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Editor's Note

Confessing Christ contextually has been one of the emphases of this Journal since its inception fifteen years ago. Our readership has experienced the joy of missionaries sharing the faith with various peoples and cultures in domestic as well as distant lands. Colleague Leo Sanchez has provided us personnel as well as resources to publish this edition with an emphasis on mission and ministry among the Hispanic/Latino population of God's world. An added feature in this issue is summary statements of the articles in Spanish.

This issue is comprehensive in its scope as it presents topics and voices such as Marginality and the Hispanic Church, Latino Church Planting, Latino Lutheran Identity, Women, and actual eyewitness testimonies of Hispanic work on our shores. These are exciting times for churches and institutions that prepare men and women for God's mission in a world overpowered by the multiplicity of cultures, and plurality of religions and worldviews. Our readers will know how.

V. R.

Editorial

El futuro es hispano/latino

Rev. Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.

El futuro es latino. Desde ya contemplamos signos por doquier de una nación cada vez más hispana. Mis suegros Tom Von Behren y Kathy Hartigan—descendientes de inmigrantes alemanes e irlandeses respectivamente—nunca se imaginaron que algún día su hija Tracy Lynn de St. Louis, Missouri, se casaría con un inmigrante de América Latina o que sus nietos nacidos en los Estados Unidos tendrían como nombres Lucas Antonio y Ana Victoria Sánchez. El futuro se verá cada vez más como el presente de la familia Sánchez Von Behren y muchas otras como esta. El futuro es *mestizo* (es decir, multiétnico y multicultural) en un sentido bastante literal.

De acuerdo a las más recientes proyecciones del Pew Hispanic Center,¹ para el año 2050, la población anglosajona y actualmente mayoritaria de los Estados Unidos disminuirá del 67% al 47% mientras que la población de origen latino—actualmente el grupo minoritario más grande del país—incrementará del 14% al 29%. Será un crecimiento de 42 a 128 millones de habitantes de origen latino, lo cual significa que para el 2050 los latinos representarán 60% del crecimiento total de la población de los Estados Unidos que se proyecta incrementará de 296 a 438 millones. Para el año 2040, se dice que 1 de cada 4 norteamericanos será de origen hispano/latino. ¿No sería un gran don de nuestro misericordioso Dios que nuestra Iglesia Luterana reflejara cada vez más en los rostros de sus miembros a través del país la realidad nacional?

Ante esta realidad demográfica, reto y momento *kairos* (tiempo oportuno) para la iglesia, el Centro de Estudios Hispánicos (CEH) del Seminario Concordia—ahora más que nunca—está comprometido a ofrecer educación teológica y liderazgo en la tradición luterana desde y para comunidades de origen hispano en los Estados Unidos. El corazón de nuestra misión es la formación de una nueva generación de obreros hispanos—y también de otros trasfondos—con el conocimiento, las aptitudes, el tipo de entrenamiento

Rev. Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M. is Director of the Center for Hispanic Studies, first occupant of the Werner R.H. Krause and Elizabeth Ringger Krause Endowed Chair for Hispanic Ministries, and Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

¹ Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "Population Projections: 2005-2050" (11 February 2008): esp. 8-10. Pew Research Center. Online: <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/85.pdf> [cited 15 March 2008].

y la motivación necesarios para proclamar el evangelio de Cristo de manera inteligible y relevante a la creciente población hispana del país.

Una de las muchas maneras en las que el CEH sirve como recurso para toda la iglesia es mediante iniciativas de investigación y publicación acerca de temas relacionados con teología y misión en el mundo hispano/latino. Queremos dar las gracias a los escritores que contribuyeron con su conocimiento y dones para hacer posible esta gran tarea. Los resúmenes de los artículos, comentarios y reseñas al español o al inglés, así como la edición de todos los manuscritos, son la responsabilidad única de este escritor (L.S.). También queremos agradecer a la Sociedad Luterana de Misiología por permitirnos editar y sufragar en parte los gastos de este ejemplar para beneficio educativo de toda una iglesia que vive y trabaja en una nación con un creciente número de latinos.

Nos hemos enfocado en la realidad hispana en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica. El lector encontrará una variedad de artículos para todo gusto. Ofrecemos reflexiones acerca de la marginación del latino en la iglesia institucional, la plantación de iglesias en contextos latinos, la identidad hispana luterana, el rol de la mujer latina en la iglesia, la realidad de la inmigración y la pobreza. Se le informará también al lector acerca de algunos importantes recursos y eventos en el mundo de las publicaciones que resaltan temas relevantes para la misión hispana.

Finalmente, el Centro de Estudios Hispánicos del Seminario Concordia desea dedicar este volumen especial de *Missio Apostolica* a las familias de los pastores Roberto González, Robert Huebner y Robert Gussick—afectuosamente, los tres “Bobs”—y a la familia del pastor Gerhard Kempff en agradecimiento a Dios por su fiel y cariñoso apoyo de estos santos y pioneros en la obra misionera entre y con el pueblo de habla hispana en América Latina y los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica. Sigamos pues el camino que estos discípulos santos de Cristo nos han trazado.

The Future is Hispanic/Latino

The future is Latino. Already now we see vivid signs everywhere of an increasingly Hispanic nation. My in-laws Tom Von Behren and Kathy Hartigan (respectively, of German and Irish descent) never imagined that someday their All-American daughter Tracy Lynn from St. Louis, Missouri, would marry an immigrant from Latin America or that their U.S.-born grandchildren would have names like Lucas Antonio and Ana Victoria Sánchez. The future will look more and more like today's Sánchez-Von Behren family and others like them. Indeed, the future is *mestizo* (broadly speaking, multiethnic and crosscultural) in a very literal sense.

According to the latest projections from the Pew Hispanic Center, the U.S. non-Hispanic White population (currently, the largest group) will decrease from 67% to 47% while the Hispanic population (currently, the nation's largest minority group) will rise from 14% to 29% by the year 2050. The Latino population will triple in numbers from 42 to 128 million. This means that by 2050 Latinos will represent 60% of the total growth of the U.S. population which is projected to rise from 296 to 438 million. By the year 2040, it is said that 1 out of every 4 North Americans will be Hispanic/Latino. Wouldn't it be a

great gift from our gracious God for our Lutheran Church to reflect in the faces of her members across the U.S. the national reality?

In the face of this demographic reality, challenge, and *kairos* moment (opportune time) for the church, the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) of Concordia Seminary—now more than ever—is committed to offering theological education and leadership in the Lutheran tradition from and for U.S. Hispanic/Latino communities. The heart of our mission is the formation of a new generation of Latino and non-Latino church workers with the necessary knowledge, aptitude, skills, and motivation for proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in an intelligible and winsome way to the nation's growing Hispanic population.

One of the many ways CHS serves as a resource for the church at large on issues concerning Hispanic/Latino theology and missions is through research and publication initiatives. We want to thank all those who contributed to this issue with their expertise and gifts in order to bring it to fruition. Summaries of articles, Mission Observers, and book reviews in Spanish or English, as well as the edition of all manuscripts, are the sole responsibility of this writer (L.S.). We also want to thank the Lutheran Society for Missiology for the opportunity to sponsor this special issue of *Missio Apostolica* in order to raise awareness and educate the church at large on various aspects that must be considered in our mission work among and with Latinos.

We have focused our efforts on issues related to Latinos in the United States. The reader will find a little bit of everything for every interest. There are reflections on Latino marginality in the institutional church, Latino church planting, Hispanic Lutheran identity, Latinas in the church, the reality of immigration, and poverty. The reader will also be alerted to some resources and major publication events—especially, in the Latino Lutheran church—throughout the issue.

Finally, the Center for Hispanic Studies of Concordia Seminary wishes to dedicate this special issue of *Missio Apostolica* to the families of the Revs. Roberto González, Robert Huebner, and Robert Gussick—affectionately called the three Bobs—and to the family of Rev. Gerhard Kempff in thankfulness to God for their faithful and loving support of these saints and pioneers in the missionary enterprise among and with Spanish-speaking peoples in Latin America and the United States of America. May we also follow in the footsteps of these disciples and saints of Christ.

Articles

Un vistazo al escudo de Lutero Acercas de la identidad luterana en el mundo hispano/latino¹

Rudolph Blank

¿Cómo se puede definir lo que es la identidad luterana en el complejo contexto del ministerio luterano en el mundo hispano/latino? Se ha dicho—medio en chiste y medio en serio—que la única cosa que todavía tienen en común las muchas clases de luteranos en nuestro mundo moderno es el escudo del Dr. Martín Lutero. En el mundo hispano, congregaciones, colegios, universidades, preescolares, asociaciones juveniles y toda clase de obra social se identifican como luteranos por medio del escudo de Lutero—en muchos casos sin saber exactamente lo que simboliza dicho escudo. Consecuentemente hemos desarrollado nuestra presentación de hoy en torno del escudo del reformador. Lo que deseo lograr de esta manera es presentar un comentario teológico sobre el escudo de Lutero desde la óptica del ministerio hispano luterano.

La cruz negra Hacer frente a la realidad y profundidad del pecado

La primera cosa que nos llama la atención en el escudo de Lutero es una cruz. El color de la cruz es negro. Es el color que para Lutero simboliza el pecado, el dolor, la muerte y la depravación del ser humano. Tanto para Lutero como para San Agustín y Juan Calvino, el pecado hereditario y la depravación son realidades tan profundas y tan

El Rev. Dr. Rudolph (Rudy) Blank ha servido como misionero de carrera y voluntario en Venezuela por más de 40 años y es profesor invitado del Centro de Estudios Hispanos del Seminario Concordia, St. Louis, Missouri. Rodolfo es el autor del libro Teología y Misión en América Latina publicado por el Editorial Concordia.

¹ El ensayo es una versión editada y resumida de una ponencia presentada durante la 1era Consulta Teológica Luterana Hispana que se celebró en el Seminario Concordia de St. Louis, Missouri, del 29 al 31 de octubre de 2007. Se puede tener acceso a la ponencia original en audio o vídeo por medio de la Universidad iTunes a la que pertenece el Seminario Concordia. Para obtener esta ponencia y otros recursos del Centro de Estudios Hispanos en iTunes, visite la siguiente página Web: <http://itunes.csl.edu/>

espantosas que la razón humana sin la ayuda del Espíritu Santo no las puede comenzar a comprender. Es difícil para el ser humano admitir que los pecados (en plural) que cometemos son en realidad el resultado del pecado (en singular) que reina dentro de nosotros, y que necesitamos ser perdonados no solo por lo que hemos hecho sino por lo que somos.

Ignorando la evidencia tan cruda de nuestra depravación en nuestro medio ambiente, muchos prefieren pensar en sí mismos como personas que por naturaleza son básicamente buenas y no pecadoras. Recién leí de una señora que le dijo a su pastor que no podía entonar el himno *Sublime Gracia* porque ella no se consideraba una infeliz perdida sino buena gente. Para ella no era posible identificarse con los sentimientos descritos por el autor del himno. Martín Lutero no hubiera tenido tal problema.

Muchos teólogos que se identifican con la llamada teología de la liberación insisten que cada ser humano es por nacimiento un Buen Samaritano en potencia. Los gurúes de la Nueva Era nos hablan de la chispa divina en todos nosotros y de las técnicas espirituales para encontrar lo divino en lo más profundo de nuestro ser. Pero tales afirmaciones no cuadran bien con el color negro en el escudo de Lutero. Si somos sinceros con nosotros mismos y con la sociedad de la que formamos parte, descubriremos que lo que vive en lo más profundo de nuestro ser no es el Espíritu de Dios sino la bestia. Si intentamos conversar con esta bestia corremos el peligro de perder no solamente nuestra identidad como luteranos sino también nuestra humanidad.

Hace un año una psicóloga cristiana, directora de un centro para la rehabilitación de alcohólicos y drogadictos en la ciudad de Caracas, me contó que su trabajo se ha hecho sumamente más difícil en los últimos años porque cada vez más las personas referidas a ella para tratamiento no le llegan padeciendo de una sola anomalía como antes sino de una triple adicción: primero a las drogas, segundo a una aberración sexual y, tercero, a cultos satánicos.

En el bajo mundo de nuestros barrios hispanos ha aparecido el culto a la Santa Muerte. Este culto ya cuenta con más de un millón de devotos, y en las cárceles de México aparentemente tal devoción a la Santa Muerte supera a la de la Virgen de Guadalupe. Se habla de la Santa Muerte, la llamada “Bella”, como la patrona y protectora de la infame pandilla Mara Salvatrucha. Recién descubrí que una señora que envía a sus cuatro hijos a la escuela dominical hispana en una de nuestras congregaciones en los Estados Unidos tiene en su apartamento una imagen de la Santa Muerte ante la cual siempre hay una vela encendida y donde se elevan rezos pidiendo dinero y otros favores.

Esta valoración tan funesta de nuestra raza humana concuerda con lo que encontramos en los ensayos y novelas de los grandes escritores latinoamericanos. En *Los Cien Años de Soledad* de Gabriel García Márquez, toda la trágica historia de Macondo termina con el retorno del pueblo y sus habitantes al fangal y el olvido. En los demás libros de García Márquez predominan escenas llenas de futilidad, corrupción y venalidad. Hasta en su gran libro histórico sobre los últimos días del gran libertador Simón Bolívar, toda la gran empresa revolucionaria se envuelve en las sombras de la vanidad. Algo semejante sucede en las obras de Mario Vargas Llosa, sobretudo en su celebrada historia de un fracasado intento de crear a fines del siglo XIX una nueva sociedad milenaria en

una región remota del Brasil. Esta obra de Vargas Llosa titulada *La Guerra del Fin del Mundo* termina no con el esperado retorno al paraíso perdido sino con la creación de un nuevo infierno.

En 1925 el filósofo y también secretario de educación de la República Mexicana, José Vasconcelos (1881-1959), publicó su famoso ensayo *La Raza Cósmica* en el que postula la formación de una quinta raza compuesta de un mestizaje de las cuatro razas presentes en los continentes americanos. En la visión de Vasconcelos, esta raza cósmica tendrá las cualidades espirituales, intelectuales, raciales y culturales para conquistar al mundo pacíficamente y crear el *Universópolis*, o sea *la era universal de la humanidad*. Pero existen también críticos que nos relatan como se ha desplomado el mito de Vasconcelos de la raza cósmica tan popular entre los intelectuales mexicanos de la década de los 1920 y todavía popular entre algunos teólogos chicanos de hoy.

Se ha criticado el concepto de la raza cósmica como una típica artimaña de la oligarquía del capitalismo neoliberal que busca sofocar la indigenidad y la africanidad de nuestras etnias en una globalización en la que cada grupo es condenado a perder su identidad. Todo grupo que pierde su identidad es más susceptible a ser controlado, manipulado y explotado por las oligarquías capitalistas que pretenden dominar al mundo entero. Aparentemente, los luteranos no son los únicos que se preocupan por la pérdida de identidad. Menciono esto para recordarnos que la pregunta *¿puede uno perder su identidad como hispano en una iglesia luterana?* es el otro lado de la pregunta *¿puede la iglesia luterana perder su identidad en una sociedad hispana?*

Como hemos dicho, uno de los enfoques de la teología luterana que ha servido en la formación de nuestra identidad eclesial es el de la profunda depravación del ser humano. Hemos notado que tal énfasis en la humanidad caída es algo que se pone de manifiesto una y otra vez en las historias, ensayos y novelas escritas por algunos de los autores hispanos más renombrados. En la novela de Graciela Limón, *El Canto del Colibrí*, Huitzitzilin, la protagonista del libro concluye su larga reseña de la historia del pueblo Azteca con la declaración al buen padre Benito de que a fin de cuentas Huitzilipochtli, el dios de la violencia y la guerra, ha resultado ser el vencedor sobre Quetzalcóatl, el dios de la paz y de la civilización. O sea que en términos teológicos el poder del pecado, la muerte y el diablo es más fuerte que el amor.

Las voces que hace pocos años proclamaron con entusiasmo y optimismo la transformación de nuestro continente por medio de una teología y una praxis de liberación, ahora con mucho menos optimismo han comenzado a elaborar una teología de supervivencia. La película *El minero del diablo* (*The Devil's Miner*) que muchos de los participantes de nuestra consulta vieron nos ha impactado fuertemente. El documental relata la vida infrahumana de los niños que trabajan en las minas de plata de Potosí en Bolivia, y cómo rezan y sacrifican llamas a los ídolos de los "tíos diabólicos" que se han erigido en las cavernas subterráneas.

Frente a semejantes acontecimientos tenemos que no solo lamentar sino, como los profetas, gritar "Ay, ay, ay de nosotros", pues estamos implicados en los crímenes en contra de la humanidad que se cometen a diario en nuestro mundo hispano/latino. Lamentamos los sucesos que han llevado a los niños de Potosí a ser crucificados sobre

una cruz de plata, tal vez la misma plata que adorna a miles de bellas iglesias que como turistas visitamos para admirar la belleza de su arte barroco. El “tío diabólico” en cuyo poder se encuentran los niños de Potosí no es necesariamente un ídolo colocado en una de las minas. Pudiera ser también el gerente de una gran empresa transnacional o del banco donde tengo depositado el dinero de mi jubilación.

En nuestras casas se pueden encontrar muchos artículos producidos en las maquiladoras de Ciudad Juárez y Tijuana desde donde se escucha el grito del pueblo crucificado de Dios: “Oh Dios de Abraham, Isaac, Bartolomé de las Casas, César Chávez y todos los santos, ten piedad de nosotros; oye nuestra oración; libéranos”. Al descubrir que el “tío diabólico” ha establecido una base no solamente en las minas de Potosí sino también en mi viejo hombre (mi viejo Adán), lo único que puedo hacer es gritar con San Pablo: “Ay de mí, miserable de mí, ¿quién me librará de este cuerpo de muerte?”

Así pues, uno de puntos no negociables de nuestra identidad luterana hispana es el de una antropología bíblica realista, lo que la Palabra de Dios dice de nosotros los seres humanos acerca de la realidad y profundidad de nuestro pecado. Relacionado a este punto viene el segundo punto no negociable, el carácter *extra nos* de la obra de Dios a favor de nosotros, los seres humanos caídos. La expresión *extra nos* que tanto abunda en los escritos de Martín Lutero, se refiere al hecho de que el poder para efectuar nuestra liberación proviene de una fuente *externa* a nosotros mismos, a saber, la cruz de Cristo y su Evangelio del perdón de los pecados.

El corazón rojo Dirigir la mirada al Cristo crucificado y su Evangelio

La segunda cosa que observamos en el escudo de Lutero es el color rojo del corazón. Para Lutero el corazón rojo representa la fe, “porque con el corazón se cree para justicia (Romanos 10:10)”. Pero lo que cree el corazón no es lo que yo he realizado ni lo que soy. Lo que cree el corazón es lo que ha sucedido *extra nos*, fuera de nosotros. Lo que cree el corazón es el mensaje del Evangelio, a saber, que el Señor “me ha redimido a mí, hombre perdido y condenado, y me ha rescatado y librado de todos mis pecados, de la muerte y del poder del diablo; mas no con oro ni plata, sino con su santa y preciosa sangre y con su inocente pasión y muerte”—como lo dice el *Catecismo Menor* de Lutero.

Durante los últimos años me he dedicado mucho al estudio de los Salmos. Una cosa que notamos en el estudio de los salmos es que los salmistas siempre esperan una salvación que viene de afuera, desde arriba, de la Roca que es más alta que yo. La salvación es de Yahvé que viene montado sobre el huracán, que viene con poder y justicia para juzgar a la tierra. La plegaria, el lamento, el grito de socorro viene siempre desde abajo. Viene de los pobres, marginados y oprimidos por gobernantes corruptos, invasores extranjeros, hechiceros y brujos, espíritus del mal, y el poder del Seol. En tales situaciones de opresión, los salmistas y los profetas no nos llaman a echar mano a los poderes latentes dentro de nosotros mismos. No encontramos en los salmistas ni en los profetas una búsqueda de la chispa divina escondida en lo más profundo de nuestro ser. Dicho sea de paso, los sacramentos que celebramos en la iglesia luterana también nos

dirigen hacia afuera de nosotros mismos, hacia el perdón de los pecados y el don del Espíritu Santo que nos vienen desde arriba. Jesús le dijo a Nicodemo que tenía que nacer desde arriba y no a base de un encuentro místico con los poderes inherentes en su ser más íntimo.

Es evidente en el escudo del Dr. Lutero que la cruz negra—dentro del corazón rojo—que domina todo el centro del escudo es un símbolo del Cristo crucificado y de la salvación que se encuentra en Él. Nuestra identidad luterana es *crístocéntrica*, una identidad enfocada en la cruz. Hoy en día podemos encontrar en nuestra América Latina muchos teólogos y pensadores que están buscando enfocar la teología no en el Cristo crucificado sino en el Creador o en el Espíritu Santo. La fe cristiana juntamente con la mayoría de las religiones precolombinas comparten la creencia en un Creador quien en el principio hizo el universo. Igualmente encontramos en casi todas las tradiciones religiosas de nuestro mundo latino una creencia en un gran Espíritu que es la fuente de nuestras experiencias espirituales. Se nos dice que el Creador y el Espíritu pueden servir como puentes, como puntos de unidad, que tenemos en común con las otras tradiciones religiosas. Pero en casi todo proyecto de allanar diferencias y establecer una fe común entre todos, el Cristo crucificado y la exclusividad de la salvación en su nombre son un tropiezo. Si somos llevados a marginar la centralidad de Cristo y su cruz por buscar una fe universal que pueda unificar a los latinos en un intento de construir un nuevo mundo de justicia, fraternidad e igualdad, terminaremos de perder por completo nuestra identidad como luteranos. La razón por la cual la salvación nos viene *extra nos* es porque procede únicamente del Cristo crucificado.

El Espíritu Santo con su poder santificador también desciende desde arriba. Así es como el Espíritu Santo es presentado en el bautismo de Jesús. Es así como el Espíritu de Dios viene en el día de Pentecostés y en el Pentecostés gentil en la casa de Cornelio. En el escudo es interesante notar que Lutero prefiere identificar a este Espíritu Santo con el color blanco y no con el color rojo. Rojo es el color de la sangre. Para Lutero blanco es el color de la santidad y la santificación. El hecho de que nuestra santificación es una obra del Espíritu Santo y que es producto y no causa de nuestra justificación por la obra de la sangre de Cristo es uno de los puntos que no podemos negociar sin perder nuestra identidad como luteranos.

Otra característica de los seres humanos es nuestra tendencia a buscar en nosotros mismos la razón por la cual fuimos escogidos para ser rescatados por Cristo y hechos herederos de su reino. Hace algunas semanas me pidieron predicar sobre la parábola de la oveja perdida en nuestra adoración hispana que se celebra en el Seminario Concordia. Al llevar a cabo una pequeña investigación sobre la misma, encontré que una versión alterna de la parábola de la oveja perdida se encuentra en el Evangelio de Tomás, un escrito apócrifo con ciertas tendencias gnósticas, descubierto en Egipto en 1945. A la pregunta ¿por qué estaba dispuesto el Buen Pastor a dejar las noventa y nueve y arriesgar su vida para salvar esta oveja?, el Evangelio de Tomás nos da la siguiente respuesta: Porque era la oveja más grande, más blanca y más bonita. Tan temprano en la historia del cristianismo se busca la razón de nuestra elección en el mismo ser humano y no en la gracia y misericordia de Dios. En el Evangelio de Tomás la razón de nuestra elección ya

no es algo *extra nos* sino algo *intra nos*, dentro de nosotros mismos.

La rosa blanca Dar prioridad al fruto del Espíritu por encima de sus dones

Al tocar la cuestión de la santificación es necesario, como parte de nuestra discusión de la identidad luterana, decir algo sobre el tema de los dones del Espíritu, o sea los poderes especiales dados a los creyentes para ayudarles a llevar a cabo su misión. El color blanco en el escudo de Lutero nos permite afirmar y promover todo el fruto y todos los dones del Espíritu Santo. Los verdaderos carismas son parte esencial de nuestra vida en Cristo porque todos ellos proceden de la fe que el Espíritu ha obrado en nuestros corazones y, por lo tanto, no deben ser descartados o menospreciados. Pero hay que enfatizar que cuando hablamos de nuestra identidad como luteranos, existe una prioridad del fruto del Espíritu sobre los poderes especiales que nos da el mismo Espíritu.

Es interesante notar que cuando Lutero trata de la obra del Espíritu Santo al identificar el color blanco con la santificación, el enfoque del reformador no es tanto en los dones sino en el fruto del Espíritu. La distinción es importante. En primer lugar, las nueve dimensiones del fruto del Espíritu mencionadas en Gálatas 5 son para todos los cristianos. No son opcionales. Nadie puede declarar: *A mí nunca me fue dado el fruto de la humildad. Es un fruto que algunos reciben y otros no.* No, todas las nueve dimensiones del fruto del Espíritu son para todos. No es así con los poderes especiales o carismas que el Espíritu da a unos pero no a otros. Según el libro de Génesis, el patriarca José recibió el don de interpretar sueños. Este es un don que no recibió su padre, su madre o sus hermanos. El hecho de que José recibió este don y no sus familiares sirvió para provocar envidia y división en la familia así como sucede con algunos de los dones carismáticos en la iglesia hoy en día.

Hay una segunda diferencia importante entre el fruto y los dones especiales del Espíritu. Muchos de los carismas pueden ser imitados, falsificados y abusados por el enemigo y sus secuaces. Lutero solía llamar a Satanás el mono (chango) o simio de Dios, o sea, uno que para engañar a los seres humanos quiere copiar o imitar a Dios. Jesús mismo nos dice: “Se levantarán falsos Cristos y falsos profetas, y harán grandes señales y prodigios, de tal manera que engañarán, si fuere posible aún a los escogidos” (Mateo 24:24). Según Apocalipsis 13:13, la segunda bestia que saldrá de la tierra realizará grandes señales de tal manera que aún hará descender fuego del cielo a la tierra delante de los hombres. Tales dones o poderes especiales del Espíritu como los milagros y exorcismos, las profecías, lenguas y sanidades, el celibato y las adivinaciones pueden ser imitados por Satanás. No es así con el fruto del Espíritu Santo mencionado por Pablo en Gálatas 5. Satanás y sus agentes no son capaces de producir el verdadero amor, paz, esperanza, humildad, fe, bondad y misericordia porque tal fruto es contrario a la naturaleza de los principados y poderes de este mundo. El verdadero fruto del Espíritu solo puede ser producido por la operación del mismo Espíritu. El verdadero fruto del Espíritu es fruto de la fe en Cristo y solo aquellos que han nacido del agua y del Espíritu por el bautismo son capaces de producirlo.

