedy III," *Z Magazine* 4 (1991) 10. Note that the gap is rapidly growing. A decade ago, in 1980, the richest one percent received "only" about half as much after-tax income as the bottom forty percent!

<sup>8</sup>Gerald Epstein, "Mortgaging America," *World Policy Journal* 8 (1990-1991) 46.

<sup>9</sup>"The Truly Greedy," 11.

<sup>10</sup>Donald Barlett and James Steele, *America: What Went Wrong?* (Kansas City MO: Andrews and McMeel, 1992) 3. Similar trends are evident in Canada, reinforced by the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the U.S. See Bruce Campbell, *Canada Under Siege: Three Years Into the Free Trade Era* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1992).

as we know it on this planet.

The new world order is ready to explode, indeed is already exploding at home as well as around the world, as the fires of Los Angeles, and in Toronto rampages on Yonge Street, have demonstrated. And in the face of the thorough cooptation of the major political parties and of the whole governing process by elites, so that elections and policy debates are almost meaningless, and of a mass media which largely cooperates in this agenda, cynicism and despair are on the rise.<sup>11</sup> The rise of Perot in the 1992 primaries in the U.S., like the election of Fujimori in Peru, and the preference by Canadians for "none of the above" when asked in a recent poll to choose among the leaders of the three major parties,<sup>12</sup> confirm widespread and growing alienation from politics as usual, and an increasingly desperate willingness to turn to unknowns in hope for something different, even if chances are, as in the case of Fujimori's alliance with the military in a coup in 1992, that the unknown turns out not to be so different, even worse.

### III. SEEDS OF HOPE

Despite the widespread suffering and death of millions of people before their times and of thousands of species, and of the apparently dominant historical trends, there are—surely it is irrational and scandalous to say so—signs of hope.

In our own lifetimes we have witnessed an unprecedented development: the breaking into history of so many of the historically marginalized and silenced, giving voice to their own experiences and hopes, faith and politics, and in the process affirming their God-given dignity and integrity. Clearly, the Bible tells us, this is the primary way God speaks to the people of every age, revealing things not known before concerning the mystery of life on this earth and hope for the future.<sup>13</sup>

As in the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, every act of solidarity which nurtures the lives of those who count for so little in conventional accounting systems—or for nothing at all—is a seed of hope for the future. Every affirmation of their dignity and integrity in speaking for themselves, and in having a voice in the decision making about the future anticipates a different future.

And there are many signs of hope in the renewed identities of individuals and communities who have begun to define themselves and their agendas in terms of oppressed and exploited peoples and the earth itself. Of course, we have learned that it is impossible for any individual or group to incorporate awareness

---

<sup>11</sup>See William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

<sup>12</sup>See "Canada's Choice for PM: 'None of the Above,'" *Toronto Star*, June 1, 1992, A1.

<sup>13</sup>I have addressed this issue in more depth in my "Revolutions in Reading the Bible," in Peggy Day, David Jobling, and Gerald Sheppard, eds., *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1991) 173-93.

about all "others," their experiences, insights and needs; we must always remain open to yet new challenges of the Spirit to conversion and renewal. Still, every concrete act of solidarity across traditional divisions and barriers is a sign of hope uniting people and the earth in proclaiming the nonnecessity of the present *disorder* and witnessing to the good news of a promised new reign of the fullness of life for all on this earth. As Gustavo Gutiérrez insists, this challenge of poor and oppressed peoples, and of the earth itself, I would add, is a global challenge to the whole of our faith and our church.

Certainly, during these last fifteen or twenty years there have been many signs that this conversion is underway in the Church. And there are signs of this Spirit even in academic theology, including in organizations like the CTSA! As the "new" voices here attest, the face of Catholic theology in North America has changed and is changing dramatically. In this new context, I would like to express my appreciation to Gustavo for the witness to the poor of Peru and the world which shines so clearly and consistently in all his speaking and writing. He has helped to bring about this transformation, linking me and many of us to the voices of so many of the poor in Latin America, and, joining with other "new" voices here, to so many "others" throughout the Third World and in the First World, too.

They have helped us to see more clearly that it is only in listening to these voices, their experiences, challenges and inspiration, that there is any hope of hearing the voice of the Spirit in our broken, divided and bleeding world, and that there is any real hope for the future—for the poor in the Third World and at home, for the working class and the shrinking "middle class," and ultimately for all, and for all of life as we know it on this earth.

In the midst of so much suffering and death and dread about the future, there is much to be thankful for, and to celebrate joyfully in the Spirit.

LEE CORMIE

*University of St. Michael's College  
Toronto*