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THE OPTION
for the

POOR

in

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

edited by

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INTRODUCTION

DANIEL G. GROODY

In the spring of 2000, Virgilio Elizondo and I attended a meeting in Paris, France. While we were there, he asked me if I wanted to get together with a good friend of his named Gustavo Gutiérrez. I was grateful for the invitation because for many years I had been greatly influenced by Gutiérrez's writings and welcomed the chance to meet him in person. The three of us went out to lunch together and spent hours talking about many things, not the least of which was the option for the poor in Christian theology and where it stood as an issue within the church and the academy today.

This lunch in Paris was particularly timely. It was becoming less clear where this topic of the poor fit within the discipline of academic theology. Undoubtedly, many today recognize how Gutiérrez has pioneered a new area in the discipline and has put this whole notion of the preferential option for the poor on the theological map. But as I looked at the current state of the question, I wondered if, at least in theology, the theme was receding into the background.

There were various reasons why the preferential option for the poor seemed at low ebb. One was the inevitable development of the theme and its transformation into new expressions, accelerated in particular by