En 1975 el teólogo noruego Carl F. Wisløff escribió una serie de cuatro tesis sobre Ley y Evangelio para complementar las famosas tesis del Dr. C.F.W. Walther. Vale la pena recalcar aquí la tercera de estas tesis pues enfoca bien el tema bajo discusión: “Ley y evangelio no están correctamente predicados si se lleva a la gente a una experiencia particular, en lugar de guiarlos a la promesa de Dios en su Palabra y en los sacramentos.”² De ninguna manera he incluido esta cita como una crítica de los hermanos que ejercen un verdadero carisma del Espíritu Santo en el ejercicio de su vocación cristiana, especialmente en este momento cuando estamos reunidos aquí en un seminario teológico, en un espacio ocupado por muchos eminentes teólogos que han sido bendecidos con los carismas de la enseñanza y de la sabiduría—dos dones espirituales de gran valor pero también capaces de ser abusados y utilizados para fomentar la división y el orgullo. Como luteranos somos llamados a no sobrestimar ni despreciar los dones sino a darles su debido uso para la gloria de Dios y la edificación y preservación de la unidad de la iglesia.

Los carismas pueden llegar a ser problemáticos si estos nos llevan a una escatología sobre-realizada, como creen algunos intérpretes que existió en Corinto en los días del apóstol Pablo. Al utilizar el término “escatología sobre-realizada” me refiero a la idea de que uno pueda ya en esta vida alcanzar un nivel de espiritualidad tan grande que lo haga inmune a toda tentación, capaz de subir en espíritu al cielo y conversar con los ángeles, o salvo por tener una visión de Cristo en su gloria (la visión beatífica) sin necesitar más la ayuda de la Palabra y los sacramentos. Ningún ser humano ha recobrado en su totalidad la imagen de Dios y, por lo tanto, necesitamos seguir luchando diariamente en contra de nuestra vieja naturaleza pecaminosa, el viejo Adán o la vieja Eva. El buen luterano reconoce que es siempre *simul justus et peccator*, un pecador y un santo justificado por pura gracia a la vez. El Espíritu Santo todavía no ha terminado su obra de santificación en nosotros y en la iglesia que lleva el nombre luterana.

El fondo azul celeste

Proclamando y viviendo desde la cruz la promesa del reino venidero de Cristo

El fondo azul del escudo de Lutero es, en palabras del reformador, un recuerdo de que el fruto y dones del Espíritu Santo que recibimos y celebramos ahora son un anticipo y comienzo del gozo celestial futuro. En otras palabras, por la obra del Espíritu Santo podemos comenzar a experimentar anticipaciones del futuro Reino de Dios ya en el presente. Por la Palabra y los Sacramentos las bendiciones y poderes del reino futuro invaden nuestra existencia. Tal afirmación es importante porque nos ayuda a evaluar nuestra misión como iglesia en el mundo. A través de la historia encontramos a grupos de cristianos—muchas veces con las mejores intenciones—que se creían competentes para establecer el Reino de Dios aquí en la tierra como un proyecto que los seres humanos guiados por el Espíritu son capaces de realizar. En nuestro contexto hispano pudiéramos citar como ejemplos los esfuerzos de los misioneros franciscanos de inaugurar entre los indígenas del Nuevo Mundo la soñada Tercera Edad del Espíritu profetizada por Joaquín

² Carl F. Wisløff, *Como luz brillante* (Arequipa, Perú: Editorial Siembra, 1997), 17.

de Fiore como preludio al establecimiento del reino milenarista de Cristo. Se pudiera mencionar también la Guerra de Canudos en la provincia de Bahía en Brasil (1896-1897) que surgió como consecuencia de las actividades del predicador mesiánico-escatológico Antonio Conselheiro. Más recientemente algunos teólogos han afirmado que el fin que persigue la Teología de la Liberación es el establecimiento del Reino de Dios aquí en nuestra tierra como la consecuencia de una praxis libertadora llevada a cabo por el pueblo de Dios.

Lutero vivió en un tiempo cuando muchos profetas celestiales identificaban sus movimientos con el establecimiento del Reino de Dios en la tierra. En sus días Lutero actuó con mucha más cautela al reconocer que nuestros mejores esfuerzos para establecer una sociedad más justa, humana e igualitaria no son el Reino de Dios sino adelantos o anticipos en los cuales podemos divisar la presencia del reino futuro. Son hechos que proclaman los valores del reino venidero y muestran anticipadamente algunas de las bendiciones del reino de los cielos. La teología luterana, por lo tanto, siempre ha buscado alejarse de las voces que proclaman o identifican a cualquier movimiento o institución humana con el Reino de Dios. Tal identificación casi siempre ha abierto las puertas al fanatismo revolucionario, a una escatología sobre-realizada, al imperialismo eclesiástico o aún a la justificación de una guerra santa.

Otra manifestación contemporánea de una teología de la gloria malconcebida es el llamado Movimiento Apostólico que está en pleno auge en el mundo evangélico hispano. Tal movimiento enfatiza la restauración y necesidad del oficio apostólico o patriarca-apostólico en la iglesia como una de las condiciones necesarias para la segunda venida de Jesucristo. Tales “apóstoles” han florecido en todas partes de la América Latina y han tomado el control absoluto sobre sus fieles. En muchos casos los nuevos “apóstoles” están formando sus propios partidos políticos y dando nuevas revelaciones proféticas a favor de figuras políticas nacionales de dudoso carácter ético y espiritual.

Las experiencias que nosotros en Venezuela hemos tenido con individuos y grupos que han sido influenciadas por este movimiento han sido sumamente negativas. Primero, porque los derechos, responsabilidades y capacidades de los laicos han sido menospreciados. Como resultado, el real sacerdocio de todos los creyentes ha sido marginado o negado. Los así llamados apóstoles y patriarcas con frecuencia acaparan para sí mismos más y más autoridad, privilegios especiales, influencia y bienes materiales. La tentación de utilizar los oficios eclesiásticos para ser servidos en vez de servir y de crear miniteocracias siempre ha estado con nosotros, pero en estos últimos tiempos se ha incrementado debido a una teología de gloria que ha marginado a la cruz de Cristo que adorna el centro del escudo de Lutero. Los pioneros alemanes luteranos en los Estados Unidos también han tenido sus problemas históricos con caciques y patriarcas como Martín Stephan y el pastor J. A. Grabau, así que no estamos hablando de un problema que solo tiene que ver con los hispanos.

Para mí es esencial que las congregaciones luteranas no pierdan su derecho de llamar y ordenar a sus líderes y de tener la autoridad de juzgar la teología y el estilo de vida de sus líderes. Aunque hay muchos que estarían en desacuerdo conmigo, considero imperativo que el real sacerdocio de todos los creyentes sea parte de nuestra identidad

luterana y no simplemente un artefacto anticuado cultural del Dr. Walther, como una vez me expresó un pastor luterano en Venezuela. Hace unos años un grupo de cinco pastores de otra denominación cristiana pidieron formar parte de nuestra iglesia luterana en Venezuela. Una vez que fueron ordenados, el mismo grupo intentó apoderarse de la iglesia, cambiar la constitución de la misma e instalar una especie de teocracia en la cual toda la autoridad, todas las propiedades y todos los recursos monetarios de las congregaciones estarían en poder de una sola persona. Se quería quitar a los laicos el derecho de poder cuestionar en el más mínimo detalle la actuación de sus líderes tanto en cuanto a doctrina como en el manejo de fondos y propiedades. Tales eventos resultaron en una división de la iglesia y en interminables reuniones, conferencias y gastos legales.

Ante estas tendencias y los peligros que pueden engendrar, enfatizamos una de las marcas sobresalientes de nuestra identidad luterana, a saber, la necesidad de distinguir entre la teología de la cruz y de la promesa del reino de gloria. Cristo sí ha resucitado de entre los muertos y ha dado el golpe decisivo al pecado, al demonio y a la muerte. Por la Palabra y los Sacramentos hemos recibido las primicias del reino venidero. Hemos recibido la promesa de cielos nuevos, una tierra nueva y de la resurrección de los muertos. De todas estas cosas nos gloriamos, pues la transformación de todas las cosas ha comenzado. Cristo ya está reinando en gloria a la diestra del Padre y toda autoridad le ha sido dada. Su presencia nos acompaña hasta el fin de este siglo malvado. Todos estos sucesos nos indican, como dice Pablo en Romanos 13, que la noche está avanzada, y se acerca el día, de que nuestra salvación está más cerca de nosotros que cuando creímos. Según Lutero, el fondo azul de su escudo nos señala el comienzo de un gozo celestial futuro, y por lo tanto, tenemos una teología de la promesa de la gloria. Pero todavía no hemos experimentado la realización completa de ese futuro celestial en la resurrección. Esta esperanza es, según Lutero, algo todavía no revelado plenamente.

Todavía nos encontramos en un mundo en que predomina el mal, en que los seguidores del Cordero son atacados, perseguidos y sujetos a toda clase de sufrimientos y privaciones. El llamado a tomar nuestra cruz y seguir a Cristo no ha sido reemplazado por una teología de prosperidad. No encontramos nada en el libro de Apocalipsis que nos indique que seremos raptados al cielo para no tener que pasar por las últimas tribulaciones. En 1 Corintios 4:9,13 Pablo nos habla de los apóstoles que son llevados desnudos al anfiteatro—como si fueran despreciables criminales—para ser ejecutados públicamente; luego nos dice que sus cadáveres son tirados al basurero público para podrirse sin recibir la dignidad de ser enterrados como se acostumbraba entre los habitantes del Imperio Romano.³ Para muchos discípulos del Cristo crucificado, la gloria más grande que podían esperar era la de tomar su cruz y seguirle al destierro, el desprecio y la muerte. Lutero bien sabía esto cuando escribió la última estrofa de su himno *Castillo Fuerte*: “Que lleven con furor los bienes, vida, honor, los hijos, la mujer. Todo ha de perecer: De Dios el reino queda.” Nos gloriamos, como San Pablo. Tenemos una teología de la verdadera gloria. Pero con frecuencia somos llamados a cantar nuestros himnos de gloria en la cárcel o al lado de una fosa abierta en un cementerio o aún ante el patíbulo.

Así como se puede abusar de una legítima teología a la luz de la gloria futura para

³ Henry V. Nyuyen, *New Testament Studies* 53/4 (2007): 499-500.

convertirla en una teología de prosperidad u otra abominación, es también posible abusar de una teología de la cruz para convertirla en un pesimismo eclesiástico que luego se usa para justificar la falta de motivación y movilización misionera así como la falta de uso de todos los recursos que el Espíritu nos ha dado para llevar a cabo la Gran Comisión. Dios quiere que lancemos las redes del evangelio a las aguas más profundas en espera de recoger una gran pesca y no de quedarnos anclados en aguas tranquilas con excusas tales como: “Dios está interesado en calidad y no en cantidad”. El Espíritu Santo que hemos recibido en la Palabra y los Sacramentos es un Espíritu misionero. Calificar al fervor misionero como puro entusiasmo y algo no digno de luteranos sería una buena manera de negar nuestra identidad. Los luteranos mantienen su identidad como miembros del cuerpo de Cristo cuando actúan como discípulos que activamente participan en la tarea de proclamar a todos los pueblos del mundo el evangelio de perdón y paz en Jesucristo. Es solo como una iglesia misionera que podemos mantener nuestra identidad luterana y cristiana.

La tarea de proclamar el evangelio a todos los pueblos es una que tiene que ver con la encarnación de la iglesia y su mensaje en las diversas culturales de nuestro mundo y no en un intento de imponer sobre otras culturas ciertas normas sociales y culturales. En esta presentación hemos hablado de algunas de las cosas que pueden perjudicar nuestra identidad luterana. Hay que precisar también las cosas que algunos identifican como enemigos de nuestra identidad luterana que en realidad no lo son. Uno de ellos es el multiculturalismo o convivencia de diversas culturas. Para mí, queda sobreentendido que nuestra identidad luterana no implica conformidad a las normas culturales de la clase media o de la sociedad anglosajona. En los últimos años la iglesia luterana en los Estados Unidos ha llegado a ser más y más una iglesia de la clase media, o sea, una iglesia cuya liturgia, prioridades, gustos culturales, postura frente al problema de la inmigración, organización y *modus vivendi* reflejan las normas culturales de la clase media. En demasiadas oportunidades se ha dado la preferencia al establecimiento de nuevas congregaciones en urbanizaciones o suburbios de la clase media donde supuestamente en poco tiempo el grupo podrá sostenerse económicamente por sí mismo. Pero la gran mayoría de los habitantes de nuestro globo pertenecen a las clases marginadas y a una innumerable cantidad de culturas no anglosajonas. Fidelidad a la Gran Comisión requiere de todos los cristianos y de todos los luteranos una opción preferencial para con los pobres. Esto implica vivir para y con los pobres y además que los pobres expresen su fe según las formas culturales de sus pueblos.

El hecho de que el Verbo se hizo carne no solamente quiere decir que Dios puede estar presente y trabajar a través de cosas materiales como el agua del Santo Bautismo y el pan y el vino en la Eucaristía. El Señor también quiere encarnarse en todas las diversas culturas de nuestro planeta como una vez se hizo parte del mundo cultural de Galilea, Judea y Samaria. Todas las culturas humanas son parte de la buena creación de nuestro Hacedor. Todas han sido contaminadas por el pecado, pero todas pueden ser transformadas desde adentro, así como la masa es transformada por la buena levadura. Por lo tanto, nuestra fe e identidad luterana pueden ser expresadas a través de las formas culturales de cada una de nuestras sociedades humanas. Un supuesto luteranismo que nos

pidiera sacrificar nuestra identidad hispana de forma absoluta para el bien de nuestra identidad luterana sería un luteranismo inauténtico, un luteranismo que pierde su verdadera identidad.

Al hablar de los enemigos de nuestra identidad luterana que no necesariamente tienen que ser enemigos, vale la pena mencionar también la teología de la liberación. En realidad no existe una teología de la liberación en sí, sino un sin fin de teologías—muchas veces contradictorias—que se identifican como tal. En realidad, la iglesia luterana siempre ha tenido una teología de liberación que ha sido llamada el *primer uso de la Ley*. Este es una respuesta al clamor de los marginados, los oprimidos, de los pobres y los necesitados de la tierra. El propósito del primer uso de la Ley no es el de mantener los privilegios de los faraones de nuestros tiempos sino el de establecer la justicia y de denunciar a las personas, los dirigentes y los sistemas que han servido para deshumanizar a todos los que han sido creados a la imagen de Dios.

La iglesia luterana siempre ha insistido en la necesidad de predicar no solo el Evangelio sino también la Ley. Hoy por hoy, algunas de las proclamaciones más contundentes y penetrantes de la Ley han venido por medio de algunos de los teólogos de la liberación en la América Latina. Los problemas que un luterano puede tener con la teología de la liberación ocurren cuando tal proclamación es presentada como el mensaje del Evangelio del perdón de pecados, o sea, un camino de salvación. Un luterano siempre insistirá en que la salvación es dada por medio de la gracia de Dios que ha sido manifestada en la Cruz de Jesucristo y no por involucrarnos en la lucha de transformar nuestra sociedad. Lamentablemente existe en nuestro medio hispano una creencia equivocada de la salvación según la cual se logra la justificación por medio de nuestra identificación con una causa justa. La lucha a favor de la justicia, la igualdad y la libertad es un producto y no la causa de nuestra liberación en Cristo. Cada vez que confundimos la justificación con la santificación opacamos nuestra identidad como luteranos.

En varios sectores de nuestro mundo hispano la teología de la liberación ha perdido terreno y fuerza. Muchos que antes abogaban a favor de la teología de la liberación han cambiado su enfoque y ahora están promoviendo un encuentro con Dios mediante las diversas expresiones de religiosidad popular que se encuentran entre nuestros pueblos. El nuevo enfoque de muchos teólogos, iglesias y hasta gobiernos en América Latina hoy en día no es tanto la teología de la liberación como hace unos veinte años, sino la exaltación de la religiosidad popular. El enfoque es en gran parte un producto de una interpretación muy radical de la opción preferencial por los pobres. De acuerdo a esta manera de pensar, si Dios tiene una opción preferencial hacia los pobres es porque siempre ha estado con ellos y porque se ha encarnado no solo en Jesucristo sino en las tradiciones, ceremonias, mitos y costumbres de las masas. Esto quiere decir que podemos tener un encuentro con el Creador y con el Gran Espíritu no solo por los medios de gracia que se celebran en la iglesia cristiana, sino también en la historia, en las luchas, en los sufrimientos y en las expresiones religiosas de todas las tribus y razas de nuestros pueblos americanos. En otras palabras, Dios se revela no solo en las Sagradas Escrituras sino también en el *Popul Vuh* y en las tradiciones orales transmitidas por los chamanes, curanderos y sacerdotes populares. Para muchos el evangelismo, ya no es como antes, proclamar el mensaje del

Cristo crucificado, sino compartir tradiciones religiosas y de esta manera profundizar en los secretos del universo.

En el libro “*El Canto del Colibrí*” de la escritora chicana Graciela Limón, a quien ya hemos hecho referencia, el buen padre Benito, joven monje franciscano, es enviado a un convento en la ciudad de México para escuchar la confesión de una anciana mujer y darle la absolución poco antes de su muerte. La anciana se llama Huitzitzilin que en el idioma náhuatl quiere decir colibrí. El libro de Limón toma la forma de una serie de confesiones en las cuales la protagonista describe su vida desde sus días como una joven adolescente de la nobleza azteca en los días de la Conquista hasta su encuentro con el padre Benito unos sesenta años después de la Conquista. De esta manera, el libro toma la forma de una cadena de recuentos históricos que relatan los eventos más impactantes de la Conquista y sus consecuencias desde la óptica de los conquistados y no de los vencedores.

Con disgusto y horror, el padre Benito descubre que Huitzitzilin, aunque había sido bautizada como católica por el famoso misionero Motolinia, todavía retiene muchas de sus viejas creencias paganas. Además, Huitzitzilin, en vez de lamentar sus muchos pecados, los defiende y los justifica. Los pecados de Huitzitzilin son muchos: fornicación, el aborto del feto que llevaba en sus entrañas, adulterio, automutilación, idolatría y el asesinato de su amante (un conquistador español). A través de toda la novela el buen padre Benito intenta llevar a Huitzitzilin a la contrición y al remordimiento. Al mismo tiempo, la protagonista busca convertir a su confesor a entender su propia historia, la historia de una indígena oprimida, atropellada, humillada, violada y deshumanizada. Desde esta óptica, sus actos son las únicas respuestas posibles para ella. El día antes de su muerte, Huitzitzilin le pide al padre Benito, su perdón—no el perdón de Dios, ni el perdón de la iglesia católica, sino de su perdón personal.

Al entregar el perdón solicitado de esta forma, se cambian los papeles. El padre Benito que había sido enviado para lograr la conversión de Huitzitzilin es evangelizado por ella. En una forma dramática Graciela Limón ha dado expresión al nuevo concepto de evangelización que está ganando terreno en el Mundo Hispano, especialmente entre los católicorromanos. De acuerdo a este concepto, la evangelización no es la comunicación de un mensaje de salvación del evangelista al evangelizado, sino un diálogo en el cual los dos comparten las maneras en que ellos han experimentado la presencia del Espíritu de Dios en sus propias historias, culturas y expresiones religiosas. O sea, el elemento de la salvación como algo que nos viene *extra nos* ha sido reemplazado por la búsqueda de experiencias de salvación en nuestra cultura, en nuestra historia y en nuestra propia experiencia existencial. Aceptar tal perspectiva sería, a mi manera de entender, una negación de nuestra identidad luterana.

Esto no quiere decir, sin embargo, que no haya nada que podamos aprender acerca del estudio de las grandes religiones del mundo y también de la religiosidad popular de nuestros pueblos hispanos. En estos podemos encontrar elementos de la ley natural escrita en el corazón humano. También en estos podemos apreciar la profunda religiosidad del ser humano y su deseo de entrar en contacto con el Creador y la Fuente de su existencia. En estos podemos encontrar muchos himnos, lamentos y meditaciones de gran belleza que pueden ser usados para enriquecer nuestra propia praxis. Pero a la

vez, debemos estar concientes de que en nuestro diálogo con las expresiones de la religiosidad popular podemos encontrar elementos equivocados, peligrosos y hasta diabólicos. Por lo tanto, es imperativo utilizar las Sagradas Escrituras y dirigir la mirada a Jesucristo, la Palabra hecha carne, para evaluar toda expresión o manifestación religiosa proveniente de la religiosidad popular o de las otras grandes religiones—si es que queremos preservar nuestra identidad luterana. No se puede mantener la *sola fide* y la *sola gratia* de nuestra identidad luterana sin la *sola Scriptura*.

El anillo áureo Creados para vivir en comunión eterna con Dios

La última imagen que encontramos en el escudo de Martín Lutero es el anillo de oro que sirve para encerrar el fondo azul celeste del cual hemos hablado. El propio Dr. Lutero ha identificado este anillo de oro con la eterna bienaventuranza del cielo. A pesar de todo lo que muchos autores y analistas han escrito acerca de satisfacer las necesidades básicas materiales del ser humano en cuanto a comida, techo, reproducción y seguridad antes de hablar de conceptos tan efímeros como Dios y el cielo, la realidad es que Dios nos ha creado para tener comunión con Él y en lo más profundo de nuestro ser late un hambre que puede ser satisfecha solamente por Dios y el cielo. Una de las razones principales dadas por los sociólogos por el decrecimiento de las comunidades de base en muchas partes de América Latina es que, después de un tiempo, las personas se dan cuenta que la vida humana es más que comer, beber y hacer fiesta—verdad que han olvidado algunos teólogos de la liberación en su afán por promover la realización de su proyecto en la historia y en el tiempo. Muchos laicos y sacerdotes que antes militaban en las trincheras de la liberación se encuentran ahora metidos en una célula carismática, en una iglesia Pentecostal, la Nueva Era o en una forma del ocultismo.

El pan que dio Moisés en el desierto, a fin de cuentas, no satisface. Lutero bien sabía que lo que anhelamos debajo de nuestra frenética lucha por conseguir los bienes materiales de nuestra sociedad de consumo es lo que simboliza el anillo de oro en su escudo. Es la esperanza de que no todo termina con la muerte. Esta esperanza es lo que nos anima a no cansarnos de hacer el bien. Si todo terminara con la muerte, entonces la muerte—y no Jesucristo—sería nuestro Dios. La visión del establecimiento del Reino de Dios que vemos en la transfiguración de Jesús nos garantiza que vale la pena construir una nueva sociedad que es un anticipo del reino futuro. Nos anima a luchar a favor de la justicia y a defender los derechos de los oprimidos, y nos recuerda que nuestro trabajo en el Señor no es en vano. El capítulo 11 de Hebreos nos muestra cuán importante fue ese anillo de oro en la vida de todos los santos y mártires desde los días de Abel hasta el tiempo de los apóstoles. Fue la esperanza de recibir lo que simbolizaba ese anillo de oro que sostuvo a Martín Lutero en su lucha en contra de los principados y potestades de su tiempo. Es la esperanza que necesitaremos no solo para mantener nuestra identidad como luteranos sino para mantenernos fieles a Cristo hasta la muerte.

Conclusión

Hemos definido nuestra identidad luterana de acuerdo a las cinco partes del escudo de Martín Lutero. El color negro nos recuerda el estado total de perdición en el cual nos encontramos y del cual es imposible escapar por nuestros propios esfuerzos. El color rojo subraya el hecho de que solo por la fe en la sangre de Cristo y por una salvación que viene *extra nos* somos liberados del poder del pecado, la muerte y el diablo. El color blanco nos recalca que la santificación obrada por el Espíritu Santo con su buen fruto y dones es producto y resultado de haber sido declarados libres de culpa (justificados) ante Dios por la fe en Cristo. El fondo azul celeste del escudo nos habla del futuro Reino de Dios que no solamente está para llegar sino que ya está invadiendo nuestro presente y transformando nuestra realidad. Finalmente, antes de que seamos cegados y trastornados por falsos valores de esta generación adúltera, el anillo de oro nos recuerda además que nuestra esperanza como luteranos son los cielos nuevos y la tierra nueva en la que habrá justicia plena y donde Cristo será Rey de Reyes y Señor de Señores.

Summary

Originally presented as a lecture at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Dr. Blank argues in this essay that Luther's seal (rose) is a productive theological summary of Lutheran identity for engaging theological and cultural ideas and currents in the Hispanic/Latino world. The author takes the reader on a journey through the various parts of the seal, their theological meaning, and most importantly their significance for the church's thinking about and engaging in missions among and with Hispanics/Latinos. Primary attention is given to the question of preservation of Lutheran identity in Hispanic/Latino contexts, but also in part to the need for affirming genuine Hispanic/Latino identities in the construction of a Lutheran worldview.

The black cross in the center of the seal reminds us to face the reality and depth of our sinful human condition. The author points to the underlying suspicion regarding perfect societies in the works of García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, and Graciela Limón, as well as to the plain realities of exploitation in the mines of Potosí, Bolivia, or the kidnappings and deaths perpetrated by Mara Salvatrucha gangs, as strong reminders of life in a sinful world. The red heart upon which the black cross rests points to the gift of faith, which directs our minds and hearts to the crucified Christ and His Gospel. Regarding such faith, the author defends the *extra nos* character of God's intervention in human affairs (so well attested to in the psalms), reminding us that faith as trust does not look to what God might or not be doing in creation or what the Spirit might or not be doing in our experiences but rather to Christ as its aim. There is no access to God and the Spirit apart from Christ the crucified.

The white rose upon which the red heart rests reminds us of the life of faith, which brings joy and peace in the Spirit. Here the author gives priority to the fruit of the Spirit—love being the foundation of such fruit—over the particular gifts so that one

might be able to discern the proper evangelical use of spiritual gifts in the church. The celestial blue background of the whole seal shows us that faith in the crucified Christ and joy in the Spirit are a foretaste of the heavenly joy that Christians look forward to in hope even as they bear crosses in this world. In this section, the author warns against the dangers of ecclesial imperialism evident, for example, in the so-called Apostolic Movement—where whatever the “apostle” says goes—or in a relatively recent split among Lutherans in Venezuela over the unchecked power a group of pastors claimed to possess over congregations in matters concerning faith and even finances. The golden ring that encircles the seal directs us to the fulfillment of all joys through eternal communion with God—a joy that transcends all earthly needs while also empowering us to work for the neighbor who needs us.

After each description of the various parts of Luther’s seal—including personal stories from the author’s missionary experience—Dr. Blank engages critically and constructively ideas and movements in the Hispanic/Latino world. For example, the author is critical of some liberation theologies’ romantic view of the poor and oppressed as naturally good and noble (or sinless), but also praises the preferential option for the poor as a radical affirmation of the priority of love for the neediest neighbors in our midst. Under criticism is also the recent move towards privileging popular religiosity with little qualification at the expense of bringing people creatively into the narrative of redemption in Jesus Christ. At the same time, the author recognizes that all humans without distinction have the knowledge of the law in their hearts, desire to find the source and end of their existence through their various religious expressions, and even share inspiring stories that can serve as bridges for dialogue concerning sin and ultimately for proclaiming the Gospel.

