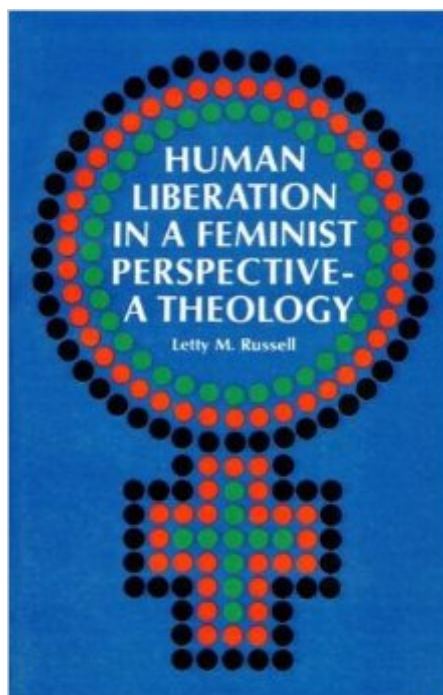


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Human Liberation In A Feminist Perspective--A Theology



Synopsis

Today, women are joining other oppressed groups in a search for liberation. Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective--A Theology is an attempt to wrestle with this challenge by making a contribution to the Christian understanding of human liberation from the feminist perspective.

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Customer Reviews

Letty Mandeville Russell (1929-2007) was a feminist theologian who taught at Yale Divinity Schools, who also wrote/edited books such asÂ Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church, Dictionary of Feminist Theologies, Inheriting Our Mothers' Gardens: Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective, etc. She wrote in her Introduction to this 1974 book, "This book comes out of my own experience in the search for liberation... I have simply tried to set down a few notes on aspects of the gospel of liberation which is my basis of hope..." She states that theology may be "feminist" because the women involved are "actively engaged in advocating the equality and partnership of women and men in church and society." (Pg. 19) Like Third World theology, feminist theology is written out of an experience of oppression in society. (Pg. 21) She notes the importance of women doing theology, as they make a contribution to the "unfinished dimension" of theology. (Pg. 53) She observes that it is not necessary to think of God primarily as having masculine characteristics of domination and lordship, a practice that has served to "legitimate aggression and domination" in male-dominated cultures. (Pg. 100) She suggests that for women, the scandal of the gospel is seen "most importantly in his maleness... How is it possible for this male to be the bearer of God's togetherness with women and men when he represents only one half of the human race in

this respect?" (Pg. 137-138) In conclusion, she suggests that for Christians, this experiment in liberation is not done only on our own initiative, but "is a way of participating in the humanity of God; joining God's experiment in being together with us, so that we might be together in community with each other." (Pg. 183) This book is one of the early "pathbreakers" in feminist theology and biblical interpretation, and is still of considerable value.

Russell's book is an early work in the emerging liberation theology dialogue in the U.S. in the 1970's. Contemporary with Rosemary Radford Ruether's "Liberation Theology," James Cone's "A Black Theology of Liberation," and Gutierrez's "A Theology of Liberation," Russell's book captures the spirit of the times from a feminist perspective, which she develops through all her later work. While Russell was a white feminist, her feminist vision of human liberation explicitly concerns black feminists and women of the so-called "Third World." Letty Russell died in 2007. A paragraph in the "Prologue," which serves as the epilogue of the book states the book in her own words. "This book itself is an experiment in liberation theology - and invitation to test out the signs of the times in light of Tradition, so that we can begin to speak the language of hope in a world where there is little hope. It is an experiment, not just because this is where we are in the search of human liberation, but because this is always the nature of liberation theology." (184) Russell's book focuses on the common themes and perspectives of early Liberation Theology. She ties them together in a humanist interpretation of liberation theology that is feminist because she argues a view of humanity that is mutually free, mutual, and inclusive. This means liberating humanity from a history shaped in racism, sexism, and androcentrism. Human liberation in feminist perspective is, therefore, based on equality. In her section on partnership (cf. her "Growth in Partnership," 1981) and humanization (cf. her "Becoming Human," 1982), Russell distinguishes female sex (biological) from the feminine (cultural/social constructions). She argues becoming a human subject means transcending the labor of biological necessity ("woman's work," etc) and repetition of dehumanizing work to become creative in the shaping of society. Her feminist anthropology, or view of a humanized humanity, is two-ness or partnership. In Christ, women and men are set free to co-labor in the liberating work of God. Her book closes an "open ecclesiology," which is a reflection of what this means for the Christian church and reflections on women in ministry and models of ministry. (cf. for more, see her later "Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church," 1993)

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