On the one hand, the author criticizes utopian visions of reality that seek to construct something like a kingdom of God on earth—for example, Vasconcelos’s *raza cósmica*, or some Pentecostals’ “over-realized” eschatologies devoid of struggle and the cross in this life. On the other hand, he speaks of the proclamation of the Gospel through Word and Sacraments and its visible fruits in the life of the Christian who cares for his neighbor as concrete anticipations of the coming Kingdom of God in the here and now. No reductionism of Christian hope to an absolute this-worldliness is allowed. Yet the author can also highlight the first use of the law to curb injustice against the neighbor in this world as a critical tool that Lutherans have at their disposal to foster the cause of justice on behalf of the poor in the here and now.

Finally, the author argues in parts of the essay for a genuine Latino Lutheranism. He is suspicious of grand visions of Latino unity such as Vasconcelos’ *raza cósmica* because of their potential to be read in such a way that the complexity and diversity of Latino cultures become diluted into a globalizing metanarrative that serves the interests of neo-liberal market capitalism. Closer to the U.S. ecclesial context, the author is no less critical of predominantly non-Latino churches’ readings of Latinos into suspicious forms of Lutheranism that at times serve the interests of the middle class and their political views on immigration, poverty, or economic sustainability of church plants more than a genuine Lutheran evangelical and vocational interest in reaching out to the strange and needy

neighbor with the Gospel and the arm of mercy in ways that take seriously their complex worldviews, challenges, and hopes.

At the Edge of the Nation Reprised On Marginality and the Hispanic Church

Eloy S. González

“You have given me the title to my next book, Mr. Gonzalez.” These words from my undergraduate political science professor still resonate in my ears. “What do you mean professor?” I asked—half expecting that some bone-headed thing I did or said would give him just the right theme for his next “what-not-to-do” book. But the professor’s response surprised me. “*At the Edge of the Nation*—those are your father’s words. I read them in the paper that you turned in. That’s what I’m going to title my next book: *At the Edge of the Nation*.”

We had been assigned to interview a person who had lived through major societal change—especially during the 1950s and 1960s. I chose to interview my father.¹ He was a truck driver. He told me about the things he had faced as he drove his truck through different parts of the country. He recollected how in West Texas it was not unusual to spend over one hundred dollars for fuel, only to be told that “Mexicans” could not use the bathroom at the gas station. He also vividly remembered the little town of Wharton in southeast Texas. While driving through, he and a colleague had stopped at a little diner to get lunch. After a long wait, the cook came out from the kitchen and told them that he could not serve them. He was not rude or angry, just matter-of-fact. “He told us to go down the road a bit and we would find a place that served Blacks and Mexicans,” my father related.

And, of course, there was the part of the long conversation with my father that

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¹ Domitilo González was born in 1912 in Mexico. His mother—my grandmother—“gave” him to her sister to raise. This aunt lived in deep, deep South Texas, so my father grew up on the U.S. side of the Mexican border in the very tiny, dirt-poor, agro-based community of La Grulla, Texas. He grew up picking cotton, onions, citrus, cantaloupe, tomato, and a variety of other crops raised in the area. Somehow he made it through the sixth grade—an education considered adequate for that time and place. It was a hard life. This inspired him to learn a trade. He chose to learn how to drive trucks. A few diversions forced him into other types of jobs, but being a professional driver became his life-long work. He drove trucks as he served in the European Theater of Operations for the U.S. Army during WWII. Upon his discharge from the Army, he purchased a number of cars and with a friend started a small taxi-cab company. The primary clientele for this business were legal guest workers from Mexico that were picked up at the border crossing between Reynosa, Mexico and Hidalgo, Texas and shuttled to their work sites. In the early 1960s the legal moorings for this guest worker program were abolished when the *Bracero Guest Worker Act* was ended. This effectively eliminated the great majority of the business that dad’s taxi company did forcing the business to close. So my father returned to driving trucks until he retired.

yielded the title to the professor's next book: "Dad, what do you appreciate most about living here?" I had asked. He talked about many things, but being a professional driver, he gravitated to how much he appreciated the farm-to-market road system in Texas.

He said, "The roads in the state are great. But here in the Rio Grande Valley² the road system is not as nice as around Austin or Houston. There the roads are wider and better maintained. Here, in the Valley, the roads just get you from one place to another."

Out of naiveté I asked, "Why do you think that the roads here are not as nice or well maintained?" His response: "If you had a business, you would want to put it at the center of town where you would get the most traffic. You would want to make sure that the greatest number of people would have easy access to it. That is why I think that the State puts so much money into the roads and buildings in Austin and the big cities. Why would they want to put their resources here, *at the edge of the nation?*"

Thus, a book title was born and a bittersweet reality was shared from father to son—not with rancor or disdain, just matter-of-fact. Just like at that diner in Wharton, Texas. Why would anyone want to put his resources *at the edge of the nation?*

Being at the Edge

We need to delve a bit more into the phrase "at the edge of the nation." The phrase can legitimately be considered from a number of perspectives. First, we can say that being at the edge is very literal and to be understood geographically. In this sense the expression refers to people who live on the fringes of the country, on the border, at the *Frontera*. Very literally, they are borderlands people. The people we are talking about could be located along the U.S.-Mexico border, or they could be inner city or barrio folk. The key to understanding this initial definition of being at the edge is to recognize that there are people geographically and socially on the fringes of mainstream society.

Second, we can say that the phrase "at the edge of the nation" refers to people who find no acceptance in society. It can refer to people who are treated as "non-persons." Virgilio Elizondo suggests that Mexican-Americans are such a group. He refers to the Mexican-Americans in the United States as the New Galileans. In Jesus' time, Galileans were regarded with patronizing contempt by the Jews and were scorned by the Gentiles.³ In the same way the linguistic and cultural synthesis of the Mexican-Americans finds acceptance neither among people who hail from Latin America nor among the predominant Anglo culture of North America.

"At the edge of a nation" can also refer to other people who struggle to find acceptance in society. It would be accurate to say that most of the world is populated by such people. The two-thirds of the world that make up the "third world" can be classed as

² The Rio Grande Valley is a four-county area in the southernmost part of Texas. The region is approximately 250 miles south of San Antonio, 350 miles south of Austin, and 550 miles south of Dallas. Three of the four counties making up the Rio Grande Valley are on the U.S.-Mexico border.

³ Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 51.

people who live “at the edge of the nation.” This becomes clearer as these cultures come into the proximity of and interact with more dominant cultures.

Third, being “at the edge” may legitimately refer to those who are systematically excluded from the church decisions that directly affect them. These would be people with no seat at the table where important, strategic, and tactical plans are conceived and activated through institutional church organizations and budgets. Included among these people are demographically significant populations whom the church has said it is interested in reaching but whose voices are rarely taken into account.

Marginalization or marginality is the more general term that has been used in the social and religious literature to refer to the experience we have been defining. For the remainder of the article, these are the terms that will be used. Moreover, for the purposes of this article, the term “church” refers to the institutional church and very specifically The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), the organizational corpus made up of Districts, Boards, Commissions, staffs and offices. These are the entities that hold sway over the institutional machinery that evaluates and prioritizes the church’s activities.

Does Systematic Marginalization exist in the Church?

Borderland communities have never fared well. Neither have barrios and slums, or, in the suburbia-driven society of today, inner cities. These areas struggle to find a voice and resources in the broader society. Society takes care of the more influential first. It is human nature. And the principle, it seems, is ubiquitous. We practice it in our personal lives, in government, business, industry and the church. Taking care of what we consider most important for us first is part of the basic human fabric since the Fall. It becomes sinful when our actions cause others to suffer loss or when in our choices we fail to consider the needs of the weaker neighbor.

Does the church also struggle with this? Yes. The church as a corporate entity first takes care of itself. We have often heard the phrase, “turned inward,” as it applies to congregations. It is not altogether different with the church as a corporate entity. The church struggles with identifying its neighbor, as well as with identifying and meeting needs of those “at the edge of the nation.” The basic problem with this tendency is that when the church behaves this way, it hurts itself. It hurts its mission. It hurts its capacity to find acceptance by the very people it marginalizes. It limits its ability to get seasoned advice from people who are part of or have served those people groups. But most of all, when the church behaves this way, it fails to be what the Scriptures call it to be, namely, an entity that makes disciples of all nations. It fails to be an entity that missionally lives out the call to become all things to all men so that by all possible means it may have the privilege of being used by God to save some.

It is my firm conviction that people of good will who love the Lord Jesus lead the Boards, Commissions, Districts, executive staff, offices, and the various other entities that together make up the LCMS. There is no question about the consecration and devotion of these fine leaders. There is no “agenda” in the LCMS to systematically

marginalize any people group. In fact, quite the opposite: the agenda is to evangelize. So how then does marginalization occur?

The problem of marginalization of Hispanics begins to manifest itself when critical decisions affecting the Hispanic community are made in a near vacuum. In these cases, lack of familiarity and connection with the Hispanic community renders many LCMS leaders' best intentions and decisions as, at best, counter-productive, especially as regards the *missio Dei* (God's work to restore fallen humanity through the work of Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ) or, simply, mission work. Often the decisions are actually damaging. A variety of institutional policies, decisions, and choices that have served to marginalize Hispanics in the LCMS will be cited.⁴

First, consider the string of questionable funding decisions affecting Hispanic ministry that have been made in the LCMS. It is correct to say that in the last decade contributions to Districts and Synod have declined. This type of pressure, coupled with the need to pursue an ambitious church planting strategy, has strained District and Synodical budgets. The situation has put enormous pressure on leaders to balance budgets. How did the institutional church respond?

In case after case, in District after District, subsidies to existing Hispanic ministries and church workers were either eliminated or are in the process of being systematically reduced to zero.⁵ In a number of cases, Districts have taken these measures after years of funding ministries that have failed to yield self-sustaining, self-propagating congregations. However, these crucial decisions were made without soliciting the input from the Hispanic community. Nor were other options explored. Church workers affected were not given the opportunity to learn skills that the church implied they lacked. The church responded in ways that effectively excluded the voice of its Hispanic brothers and sisters.

Second, consider the case of church-worker formation. The path to the LCMS *ministerium* for Spanish-speaking people went through the former Hispanic Institute of Theology (HIT). The HIT was begun in partnership with Concordia University—River Forest (now Concordia University Chicago), the Board for Mission Services, and the old Board for Higher Education. Over the course of a decade, each of the latter two partners unilaterally acted to eliminate its funding for the HIT. This move could have had the disastrous effect of eliminating the path to the *ministerium* for Spanish-speaking church workers in an increasingly Latino nation.⁶ Again, critical decisions were made by two different program boards of the LCMS with no input from the Hispanic community of the LCMS.

⁴ This section is an expansion of a prior commentary piece written in *Reporter*, the official newspaper of the LCMS. See Eloy González, "We Need to Reach the Latinos!" (1 May 2006). Reporter Online. Online: <https://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=9783> [cited 5 March 2008].

⁵ Subsidies to other church workers and missions besides Hispanic ministries were also affected in a number of cases.

⁶ The funding for the HIT was eliminated by the board of Mission Services and the Board for High Education during different years. After these program boards took this action, Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, replaced the funding the HIT had lost. Today the ministry of the HIT has morphed into the ministry of the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) and is fully supported by Concordia Seminary.

Third, consider the case of the position of National Hispanic Counselor. This position once served the LCMS by helping to provide seasoned advice to both the church and to the Hispanic community of the LCMS. The function and scope of this position were changed a number of times. With each change, the position became less able to serve the Hispanic community. Finally, the position was completely eliminated. The LCMS Hispanic community was not consulted.

Finally, consider the case of the overwhelming recommendation of the National Hispanic Summit that met in Saint Louis in January of 2007. This forum was convened by the President of the LCMS to provide a venue and sounding board for the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Hispanic Ministry in order to test its recommendations. The overwhelming recommendation of this Summit to the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Hispanic Ministry was to create and fund a position for a “Director for Strategic Development of Hispanic Ministries.” This position was deemed vital to the health and vitality of the existing LCMS Hispanic ministry and to the future hope that the LCMS might be able to effectively engage in mission work to the more than 40 million Hispanics in the United States.

This recommendation was put into the form of a resolution to be passed on to the Synodical Convention that met during the summer of 2007. But, the recommendation was first modified in floor committee to essentially say that the position would be created “once funding was available.” The Synodical Convention approved the resolution by an overwhelming majority (yea: 875; nay: 112). However, as work to actually implement the Synodical Convention’s decision is done, the obstacle that crops up is the funding. The pat answer is that for this position to be created, something else needs to be eliminated. In other words, the message has been that it is not high enough a concern for the institutional church to reevaluate its priorities.

These examples are simply put before the reader to show that marginalization can occur even in a church that is vitally interested in mission work among Hispanics. Marginalization can occur even in a church whose leaders are people of faith vitally concerned with Hispanic mission and ministry. The Hispanic voice can be ignored or not sought when decisions vital to Hispanics and Hispanic ministry are being decided. Clearly the institutional church does engage in systematic marginalization of Hispanics.

How does Systematic Marginalization affect the Mission of the Church?

As Districts make decisions critical to the ministry of Hispanic church workers, they tend to do so unilaterally. There is little to no input from the Hispanic community. There is little to no conversation to explore other types of solutions and partnerships to assist the church in learning about the challenges faced by workers on the margins of the church. There is little to no effort to figure out the training and formation needs of these workers, whether their skill set is compatible or not with the work expected of them in a particular ministry and mission setting. In many cases, the church chooses to invest its resources in new workers whose abilities are again not vetted by seasoned Hispanic leaders. Therefore, not only does the church worker suffer, but the church deprives itself

of the opportunity to grow and improve its capacity to reach others by growing the skills and abilities of its own church workers.

Another problem is that the church begins to place doubts about its own loyalty into the minds of Hispanics. After unilaterally acting in what seems a prejudicial way against Hispanics, how does a District convince future Hispanic church planters that the District is a reliable partner? The lack of dialogue on these issues has created a level of mistrust among Hispanics and the institutional church. In a number of cases there has been substantial emotional backlash from a number of church workers. The lack of trust has resulted in accusations of racism, divestiture of church properties by both Districts and Hispanic congregations, and a questioning of the District and Synodical missional goals. In each case, church workers were alienated and the reputation of the church as being vitally interested in Hispanic ministry has suffered.

Another issue is that by marginalizing Hispanic church workers and Hispanic people, the church fails to learn. The challenge to Hispanic church workers has been to raise self-supporting congregations, a challenge that is daunting. Consider Kochhar's findings: "Hispanic households have less than ten cents for every dollar in wealth owned by White households."⁷ Kochhar's research is based on the state of the Hispanic family economy in the year after the recession of 2001. Kochhar cites research stating that the situation was not much better during the economic heyday of the decade of 1990s. A wide gulf between White and Hispanic households is also observed in estimates from the Survey of Consumer Finances. Research by Edward Wolff shows that, in 1995, the wealth of Hispanics was only eight percent of the wealth of White households.⁸

Considering the statistics, there is no financial base from which to build self-sustainability for congregations in the Hispanic community. And yet, the church's expectation is for Hispanic mission planters to develop self-sustaining ministries. This is possible, but not in the traditional way done by congregations in more affluent communities. But how can we learn if we do not dialogue. How can we learn if we do not accompany? How can we learn so that we do not repeat these mistakes time and again with church worker after church worker?

To learn about overcoming these obstacles we need to begin to listen to the margins. We need to begin to hear the voices of the Hispanic community, especially as the institutional church makes decisions that directly affects them. One of the forces that keeps this from happening is the hegemony created as a powerful institutional church interacts with a marginalized segment of its constituency. In these circumstances there are no winners. The church loses as its mission efforts to reach those on the margins languish unsuccessfully. The church loses esteem in the eyes of those on the margins when it makes decisions that are interpreted as institutional racism. The Hispanic community loses also as it finds itself pushed farther toward the margins of the church. And the mission loses as neither the church nor church workers finds ways to make the contributions necessary to reach the Hispanic community.

⁷ Rakesh Kochhar, "The Wealth of Hispanic Households: 1996 to 2002" (18 October 2004): 1. Pew Hispanic Center. Online: <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/34.pdf> [cited 17 February 2008].

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

This is not a new phenomenon. A church that believes it has the power and authority to act unilaterally is in danger. Consider the following dialogue from an interview between the Rt. Rev. Dr. David Zac Niringiye, assistant bishop in a region of Uganda, and Andy Crouch, a writer for *Christianity Today*:

Crouch: As a longtime friend and partner of North American Christians, what have you noticed about us?

Dr. Zac: One of the gravest threats to the North American church is the deception of power—the deception of being at the center. Those at the center tend to think, “The future belongs to us. We are the shapers of tomorrow. The process of Gospel transmission, the process of mission—all of it is on our terms, because we are powerful, because we are established. We have a track record of success, after all.” Yet recently the Lord led me to an amazing passage, the encounter between Jesus and Nathaniel in John 1. Nathaniel has decided Jesus is a non-entity. Jesus comes from Nazareth, after all. Nathaniel’s skepticism comes from being in power, being at the center. Those at the center decide that anyone not with us is—not against us—[but] just irrelevant. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” It doesn’t warrant our time. But the Messiah is from Nazareth. Surprise, Nathaniel!

Crouch: What’s the problem with being at the center?

Dr. Zac: God very often is working most powerfully far from the center. Jesus is crucified outside Jerusalem—outside—with the very cynical sign over his head, “The King of the Jews.” Surprise—he is the King of the Jews. “We had hoped...” say the disappointed disciples on the road to Emmaus, but he did not fulfill our criteria. In Acts, we read that the cross-cultural missionary thrust did not begin in Jerusalem. It began in Antioch, on the periphery, the margins. But Jerusalem is not ready for Antioch. In fact, even when they go to Antioch, it’s just to check on what’s happening. I have come to the conclusion that the powerful, those at the center, must begin to realize that the future shape of things does not belong to them. The future shape of things is on the periphery. The future shape of things is not in Jerusalem, but outside. It is Nazareth. It is Antioch. If you really want to understand the future of Christianity, go and see what is happening in Asia, Africa, Latin America. It’s the periphery—but that’s where the action is.⁹

Powerful church leaders missed the Messiah! Powerful church leaders missed the significance of what a German monk (Luther!) was trying to say during the time of the Reformation. Powerful churches missed the significance of the Word during the time of historical criticism. By missing what happens on the edge—the margins—a powerful church can often miss what God is trying to accomplish. When a powerful church fails to understand the hermeneutic of marginality, it will also struggle to communicate the Word of Truth to people on the margins. Bishop Zac is warning powerful North American

⁹ Andy Crouch, “Experiencing Life at the Margins,” *Christianity Today* (July 2006): 32, 34.

churches to pay attention to the margins or risk becoming irrelevant as it attempts to enter into mission fields.

Dr. Zac suggests that by becoming connected to the margins, the church learns how to read the Bible differently. It learns in a very real and tangible way that Jesus is after all the Lord of the church. The church learns that when it exercises power based on its own position of authority, it can actually harm the mission endeavor. Learning to see things from the perspective of those on the margins will in the end serve the church by keeping it from converting mission work into an exercise of power.¹⁰

Bishop Zac is not the only voice lifting these concerns. Among others, Hispanic theologian Orlando Costas suggests that the *missio Dei* suffers because the largely middle-class church culture sees Scripture from a very different perspective than the marginalized see it. In the end, this disconnect affects the church's missiology. Costas was an advocate of the concept that a church incarnating the Holy Spirit was a church that would grow numerically. As such, Costas did not reject church growth theory. He did, however, have concerns with a number of aspects of the Church Growth movement. One of these was precisely the notion that the church's Scriptural hermeneutic was flawed because of its affluence. Curtis W. Book writes:

First, he [*Costas*] was concerned with what he perceived to be a shallow hermeneutic. He perceived that many times while appealing to the authority of the Scriptures, because of the overarching desire to see churches grow, advocates tended towards simplistic biblical interpretations which they applied across the cultural spectrum without adequate attention to the local context. "[It] takes more than obedience to the biblical text," says Costas. "It takes tireless effort to understand it in 'its context and coherent purpose.'" For example, when a person within an oppressive social system approaches a text like Luke 4:18-19 in the light of his context of injustice, he understands the issues of poverty, oppression, sight and blindness in a way different from a person who approaches the same passage from the vantage point of middle-class America. He makes the point that the places where the interpreters stand make a huge difference in their approach to the biblical text. The Western missiologist who views the text from a position of privilege and a full stomach often fails to see its radical biblical hermeneutic (1974:131-34).¹¹

We are a church body interested in using tangible means to demonstrate that we are faithful to God's call of mission work. We argue that the principal weapon we have in this work is a gift of God, namely, the Gospel. According to Costas, a powerful church risks neutralizing this gift of God and rendering it irrelevant by failing to apply a

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹ Curtis W. Book, "The Continuing Relevance of Orlando Costas' Ecclesiology," *Mission Studies* 23/1 (2007): 68.

hermeneutic that properly contextualizes the Gospel for people of different cultures. In order to interpret and apply God's Word in an authentic contextualized manner, it is necessary to connect with the people on the margins. It is the only way to see the scriptures the way people on the edge see it. It is the only way to make proclamation meaningful and relevant. It is what Saint Paul was able to do at the Areopagus when he said:

*“Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.”*¹²

Another Hispanic theologian, Harold Recinos, also echoes some of these same principles. He points the church to the cry of the oppressed and specifically directs us to Jesus' identification with poor people.¹³ It is this identification that can serve to clarify the missional imperatives for the church. Recinos writes:

God's identification with the poor is becoming clearer to the church as it looks to the barrio. The church is discovering that the oppressed and the poor are laying Christianity's foundation for the next millennium. The humiliated of the world are now speaking from the context of the barrio in ways that reflect the drama of the Holy Spirit at work renewing hope, theology, and ecclesial praxis. In this new reformation underway in the barrio, the poor teach the universal church that following Jesus in the setting of oppression and suffering means expressing a love that is sacrificially attentive to others (John 15:13). The poor raise ultimate questions for faith and remind the church that Christian love necessitates social transformations.¹⁴

Recinos sums up the concerns discussed earlier. He indicates that by looking to the margins, churches are finding the foundational elements that will prepare the church to face ministry in the present future. Ministry to those on the margins is how the church connects to the transforming power of God, which in turn allows the church to become a transformative agent. As a church body, we have much to gain by engaging those on the edge. We have seen microcosms of this effect as people returning from the margins after short-term mission trips engage ministry with a new zeal, energized for service. Imagine an entire church body *Ablaze!* in this fashion!

¹² Acts 17: 22b-24 (New International Version).

¹³ Recinos very specifically identifies the subject of his work as Latinos living in very marginalized situations in barrios located next to centers of wealth and power.

¹⁴ Harold J. Recinos, "The Barrio as the Locus of a New Church," in *Hispanic Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Fernando F. Segovia, eds. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 183-194; reprint "El barrio: contexto teológico de una nueva iglesia," in *Cuadernos de Teología* 24 (2005): 131.

Conclusion

What Lessons can We take Home?

Clearly the institutional church needs to recognize that it has indeed acted in ways that have marginalized people. It needs to understand that such actions are incompatible with the *missio Dei* and repent. If we are to engage the world with the love of Jesus Christ, we must also begin to look at those “at the edge of the nation” as people who are valuable and who can make contributions to the church. In other words, the institutional church needs to find ways to listen to the voices of those who are marginalized. By doing so, the church will also be engaging in the work of reconciliation. It will be stretching itself to reach into the borderlands with the Gospel of peace. Keenen writes:

Christianity calls us to be ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5) and in doing that asks us to reconcile the world to God. In that work we must always be vigilant not only to those who are outsiders but also to our own tendencies to, by a variety of ways, exclude others. Christians, mindful both of their sinfulness and of the needs of those on the margins of society, must see in Christ the one who brings us into a kingdom where there are no outsiders because there is no outsidings. That is the vision of the world and the church that we hope to see realized.¹⁵

The institutional church also needs to learn how to serve. Christ told his followers that the greatest in the Kingdom of God would be the servant of all. It is clear that the church needs to recognize that its default vantage point of power is dangerous to its identity as the Body of Christ and to its capacity to reach out to the margins where many of those that need to be served live. Learning how to serve is learning how to be like Christ.

If the church articulates that mission work among the marginalized is important, it follows that the institutional church needs to find a way to reevaluate and change its priorities. Such change requires a more ethical and equitable system of prioritizing the “business” of the church. It calls for a sense of calling to serve not just its core constituency, but those who are on the margins. Budgets for church worker preparation programs and for sending workers into the harvest need to reflect the articulated missional imperatives and positions of the church.

Finally, the church needs to learn to hear of the challenges faced by these workers on the margins. When decisions that affect these workers need to be made, the church needs to actively seek out sage advice from the communities that will be affected. Without a leader that can be the voice for the marginalized Hispanic, the church must establish a way to hear the voice rising from the edge of the nation.

It is the hope of the author that this article will allow us to examine critically our church’s efforts to reach out to communities that are marginalized. We are wonderfully

¹⁵ James F. Keenan, “Outsiding,” *Living Pulpit* 13/4 (O-D 2004): 25.

blessed to be in the Kingdom. We owe this only to the grace of a loving and merciful God who was willing to see his own beloved Son, Jesus Christ, suffer and die on the cross in order to bring us into the Kingdom. It is our hope as a church to be incorporated in the *missio Dei* in a way that allows us to bring that same reconciling love of God to the entire world—yes, even to the edge of nation. May God the Holy Spirit bring us to the place where we will be able to be God's servants in the cause of Christ.

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Resumen

González explora el tema de la marginación a nivel institucional de la iglesia hispana luterana en los Estados Unidos. Habla de tal marginación dentro del Sínodo de Misuri como una expresión concreta de una realidad más amplia que denomina "estar al margen de la nación" y que comparten diversas comunidades hispanas dentro y fuera de la iglesia.

Primeramente define la marginación de forma geográfica haciendo referencia a la frontera entre México y los Estados Unidos, pero también en un sentido sociológico para referirse a personas que la sociedad considera de poca valía. Haciendo eco de Virgilio Elizondo se refiere en particular a mexicanos nacidos en los Estados Unidos como nuevos galileos que no reciben la aceptación de los latinoamericanos al sur ni la de los norteamericanos anglosajones al norte. Se parecen a Jesús de Galilea quien fue rechazado por judíos y gentiles. Luego el autor se enfoca en la marginación como problema institucional, como realidad que ocurre dentro de la iglesia. Define tal marginación en

términos de la falta de representación hispana en las mesas redondas donde se conciben y toman decisiones estratégicas que afectan políticas y presupuestos.

González argumenta que la marginación de la iglesia hispana no ocurre por mala voluntad o agenda premeditada sino por la falta de familiaridad con la realidad de la iglesia hispana y con sus líderes a la hora de tomar decisiones críticas. Menciona cuatro ejemplos específicos de instancias en la que la iglesia como institución ha marginado *de facto* y sistemáticamente a los hispanos:

1. La reducción de donaciones al Sínodo y la presión que esta ha creado en la planificación, junto con el deseo del liderazgo de implementar ambiciosos programas de evangelización, ha llevado a repentinos cortes presupuestarios que han eliminado subsidios para ministerios hispanos. Tales decisiones las ha tomado el Sínodo o el distrito sin dialogar con líderes hispanos, sin ofrecer otras maneras de solucionar problemas de manera creativa o de proveer el tipo de entrenamiento necesario y estratégico para que hispanos aprendan lo que supuestamente les falta para hacer la misión de manera responsable y efectiva.
2. En dos ocasiones, dos juntas del Sínodo unilateralmente eliminaron—sin consultar a líderes hispanos—el presupuesto del único programa de formación de pastores de habla hispana en nuestra iglesia. Sin el apoyo económico total del Seminario Concordia de St. Louis, el antiguo Instituto Hispano de Teología (hoy en día, el Centro de Estudios Hispanos) no existiría.
3. La eliminación de la posición de Consejero para Ministerios Hispanos sin consultar a la comunidad hispana del Sínodo.
4. Más recientemente, la falta de voluntad para dar prioridad dentro del presupuesto del Sínodo a la posición de Director para el Desarrollo Estratégico de los Ministerios Hispanos. Esta posición fue aprobada no solo por un foro representativo de líderes hispanos a nivel nacional sino también por el mismo Sínodo en convención nacional.

Todos estos ejemplos muestran que existe marginación de la voz hispana en una iglesia que al mismo tiempo habla de la importancia de evangelizar entre hispanos. El autor argumenta que tal marginación no solo es una realidad sino que también afecta a la iglesia y su misión. En primer lugar, el distrito que corta subsidios sin proveer la ayuda necesaria a sus obreros para crecer y recibir el conocimiento necesario para liderar y administrar sus ministerios, pierde la oportunidad de desarrollar liderazgo y de evangelizar mediante estos valiosos recursos humanos. La falta de diálogo y las decisiones unilaterales crean además una falta de confianza por parte de los hispanos hacia el Sínodo y sus líderes que ha resultado en la venta súbita de propiedades por parte de distritos y de congregaciones hispanas, acusaciones de racismo, obreros frustrados y el problema de la baja reputación que en el presente tiene la iglesia como institución cada vez que ésta dice estar interesada en el ministerio entre hispanos.

González concluye su ensayo llamando a los líderes a cargo de las estructuras de poder del Sínodo a que escuchen e incluyan en sus diálogos y decisiones a los que viven a los márgenes de la iglesia. Los invita a salirse de la cultura de poder para ver lo que Dios está haciendo al margen de la nación y de la iglesia donde uno menos espera encontrar el poder y la sabiduría de Dios. Nos llama a colaborar con y a aprender de los miembros aparentemente más débiles de la comunidad. Nos llama al arrepentimiento pero también a la reconciliación y al servicio conforme a Cristo el siervo en pro de la misión misericordiosa de Dios en el mundo.

In Search for a Lutheran Latino Church Planting Model

Reflections from a Church Planter on the Field

Mark Junkans

At times one hears in our synodical circles that there is no successful Lutheran Latino church planting model in the United States, or possibly in Latino contexts worldwide. The plain reality is that, throughout the whole Spanish-speaking world, the Lutheran Church has not made the impact that it could with its clear Gospel-centered message of reconciliation between God and humanity through faith in Christ. Arguably, other movements like Pentecostalism seem to be literally taking over the Spanish-speaking world. They continue to grow, multiply and, in many places, are fast becoming the religion of the people—especially, in major urban centers. Where is the Lutheran Church in all of this? What impact do we have in Latino society? While not delving deeply into any and every example of potential or realized Lutheran impact on Latino societies, particularly in the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s (LCMS) involvement in U.S. Hispanic and/or Latin American mission fields, this paper seeks to at least answer the question, “Can there be a successful model for Latino church planting within the context of mainline Lutheranism?”

The Problem of Lutheran Identity and Impact

I met Raúl at a store where I was shopping. We made conversation for awhile and a typical question was asked of me: *¿En qué trabaja Ud.?* (What do you do?) I told Raúl that I was a pastor and he then asked of which church. That was the moment when something inside me stopped me and made me think, “Lucy, you’ve got some splainin’ to do!” (The Raúl question always creates a sense of anxiety in me because I fear that I will not properly be able to explain what Lutheranism is.) I told Raúl, *Soy de la Iglesia Luterana* (I’m from the Lutheran Church). He asked the next logical question: *¿Qué es la Iglesia Luterana?* (What is the Lutheran Church?)

There is no easy answer to this question when working in a Hispanic society, partly because North American Lutherans and others have been trained in some circles to say

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that we are neither Evangelical nor Roman Catholic, and in other circles to say that we are both evangelical and catholic. Moreover, people of Latin American descent are at times taught that Lutheranism is perhaps a novel yet sectarian movement of protest in the church. But then Lutheranism becomes a historical construct or idea of the past, not really a living church in the present that people can identify. To go further, giving the growth of fringe groups in Latino contexts, one even fears Raúl might be thinking to himself: *¿Es algo así como los Mormones?* (Is the church something like the Mormons?)

Whether we are able or not to properly explain our theology and history, the bigger picture remains that the Lutheran Church does not have a strong presence in Latino contexts in the U.S. or abroad. No one really knows us, except for those few Christians who have experienced the “dark side” of Lutheranism, perhaps in the extreme forms of dead liturgical ritualism or arid intellectual approaches to the faith where the centrality of Christ and the concern for reaching the lost with the Gospel have been eclipsed. To them, we are simply a take on their worst experiences in certain Roman Catholic contexts.

Perhaps one of the simple reasons no one really knows us Lutherans is that we have so few Spanish-speaking churches or mission fields, and therefore so little impact on an ever growing number of Latinos (especially, in the U.S.). Everyone in Latino society seems to know about the existence of Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses. Everyone knows that Pentecostals are around. But only a few have met a live Lutheran in the flesh, a living and active Lutheran witness.

What then might a successful, thriving, and faithful Hispanic/Latino church look like? In my opinion, such a church is one that is growing in numbers and impact. Of course, gathering numbers of people for worship *per se* is not ultimately an adequate measurement of success. But it can indeed be a sign of God’s abundant mercy and outreach to many through the proclamation and living out of the Gospel. Similarly, Lutherans are aware that the number of sacraments and ceremonies performed *per se* are also not a good measurement of a thriving congregation. One ought not to think of the sacraments in an *ex opere operato* framework, that is to say, as works that are effective merely because they are performed. Lutherans do not think of sacraments apart from faith in the promises offered in the sacraments and—we might add—their impact in our lives of witness and service to the community. In my opinion, a successful congregation is one where the number of baptized disciples who rejoice in and are committed to fulfilling the Great Commission according to their stations in life continues to grow, and therefore greater Kingdom impact is being made in the community through the Gospel and Christian vocation.

I argue that there are practical, cultural, and systemic issues that need to be taken seriously as we think about any Lutheran Latino church planting model. First, as a whole, we as a church body know very little about how to plant churches in Latino contexts—especially in U.S. Hispanic communities where Latin American realities are not necessarily transferable to the U.S. situation. In many ways, the *practical* knowledge and skills required for church planting that some movements appear to have is ultimately accumulated knowledge, which means they have done it enough to know how to do it. This acquired knowledge becomes almost instinctive to a church planting ecclesial body

and actually positions it to be able to provide support for, avoid potential pitfalls in, and accurately assess the vitality of church plants. Such acquired knowledge also allows planters to diagnose problems and provide recommended solutions that—with God’s blessing—can indeed lead to a dynamic and even growing church.

Second, any Lutheran Latino church planting model within mainstream Lutheranism faces a *cultural* problem, namely, the meeting of LCMS culture and Latino culture(s). Though some similarities abound because of our immigrant past as Lutherans, many cultural barriers exist between the mainstream church culture and the Latino community which we try to reach. Such barriers will be addressed to some extent throughout this essay.

Finally, the third aspect for consideration is *systemic*. We have a certain system of doing church that has been built through our own experience as a church body in North America, which also has its roots in a much older European model of doing church. Our institutional system is built for consistency, preservation, and continuity. I put this in stark contrast to a scalable system that is built for expansion and flexibility. Such an entrepreneurial-like system is not risk-free but it can be a means to communicate the Gospel in our day and age. Such a system must have non-negotiables such as a common doctrine and commitment to walk together as we form church workers who will lead others to express and live out their faith for the sake of the church’s mission in the world. Even if we take the issue of the church’s unity seriously, it is still the case, however, that in the more entrepreneurial framework, the way things are done in regards to church planting are seen through the lens of actually getting missions done. The unity of the church ultimately serves the mission of the church in the world.

The Way of Leadership and Partnership

In the conception of a church planting model, the first principle to work from is *leadership development*. One of the main reasons we are not effective in planting Latino churches is our lack of indigenous missional leadership. When we as a mainline Lutheran denomination have wanted to work among people of other ethnic groups, we have generally picked leaders from our own ranks or so-called “ethnics” who play ball well with us. That often means that the leaders we have chosen are many times those who are willing to become like us in order to work with us. We do not necessarily know what to look for in individuals except for the fact that they understand the totality of our doctrine and practice as a church, or a particular mission strategy or formation model for the whole church. However, the adherence of either an educated Anglo or Latino leader to doctrine and practice in and of itself is not easily expressed in an intelligible way to the common Latino—a critical sensibility to acquire in church planting—and, moreover, does not support a partnership model where the indigenous leader also contributes theologically and practically to the expression of the church’s faith and life and its missional strategy and vision.

One of the reasons we struggle in Latino church planting is that we do not know what to look for and train for in a missional leader. The majority of our pastors and even

mission executives throughout Synod are themselves sorely lacking in both experience and skills with regards to church planting. We do not have the missional leadership that can say, “I’ve been there; this is how it works.” I would venture to say that few if any of our leaders have experienced an Acts-like (not an Acts, but an Acts-like) mission movement (myself included!)—one in which the church’s mission can be described in terms of an explosion of joy in the Gospel that moves the church to expand beyond her immediate sphere of influence into, say, marginalized Samaria-like places such as Hispanic/Latino communities in the U.S. We can read the books, go to the conferences and talk about this Acts-like church trajectory (mostly, as law), but we often do not appropriate it joyfully in our present contexts as a Gospel reality—it is still “out there” and intangible to us.

Building up leaders for missions is more than teaching theology. Leadership development in the Latino context is relational. In many ways, missional leadership must be imparted from one person to another in a close family-like relationship. Head knowledge and learning the rules are far from enough in developing such leadership. Missional leadership must be developed through significant quantity of time spent in missions and in relationship. A missional leader is shaped because another missional leader mentored him/her closely. I can say that most Latino mission leaders I have encountered have basically said the same things about this or that Lutheran pastor they have met: *Es buena gente* (He’s a good person). Sounds good, but there is a lot unsaid in this statement. If they are brave enough to include the “but” (*pero*), their next statements will indicate that they see a huge gap between the pastor’s teaching and his congregation’s missional practice. In short, they cannot believe that Lutheran pastors are somewhat unwilling to be bold and do whatever it takes to bring Christ to people around them, that their mission fire is so cold and their church seems so apathetic to evangelism. Have our Latino missionary pastors possibly learned from us all too well? They go from being potential mission stallions to geldings. Can we, or our church, allow and train these “sementales Latinos” to run?

Leadership Selection and Retention

How do you spot a potential missional leader, the right candidate? First, look for someone who has God’s call in his life to reach his community with the Gospel message. Seek someone with a good reputation among his Latino community and among other Latino clergy. Search for someone with a strong immediate and extended family. Because of the familial nature of Latino ministry, having strong family ties does wonders for a leader’s ministry. Often it is the wife who does 50% of the work in the ministry context, the children who help lead worship, and the extended family that provides the basis for the new church plant. Typically, those who work alone will not have the respect of others or the relational skills to lead a growing church. But the ones who work through others will. Also, avoid those with an unhealthy fixation with money.

What attracts potential missional leaders to our church? Most of us would like to say almost immediately that it is our theology. Although that may become one of the reasons

they decide to stay, it is not typically the initial motivating factor for working with the Lutheran Church. There are many Christians throughout the Latino community who know that God is calling them into ministry. Why might they want to work with us? In my own experience, I have found that there are at least three factors that generally attract leaders to do so: 1) money, 2) vision for Kingdom growth, and 3) opportunities for other types of support (non-financial).

1. *Money.* Even though the money factor is always present in recruiting leaders, it should not be the first point of discussion. There are many ship-jumpers who will decide to become “Lutheran” simply because we will pay them to do ministry. I always question a person’s true motivation and dedication to the mission when the relationship begins with money talk. If the relationship with the church begins with money, it will often end with money. That is, when someone depends at any time during the relationship on the sponsoring organization for 100% of the ministry budget, an unhealthy dependence grows which actually stifles the maturity of the ministry. When we allow the missionary pastor to escape the difficult task of teaching and even enforcing biblical stewardship principles, the congregation will almost never reach maturity. Most of the time in this situation, as soon as the money is gone, the ministry stops. When money issues are brought to the table, it should be towards the end of the conversation, preferably after an adequate relationship has been built to talk frankly about it. In our desperation for Latino missionary leaders, we have often dangled as many carrots as possible, hoping that someone—anyone—will bite. If God is indeed calling them, servants with a missional heart who live by faith will simply go as Abraham did (Hebrews 11:8). Period. Where God sends His leaders, He will also provide for them. This statement, of course, does not abdicate the church from its responsibility to provide certain resources for the missionary. However, the center of mission talk should not be money.
2. *Vision for Kingdom Growth.* When we talk to potential mission leaders, they are asking themselves the question, “Where is this organization going, what is the vision of its leaders, and can I relate to them?” Most of the time when individuals speak with us, they have a preconceived image in their minds of the Lutheran church. To the average Latino Christian, we Lutherans are almost Roman Catholic, not exactly Evangelical, and mostly concerned in a rigid way about making sure they worship and preach just like we do. Latino leaders struggle greatly and make compromises even to talk with us precisely because they—and their congregations—have a somewhat negative image in their minds about who we are. However, when a concern for the lost is the main point of congruence in the relationship, then it becomes

acceptable to engage the Lutheran Church. Skeptical Latino leaders who venture into Lutheran waters need to be assured that it is okay to engage and be engaged in a critical and constructive criticism regarding all sorts of issues. In the field, we want to see the Kingdom of God grow through the Gospel and, therefore, are willing to be flexible on the practical side of ministry—particularly, in the process of leadership selection, formation, and development—so that potential leaders in Latino communities can best reach their own communities. Within that process, our readiness to share a common vision for ministry can be a powerful force that attracts leaders to our movement. But vision alone will not keep the best leaders. Vision must be accompanied by a ministry support system that is flexible, directive, and encouraging.

3. *Support System.* Probably the most undervalued and misunderstood aspect of recruiting and retaining Latino leaders is the mission support system. Most of the new leaders we are working with now have stated repeatedly their desire for *cobertura* from an umbrella organization. The “supportive covering” they desire is multi-faceted. It means first of all, that there is an organization they can belong to instead of being out there on their own. For anyone who has been in the mission field by themselves, it is easy to see why *cobertura* is important. It gives a healthy sense of security, a sense of direction, and the knowledge that you can go to someone when a problem or challenge arises that is bigger than you. Such a need for support is sometimes misunderstood by us, individualistic Westerners, who value individual success above Latino relational needs and worldview in the construction of a work ethic.

There are at least two extremes in our current mission way of thinking when envisioning what supervision and support should entail. We see the first extreme at work when Latino mission leaders are recruited, trained theologically, and then left to themselves under the assumption that now “they know best how to reach their communities.” This hands-off approach is great for someone who works best alone, but becomes increasingly pernicious to a leader who works best within a relational society. North Americans typically confuse the desire for support as co-dependency and, therefore, do not have the patience or give the time necessary to truly support someone in their ministry. Many a budding ministry has withered because there is no nurturing system in place to support them.

We see the other extreme in missionary support when there is an unhealthy focus on controlling all possible variables. “Don’t do it this way,” and “you can’t do it that way.” It cannot be overstated how much our over-control of our Latino mission leaders stifles their ministry potential, leaving no room for healthy creativity and learning. Indeed, there needs to be accountability for actions and results, but the prescriptive nature of our mission management style leaves many Latino leaders feeling like they have their hands

tied. Because of our cultural ignorance of relationship-based societies and how they work, we try to control how leadership is done, how relationships “should be” managed, and how the church should operate uniformly in a Latino community. We shake our heads at the fact that our leaders cannot seem to get “tasks” done. Yet getting things done in the Latino community is a much more complicated process because so many relationships have to be massaged and nurtured along the way. If we desire a growing Latino church planting system, the Latino leaders need to have the flexibility to lead.

The solution to this problem is a low-control, high accountability, approach to leadership. Having low control means recognizing and accepting that the process and means for getting something accomplished varies from culture to culture and from person to person. As long as the process and means are not illegal or unscriptural, we should allow our leaders to experiment with what works—and even what does not work—for growing the Kingdom. This is not a hands-off approach that simply allows for “anything goes,” but a flexible one where high accountability comes into play. In relating to a Hispanic mission leader, accountability is much more than just pointing out mistakes and low achievement. It entails being committed to the relationship above all else. When we prove that we are people *de confianza* (worthy of trust), there is a high degree of accountability that we have to exercise responsibly towards our leaders not to betray that trust. A Latino with whom we have built great trust will do almost anything we ask, but not until after that trust has been cemented. The reason that most North American pastors, mission executives, and synodical leaders cannot get their Hispanic/Latino leaders to cooperate with them is that trust has probably either not been built or has been effectively broken. So it is possible to have high accountability among Latinos. However, that accountability involves more than just job performance. It involves the attention of both sides to the relationship, built on mutual trust, which in the end is more important than this or that task at hand.

A Word on Partnership

In order for Latino mission planters to truly flourish, there must be a true partnership in the Gospel. Patronage may make our system’s job more efficient, but to truly see a movement of growing Latino churches, a true partnership must be fostered. Patronage says, “I pay you to do our work among your people.” Partnership sees Latinos not as objects of our compassion, as saviors for our dying church, or as agents of our mission program. Instead, Latinos need and expect to be included in decision-making, process development, and planning aspects of the mission program. Being in partnership means more than simply keeping the mission society informed. It is valuing the basic humanity and contribution of our Latino leaders. Being a partner means letting the Latino leader make decisions and even make mistakes. Correction comes through private dialogue that avoids directly assigning blame. Correction does not come through public or private rebuke for not performing. Indeed, true partnership in the Gospel means that all are equal at the table and treated as such.

Concluding Thoughts toward a Solution

What is the solution to the problems and deficiencies that we find in our Lutheran Church with regards to Latino church planting? There are short- and long-range solutions. The long-range solution is a change in the whole LCMS system and culture. Our ministry training system for Latinos must become formational rather than simply informational. Rather than just teaching the rules and norms, we must mold and shape our future leaders holistically to be missional, that is, to impact and transform their communities with the Gospel message. There must be a salutary freedom of the Gospel in our church culture at large that allows for the worship, leadership, and community that Latinos sense they need to feel a part of our church body. This is beginning to happen in some isolated places, but not nearly fast enough on the whole. Another solution lies in building support systems that address the deeper needs of our Latino church planters and pastors. Simply pulling funding without providing for the other needs only creates resentment and fallout. Our church body needs a uniquely Latino support system for pastors where they are working, not just when they occasionally get together for conferences.

The short-term solution is to create missional subsystems throughout our Synod that can do the work of missions on behalf of the church at large. These systems are part of the bigger Synod, but operate inter-dependently with districts, seminaries, etc. Such a system allows for flexibility in recruiting, training, and supporting local Latino missionaries while creating a buffer between the Latino leader and the hard realities of the LCMS church system. There is leadership in place for these systems that can relate to the culture, knows the language, and is able to lead in a way that supports and encourages the mission to take place.

Can the Lutheran Church successfully plant Latino churches in North America and beyond? I say yes, because God is the one who moves to do the work, the one whose Word brings about what it says. Will our system, culture, and practice be able to accommodate such a movement? That remains to be seen. There are positive steps that are being taken throughout Synod for Hispanic missions. These are encouraging. May God grant us faithfulness and success in fulfilling Christ's Great Commission while there is still time.

Resumen

El pastor-misionero Mark Junkans, plantador de iglesias en el área urbana de Houston, nos ofrece principios prácticos que la iglesia luterana debe tomar en cuenta al desarrollar modelos de plantación de iglesias en contextos latinos. En su introducción, se plantea el autor el problema de la falta de presencia e impacto luterano en la sociedad hispana en general. Atribuye tal falta a una serie de factores, a saber, la dificultad que tienen anglosajones luteranos de explicar lo que es el luteranismo en distinción a ser "católico" o "evangélico," la percepción en algunos sectores del mundo latino de que el

luteranismo es solo parte de la historia pasada o una de las sectas de nuestros días, y por último la experiencia negativa de algunos hispanos en la iglesia luterana cuando sus líderes han practicado un ritualismo litúrgico rígido o una aproximación demasiado intelectual a la fe.

Sin reducir el éxito y la fidelidad de una misión a números de evangelizados o de actos sacramentales, el autor define una congregación luterana exitosa y fiel como aquella en la cual existe un número creciente de discípulos bautizados quienes se regocijan en la gran comisión y están comprometidos a vivir según la misma conforme a sus vocaciones. Sin embargo, reconoce también que existen problemas de tipo práctico, cultural y sistémico-institucional que no facilitan la formación de un discipulado con vistas al desarrollo de plantación de iglesias.

El primer problema es la falta de conocimiento *práctico* por parte del liderazgo pastoral, misional y teológico del Sínodo de Misuri acerca del ministerio de plantación de iglesias, específicamente en contextos latinos. Se necesita un número crítico de líderes que practiquen el arte para luego formar a otros. El segundo problema es la falta de conocimiento *cultural* por parte de la iglesia en los Estados Unidos acerca de latinos, su cosmovisión relacional o comunitaria del ser humano—en particular, la importancia de llegar a ser una persona “de confianza.” El tercer y último problema es *sistémico-institucional*. Se define como la posición privilegiada que la iglesia anglosajona da a la consistencia, preservación y continuidad de sus instituciones. El contraste sería un modelo con más escalabilidad, es decir, con más facilidad para adaptarse y expandirse sin sacrificar calidad en el proceso. El sistema más flexible atiende también a la unidad doctrinal y en práctica de la iglesia pero la entiende como sierva de la misión.

Del análisis crítico pasa el autor a su propuesta constructiva bajo las rúbricas de desarrollar liderazgo y forjar alianzas. No lo hace sin antes recordarnos la importancia de situar su propuesta dentro de una visión en la cual misión no es simplemente una ley que hay que cumplir sino una explosión de gozo en el evangelio que mueve a la iglesia a lugares como Samaria en el libro de Hechos, a regiones marginadas como los vecindarios de muchos latinos en los Estados Unidos. El autor nos presenta los siguientes principios prácticos con miras al desarrollo de líderes y la creación de alianzas en el proceso de plantación de iglesias en contextos latinos:

1. El líder misionero con potencial debe sentirse llamado por Dios para evangelizar a su comunidad. Debe ser alguien con buena reputación en la comunidad latina y entre otros clérigos de iglesias hispanas. Debe ser alguien que tiene una relación sólida con los miembros de su familia, pues esta a menudo apoya su ministerio. El líder que trabaja por sí solo generalmente no tiene el respeto de otros ni tampoco el poder de convocatoria para liderar una iglesia creciente.
2. Inicialmente el líder misionero con potencial muestra interés en trabajar con la iglesia luterana si esta ofrece algún tipo de recurso económico, una visión clara de estrategia evangelística y una comunidad de apoyo moral. La teología luterana es por lo general una de las razones por la

cual el líder decide quedarse en la iglesia, pero inicialmente no es siempre uno de los factores principales que le ayudan a considerar trabajar con la iglesia luterana.

3. En cuanto al factor económico, el líder con potencial no debe mostrar un interés exagerado en el dinero. Se debe sospechar de la verdadera motivación y dedicación a la misión de alguien cuando éste quiere forjar relaciones que se fundamentan en lo económico. Generalmente cuando el 100% del presupuesto de un líder depende de una congregación u organización luterana, y éste no aprende a enseñar y promover la mayordomía por sí mismo en su contexto de misión, su ministerio no alcanza madurez y en muchas ocasiones llega a su fin. Cuando el tema de dinero o compensación se debe considerar es preferible hacerlo una vez que las partes hayan establecido una relación de confianza.
4. Es de esperarse que el líder con potencial se pregunte acerca de la meta de la organización misionera luterana, la visión de sus líderes y la manera en que éste podría relacionarse con la iglesia luterana y sus representantes. Si el punto central de la relación entre la iglesia luterana y el líder es el deseo de evangelizar a la oveja perdida, el líder generalmente baja la guardia y muestra apertura hacia la teología luterana y todo tipo de tema que se relacione a la comunidad luterana. Se debe crear un ambiente en el cual el plantador de iglesias luterano y el líder latino con potencial puedan expresar sus temores y esperanzas con confianza. Se recalca que nunca se debe perder de vista la importancia crítica de articular en cualquier momento y de forma clara una visión que atraiga a líderes con potencial a nuestro movimiento evangelístico.
5. Aunque la visión para el ministerio es crítica para atraer al líder con potencial, tal visión por sí sola no retendrá a los mejores líderes a menos que ésta vaya acompañada de una estructura comunitaria que ofrezca apoyo moral y de otro tipo a los obreros. Esta cobertura permite que el líder no trabaje solo sino como parte de un equipo, y que por ende se sienta más seguro en su misión, tenga una idea de la dirección de la misma y busque la guía y el consejo de la comunidad de apoyo. Apoyar al líder no significa dejarlo completamente solo ni controlarlo demasiado. El modelo ideal de liderazgo es uno de bajo control pero a la vez uno en que se valora alta responsabilidad en la relación entre el plantador o la organización luterana y el líder potencial. Bajo control permite flexibilidad en el proceso de aprendizaje, promueve creatividad y da prioridad a la promoción de relaciones por encima del cumplimiento de esta u otra tarea. Un grado de alta responsabilidad en la formación de líderes no significa simplemente evaluar la efectividad del obrero en una y otra tarea sino nutrir la confianza mutua entre las

partes. Esto toma tiempo y dedicación y es imperativo para desarrollar líderes comprometidos con la misión de la iglesia y con una apertura para profundizar en el fundamento teológico de tal misión.

6. La creación de alianzas donde existan niveles significativos de reciprocidad es importante en el desarrollo de líderes. El sistema de patronato en el cual se le paga al latino para que trabaje con latinos tiende a ser unilateral. Tampoco se debe ver al líder latino como el objeto de nuestra compasión, el salvador de la iglesia de habla inglesa que se está muriendo o agentes de la misión que ya otro ha concebido. Por el contrario, se debe trabajar con miras a incluir a líderes latinos en la toma de decisiones, implementación de procesos y planificación de diversos aspectos de la misión. Si hay que corregir en el proceso de aprendizaje, se hace por medio del diálogo en privado y nunca avergonzando públicamente al líder latino frente a la comunidad.

Entre varias recomendaciones, el autor sugiere crear o seguir desarrollando subsistemas de formación a través del Sínodo que lleven a cabo misiones en representación del mismo. Estos sistemas formarían parte del Sínodo y operarían de manera interdependiente con el distrito y el seminario para reclutar, formar y crear sistemas de apoyo económico, moral, educativo y de otro tipo para líderes latinos—todo esto como parte del proceso de plantación de iglesias. El liderazgo al frente de tales sistemas deberá hablar el idioma español, conocer a fondo las culturas latinas (particularmente, en el contexto de los Estados Unidos) y buscar las formas de crear y facilitar el desarrollo y mantenimiento de los ya mencionados sistemas y comunidades de apoyo a todo nivel para los nuevos líderes latinos y los que ya están en el campo misionero.

The Call to Community

What Hispanic/Latina Women share with the Church

Melissa Salomón

When asked to reflect on what Hispanic/Latina women serving in their particular vocations or ministries share with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), the faces and examples of many women flashed through my mind. They are those I have had the privilege of working and serving with over the last twenty years in various Hispanic parish ministries, as well as women I have admired and observed at work in a variety of service contexts from the mission field in Tijuana, México, and the work of Lutheran Hour Ministries, México. They are Latina women I have met from all across the United States, through the work of the Heart to Heart Sisters program of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML). They are all women who have inspired, encouraged, and amazed many, including me, with their example of great love, compassion, and faith.

Reclaiming the Diversity of the Body of Christ

Offering my observations on the work of Hispanic/Latina women in the LCMS serves multiple purposes. First, they serve to illustrate and make me thank God for the unique and diverse gifts He bestows upon His dear church in order to build up the community of believers in faith and love. Indeed, we reclaim the diversity of the Body of Christ when we recognize that the church would be lacking, incomplete, and even weaker without the inclusion of the particular yet at times forgotten gifts and unique sensibilities that make up the whole.

Second, I offer my reflections in the hope of encouraging the church at large to learn more about and value those unique elements of the Body of Christ that God uses mightily in their vocations and ministries to reach others from the Hispanic population that still do not know Jesus as their personal and risen Savior. Latinas are already well known as the primary evangelists of the home and their influence will continue to extend to society at

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large, especially in the U.S. where population growth is fueled above all by the growth of the Latino/a population.¹ Where demographics are heavily influenced with growth in particular ethnic communities, there is sometimes an accompanying fear and a missed opportunity in our society to understand and value the people who are new and different. Nevertheless, it is imperative that, within the community of believers—the Body of Christ, we not only endeavor to understand and value the diversity of the Christian community and their women but also do so with an understanding that through each person’s unique gifts and sensibilities, God brings something absolutely necessary to the life of the church, without which we are infinitely poorer.

Finally, if the unique gifts of any ethnic group in the church and, more particularly, of the Hispanic/Latina women of the church are necessary and essential to the community of believers, then it follows that what these women share is valuable to the whole Body. In other words, the gifts Latina women bring to the table must not be limited to their work with their own ethnic-specific communities and ministries even if they work from a given ethno-cultural social location for the sake of the whole church.

God is the author of diversity, as it is He who created the great variety of people who inhabit a variety of regions within diverse cultures. He creates a variety of gifts, different kinds of service, and various kinds of works. At the same time, though diverse, like the many parts of the body, the members of the Body work under one God for the purpose of building up the one Body of Christ in faith and love. The challenge for the entire church is not to confuse unity with uniformity, but to recognize the diversity that is the one Body of Christ and value the various and discrete parts of that Body as contributing members who work together to express their common faith in service to the Gospel.

Since we value the gifts God has bestowed upon the entire church, why is it important at all to highlight and discuss those resident in this or that—to use the dominant culture’s language—“minority” group or “ethnic” church? It’s important because our church body has a history and roots in a Germanic, Northern European culture, and even today, though far removed from its European immigration, the LCMS maintains a culture that reflects such roots. To be realistic, the process of learning about the gifts and work of people not coming from Northern European cultures is often difficult for the LCMS. Yet it is a critical growing pain not only to help the church understand and learn from her own community of believers, but also to help her see her unique role in reaching out to and working among and with those in the large and growing Hispanic/Latino populations in cities and towns across the U.S.²

¹ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics accounted for 49% of the nation’s population growth from 2000 to 2004. Hispanics now number more than 42 million in the United States. Interestingly, while growth through immigration is still prominent, the majority of growth has occurred in Hispanic births because of the youth of Hispanic U.S. women. Now, one of every 5 children under the age of five is Hispanic. For the latter statistic, see “Hispanics in the U.S.: Breaking Down the Numbers” (9 June 2005). Online: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4696640> [cited 7 January 2008].

² Demographers are noting an interesting change to patterns of growth in U.S. Hispanic populations. Since 2000 growth has occurred in areas that are not traditional Latino areas. The states of North Carolina, Georgia, Nebraska, Iowa, Arkansas, and the interior parts of Oregon and Washington states have experienced continuous and rapid growth of Hispanic people. See Mark Mather and Kelvin Pollard, “Hispanic Gains Minimize

The Gift of Building Community among Hispanic/Latina Women

Even casual observers of culture have noted that Hispanics/Latinos place a high value on the family and more specifically, the unity of the family. Hispanic families value those things that will achieve family goals and encourage family unity. This dimension of life is where they largely invest their time and resources. “Americans” (which usually means North American and Anglo American) prize personal responsibility and individual effort and success, and this structure rewards the raising of children who will be independent and will “make it on their own.” These values spill over to the church family and become part of the church culture, which is successful only if everyone in the church family belongs to and holds the values of the same culture group. However, when there is a clash of values between different culture groups in the church, it is usually the case that the dominant group’s set of values becomes the norm for the whole, resulting in a sense of disconnectedness for new people trying to “fit in” their newly adopted church family.

Hispanic/Latino culture has often defined norms for the roles of men and women, fathers and mothers. I personally think such norms have assisted women in developing the gifts of care and compassion, fellowship and hospitality, love and service with such laser-like focus that they have become instruments of great healing and unity in their spheres of influence at home, church, and wherever they have used their gifts. Rather than seeing defined roles as limiting or dehumanizing, I believe Hispanic/Latina women have a deep understanding of and appreciation for the inestimable influence they exert in the lives of those whom they love and in arenas where they serve many with that same great love. When serving the larger family, that is, the church, these gifts that have been honed within the context of the family become the glue that God uses to cement the unity of the family of believers in Christ so that they are strengthened for their common work in mission and witness to the world.

Rather than having only a family orientation or focus, I have observed that many Hispanic/Latina women working in service and ministry are deeply committed to and gifted in *building community* in the church, using other helping gifts that they seem to possess in significant measure.

What does such community look like? Here community includes caring fellowship and unity of purpose in Christ. It is built on the strength of relationships. In other words, without relationships, there can be no community, no being with another, no being for another. Community begins, of course, with our relationship with God and extends and finds expression in our relationship with others. Strengthened by our relationship with God through faith in Christ, we fulfill our Christian responsibilities to care for and love each other. These responsibilities are neither optional nor are they possible without the investment of time and self. Sociologists have studied how various cultures view time and the importance of arriving “on time” for events, meetings, etc. I think the Hispanic woman has a clear understanding that community is not built without the investment of

time and self. Often, the sacrificial giving of self can only be measured by time. There is no concept of “quality time” within the Hispanic/Latino context. The more opportunities to spend time in service to the Gospel and the neighbor, the more the community is built in faith and love and, therefore, the more the community is edified and unity cemented.

Hospitality

What are the practices and gifts that build community? Many have remarked on the level of fellowship and hospitality of Latina women serving in various vocations and ministries of service. It is especially noted that this giftedness is often displayed at the “drop of a hat” and without advance warning. Because creating community and fostering unity is one of the highest values for the Hispanic woman, these service occasions are prime opportunities to create shared time and experience and extended conversation. Even though there may be dozens of people gathered around tables, the sharing of a meal is a very personal offering. Even when the family may have a limited income, Hispanic women are very inventive in preparing meals that can be stretched to include even a number of unexpected guests, and this accommodation she will allow with delight and confidence.³ A humorous piece came across my desk one day: “10 Ways to Avoid Building Community within the Church.” Among the list of things to avoid were the following:

- *Don't Share a Meal.* If your goal is to avoid community, this step is of the utmost importance. Don't ask people to lunch! Sharing a meal is an intimate thing that creates deeper relationships. So, when someone asks you to lunch fake a stomach ulcer or something, just get out of it.
- *Keep Conversations Short.* You are busy, you have a lot to deal with in your life, if you talk to someone you might get close to them and that takes time and energy that you don't have. Just keep it short and sweet, don't bother talking about anything more than the weather. If you don't know a person is hurting, then you don't have to do anything about it.⁴

Latina women especially find humor in these statements because we recognize some truth therein. Above all, however, we find in Hispanic/Latino cultures that extending hospitality to others—say, by sharing a meal—does not have to do with your economy or space availability. I have observed many Hispanic families who have been part of our congregation and have lived in very small houses or apartments (and in one instance, a garage!). Not only have their living spaces been small, but these are often inhabited by

³ This is why, for example, meals such as tacos (which can be filled with most anything, including potatoes or beans) or *posole* (a type of soup or stew with many different variations) are a staple of Mexican families.

⁴ Other entries were: Always sit in your “assigned” seat. Avoid new people. Leave immediately after the service (or early). Be physically present but mentally absent. Stay very, very busy. Make your default response “everything is great.” Don't show up. See Adam J. Walker, “10 Ways to Avoid Building Community Within the Church” (21 March 2007). askingY.com. Online: <http://www.askingy.com/?p=425> [cited 7 January 2008].

numerous members of the family. Yet these poor families routinely have fellowship and extend hospitality to those they include in their network of friendships. Hispanic families do not tend to view their homes as private domains as those from Anglo cultures tend to do. It would be a great blessing if hospitality and fellowship were practiced more often in the church at large, particularly in the homes of church members, as such practice fosters the building of a strong community in faith and love. Here Latinas show us all a faithful way of being church.

Visitation Ministry

It is hard to separate hospitality from fellowship in Hispanic/Latino contexts. Latinas seem very adept at offering and promoting fellowship opportunities—whether organizing events at the church or inviting people to their homes. Akin to this gift is the willingness to extend fellowship beyond one's immediate home sphere to others who need to be visited in their homes. This practice embodies the commitment to recognize that the community is incomplete when there are missing or marginalized members. Within Hispanic contexts, visitation is an area that definitely requires the involvement of women as spiritual caregivers because of cultural norms that restrict the Pastor's presence in the homes of women who are alone. Even if this reason did not exist, however, the ministry of visitation is one at which Hispanic women seem naturally adept. It is carried out and often initiated in many Hispanic churches by Latinas who understand the need of their sisters and gladly engage in this work of mercy. Community is built when there is this kind of direct care and compassion for members. This concern has been notably present in Hispanic ministries where the women are serving according to their gifts. Again, as in the case of hospitality, the move towards visitation serves the greater purpose of creating community and unity and completeness in faith and love.

Sacrificial Service

It is impossible to list the aforementioned gifts in an order of importance. In any case, gifts do not point to themselves but to others. The gifts Latinas bring to the church are all of paramount importance and all—in God's good timing—have a critical and significant role in the building of community. Yet a prominent feature in the work of the Hispanic woman in the church is her ability to offer sacrificial service. Her willingness to sacrifice and the extent to which she does so relates directly to the level of high priority and commitment she gives to the unity of the community, including the church family.

Because Hispanic women are committed to building community and caring for this larger and extended church family, there is uncommon sacrifice in serving the needs of others in the Body even in the face of the many obligations that cry out for her time and energy. I have been amazed by the sacrifice of women who have very little time and yet are willing helpers when the family of faith needs to be tended to and cared for. One also thinks of the example of women with very little economic means who are delighted to extend hospitality. Pastors who are beginning new missions among Hispanic peoples

have remarked on Hispanic women's willingness to take on responsibilities at church even though they have many responsibilities at home. It is usually the case that, when new work gets going, the women are the first to commit to serve and work for the church.

Why is Community Important for the Church Today?

It is remarkable to consider that God made us to need each other, be for one another, live in community with each other, and worship Him in ever increasing community with Christ and one another. "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). We need each other to grow together in Christ just as the parts of the body need each other, with the network of supporting ligaments, to live and thrive in each other's company.

We need each other to do the work that Christ has given us as His church. We build community by investing time in each other and by sacrificial self-giving through care and compassion and service. We build community through the commitment to share life, up close and personal, with those whom Christ has put us in community with at home and in our extended church family. We also build community by sharing our tables, our homes, our tough times and joys—even with strangers and unbelievers. There is no shortcut to building community.

Community is Christ's building us up into the one Body that He calls us to be. Jesus prays, "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23). Community exists not only for the Body to be strengthened but amazingly will attest to the power of the Gospel as it lives and is made evident in the lives of believers who are living an authentic human life of community in a world that so desperately needs communion with God and others.

Conclusion

There is wholeness and health where we value the diversity of the Body of Christ. God created the diversity of cultures and gifts not only as necessary parts of a whole but to give opportunity for expressing mutual care and community within the Body of believers. How do we reconcile diversity and unity through community as interrelated dimensions of being the one church? We are tempted to think of this kind of diversity within the Body as many pieces to the same puzzle. If one is missing, the bigger picture is lost. Yes, it is this, but it is much more than this. Perhaps it is like a pattern made on the surface of a pond when a pebble is cast into it. The effect is not local and discrete but ripples throughout the surface of the water and below and the pattern is altered because of it.

How are we affected and altered by the diversity within the Body of believers? If God created and preserves this diversity, the change will always be an enriching one. He made us to nurture us, bless us, and help us grow into greater unity in community.

God has given our church the gift of Hispanic women and through the medium of culture He has given them gifts that are very prominent in hospitality and fellowship. We have seen some examples of how these gifts build community. If we are affected and altered by the diversity of gifts and God gives us an opportunity to learn from each other, perhaps Hispanic women carry a unique call to community in an increasingly Latino/a nation for the church in the U.S., and their example could serve the whole Body as God's Holy Spirit strengthens it to serve Christ's purposes in our time.

God has gifted the U.S. church with the gift of ethno-cultural diversity, which we see as greater numbers as people from various groups are included into the life and work of the LCMS. However, it would be a mistake to see diversity as an ethnic-specific matter. The larger conversation is about how we value diversity of peoples, cultures, and gifts in all of its multiple forms and salutary shapes, which is not an "ethnic" discussion at all. That conversation will help us discover the wholeness and vitality God intends for those who work with energy and passion for Him and His eternal purposes.

Resumen

Desde su contexto ministerial en la región fronteriza entre los Estados Unidos y México y como líder en su congregación y además entre damas a nivel sinodal, la Dra. Salomón argumenta que la mujer hispana encarna de manera especial el llamado de Dios a promover comunidad en la iglesia y el mundo. La autora hace sus reflexiones en el marco de una catequesis que nos recuerda apreciar los dones y contribuciones de la mujer en la iglesia como las primeras evangelizadoras del hogar y, por ende, como las que se espera serán además las primeras maestras de una creciente población hispana predominantemente joven en los Estados Unidos. Al situar la perspectiva teológica de la diversidad de dones y aptitudes que la mujer contribuye desde la iglesia dentro de la realidad sociológica-demográfica de la creciente presencia hispana en la nación, la autora interpreta la vocación de la mujer latina no sólo como una contribución a la iglesia hispana o de habla hispana—o a una iglesia "étnica", como se dice inadecuadamente en algunos círculos—sino como una joya para el futuro de toda la iglesia sin distinción.

La autora enumera valores que por lo general encarna la mujer hispana en su iglesia y vecindad. Se habla en primer lugar del don de construir o promover comunidad, el cual corresponde a la prioridad que latinas dan a la preservación de la unidad familiar por encima del individualismo y el valerse por sí mismo. La iglesia de habla inglesa no sólo deberá tomar en cuenta este valor en su trato con damas hispanas sino también aprender de ellas lo que significa encarnar unidad en comunidad. Salomón fundamenta el valor de fomentar tal comunidad en una ontología o visión del ser humano como ser creado por Dios para existir y vivir no por sí mismo sino en relación a otros. El rol tradicional de la mujer desde la esfera del hogar y la familia no debe verse necesariamente como opresivo o deshumanizante sino como contexto de partida privilegiado desde el cual la mujer latina contribuye a toda la sociedad y a la vez desarrolla de forma especial dones como la hospitalidad y el cuidado del necesitado y la compasión hacia el mismo.

Vivir en comunidad se aprecia en la práctica de la hospitalidad, área en la que la mujer latina frecuentemente ofrece su testimonio de fe y amor. La autora recalca que este ofrecimiento lo hace a menudo la mujer hispana a pesar de la difícil economía y el espacio confinado de su hogar precisamente porque tal mujer da prioridad al valor de fomentar abiertamente las relaciones humanas. A diferencia del contexto norteamericano, el hogar hispano no se interpreta primordialmente como esfera privada de acción sino como espacio abierto de interacción y aceptación del visitante.

Vivir en comunidad se aprecia también en el ministerio de la visitación que muchas damas hispanas desempeñan y el cual puede interpretarse como una extensión del don de la hospitalidad que se proyecta más allá de los confines de la esfera inmediata del hogar. Esta práctica no sólo es compasiva sino que reconoce que la comunidad está incompleta cuando algunos de sus miembros no están presentes o viven marginados. En espacios culturales donde no se ve bien que el pastor visite a mujeres que vivan solas, la visitación de damas por parte de damas pasa a ser no sólo una práctica apropiada en lo cultural sino también en lo que concierne al cuidado espiritual de la mujer que vive en la soledad.

Concluye Salomón sugiriendo que el cuerpo de Cristo no debe verse simplemente como un rompecabezas con distintas piezas sino en términos de una y otra piedra que al ser tirada a una parte del río tiene el efecto de expandir la onda que crea a otras partes del mismo. Se abre la iglesia entonces a ser tocada por todos sus miembros y a vivir a partir de lo que cada uno contribuye a la misión del cuerpo en el mundo. En el marco de esta visión más amplia, no se puede entonces hablar de una aportación de la mujer latina que sólo toca a esta u otra iglesia “étnica” o comunidad hispana sino de lo que cada miembro del cuerpo contribuye a toda la iglesia desde su vocación y contexto.

A Response to Melissa Salomón’s
The Call to Community
Rose E. Adle

In Salomón’s article, *The Call to Community: What Hispanic/Latina Women Share with the Church*, there is a great deal to affirm, with only very few opportunities for clarification or expansion.

Dr. Salomón’s first great point is delivered in her section on “Reclaiming the Diversity of the Body of Christ.” Here she writes, “Latinas are already known as the primary evangelists of the home...” What she has rightly identified here is of critical importance to this conversation. During my many travels throughout Latin America, as well as my work among U.S. Hispanic/Latina women, I have witnessed this phenomenon repeatedly. It seems that this group is truly devoted to the upbringing of their children,

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and they make their own laps the place where the teaching of the faith first occurs. The women who went to Christ's tomb intended to perform a very simple act of bodily care, and within that quotidian task they found themselves privileged to share the message of salvation. So too, Latina women who take their vocation of motherhood seriously, are engaged in faithful witness by simply doing the tasks that God has given them to do.

Deserving of additional recognition is Salomón's section on "Hospitality," which highlights the various service occasions to which Latina women dedicate themselves without any expectation of recognition or reward. In carrying out charitable acts of this nature, these women carry one another's burdens according to the exhortation found in Galatians 6:2. For them, however, it seems there is very little compulsion behind their completion of these chores. My impression is that their hospitality is—as it ought to be for us all—a natural extension and expression of their thanksgiving for what they have received according to God's abundant grace. Hospitality as it was once known within the early church has been largely displaced in North American culture by such values as individualism and privacy. What Latinas lend to this arena should be applauded and mimicked wherever possible, for truly they are embodying mercy to the "least of these" described in Matthew 25 whenever they prepare a bed or cook a meal or offer a cup of water to a guest.

Salomón speaks a great deal of "building community." I might venture to rephrase this, ever so slightly. In a sense, the community already exists, for in fact it—the Church—was instituted by Christ and built upon the foundation of His Gospel. What remains to be done, however, is the fostering, nurturing, and care of this already existing community—as Salomón rightly points out. It makes sense, then, that women would excel at this task since they readily participate in building community both in church and world. Theologically speaking, one might also see women embodying in a special way and according to their vocations the church's faithfulness to Christ in service to others. Within the church, we see the pastor acting in the stead and by the command of Christ himself when he preaches the Word, administers the Sacraments, and speaks the sure words of absolution. Who then is there to carry these gifts out into the world and act according to the grace they have received? Who is to be an active representative of the Bride—the church—serving on her behalf? Certainly all the baptized are called to this. And what could be more fitting than to see women as the leading force of this effort (both Latinas and women of all backgrounds), representing the Bride of Christ in faithful care for the children whom they have brought up in the Christian faith, that is to say, all the members of the community.

Clearly, then, this article importantly reminds us all that theology isolated from mercy amounts to little more than the clanging cymbal described in 1 Corinthians 13. May we rejoice with Salomón and with all of Christendom for the Latina women who personify their faith in such tangible ways by living according to the gifts and stations God has granted to them and Christ has sanctified through the Holy Spirit.

Resumen

En diálogo con la Dra. Salomón, la diaconisa Adle recalca la identidad de la mujer hispana como la primera maestra de la fe. Aquellas mujeres que visitaron la tumba de Cristo sólo fueron a unguir su cuerpo con especias aromáticas, pero en medio de un cotidiano acto de servicio reciben también el privilegio de proclamar el mensaje de salvación. Asimismo, aquella mujer latina que toma su vocación de madre-maestra con seriedad pasa a ser testigo fiel de Cristo en el hogar y por ende a futuras generaciones.

Aplauda Adle el énfasis que Salomón le da al don de la hospitalidad. Aprecia la forma sacrificial que toma la hospitalidad de las mujeres hispanas en un contexto norteamericano donde se tiende a valorar más el individualismo y la privacidad que el llamado del apóstol Pablo a llevar las cargas del prójimo en cumplimiento de la ley de Cristo (Gálatas 6:2). En su dedicación y entrega, la mujer hispana encarna el ministerio de la misericordia.

En un contexto eclesial, Adle prefiere hablar menos de construir comunidad—pues Cristo instituyó la iglesia y su existencia está dada—y más de su promoción y cuidado. Si el ministerio pastoral se caracteriza por la proclamación del evangelio y la administración de los sacramentos, el servicio multiforme del resto del cuerpo se caracteriza por las innumerables vocaciones que nacen del encuentro de la iglesia con Cristo y su evangelio. Como su esposa fiel, ciertamente toda la iglesia sirve a Cristo. Sin embargo, la fidelidad de la mujer en su calidad de primerísima maestra del evangelio es fundamental porque mediante tal vocación del Espíritu Santo en pro de niños y jóvenes *toda* la comunidad que llamamos iglesia se nutre y preserva en la fe en Cristo y en el amor.

On Mission Work among Hispanics/Latinos Stories from a Lutheran Historian on the Field

Michael Doyle

When I was asked by the Pacific Southwest to write a book on the Hispanic ministries in the District, I was told it was to be a history to help uplift the workers in this vital field. When the book, *Feed My Sheep, A History of the Hispanic Missions in the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*,¹ was finished, I became aware that it was more than a history; it was also a kind of handbook on how to do ministry among the Hispanics/Latinos. As you read the article, you will note similarities in approaches that were used by different pastors and laypeople in doing work among the Hispanic population.

As I began research on the Hispanic work in Southern California and Arizona, I discovered that Rev. Gotthold Smukal started the first mission in East Los Angeles, California, in 1929. The area around his church, St. John's, was changing with more Mexicans moving into the neighborhood. Seeing the opportunity for doing Lutheran work among these people, he decided to start a Sunday school, along with his daughter, for the Mexican children, laying the groundwork for the Hispanic ministries. By 1930, the Sunday school had grown to sixteen children with two teachers and an adult Bible class of six adults. Through this endeavor, a nucleus for work in Spanish was established.² In 1938, a young woman, Alice Fiene, worked in a market in Santa Ana, meeting many Mexican customers who shopped there. Since she could speak a little Spanish, she decided that Mexican families needed to hear the Word of God, too. She, along with other young women from St. John's in Orange, started a Sunday school in Santa Ana. Through the children, adults were brought into the church, marking the beginnings of Iglesia de Nuestro Salvador (Church of Our Savior). In the late 1940s, Rev. David Stirdivant, who would become the father of Hispanic ministries in the District, became the first full-time pastor of this little group.³

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¹ Michael Doyle, *Feed My Sheep, A History of the Hispanic Missions in The Pacific Southwest District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (Upland: Dragonfly Press, 2006).

² *Lutheran Witness, The*. "Work Among the Mexicans of Los Angeles." June 18, 1935.

³ Stirdivant, Rev. David M. "Brief Sketch of Spanish Lutheran Work in the Southern California District." Unpublished Manuscript. January 1979. It should be noted that, of all the missions mentioned in this article, Nuestro Salvador in Santa Ana is the one not in existence today. The little Santa Ana mission was started in.

In the early 1950s, Eva Magnusson, a mission-minded member of the mission society of Iglesia de Nuestro Salvador, was riding the bus when a Mexican man boarded and sat next to her. She asked if he had any children, and he replied that he had four. She asked if they went to Sunday school or church; he replied that they didn't. She impressed on his mind that they should go to church and Sunday school. At this point, she had to disembark from the bus. When she saw pastor Stirdivant, she told him about this man, Amos Lopez, and asked pastor to visit him. From his call on Amos, eventually thirty people were gained for the mission. I interviewed four of the people who, as children, had been brought to that mission. Since they were now in their 70s and 80s, I asked them what influence that little mission in Santa Ana had on them. All of them replied that they would not have known Christ if it were not for that mission.⁴

In October of 1950, pastor Stirdivant was called to East Los Angeles where there were 250,000 Latin Americans. He stood on corners preaching and trying to reach the population, but only gained one person. It was difficult, as he had no church building. In 1953, he received help from the Southern California LWML, who canvassed the area to conduct four Vacation Bible schools in the East Los Angeles area in August, at three different churches. From this group of children, the Hispanic mission of La Santa Cruz (The Holy Cross) was born in the Boyle Heights section of Los Angeles.⁵

In 1975, pastor Stirdivant was called to Bell Gardens to begin Spanish work as the English-speaking church was diminishing and the neighborhood had a large Hispanic population. Once again, Vacation Bible schools were conducted, drawing in more and more Hispanic children each year. In 1978, Mr. Ricardo Sarria was commissioned as a non-salaried neighborhood worker. In 1980, Hilario Deniz came to Bell Gardens and assisted Pastor Stirdivant. Through him, Pastor Stirdivant had a changed viewpoint on doing ministry among Hispanics.⁶

Pastor Stirdivant said he had always done things according to the *Lutheran Agenda* and *The Lutheran Hymnal* and it wasn't working. He and Hilario began canvassing the neighborhood, inviting the children to a Saturday morning Catechism class preparing them for *Primera Comuni3n* (First Communion)—something he had never done before. In four weeks they had twenty-four to thirty children attending. Through listening to the people, he learned of the Latino customs of celebrating Lent with the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Christmas with the *Posada*.⁷ He decided to try them. At Christmas, he instituted *las posadas*, inviting people in the neighborhood to participate. The cross in the chancel of the church was changed to a crucifix. Next the

1938 and died in 1956, when the District Mission Board decided that there were more Mexicans in East Los Angeles than in Santa Ana. They sent Pastor Stirdivant to East Los Angeles and closed the Santa Ana mission, which was arguably a mistake. Pastor Stirdivant always looks on that decision with sadness.

⁴ Rev. Dr. David M. Stirdivant, interviewed by author, August 8, 2002.

⁵ Rev. Dr. David M. Stirdivant, interviewed by Rev. Kenneth Behnken, June 18, 1991.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ In some Latin American countries, a popular reenactment of the holy family's search for a room (*posada*) in Bethlehem to rest and deliver the Christ Child (cf. Luke 2.1-7). After several unsuccessful attempts at securing *posada* at various homes in the neighborhood or around the church, sad pilgrims in procession finally reach a home where the virgin with Child is welcomed. More song follows in a celebratory tone and a party takes place.

name of the church, Bell Gardens Lutheran Church, was renamed San Pedro y San Pablo (St. Peter and St. Paul) to appeal to the Hispanic community.⁸

Pastor Stirdivant was most successful in sharing the message of the Gospel by letting people feel comfortable and at ease. Since most came from a Roman Catholic culture, he concentrated first in areas of agreement: the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer, all of which were carefully explained. He emphasized the open Bible in his teaching, the constant use and study of God's Word with this approach making a difference. In all these small dealings with Mexican families, the children were very, very important. No Baptism was done without classes for the parents and *padrinos* (Godparents), who were "special glue" in the Hispanic family.⁹

Some of the customs had changed, but the church services retained their liturgical form. The services consisted of an 8:30 a.m. English service, a 9:30 a.m. Spanish service, and an 11:00 a.m. English service with a 5:30 p.m. service in Spanish. By 1982, there were between 125 and 180 Hispanics each Sunday morning and a Saturday school of over 100 Hispanic children with numerous Bible classes and teaching classes held during the week.¹⁰

In later years, *Quinceañeras*¹¹ and weddings were used as another outreach along with the community use of the playground. During June, the *Día de San Pedro y San Pablo* was an outreach open house, where donated used articles and food were for sale, drawing in the community with a rented "jumper" and free arts and crafts for the children. People came, stayed and visited, giving opportunity to tell about the church. Also at Christmas time, a *Posada* was held in a home in a neighboring town, which grew into a Bible class.¹² Through these home Bible classes, people would invite friends and relatives, giving a connection to the church and ministering to new people.

Pastor Frank Brundige, who came to Bell Gardens in 1989, opened the church doors every morning in order for people to come in and pray. After opening the doors, he stood on the church corner greeting people, always wearing his clerical collar. Through this morning activity, he got to know the people in the community. The playground was also opened for the neighborhood children to come and play. The Sunday school rooms were rented to the local school district for classes of teenagers with problems. Through each of these activities, doors were opened to minister to people in need.¹³

At Redeemer Lutheran Church in South Gate in 1998, three evangelism teams, *Infantería de Cristo* (The Lord's Infantry) with six people each, were formed to make weekly evangelism calls in order for the Spanish congregation to grow. They conducted a

⁸ Rev. Dr. David M. Stirdivant, interviewed by Rev. Kenneth Behnken, June 18, 1991.

⁹ *THIS MONTH*. March 1984.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ In some Latin American countries, a popular celebration of the young lady's rite of passage into early womanhood at age fifteen. On the day of celebration, it is not uncommon for the fifteen-year old miss (*quinceañera*) to receive the church's blessing and prayers in a special service. The day ends with a party at home or at another special site.

¹² 2001, Fourth Quarter PSD Mission Report—San Pedro y San Pablo, Bell Gardens, California. Rev. Frank Brundige.

¹³ Rev. Frank Brundige, interviewed by author, November 15, 2002.

program, “Operation Celebration,” in which 350 Bibles were distributed in the community.¹⁴ On Wednesday evenings during Lent, a program, “Free Family Dinners,” was begun. The Lord blessed the efforts with attendance at worship services increasing to fifty-nine and the Sunday school went to twenty-five. In August of 1999, the “Redeemer Fair,” a major evangelism event, was held. The street in front of the church was closed for a big block party.

At Zion Lutheran Church in Maywood, the church changed its name to Iglesia Luterana Sion and later to Palabra de Dios (Word of God). The parish decided to have a free English class taught by the pastor’s wife, Mrs. Hoffschneider. On a Saturday, they hired a Mariachi Band to draw people in and the members provided free ice cream to 100 neighbors who registered for the class. The classes began with forty attending the Saturday morning class and thirty attending the afternoon classes.¹⁵ These classes were held each Saturday and Sunday afternoon. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes continued throughout the years. Later Rev. Brundige started *Posadas*, *Quinceañeras*, and *Primera Comunión* classes to reach the Hispanic community.

Peace Lutheran Church in Pico Rivera decided to open a Christian preschool in 1988. From its inception, the school’s purpose was to offer a service to young Hispanic families in their neighborhood, inviting those without an active relationship with Christ or those in a local church to such a relationship. To aid Spanish-speaking parents or grandparents to be able to communicate with the teachers, every class had either a teacher or teacher’s assistant who was fluent in both English and Spanish.

Beginning in 1989, services were conducted in both Spanish and English, with a fifth Sunday of the month reserved for a bilingual service, creating an opportunity for shared worship and fellowship with bilingual Vacation Bible schools held in the summers. In order to evangelize in the community, fliers were distributed and phone calls and visitations followed. Four of the members went out two-by-two inviting the families of the community to the church with these visitors setting appointments with the families for the pastor to call on them. In 2002, Vicar Zabdi Lopez conducted Sunday morning bilingual Bible class with forty people attending. By April, 544 people had attended the sixty-eight Bible class sessions that were held; classes averaged eight per session.¹⁶

Faith Lutheran Church in East Whittier also saw a shift in demographics around their church in 2000. Recognizing the change in the neighborhood, they had gone door-to-door, placing door hangers with invitations for the community to come to church. During that time, over 10,000 door hangers had been distributed. In 1997, Faith initiated ministries aimed at the local Hispanic community offering ESL classes, which at one time had over thirty students. During these classes, invitations were distributed in both English and Spanish, inviting people to various activities at the church. Faith also targeted the youth of the community through a weekly tract ministry to the local high

¹⁴ 1998, First Quarter PSD Mission Report—Redeemer, South Gate, California. Rev. Charles Brady.

¹⁵ *THIS MONTH*. September 1994.

¹⁶ Michael Doyle, *Feed My Sheep*, 156.

school. These adolescents also participated in the newly formed Venturing Program, a youth program to encourage relationship development between various ethnic groups.¹⁷

In 1980, St. John's Lutheran Church in Oxnard experienced a traumatic shift in the population in the area. With the Hispanic population increasing, the church saw a need to minister to this group of people. The congregation decided to have an outreach program with nine Vacation Bible schools held in parks, yards, and people's homes where Hispanic children were invited to attend. After they procured trucks to take furniture to the sites, they had three teams that did the teaching, crafts, and music. When the Vacation Bible schools were completed, they discovered that south Oxnard was where they received the best response. In 1983, Rev. Dennis Bradshaw was placed in Oxnard to begin a Hispanic ministry. He conducted a Vacation Bible School (VBS) where there were sixty to seventy Hispanic children. Following VBS, he made home visitations, beginning a Spanish Bible study in homes of several families, and was preparing a Spanish language radio program in the area. A Spanish Saturday school and worship services were conducted at St. John's. He also conducted services in carports of apartment complexes and in the city parks in south Oxnard.¹⁸

From this simple beginning, a storefront facility was rented in south Oxnard in 1985, close to the families of the children with whom he had worked, establishing Centro Educacional Cristiano de la Iglesia Luterana (Christian Educational Center of the Lutheran Church). The mission along with St. John's participated in the Candy Cane Festival in 1986, with puppeteers from the congregation presenting a show in Spanish and English based on the *Posadas* theme "No Room at the Inn." Tracts in Spanish and English were distributed, integrating the story with the presentation of the Gospel.¹⁹

The mission continued to grow and moved to a different location in the neighborhood. They directed their programs to the boys and girls who lived in the large apartment complexes in the area. They proclaimed and taught the Gospel and had craft programs, making all these events the highlight of the children's week. Some of the activities were group devotions, a fishing workshop on the Hueneme Pier, a craft day, a Health Fair, and a neighborhood cleanup. The food left over from Desert Storm packages were given to assist the ministry. Since many people in the apartment complex were on low income with tight food budgets, bread, courtesy of a local bakery, was distributed every Thursday.²⁰ By being open to families' basic needs, the church also had a good opportunity to point people to Christ, the "Bread of Life." Other means of outreach that brought positive results were the storefront preaching, worship in the park, and active door-to-door evangelism.

This small mission made up of first generation Hispanic immigrants from Mexico or Central America, joined Synod in 1997, and is now known as Centro Cristiano Redwood, having over 100 members. Rev. Marco Lozano presently is the pastor of the church. His

¹⁷ "Proposal to Establish a Spanish Ministry at Faith Lutheran Church East Whittier." Unpublished Manuscript. March 21, 2000.

¹⁸ Rev. Calvin Fiege, interviewed by author, June 28, 2003.

¹⁹ *THIS MONTH*. December 1986.

²⁰ *THIS MONTH*. June–July 1982.

wife and children were brought to the mission through VBS. When pastor Bradshaw met Marco, he started coming to church, was confirmed, and later became a pastor through the Theological Education by Extension Program (TEE) of the Hispanic Institute of Theology.²¹ The activities of this congregation to bring the Gospel to south Oxnard are parking lot sales, park visits, and visiting prospective members. Pastor Lozano stated that the mission is a loving, caring, and warm church embracing the needy.²²

When pastor Cristiano Artigas was called as missionary-at-large in the Phoenix area in 1992, there were no Spanish-speaking congregations. He helped to establish the Schaller Community Center in Phoenix. Through children's after-school tutoring and recreational programs, food and clothing distribution, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, ESL classes, community meetings, single mother's programs, and tax services, a mission, Iglesia Gracias (Thanks[giving] Church), was established at the center. A VBS was conducted each year with children receiving backpacks filled with school supplies. Other missions, Sola Fide, Santo Tomas, Rey y Reyes (King and Kings), and El Divino Maestro (Divine Teacher), were also begun through ESL classes and Vacation Bible schools.²³

After Rev. Gale Schmidt retired in the Phoenix area, he conducted ESL classes and worked with the school children at Christ the Redeemer, teaching them Spanish. He decided to start a Hispanic ministry at Christ the Redeemer by placing a sign in front of the church building stating that Spanish services would be conducted in the chapel. At the first service, there were nineteen people. From this small beginning, the Spanish service now draws over 130 people who presently worship in the sanctuary.²⁴

As you read the histories of each of these ministries, you may have noted a common thread—most of them started through the children either in a VBS or Sunday school setting.²⁵ Through the children, some adults were gained who established ministries in the Spanish language. Through outreach in many different forms—ESL classes, park activities, rummage sales, Bible studies—people were reached with the Gospel in their language. It is also important to note that cultural celebrations such as *Quinceañeras*, imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Christmas with *Posadas* should not be disregarded, but rather used as occasions for planting the seed of the Word. In connection with the study of the Word (Scripture), these liturgical rites served both as a bridge to and as an actual expression of the Gospel of salvation in Christ.²⁶

²¹ Since the summer of 2006, the TEE offerings of the former Hispanic Institute of Theology have been consolidated under the congregational (entrance or pre-Seminary) and Seminary levels formation programs of Concordia Seminary's Center for Hispanic Studies.

²² Rev. Marco Lozano, interviewed by author, August 1, 2003.

²³ Rev. Cristiano Artigas, interviewed by author, January 7, 2004.

²⁴ Rev. Gale Schmidt, interviewed by author, August 2, 2002.

²⁵ The author recalled Pastor Stirdivant noting it was often helpful getting the grandmother's approval for children to come to Sunday school. Mothers and fathers were typically gained through the VBS and Sunday school experiences of their children. However, based on some statements pastors made to the author in the course of his research, it seems that mothers were often more receptive to the Gospel than the fathers.

²⁶ There were Lutheran pastors who also dealt with Latino Pentecostals. Pastor Bradshaw in Santa Paula developed the church there through a group of Pentecostals who had a bad experience with a Pentecostal minister and left his church. In order to minister to these people, the liturgical forms were changed, the paraments were taken off the altar, and other things were done to make them more comfortable in the church

We plant the seed, the Holy Spirit nurtures it to makes it grow and mature in the faith. Your congregation also can begin a ministry to, among, and with Hispanics/Latinos in your community by working with the children and their families in the neighborhood, and by providing activities that meet the spiritual and everyday needs of the people and are intelligible to them in their cultural milieu. The following hymn stanza (LSB 826) sums up well the real life stories of God's work among Latinos that I was privileged to gather in my research:

*Hark! The voice of Jesus calling,
Who will go and work today?
Fields are white and harvest waiting—
Who will bear the sheaves away?...
You can tell the love of Jesus,
You can say he died for all....
You can lead the little children
To the Savior's waiting arms.*

Resumen

El historiador luterano Michael Doyle nos ofrece una selección de narrativas de su extensa obra acerca de las misiones hispanas en el distrito Pacífico-Suroeste del Sínodo de Misuri. Más allá de un mero recuento de historias recopiladas de sus muchas entrevistas, el autor presenta las narrativas como ventanas a estrategias misionales básicas de uso con el pueblo hispano/latino.

Al leer las historias de cada uno de los ministerios, su común denominador consiste en que la mayoría empezó con la invitación de niños del vecindario a una escuela bíblica vacacional o a la escuela dominical. Por medio de los niños algunos adultos se incorporaron a varios ministerios de la iglesia local. Algunas maneras de alcance a la comunidad se mencionan en las narrativas: clases de inglés como segunda lengua, actividades de familia en parques, venta de artículos de segunda mano, y desde luego estudios bíblicos.

La celebración de ritos de gran importancia cultural y religiosa como las quinceañeras, las posadas, la imposición de cenizas y el viernes santo sobresalen como

and in worship. Once again a strong emphasis was placed on Bible study and doctrine. Pastor Herrera, an alumnus of the former Hispanic Institute of Theology, who was a Church of Christ minister before coming to the Missouri Synod, took his congregation from the Church of Christ to Lutheranism. The big problem came when the congregation was invited to a meeting in Pasadena where a Hispanic minister from Texas talked about making the sign of the cross in church services. When Pastor Herrera's congregation came to church the next day, they said they had already left the Catholic Church and did not want to return to that way of doing things anymore. Over half of the congregation walked out and never returned. A lesson: When we minister to people, we have to understand where they are coming from and gently bring them to the Gospel, not imposing some external things on them, but rather teaching Christ in the Scriptures and showing why we, as Lutherans, do certain things.

ocasiones privilegiadas para la plantación de la semilla de la palabra de Dios entre aquellos que vienen de un trasfondo católicorromano—menos se dice del trabajo con latinos de otros trasfondos. Cuando tales ritos litúrgicos están íntimamente ligados a la palabra de Dios, estos sirven como un puente para la proclamación del evangelio de Cristo y como una expresión del mismo. El historiador finaliza su ensayo animando a toda la iglesia a servir al pueblo hispano mediante la obra con los niños y sus familias. Nos recuerda también la importancia de una evangelización que toma en serio tanto las necesidades espirituales como materiales de la comunidad hispana.

**A Response to Michael Doyle's *Feed My Sheep*
Douglas R. Groll**

Without a doubt in *Feed My Sheep* Michael Doyle has made a wonderful contribution to the study of the history of the Missouri Synod's Hispanic missions in Southern California. In just over 400 pages of easily readable type on fine paper bound in a sturdy 8"x10" beautifully designed hardcover tome with hundreds of relevant photos, the author has compiled an almost encyclopedic source of information about this important ministry which transcends any one-dimensional reading which would see it only as a treasured data base of people, places, dates and historical facts. In reality *Feed My Sheep* draws the reader into an almost unwitting encounter with the "big questions" of philosophies of mission, denominational and district debates as to long-term and day-to-day strategies, funding, ecclesiology, doctrine and practice through the careful telling of the narratives of Christian individuals and groups in very specific mission settings which required the best judgment and Spirit-filled decisions in the "trenches" of real life.

Doyle has succeeded in engaging the reader by conveying the information in an almost photographic style which is refreshingly devoid of polemic or agenda aimed at winning an argument of the "why" of either success or failure or the "who" of whomever was to receive praise or blame. The reader is enjoined to look with wonderment and thanksgiving through the author's eyes at a century of change, successes and failures, starts, restarts, closings and new works. The author does not judge. Instead he presents so much material involving hundreds of men and women in dozens of places over so much time that he basically invites us to make this a "must read" from the multiple perspectives of the diversity of people: laymen, pastors, teachers, administrators, funding units that of necessity must be involved in missions.

Put another way, one could posit a series of questions that, depending on who asks the question, could then give an orientation as to how to sort through this trove of so

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much material. The reader who asks, “Has Missouri historically only been interested in *status quo* maintenance or ministering to its own?” will find page after page of visionary thought and action. Pastor John William Theiss’ remark to his friend Gotthold Smukal on a morning walk in the hills of Boyle Heights in 1906 that the church should be doing mission work among all the Mexican people in the area will find this answer in many forms over the next three hundred pages.

The Lutheran layman or laywoman who wonders if there is any message in these pages that point to lay empowerment in mission will see the heroic examples of Miss Alice Fiene and her ability to mobilize other women to organize Sunday schools and ministry to children in the Santa Ana area that brought about contacts for later visitation and catechesis by ordained pastors. This same lay impetus for mission is replicated through page after page and time after time until today. The reader is reminded of the diversity of gifts that make such projects as the Schaller Center in Phoenix a success in mission.

What does this history tell the church about the challenges of cross-cultural ministry where more than one language is involved? Doyle helps us see that dynamic confronted for good or bad by the actors in this drama over many years. One senses the frustration of English-dominant pastors trying to become bilingual or reach out to Hispanics or Spanish-speakers; or one finds men like Bruno Martinelli who linguistically and culturally was Italian but tried to minister in a Mexican environment. The endlessly debated question of the advisability of a Spanish-dominant Hispanic ministry saw its incarnation in the tension between the vocational and linguistic leanings of Hispanic Pastor Alfred Saez as he moved ministry toward an English-dominant base and his strategy’s ultimate rejection by a mission judicatory that wanted work carried out in Spanish.

What type of person is suited for Hispanic ministry? Here again the author provides us with a rich variety of profiles of men and women, both Hispanic and Anglo. The book is dedicated to the ministry of Dr. David Stirdivant, an Anglo who has labored since 1946 in Hispanic ministry in the Pacific Southwest District. It is in the details of the sacrifice and ingenuity of men and women like Pastor Stirdivant that Doyle’s work becomes a picture of God’s action through real people. Though perhaps tedious to the theorist the recounting of Vicar Stirdivant’s rebuilding of a Model A Ford, or the award given to Pastor Artigas’s son, Chris, for college wrestling accomplishments, cements a century of ministry grounded in a limitless Gospel delivered in the midst of the daily struggles and joys of a church limited by yet empowered through flesh-and-blood people in the world.

Is there a way this work should be read by churchmen, administrators and institutional leaders? The dozens of pages of correspondence between missionaries, administrators, and interested laymen over a host of issues ranging from language proficiency to vehicles to measure success in mission remind us that those same questions raised today are not new and men and women who must make life and death decisions as to deployment of people and resources would do well to review how previous generations succeeded and failed in addressing those issues. Doyle’s fine work will be worth its publication costs if it does nothing more than help district and synodical

church administrations step back from polemics in missiology to contemplate how the Holy Spirit is pretty good at scoring points for all sides of every debate as servant hearts do servant ministry for all God's people.

Resumen

Esta obra enciclopédica del historiador luterano Michael Doyle acerca de las misiones hispanas en el distrito Pacífico-Suroeste de La Iglesia Luterana—Sínodo de Misuri nos presenta una gran cantidad de fotos y documentación relevantes que lejos de ser una mera reserva de datos históricos invitan al lector, por medio de las narrativas de personas de carne y hueso en su diario vivir, a adentrarse en el mundo de las grandes preguntas que se hace toda estrategia de misiones.

Sin prejuicio o interés en presentarnos una agenda que redima a algunos y aplauda a otros, y más bien con una actitud de acción de gracias y asombro, el autor se dedica a presentar de manera casi fotográfica las historias de sucesos y fracasos, inicios y fines de obras misioneras de las que fueron partícipes innumerables laicos, pastores, maestros y administradores durante todo un siglo.

A partir de su trasfondo o interés particular, el lector podrá aproximarse a la obra con diversas preguntas. Aquel que cuestione la capacidad del *Sínodo de Misuri* de ir más allá de lo que algunos hoy denominan un “ministerio de mantenimiento” a los que ya han sido evangelizados (*maintenance ministry*) se encontrará con ejemplos de pensamiento y acción visionaria. Aquel que se pregunte acerca del impulso misionero del laicado se encontrará con el ejemplo de la Srta. Alice Fiene cuyo poder de convocatoria entre las damas para que se involucraran en el ministerio de la enseñanza abrió puertas que permitieron a pastores dar seguimiento en la catequesis y visitación de muchos en la comunidad.

Aquel que se haga la pregunta acerca de los retos del trabajo misional entre culturas o en convivencia con varias culturas (*cross-cultural ministry, multicultural ministry*) notará en las páginas del libro la frustración de obreros de habla inglesa que hablan poco o nada de español o les cuesta entablar contacto con hispanos, y a la vez encontrará la historia de alguien como Bruno Martinelli cuyo trasfondo cultural y lingüístico italiano no le impidió ministrar a mexicanos. En la historia del pastor Alfred Saez, el lector apreciará la tensión que puede existir entre pastores y juntas de misiones en cuanto a la debatida cuestión en estrategia misional en torno al uso del español o el inglés en el ministerio hispano en los Estados Unidos.

Si la pregunta es quién es el más indicado para llevar a cabo obra entre hispanos, el autor nos presenta los sacrificios y la creatividad de hombres y mujeres, tanto latinos como anglos—entre estos últimos, el pastor David Stürdivant, quien ha trabajado en ministerios hispanos desde 1946 en el distrito Pacífico-Suroeste, y a quien el autor justamente dedica su labor. Un vistazo a la extensa correspondencia entre misioneros, administradores, y laicos que nos convida el autor demuestra que las preguntas que nos hacemos hoy en cuanto a misión no son nuevas. La buena labor de Doyle será de gran

ayuda a una iglesia que de vez en cuando necesita hacer un alto a la polémica en cuestión misiológica para simplemente admirar la obra que el Espíritu Santo no deja de hacer entre todos aquellos siervos que a menudo se encuentran en distintos bandos de la estrategia misional.

Mission Observer

On the Human Face of the Migrant¹

Daniel G. Groody

One of the things I particularly draw from Luther, as a Catholic priest, is the whole notion of the gratuity of God, and the sense that there is nothing that in the end we can claim fully as our own, but we receive all as a gift. I think this insight has to be the foundation of our theological reflection because so often in this immigration debate, which is complex and difficult, we keep saying who belongs, who doesn't belong, what rights do they have, what rights don't they have. But unless we get the piece of gratuity right, and unless we get the human face of the migrant right, we are not going to find, in my opinion, the right way.

The mandate to Israel to remember the widow, the orphan, and the alien (or even in some translations, the immigrant) is very striking because it is at the heart of Israel's creed. If Israel is reminded to remember the widow, the poor, and the immigrant, it is probably because they were forgetting them. Today there is this tendency, this historical amnesia, to forget where we come from, and to forget that in the end we are all immigrant people on this earth.

Most immigrants (98%) are just looking for a job. They are coming to the U.S. because their families are hungry and they want to work. They come here because of economic need.

There are many aspects of the immigration debate that need to be looked at, but let us first of all look at the primacy of life. The fact that thousands and thousands of people have died since 1994 crossing the border in the deserts of the Southwest and in the canals merits substantial attention. On the news coverage on immigration, the issue of life that should be at the forefront of our consciousness is being relegated to the margins. The question remains: What does it mean to be a faithful Christian in the context of this social challenge of immigration?

What we want to bring to the forefront is the human face of the migrant and the face

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¹ This is a revised and edited section of the 2005-2006 First Annual Lecture in Hispanic/Latino Theology and Missions presented at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. For access to the full lecture entitled "The Journey of the Immigrant" and other resources from the Center for Hispanic Studies, go to <http://itunes.csl.edu/>

of the crucified Christ in the migrant. The way of the migrant is the way of the cross. In a sense, these are the crucified peoples of today. They certainly do not have a monopoly on suffering, but in many ways experience a social crucifixion in being away from their families. They experience a political crucifixion in being branded illegal aliens, an economic crucifixion in their poverty, and sometimes a psychological crucifixion in their loneliness.

At times migrants even experience a religious crucifixion when they go to our churches and feel that they are not welcome. All they hear is “you gotta learn English,” and I agree—I think that migrants should learn English—but we need to eventually get there. Otherwise, if Christians do not come across as a welcoming community from the start, migrants will not feel accepted by the church.

For some, the way across the desert is an actual crucifixion. Next to being nailed to pieces of wood, I am not sure there is a more painful way to die than to go through the long process of heat stroke and dehydration many migrants go through. To go to some of these cemeteries where they are buried highlights their marginality. Their tombstones often just read “John Doe” or “Jane Doe.” Once I even found one that misspelled the impersonal name. Some workers had so little regard for the migrants that they literally put them next to a garbage dump at the edge of the cemetery. So migrants are marginalized in life and even in burial—marginalized in death. This is nothing short of what we could see as a crucifixion. This is the tragic context of our mission.

The next question for us is: Where is the power of life, the dimensions of faith, the good news of the Gospel for these people?

Resumen

El Dr. Groody argumenta que en la actualidad la reducción del debate público acerca de las leyes migratorias de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica a lo político, económico, o legal—aún a lo sensacionalista—ha resultado en la pérdida de la dimensión humana del inmigrante. Señala que a pesar de sus raíces inmigrantes, los ciudadanos norteamericanos sufren de una amnesia histórica que no les permite identificarse con las necesidades del inmigrante. Nos recuerda que al fin de cuentas todos somos en algún sentido inmigrantes en este mundo y la tierra no es al fin la propiedad de este u otro grupo sino un don de Dios. La actitud fundamental del cristiano hacia el inmigrante en cuanto prójimo es simplemente la de darle su dignidad y ayudarlo en lo posible.

Reflexiona además el autor acerca de la dura experiencia del inmigrante, comparándola con un *via crucis*, es decir, viéndola como un reflejo del Cristo crucificado. Inmigrantes a menudo experimentan una crucifixión social al vivir separados de su familia, otra de tipo político por ser tildados de “ilegales”, otra en lo económico por su pobreza, y además una crucifixión psicológica por la soledad que sufren lejos de su hogar y cultura. Quizá aún peor es la crucifixión eclesial que sienten recién llegados cuando iglesias de habla inglesa les exigen implícita o explícitamente que deben aprender inglés para poder ser plenamente aceptados en el cuerpo de Cristo.

El autor nos recuerda que para los miles de inmigrantes a quienes el desierto ha enterrado trágicamente en su intento de cruzar la frontera se debe hablar de una crucifixión más literal y por ende mortal. A estos se les entierra a menudo en fosas comunes sin que nadie sepa su nombre ni de su fin. Viven un tipo de crucifixión y marginación hasta en la tumba.

La problemática del inmigrante, su situación trágica y su deseo de una mejor vida, representa parte importante del contexto de misión para todo aquel que desee trabajar con y entre latinos en los Estados Unidos. Nos deja el Dr. Groody con la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo proclamamos la buena nueva de Cristo al inmigrante en este contexto?

Misión e inmigración

Pedagogía para trabajar entre los inmigrantes

Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.

A menudo el obrero hispano en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica se ve en la difícil tarea de abogar de algún modo por la importancia de la misión entre inmigrantes recién llegados de la América Latina sin distinción de su status legal. Lo hace a menudo ante sectores mayoritarios de La Iglesia Luterana—Sínodo de Misuri que desean abogar de algún modo por el respeto que todo ciudadano (cristiano o no) debe dar a las leyes de inmigración de la nación y a aquellos que las promueven y defienden.

¿Cómo se resuelve esta paradoja entre el ser *cristiano* y el ser *ciudadano*? ¿Cómo podemos ser fieles al llamado de Dios a proclamar el evangelio a todos sin distinción (inmigrantes con o sin documentos legales) en la esfera del reino espiritual y al mismo tiempo ser obedientes al llamado de Dios a obedecer a las autoridades que éste ha instituido para preservar la paz y el orden en la esfera del reino temporal?

La teología luterana enseña que Dios ha instituido tanto el ministerio del evangelio como el gobierno para el bien del prójimo. Esto implica que Dios gobierna para nuestro bien tanto en la esfera espiritual por medio del evangelio y sus ministros así como también en la esfera temporal por medio de leyes y gobernantes. No se entiende por espiritual y temporal un dualismo entre espíritu y materia. Más bien, la esfera espiritual nos dirige a nuestra relación *ante Dios* (*coram Deo*) mediante el perdón de pecados que Cristo nos da. La esfera temporal nos refiere a nuestra relación *ante los seres humanos* (*coram hominibus*) mediante la práctica de la justicia en la sociedad. La vocación es el modo concreto en que cristianos sirven como instrumentos de amor al prójimo *en ambas esferas*—por ejemplo, el cristiano que sirve como pastor o diaconisa (esfera espiritual) y el que sirve como alcalde de la ciudad o abogado de inmigración (esfera temporal).

La teología luterana también nos advierte que tanto ministros del evangelio como ministros de gobierno pueden errar y han errado en el desempeño de su labor cuando no han tomado en cuenta el beneficio espiritual y temporal del prójimo. Se distingue a menudo entre el *oficio* del evangelio o del gobernante que Dios ha instituido y la *persona* que lo ocupa en un determinado momento. Así pues, por ejemplo, aunque el oficio del gobernante en sí es instituido por Dios, el ocupante del mismo puede errar y por ello leyes pueden ser cuestionadas y aún rechazadas si estas parecen irse en contra de la ley de Dios cuyo fin es promover siempre el bien del prójimo.

Aquellos que abogan por la misión de la iglesia entre inmigrantes sin distinción de

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status legal dan cierta prioridad a la promoción de la vocación de todo cristiano bautizado en la esfera espiritual por encima de la promoción de su deber como ciudadano de obedecer las leyes migratorias de forma absoluta y sin cuestionamiento. Lo hacen a menudo no por querer desobedecer las leyes en sí, sino porque no están convencidos de que estas son en la actualidad de beneficio para todos. Es cuestión de conciencia. Se puede argumentar, por ejemplo, que más apertura al inmigrante es de beneficio no sólo para el pobre prójimo que busca trabajo para alimentar a su familia sino también para la vitalidad económica de la nación que al fin contribuye a un mejor status de vida para todo ciudadano.

Aquellos que abogan por el respeto a las leyes en general dan cierto énfasis a la promoción de la vocación y el deber del cristiano en cuanto ciudadano en la esfera temporal sin querer por ello negar la importancia de proclamar el evangelio a todos sin distinción. Lo hacen no porque vean la ley migratoria como a un ídolo o de manera poco crítica—aunque a veces es así—sino porque en muchos casos no están completamente convencidos de que ésta sea necesariamente injusta. Se puede argumentar, por ejemplo, que menos apertura al inmigrante ilegal sería de beneficio para proteger a ciudadanos ante posibles ataques terroristas (seguridad nacional) o aún para proteger al mismo inmigrante de la explotación de negociantes que deseen aprovecharse de su labor sin compensarlos justamente.

Mi propósito no es debatir la validez de estos argumentos sino mostrar al lector que siempre habrá debate entre cristianos acerca de *cómo* se sirve mejor al prójimo y aún acerca de *quién* es el prójimo que debe servirse primero. Como profesor, tengo la oportunidad de introducir a mis estudiantes seminaristas al complejo mundo del vivir en ambas esferas, a saber, la espiritual que nos llama como cristianos a la misión por medio del evangelio pero también a la temporal que nos confronta como ciudadanos (o como residentes) con la necesidad de respetar en alguna forma la ley en general o la de inmigración en particular.

Una estrategia que ha sido de gran ayuda para articular una teología de misión en torno a la inmigración consiste en una pedagogía que hace uso de casos hipotéticos de la “vida real.” He aquí un caso en particular que ha dado buen fruto para aproximarse a la paradoja de vivir como cristiano y ciudadano, entre las dos esferas, a la luz de la problemática que se ha planteado.

Ud. ha sido llamado a servir una congregación predominantemente anglosajona que se sitúa en un barrio con un creciente número de hispanos. Dentro y fuera de la iglesia, un miembro anglosajón prominente de la parroquia que sirve en el consejo municipal de la ciudad habla a menudo y apasionadamente de su oposición a la inmigración ilegal. Personas de la comunidad latina cuyo status legal nadie conoce no quieren participar en actividades patrocinadas por la iglesia porque temen que éste ciudadano u otros llamen a “la migra” para arrestarlos. Por ende los esfuerzos de la iglesia para proclamar el evangelio y proveer ayuda humanitaria a la comunidad no han

inspirado la confianza de la comunidad hispana. La situación ha llegado a tal punto que un miembro latino de la congregación que a menudo sirve de forma voluntaria como abogado de inmigración se ha negado a comulgar con su hermano anglosajón por su aparente falta de amor al prójimo inmigrante y la comunidad latina en general.

Después de considerar la situación, se le pide al estudiante que piense en lo que le diría a ambos miembros de la iglesia. En primer lugar, el futuro pastor o la futura diaconisa reconoce que tanto el abogado hispano como el representante de gobierno anglosajón están tratando de ser fieles a su vocación en servicio al prójimo. Desde sus respectivas vocaciones, es de esperarse que cada uno vele por y dé prioridad a las necesidades de su prójimo *más cercano*. Obviamente, el abogado hispano que trabaja con inmigrantes a menudo tiene un llamado especial a servirles y esto lo lleva a defenderlos. No se puede esperar menos del abogado. Lo mismo podría decirse del hermano anglosajón cuya vocación lo impulsa a velar por las leyes de gobierno que en principio promueven el bien de ciudadanos. Obviamente, esto crea una cierta *ambigüedad* con la que los cristianos viven toda su existencia ya que muchas veces sus vocaciones entran en conflicto entre sí. Sin embargo, tal ambigüedad a la vez nos permite—de hecho, nos obliga a—abogar por el prójimo en concreto que Dios nos ha llamado a servir de acuerdo a nuestras vocaciones. Aunque entren en conflicto, tanto el abogado como el gobernante deben llevar a cabo su vocación responsablemente porque muchos dependen de su labor.

Futuros pastores y diaconisas aprenden además la importancia de *distinguir* entre la obra de Dios en la esfera espiritual mediante el evangelio y su obra en la esfera temporal mediante las leyes civiles. Por un lado, afirmar la acción de Dios en ambas esferas de la vida nos permite estar en desacuerdo con hermanos de la misma iglesia en materia de ley migratoria sin atentar contra nuestra unidad en Cristo. Así pues, la unidad de la iglesia se fundamenta en el evangelio y no en esta u otra ley. En este contexto, el abogado hispano que no quiere comulgar con su hermano anglosajón por desacuerdo político—arraigado en una preocupación legítima por proteger los derechos de los inmigrantes—ha confundido las dos esferas por la intromisión de su posición política en asuntos del evangelio (a saber, recibir la Cena) a expensas de la *unidad* de la iglesia.

Por otro lado, afirmar el gobierno de Dios en ambas esferas nos ayuda a reconocer el deber de todo ciudadano de obedecer la ley sin dejar que éste afecte negativamente su deber cristiano de promover la proclamación del evangelio y la obra de misericordia que definen la misión de la iglesia a todos sin distinción. En este contexto, la posición pública del gobernante anglosajón en contra de la inmigración ilegal—aunque permitida en cuanto ciudadano con la vocación de defender la ley—termina siendo un obstáculo para la proclamación del evangelio en una comunidad creciente de hispanos. En este caso el hermano anglosajón confunde las dos esferas por la intromisión de lo legal en asuntos del evangelio a expensas de la *misión* de la iglesia.

Summary

In light of the immigration debate in our day and age, one wonders if it is possible to be both a faithful *Christian* and an obedient *citizen*. In this short article on mission and immigration, Dr. Sánchez offers a case study for dealing with the tension between the Christian's commitment to the church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all immigrants without distinction and his/her desire to uphold the nation's immigration laws.

Lutheran theology affirms that God governs the world for our well-being through the Gospel in the spiritual realm and through government in the temporal realm. Not an ontological dualism between spirit and matter, the so-called two-kingdoms (more accurately, two-realms) distinction refers to the promotion of the neighbor's redemption *before God (coram Deo)* through faith in Christ (spiritual realm) and the cause of justice and peace *before human beings (coram hominibus)* through good works, family, education, and government (temporal realm).

Through their concrete *vocations*, Christians are called by God to serve in both realms for the benefit of their neighbor. However, since the neighbor's well-being is not always served well, we can further distinguish between God's institution of *offices* (e.g., the ministry of the Gospel and government) and particular *office-holders* who occupy them. Thus we might honor government as God's gift while at the same time protesting and fighting to change laws that might not serve our neighbor best.

At times, however, *how* the neighbor is best served—or *which* neighbor should be served first—itself becomes a matter of legitimate debate and even disagreement among Christians. Thus vocational commitments can come into conflict with one another. Through the following case study, students are challenged to consider what it means to be both a faithful Christian and a dutiful citizen without resolving completely the inherent *ambiguity* in the tension between having a heart for missions and a desire to honor government.

You have been called to serve a predominantly Anglo parish in an increasingly Latino neighborhood. A prominent Anglo member of your congregation who serves in the city council is rather vocal in and outside the church about his opposition to illegal immigration. Members of the Latino community whose legal status is simply unknown are increasingly hesitant to attend outreach church activities because of their fear that this zealous citizen or others in the church might call "la migra" (immigration officers) to check them out. As a result, the congregation's evangelistic and mercy efforts in the community are not trusted. The situation has gotten so bad that a concerned Latino member of the congregation who works pro bono as an immigration lawyer will not commune with this Anglo brother because of the latter's lack of sensitivity to the plight of the immigrant and the Latino community in their midst.

After considering the situation, students are asked to think about what they will say to both members of the congregation. First, the future pastor or deaconess has to acknowledge that both the Hispanic lawyer and the Anglo city council member are trying to be faithful to their vocations and serve the neighbor. From their respective offices, it is expected that each will focus *first* on the needs of his constituents, their *closest* neighbors. Obviously, the Hispanic member who works on behalf of immigrants as a *pro bono* lawyer has a special divine calling to serve and defend them. Nothing less can be expected of him. The same can be said of the Anglo member whose vocation impels him to protect and defend the laws, which at least in principle are for the good of many. Here students encounter a legitimate ambiguity and conflict of vocational commitments between Christian brothers. Such ambiguity is part of living in a complex world, where many neighbors depend on us, but it also allows both the immigration lawyer and the city council member to stand up and advocate for the neighbor whom they have been called to serve.

Future pastors and deaconesses also learn the importance of *distinguishing* between the work of God in the spiritual realm through the Gospel and His work in the temporal realm through the laws of government. Affirming God's action in both realms allows us to disagree with other Christians on immigration law without destroying our unity in Christ. The unity of the church is anchored in the Gospel and not in this or that law. Therefore, the Hispanic lawyer who does not want to commune with his Anglo brother because of their political disagreement—a legitimate one nevertheless that arises from his calling to be an advocate for immigrants—has confused the two realms by making the political a condition for the *unity* of the church in Christ.

On the other hand, affirming God's governing in both realms helps us to acknowledge the duty of every citizen (or resident) to obey the law without letting such duty affect negatively his commitment to promote the proclamation of the Gospel and the works of mercy that ultimately define the church's mission to all without distinction. In this context, the Anglo member's vocal opposition against illegal immigration—though perhaps legitimate as far as his vocation is concerned—ends up becoming an obstacle to the proclamation of the Gospel in an increasingly Hispanic neighborhood. In this situation, the Anglo brother confuses the two realms by openly advocating for measures against illegal immigration in the church to the detriment of the church's *mission*.

Who are these Peoples? Key Resources for Understanding Hispanics in the U.S.

Douglas R. Groll

As young missionaries in Latin America, we at times felt that policies affecting our mission strategies and our personal lives were often made by well-intentioned leaders in the U.S. who wanted to be responsible in their decision-making but often had to rely almost completely on anecdotal information or, perhaps worse yet, their own observations on the peoples in the field. Over the years I have observed that within the U.S., District presidents and mission facilitators are often put in the same impossible position. Without familiarity with Hispanic cultures and unable to speak Spanish, they are forced to rely on an extremely narrow anecdotal database, which is often shaped by culture-specific idiosyncrasies of a particular geographic zone of the country (e.g., Angelinos vs. Miami Cubans vs. Nuyoricans¹). The question arises: Is there anywhere out there a place where we can get good data on Hispanic trends, culture, history, education, and church life that is valuable for all of us in making missiological decisions?

Two relatively young research units are now making enormous contributions to the cultural and religious understanding of U.S. Hispanic/Latino communities. Within seven years the *Pew Hispanic Center* (www.pewhispanic.org) has established itself as the premier source for reliable, nonpartisan studies of the Hispanic experience. It is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and its goal is “to improve understanding of the U.S. Hispanic population and to chronicle Latinos’ growing impact on the entire nation.” The Center makes available in-depth studies and surveys dealing with demography, economics, education, identity, immigration, labor, politics, religion, and remittances. New studies are released almost every month in pdf format. Studies generally contain an executive summary followed by in-depth charts and explanations. Because of the Center’s structural ties to other Pew polling centers, its data is remarkably up to date in terms of Hispanic attitudes toward immigration, politics, the economy, and religious preferences.

A perusal of just a few of the more than eighty released studies by the Center reflects

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¹ Nuyoricans (a coming together of “New York” and “Puerto Rican”) are persons of Puerto Rican descent born and/or raised in or around New York City. They are the descendants of Puerto Ricans from the “Great Migration” that began in the 1930s and ended by 1960.

the breadth of inquiry:

Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion; Survey of Latino Attitudes on the War in Iraq; 2007 National Survey of Latinos: As Illegal Immigration Issue Heats Up, Hispanics Feel a Chill; Between Here and There: How Attached are Latino Immigrants To Their Native Country?; Modes of Entry for the Unauthorized Migrant Population; and Assimilation and Language.

Each study is detailed enough to be substantive for educational and research purposes, but also so attractively prepared that they are relatively easy to understand. Above all these studies provide an element of dry, quiet data that helps to counter so much of the emotional shouts of our highly charged political atmosphere.

An almost sister organization, often funded by grants from the Pew Hispanic Center, is the *Institute for Latino Studies* at Notre Dame University (<http://latinostudies.nd.edu>). Within the Institute, there are specific research and publication centers that almost do for religious studies on the Hispanic experience what the *Pew Hispanic Center* does in secular studies. These centers are the *Center for Latino Spirituality and Culture*, *Center for Migration and Border Studies*, *Center for Metropolitan Chicago Initiatives*, and the *Center for the Study of Latino Religion*. As in the case of the broad *Pew Hispanic Center* bibliography, significant resources in religious studies from the Institute include: *Hispanic Churches In American Public Life*, *An Educational and Ministerial Profile of Latino/a Seminarians*, and *Latino/a Seminarians and the Future of Religious Leadership in the Latino/a Community*.

These research sources can be good news for Lutherans in mission. They certainly remind us that we are not alone in attempting to understand ourselves as we relate to the growing Hispanic presence in the U.S. We often share some of the same challenges of other denominations. Studies dealing with the fear levels of Latino immigrants in relation to attitudes of Anglo majorities, for example, as well as studies indicating the low numbers of Hispanic men and women enrolled in theological studies and what that means for future leadership of an exploding population, are certainly a challenge for us as well as others. There is data out there now that, though critical, and perhaps at times almost damning, allows us to be better informed. We now have some tools at hand that allow us to say more about a mission enterprise than what we can conclude from our own best intentions and carefully listened anecdotes.

Resumen

El autor presenta dos recursos importantes para la investigación acerca de las comunidades de origen hispano en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, a saber, el *Pew*

Hispanic Center y el *Institute for Latino Studies*. Aunque las investigaciones de estas importantes instituciones solo están disponibles en inglés, el autor resalta la importancia de las mismas para ejecutivos de misiones y presidentes de distritos del Sínodo de Misuri que a menudo han tenido que tomar decisiones en cuanto al futuro de ministerios hispanos sin haber tenido a su disposición este tipo de análisis detallado de la realidad hispana en el país y en la iglesia en general.

Testimonio de una pareja cubana en el ministerio del pastor y de la diaconisa

Benito y Jessie Pérez

Nuestro éxodo de Cuba en 1980 fue la experiencia más traumática que hemos vivido juntos. En aquel entonces junto a nuestro hijo mayor Dennis de seis años estuvimos en un campo de concentración en el Mariel por una semana y atravesamos el estrecho de la Florida en una pequeña embarcación. El padre de familia estaba muy enfermo y casi inconciente pero Dios nos trajo a la libertad, a la tierra prometida. Nos salvó porque nos ama.

Fue una experiencia inexplicable, un renacer. Por primera vez en muchos años éramos libres para escoger nuestro presente y futuro y poder expresar nuestra relación con Dios. No pasó mucho tiempo antes de que empezáramos a sentir la necesidad de pertenecer a una comunidad de creyentes. Visitamos algunas iglesias hasta que la tía Carmen nos habló de la vida de Lutero y nos llevó a la Iglesia Luterana San Mateo en la Pequeña Habana en Miami. Nos confirmamos en 1981 bajo la guía del Rev. Eugene Gruell.

Cuando nació nuestro segundo hijo Steve nos mudamos y trasladamos a la Iglesia San Pablo Apóstol donde comenzamos a crecer como creyentes mediante los estudios bíblicos, la guía del pastor Yates y el liderazgo en la iglesia. Juntos hacíamos visitas a los enfermos, participábamos en los grupos de oración en los hogares y en otras actividades de evangelismo. Luego nos matriculamos en el programa de educación teológica por extensión del Instituto Hispano de Teología (actualmente, Centro de Estudios Hispánicos) para poder ayudar mejor a nuestro pastor, pero ya en ese entonces Dios nos había escogido para el ministerio.

Al concluir el primer nivel (pre-Seminario) del Instituto y luego empezar nuestra labor como obreros certificados al nivel Seminario, enfrentamos varios retos. Entre ellos, la dificultad de ser fieles al ministerio de la iglesia sin dejar a un lado la fidelidad a la familia, la responsabilidad de ejercer funciones pastorales y otras hasta que se llamara a un pastor, la difícil tarea de apoyar a las víctimas del Huracán Andrew mientras empezábamos otra obra, el golpe devastador de perder a nuestro pastor y mentor por conflictos de la congregación, y el gran reto de comenzar una obra hispana de la nada. Todas estas experiencias nos han hecho madurar y crecer. Creemos que somos más

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sensibles al dolor humano.

Creemos firmemente en la educación continua. Graduarnos del Instituto del Seminario Concordia de St. Louis nos abrió puertas para luego recibir clases de CPE (Educación Clínica Pastoral) y para obtener nuestras maestrías. El haber hecho nuestros estudios juntos en las mismas clases nos ha permitido crecer simultáneamente.

Mucho antes de servir juntos en el ministerio del pastor y de la diaconisa habíamos jurado ser el uno para el otro y estar juntos en las buenas y en las malas como Dios diseñó que la pareja fuera. Ciertamente, el pastor tiene su rol y la diaconisa el suyo. Nuestra cultura es machista y el hombre se siente más cómodo cuando su esposa habla con otra mujer. Por otro lado hay muchos temas que las mujeres prefieren hablar con otra mujer. Dios nos ha moldeado de tal manera que lo que uno no tiene lo aporta el otro y ninguno necesita estar en el lugar opuesto del otro puesto que al fin nos complementamos como el binomio perfecto de Dios para llevar a cabo su obra.

Creemos que en el ministerio hispano es fundamental la pareja. Nuestros feligreses necesitan ver las bendiciones que recibe una pareja y sus hijos cuando están unidos, especialmente cuando el matrimonio hoy por hoy parece estar en peligro de extinción y hay tantas familias que sufren.

Summary

Pastor Benito and Deaconess Jessie, a married couple of church workers, reflect on their difficult but ultimately liberating experience of exile from Cuba to the United States. After recounting their journey into the Lutheran Church in Miami through the witness of a family member, the Pérezes remember most—among other significant events—their development as leaders through their participation in their congregation's visitation and evangelism initiatives, as well as their work with Hurricane Andrew victims. These events were critical occasions that shaped the couple to become more compassionate Christians and more committed to service in the church.

Much treasured for the couple has been the blessing of receiving a Lutheran theological education in the Spanish language from the former Hispanic Institute of Theology (now Center for Hispanic Studies) as part of their formation for ministry in the church. As new immigrants, access to Lutheran education in Spanish opened doors for further work in English later on in the fields of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and Master's level theological studies at training centers and theological institutions in Florida. The Pérezes now serve as instructors for a new generation of Hispanic pastors and deaconesses, as well as leaders in their communities, the District, and Synod.

The authors believe strongly that their joint service to the church as a pastor-deaconess married couple affords them an excellent opportunity for strengthening the congregation's commitment to marriage and the family at a time when family unity is at risk among people of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In Hispanic/Latino contexts, the supportive role of the deaconess in the visitation of women has become critical where

machismo makes Latino men feel more comfortable and honored when another woman counsels their wives on certain issues.

Pedagogy for Working among the Poor Something to Talk about before Going on Your Next Short-Term Mission Trip

Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.

Last time I asked a class of about 50 Seminary students how many of them had been on a mission trip, more than half raised their hands. Short-term mission trips are becoming more and more a key dimension of the formation of Christians of all ages at the congregational level. It is not uncommon for congregations in the U.S. to send groups across the border to Mexico in order to help build homes for the poor or engage in activities such as providing medical treatment or teaching English.

While short-term trips can have their place as part of a broader mission strategy in support of the work of established expatriate missionaries in the field and, perhaps much more preferably, in partnership with the local indigenous churches, I have also come across some of my students' inaccurate views on the purpose of such trips. Typically, the main problem lies in their views of the poor, which in turn affects how they think and speak regarding working among the poor. I have developed a case study to help them think through and respond to such views in the hope that they might be able to pass on their insights to church members before their next short-term trip.

Members of the church you serve are planning to go on a mission trip to a poor neighborhood in Mexico near the border to build homes for the needy. Prior to their departure, group members talk about what they want to get out of this trip during a Bible Study hour. A member who has gone on a previous trip talks about how we should be like the poor because they are closest to God. Another member of the church talks about how, even though the group is going there to build homes, their main goal is really to convert the poor in order to help the church in Mexico grow.

The case study sums up the two most common reactions I have heard from my students who have gone on short-term mission trips as they reflect on their experiences. The first one might be described as a *romantic* view of the poor and poverty. It is best exemplified by the member who says, "We should be like the poor because they are closest to God." The second reaction might be described as a *utilitarian* view of the poor. It is expressed by the member who believes that, "even though the group is going there to

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build homes, their main goal is really to convert the poor in order to help the church in Mexico grow.”

At first, what these members in the case study want to gather from the experience appears to be theologically sound. After all, are not the poor, who are less attached to and dependent on material possessions, more dependent on God and likely to be closer to God than upper middle-class prosperous (if not materialistic) North Americans? Moreover, is not the real problem of the poor a spiritual one (of the soul) and not so much a bodily one? Should not the whole worth of any mission trip be measured only by whether the Gospel is actually proclaimed to others?

Seminary students are asked, for example, to deal with the romantic view of the poor by distinguishing properly between theologians of the cross and theologians of glory. They are also asked to deal with the utilitarian view by distinguishing properly between passive righteousness (being in a right relationship *before God* through Christ) and active righteousness (being in a right relationship *before the neighbor* through our vocations and good works). The learning process offers an opportunity for students to repent, receive forgiveness, and grow to become more faithful theologians with a heart for the poor, the work of mercy, and the mission of proclaiming Christ.

Students learn that the romantic view of the poor is a way in which theologians of glory point us to a noble state of being (say, being poor) as the solution to the problem of suffering (say, poverty). In their attempt to reconcile the goodness of God and the evil of poverty (a theodicy question), theologians of glory try to sugarcoat or make deplorable conditions of poverty look good through a theology that makes one’s state of being the condition for being in God’s good favor. A theologian of the cross, on the other hand, always “calls a thing what it is” (as Luther would say)—the poor suffer, poverty stinks, and being poor saves no one!—and, therefore, does not attempt to justify God in the midst of suffering. A theologian of the cross recognizes the plight of the poor, does not interpret their material poverty in some spiritual or noble sense, and instead helps the needy in concrete ways to give them a more dignified human life and—if given an opportunity—by sharing the Gospel with them.

Students also learn that behind the utilitarian view of the poor lies a confusion between the two kinds of righteousness which leads some to either see their good works (and not the Gospel) as a condition for making the church in Mexico grow or, more often, to look down upon their vocation to build homes in Mexico because it is not Gospel proclamation. Upon returning from the short-term experience, members of mission teams have a tendency and desire to claim that their works of mercy were in some way Gospel proclamation. The implication behind this move is that building homes is in some sense not good enough without actual Gospel proclamation.

The distinction between the two kinds of righteousness reminds us that the poor are not a means to an end, or that our service to the needy through vocations is only good if we proclaim the Gospel to them. Instead, we ought to think of the poor as human beings whom we are called to serve—simply because they are our neighbor—according to our God-given vocations in life. We think of the poor as persons with whom we enter into

mutual relationships through which the Holy Spirit can over time open doors for an intelligible and meaningful proclamation of Christ.

Our example of pedagogy for working among the poor allows us to be realistic in our view of poverty and understanding of the poor—their struggles and their sin—as well as to be realistic and humble about our potential contributions to working among them on short-term trips. Such pedagogy fosters a greater joy in doing what lies at hand by serving the poor through what God has given us to do, as well as a deeper appreciation for the work of indigenous and expatriate missionaries (as well as congregations) in the mission field who bear the primary responsibility for ongoing relationship-building and meaningful proclamation of the Gospel.

Resumen

Hoy en día el fenómeno de la misión a corto plazo en el lado mexicano de la frontera entre México y los Estados Unidos se ha vuelto popular. Sin embargo, el autor señala que la mayoría de sus estudiantes seminaristas en los Estados Unidos que han participado en tales viajes—en su mayoría anglosajones de clase media—tienden a expresar una idea *romántica* de los pobres y la pobreza o una visión *utilitaria* del pobre. Ante esta problemática, el Dr. Sánchez comparte su pedagogía para formar a personas que desean servir entre los pobres en misiones de corto plazo.

La idea romántica de la pobreza se expresa a veces cuando el visitante norteamericano piensa que el pobre vive más cerca de Dios por su despojo de lo material. A diferencia de esta tendencia teológica, el autor señala que el teólogo de la cruz—como diría Lutero—“llama a las cosas como son en realidad”, es decir, no piensa que una condición tan trágica como la pobreza es de algún modo aceptable o salvífica. Al contrario, el teólogo de la cruz reconoce la humanidad del pobre en toda su complejidad—tanto su sufrimiento como su pecado—y se solidariza con el mismo.

La visión utilitaria se expresa cuando se dice que la ayuda al pobre sólo tiene como meta que se le proclame el evangelio. Grupos de visitantes que comparten sus experiencias en viajes de corto plazo a menudo tienden a creer que sus obras de misericordia (p.ej. la construcción de una casa o la provisión de medicinas) son una forma de proclamación del evangelio. De no ser así, piensan que el viaje misionero fue un fracaso. Esto implica que los visitantes tienen una pobre apreciación de la importancia de la vocación, de servir al prójimo en lo que se nos ha dado para ayudarles. A diferencia de la visión utilitaria, el teólogo no ve al pobre como un medio u objeto que sólo nos sirve para alcanzar más almas para Cristo. Al contrario, el pobre es el prójimo que Dios ha puesto en nuestro camino, una persona de carne y hueso a quien damos su dignidad y con quien entramos en relaciones de mutuo enriquecimiento. Con el tiempo y en un contexto de amistad con el pobre, el Espíritu Santo abrirá puertas como y cuando le plazca que permitan la proclamación inteligible y contextualizada del evangelio de Cristo.

La pedagogía para trabajar entre y con los pobres nos permite ser más realistas en nuestra forma de aproximarnos al pobre y la pobreza, así como también a ser más humildes en cuanto a las posibles contribuciones que un grupo pueda ofrecer en un plazo tan corto de apoyo. Tal pedagogía ayuda a viajeros de corto plazo a recobrar el gozo de servir al pobre simplemente porque éste es su prójimo aún en las tareas más simples, y a apreciar más la labor de aquellos misioneros nacionales y extranjeros que han dado su vida entera para vivir entre los pobres y cuya responsabilidad primordial es la de proclamar el evangelio de Cristo a estos sus amigos.

Book Reviews

Presentación de la nueva serie *Biblioteca Teológica Concordia*

En agosto de 2000 un grupo de líderes de la iglesia luterana hispana de los Estados Unidos (Sínodo de Misuri) nos reunimos en *Concordia Publishing House* para debatir sobre la necesidad de crear nuestra propia dogmática luterana hispana. Durante muchas décadas las iglesias hispanas de las Américas utilizaron el libro de doctrina del Dr. Teodoro Mueller, escrito originalmente en inglés en 1934 a base de la monumental obra en idioma alemán del Dr. Francis Pieper, *Dogmática cristiana*.

En esa ocasión creímos oportuno que los hispanos luteranos comenzáramos a producir obras de teología sistemática en nuestro propio idioma, engendradas desde nuestras propias culturas. Así nació la idea que dio origen a la Biblioteca Teológica Concordia. Por el momento, tenemos a disposición de la iglesia hispana los siguientes libros: *La adoración bíblica*, por el Dr. Douglas Groll; *Pneumatología*, por el Dr. Leopoldo Sánchez; *Cristología*, por el Dr. Alberto García; y *Hermenéutica*, por el Dr. Rodolfo Blank.

La característica principal de estas obras es que son escritas por pioneros o nuevos líderes en el ministerio luterano hispano, hispanos ellos mismos o hispanos de corazón, que entienden la idiosincrasia latina y que comparten un profundo conocimiento de las Sagradas Escrituras y las Confesiones Luteranas.

La nueva serie Biblioteca Teológica Concordia es un modelo de teología contemporánea, contextualizada al pueblo latino, pero además de excelente nivel académico y el calibre para contribuir a la reflexión en conjunto de la iglesia universal. Otros títulos están en desarrollo. Para más información sobre productos teológicos en español visite www.editorial.cph.org

Rev. Héctor Hoppe, editor
Editorial Concordia

Presentation of the New *Concordia Theological Library Series*

In August of 2000 a group comprised of leaders in the Hispanic Lutheran Church, U.S.A. (Missouri Synod), met at Concordia Publishing House to discuss the necessity of developing our own Lutheran Hispanic reflection on doctrinal topics. For decades, Hispanic churches in the Americas used the book of doctrine first written in English in 1934 by Dr. Theodore Mueller, which in turn was based on the monumental German-language work by Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*.

At the meeting, we concluded that it was time for Lutheran Hispanics to begin to produce works of systematic theology in our own language, generated from our own cultural locations and perspectives. This is how the Concordia Theological Library was born. Currently, the following books in Spanish are available to serve the church: *Biblical Worship*, by Dr. Douglas Groll; *Pneumatology*, by Dr. Leopoldo Sánchez; *Christology*, by Dr. Alberto García; and *Hermeneutics*, by Dr. Rodolfo Blank.

The salient feature of these works is that they are written by pioneers or emerging leaders in the field of Lutheran Hispanic ministry—the authors are Hispanics themselves or Hispanics at heart—who understand the distinguishing characteristics of Latin American and U.S. Latino culture(s) and who share a deep knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

The Concordia Theological Library stands as a model of contemporary theology, contextualized and at the same time written with academic excellence in order to contribute to the broader body of knowledge and reflection of the church catholic. More titles are in development. For more information about theological products in Spanish, visit www.editorial.cph.org

Rev. Héctor Hoppe, editor
Editorial Concordia

LA ADORACIÓN BÍBLICA. ENFOQUES HACIA LA ADORACIÓN HISPANA. By Douglas R. Groll. Saint Louis: Editorial Concordia, 2005. 112 pages. Paper. \$10.99.

The body of good theological literature available in the Spanish language has been growing considerably in recent years. Soon Spanish will take its place alongside German and French among the required modern languages for doctoral programs in theology. Douglas Groll, with his little book *La adoración bíblica. Enfoques hacia la adoración hispana (Biblical Worship: Approaches to Hispanic Worship)*, makes a contribution to a topic of importance, not only to Spanish-speaking Christians, but to Christians in general who are seeking definition and guidance in the area of worship in a socially and culturally complex world. Dr. Groll was a missionary in Venezuela for many years, in addition to serving as a mission pastor in Cleveland, Ohio, and, until his recent retirement, as the director of the former Hispanic Institute of Theology in Chicago, Illinois (now Center for Hispanic Studies, St. Louis). He thus brings a broad and deep range of experiences to his treatment of this book's topic.

This reviewer knows Dr. Groll as a story-teller, and he makes good use of that talent in producing a book with both theological insight and much practical application. He begins, characteristically, by telling the story of a young Puerto Rican pastor, who, upon graduation from seminary, finds himself with the responsibility of planting a church in Texas. The new pastor is soon faced with a variety of issues as he tries to balance his own formation as a Puerto Rican Christian, whose development has included diverse worship

experiences, with the challenge to reach out to Hispanics who in turn have come from a number of cultural and religious backgrounds—from Pentecostalism to dead ritualism to no Christian formation of any kind. Dr. Groll paints a picture in this initial case study in such a way that the reader is made to understand the complexities of Hispanic ministry in the United States today.

From there the author moves to the four main chapters of his book. In the first chapter he advocates that the young, previously mentioned pastor, who is trying to decide which form of Christian worship to follow, should take some time to understand the nature of Christian worship from a biblical perspective. Thus, Dr. Groll begins “at the beginning,” literally, by citing the first case of formal worship, *i.e.*, the offerings of Cain and Abel. Through several examples from the Old Testament he affirms that Christian worship begins with God’s action. True worship cannot begin with human beings, as they will only find themselves like Adam and Eve in the garden, fleeing and hiding from God. He relates worship to hospitality (for God welcomes the foreigner and the sinner), a value of importance to the world of the Old Testament and to Latino culture. Worship in the New Testament is seen in its continuity with the Old as Jesus offers himself in the Eucharist.

In the second chapter Dr. Groll speaks of the centrality of the Gospel in worship. Worship is about receiving forgiveness through the means of grace. In this sense, it is about communication, which means that clarity and meaning is transferred. If the Gospel is not central to worship, then worship ceases to be legitimate. Groll points out that Luther and the reformers recognized this and were open to change and creativity, though not just for the sake of change but rather in cases of necessity for the sake of the Gospel.

The third chapter serves as an interesting reflection on the character—the look and feel—of Hispanic Catholicism, which must not be confused with the northern European version. While North American Catholicism traditionally has been *post-Tridentine* in its theological outlook, the religious background and experience of most Hispanics is *pre-Reformation*. While the dominant Catholic theology in the U.S. has been academic and dogmatic, the Catholicism of Hispanics is sensory, emotional, and dominated by the *fiesta*; and piety consists in “embraces, shouts, crying, laughing, eating and drinking” (49). One can see the contrast and cultural challenge that traditional, Northern European Lutheranism presents within this context.

Finally, Dr. Groll proposes a definition of Lutheran Hispanic worship in the context of North America, which includes influences from the various forms of Catholicism, Pentecostalism, African religions, Native American religions, traditional Protestantism, etc. He sees that the young pastor, brought into the conversation throughout the book, needs to recognize himself as part of a process of cultural change that is going on continually and acknowledge the complexities inherent in every institution’s endeavor to adapt to the new realities that present themselves in today’s world. The same goes for liturgical expression. Dr. Groll concludes, however, by stating: “Anyone who attempts to define worship practices of some group in the United States should understand the difficulty of liturgical expression in our truly multicultural world, without losing hope in achieving it.” While it may be easiest to revert to the “Mexican” or “Guatemalan,” or

“Cuban” style, it should be recognized that there is something “future” about Christian existence, that goes beyond a mere repetition of the past. At the same time, our young pastor should realize that there is a tremendous pressure in North American culture today to privatize and subjectivize religious experience, which tends to ignore the corporate nature of what it means to be a Christian. For this reason, worship should be, in a certain sense, counter-cultural, and for that reason Dr. Groll proposes that perhaps worship that has arisen in the history of the church has great value. But most importantly, citing this reviewer’s colleague, John Pless, two questions should always be asked regarding worship, “Is it a vehicle for the reception of the gospel?,” and, “Is it a vehicle for teaching the faith?” (83). While flexibility is allowed, and even demanded, what finally must be remembered is that liturgical expression and music are part of a process of transformation that, at the same time, should avoid being hijacked by “every extravagance that comes along within a particular culture” (89).

Dr. Groll’s book is a thought provoking, insightful, profound treatment of the complex socio-cultural-theological-practical issues that one attempting to lead a community of God today must face, especially in the Hispanic contexts of the United States. This reviewer would have expected nothing less from the author. Does he offer the key? Does he have the answer? Will this book provide concrete direction for how to carry out Lutheran worship in the Hispanic context? Certain guidelines and principles are laid out that can surely be of assistance to our young pastor, but there is so much more to say. Worship struggles our churches face today will not be resolved by this work alone, but it is indubitable that Dr. Groll makes an important contribution to the conversation as we make our way. One final suggestion: This book should be translated into English for our many non-Spanish speaking readers who would benefit from it.

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Resumen

En su pequeño libro el Dr. Groll ofrece una contribución no solo a la iglesia hispanoparlante sino a toda la iglesia que busca definición y guía en el área de la adoración en un mundo cada día más complejo en lo sociocultural. Comienza su obra con la historia del joven pastor puertorriqueño que después de sus estudios de seminario es enviado a plantar una iglesia en Texas donde se encuentra con personas de diversas culturas y trasfondos religiosos—Pentecostalismo, ritualismo estéril, sin formación cristiana.

En su primer capítulo el autor lleva al joven pastor a la fuente bíblica de la adoración. Enfatiza la acción de Dios como el punto de partida de la adoración y relaciona esta con la hospitalidad que Dios ofrece al inmigrante y al pecador. Se señala la continuidad entre el antiguo testamento y el nuevo testamento que Cristo nuestra pascua

nos ofrece en su santa cena. El segundo capítulo se enfoca en la centralidad del evangelio del perdón de los pecados en la adoración. Como comunicación, la claridad y el sentido de tal proclamación debe salvaguardarse. El autor nos recuerda que Lutero y los reformadores mostraron apertura al cambio y a la creatividad en la liturgia pero siempre en servicio al evangelio.

En su tercer capítulo el autor discursa acerca del carácter del catolicismo hispano, cómo este se asemeja más al catolicismo de los tiempos precedentes a la reforma luterana y por ende no se debe confundir con el catolicismo norteamericano que se deriva de la Europa del Norte postridentina. Mientras que el catolicismo dominante de los Estados Unidos ha tendido a ser más académico y dogmático, el catolicismo hispano tiende a ser más sensorial y emotivo en su piedad.

El último capítulo presenta una manera de articular lo que es la adoración luterana hispana. Al hacerlo el autor reconoce la dificultad de definir lo que es la misma por razón de su continua encarnación en la complejidad del mundo y sus culturas. Sin embargo, nos recuerda la importancia de la dimensión futura, corporativa y contracultural de toda práctica de adoración o litúrgica ante la tendencia a satisfacernos de manera absoluta con meras repeticiones del pasado o expresiones demasiado parroquiales en lo cultural o teológico. Citando a John Pless, se nos exhorta a discernir si esta u otra práctica sirve como vehículo para la proclamación del evangelio y la enseñanza de la fe.

El libro del Dr. Groll es una obra estimulante, perceptiva y profunda que toma en serio la problemática cultural, teológica y práctica en torno a la misión de la iglesia que adora e invita a la adoración en el mundo de hoy—especialmente, en el mundo hispano. No será la última palabra pero sí una gran contribución en nuestro caminar hacia una teología y práctica luterana de la adoración. Este libro debe ser traducido al inglés para que muchos de nuestros lectores angloparlantes se puedan beneficiar del mismo.

L.S.

PNEUMATOLOGÍA. UN ESTUDIO DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO Y LA ESPIRITUALIDAD DEL PUEBLO DE DIOS. Biblioteca teológica Concordia, Ed. Leopoldo Sánchez. Concordia, Saint Louis, 2005. 192 páginas. \$14.99.

No faltan ciertamente en estos últimos tiempos los estudios acerca de la pneumatología. El que ahora nos ocupa se presenta con la intención de ofrecer un instrumento pedagógico para la reflexión en torno al Espíritu de Dios. Esta reflexión se coloca en un contexto amplio. La teología se ocupa del Espíritu siempre en relación con sus efectos en nosotros, con la espiritualidad, entendida en un amplio sentido. De ahí la ambigüedad con que con frecuencia se usa el término “espíritu”. Por ello se empieza (cap. 1) con el estudio de algunas corrientes espirituales difundidas en este momento vistas en su contraste con la espiritualidad cristiana. No solamente existe el Espíritu de Dios, sino que se habla también del espíritu del hombre, e igualmente de los ángeles como seres espirituales (cap 2). Las clarificaciones que se aportan son precisas.

Naturalmente algunas expresiones pueden resultar algo llamativas para el lector católico (cf. 49); en la relación Dios-hombre se dan, como es sabido, diversidad de acentos entre las diferentes confesiones cristianas.

El cap. 3 entra más de lleno en la *teología* en el sentido más estricto de la palabra; trata de la problemática clásica del misterio de Dios uno y trino, los problemas que plantea la teología escolástica y las soluciones adoptadas en los últimos tiempos. Se ve problemático el primado del Dios uno tal como se ha presentado en algunas visiones tradicionales. Para el autor por el contrario se ha de insistir en la dimensión trinitaria y en la existencia de las tres divinas personas que existen en la única esencia divina. Se ha de pensar a Dios siempre en relación con la economía de salvación. Se da mucha importancia a la presencia de la Trinidad en la creación, que, evidentemente solamente a la luz del misterio de Cristo puede descubrirse en toda su profundidad. La creación aparece así en relación íntima con la economía de la salvación. Toda la actuación de Dios en el mundo tiene un carácter trinitario.

El cap. 4 trata de la presencia del Espíritu en Jesús, no para hacer de la cristología pneumatológica una alternativa a la de la encarnación, sino como complementaria a ésta. Jesús, el Hijo de Dios encarnado, es a la vez el portador del Espíritu, el Ungido, que en su glorificación comunica este mismo Espíritu a los hombres. También la cuestión de la procesión del Espíritu preocupa a nuestro autor. Adopta un actitud equilibrada, que no se aparta de las soluciones clásicas, aunque insiste en la presencia del Espíritu en la relación Padre-Hijo pero dentro del contexto de la taxis trinitaria clásica (118). Pero en este mismo contexto se habla de la generación *in spiritu*, punto que tal vez pudiera precisarse un poco más. Por último (cap. 5) se trata de la misión conjunta del Hijo y del Espíritu en el misterio de la iglesia. Dentro del ámbito de la tradición teológica luterana se trata de la justificación y de la presencia de Cristo en los sacramentos.

Se trata de una obra bien documentada, equilibrada en su conjunto, abierta a las nuevas reflexiones pero también anclada en la tradición que ofrecerá sin duda elementos de reflexión a quien quiera adentrarse en la teología trinitaria. Un glosario final explica el significado de algunos términos técnicos usados en el volumen. Será de utilidad para los que se acercan por primera vez a la materia.

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Summary

Given the ambiguity of the term “spirit,” the author begins his work on the Holy Spirit with a study of contemporary currents in spirituality seen in contrast to a Christian spirituality (ch. 1). Treatments on the human spirit and angels as spiritual beings are precise (ch. 2). Naturally, the Catholic reader will encounter another language and

distinct theological accents in the author's presentation of the God-man relationship from a Lutheran angle (cf. 49).

Sánchez's classical and contemporary discussion of *theo*-logy (doctrine of God) proper moves away from some problematic interpretations of the unity of God in favor of a thorough Trinitarian expression of the mystery of God (ch. 3). Only in light of the mystery of Christ, the Trinity appears intimately linked to the mystery of salvation and creation. There is a Trinitarian structure to God's acting in the world.

As a complement (not an alternative) to an incarnation-Christology, the author's argument for a pneumatological Christology allows us to confess that Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, is also the bearer of the Spirit, the Anointed One, who in His glorification gives the same Spirit to the human race (ch. 4). With a balanced posture that does not depart from the historic solutions to the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit, the author suggests an *in spiritu* model of the Trinity that makes room for the place of the Holy Spirit in the Father-Son relationship without doing harm to the classic Trinitarian taxis Father-Son-Holy Spirit (118). On this last point, perhaps a more in-depth discussion of the generation of the Son *in spiritu* deserves further attention.

Finally, Sánchez discusses the joint mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the mystery of the church, highlighting God's work of justification and the presence of Christ in the sacraments from the horizon of the Lutheran theological tradition (ch. 5).

The author offers us a well-documented work, a balanced treatment of themes, open to important contemporary reflections yet anchored in the best teaching of the church, with many elements that will stimulate the student of theology. The final glossary of technical terms will serve well those who enter the field of pneumatology for the first time.

L.S.

CRISTOLOGÍA. CRISTO JESÚS: CENTRO Y PRAXIS DEL PUEBLO DE DIOS. By Alberto L. García. Saint Louis: Editorial Concordia, 2006. 162 pages. Paper. \$13.99.

As the rest of the volumes in the *Biblioteca teológica Concordia* series, the primary audience of García's work is Spanish-speaking Christians both in Latin America and in the United States. And, also as the rest of the series, its intent is both to inform and to promote reflection and discussion. For this reason, the author's book includes suggested questions for reflection at the end of each chapter. For the same reason, at least in the case of García's presentation, the chapters are brief and to the point, averaging less than eight pages in length.

The book is divided into three sections, the first dealing with the biblical sources and directions for Christology, the second with the historical development of Christology, and the last with what Christology looks like from a Latino or Latin American perspective.

The first section, comprising seven chapters devoted the first one to the Virgin Birth, the second to the importance of Galilee in the ministry of Jesus, the next three to the subject of the Kingdom of God, and the final two to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Of these, probably the most interesting is the second, where García makes use of the work of Virgilio Elizondo and others on the significance of Jesus' Galilean origin, and its parallelism with the Latino condition and experience of *mestizaje*—the experience of being neither fully fish nor fully fowl, as a Galilean was considered a Jew by the Gentiles, but not really a full Jew by Judeans. This treatment, and the three chapters on the Kingdom of God, provide the basis for the Christology that García will develop in the last section of his book.

The central section, dealing with history, is not particularly original, since the author's purpose is not to offer new interpretations of that history, but rather to acquaint his readers with the tools to understand some of the scope of Christological thought and debate through the centuries.

It is in the last chapter that García offers his most creative work. There he develops the notion of Jesus as the Liberator whose solidarity with the poor and the marginalized are manifested not only in the great moments of life, but also in its daily events and routines—what Latina/o theologians call *lo cotidiano*, the daily. Finally, in the last chapter, he returns to the notion of *mestizaje*, and shows how Jesus himself is the center from which a *mestizo* people may draw power for their daily—*cotidiano*—living.

The book's strengths and weaknesses, in the opinion of this reviewer, both lie in the manner in which the author connects—or does not connect—the first two sections of his book with the third. For instance, the discussions in the first section of Jesus as a Galilean, and of the power of his death and resurrection, are closely intertwined with what García says about these subjects in the last section of his book. But the discussion of the Virgin Birth, and much of the historical review of Christological thought, could have been better connected with that final section.

That being said, however, this book will undoubtedly prove valuable for the Spanish-speaking community both in the United States and in Latin America. It may also serve others as a basic introduction to the Christological thought of those communities.

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Resumen

Ya que la obra de cristología del Dr. García propone fomentar la reflexión y el diálogo, el lector se hará benefactor de preguntas para la reflexión al final de cada capítulo. Además el autor es conciso en su presentación, yendo directamente al punto

clave en cada capítulo. El libro está dividido en tres secciones, a saber, fuentes y trayectorias bíblicas del misterio de Cristo, desarrollo histórico del dogma cristológico, y perspectivas desde el mundo hispano-latino que incluye teólogos latinos tanto de América Latina como de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica.

La primera sección del libro cubre el nacimiento virginal, el ministerio en Galilea, el reino de Dios, y la muerte y resurrección de Jesús. De notable importancia es el diálogo en el segundo capítulo con la obra de Virgilio Elizondo y otros en torno al significado del origen Galileo de Jesús y su paralelismo con la experiencia hispana del mestizaje, es decir, de ser ni uno ni el otro, así como Jesús fue visto como judío por los Gentiles y a la vez no fue visto completamente como judío por los judíos de Judea. Este capítulo y los que tratan del reino de Dios le servirán al autor para desarrollar la última sección del libro.

El propósito del autor en la segunda sección del libro no es la de reinterpretar la historia del desarrollo cristológico en la iglesia sino la de ofrecer al lector las herramientas para apreciar y entender los debates y las contribuciones de aquellos que nos han precedido en el quehacer teológico. En contraste, la tercera sección de la obra es la más creativa. Aquí desarrolla el autor la imagen de Jesús como liberador cuya solidaridad con los pobres y marginados se manifiesta no solo en los grandes eventos de su vida sino también en lo cotidiano. En el último capítulo vuelve al tema del mestizaje, mostrándonos cómo Jesús es la fuente de la cual un pueblo mestizo recibe la fuerza para su vivir cotidiano.

Las posibles ventajas y desventajas del libro surgen de la manera en que el autor relaciona o no las primeras dos secciones de su libro con la tercera. Por ejemplo, la exposición de la primera sección en torno a Jesús el Galileo y el poder de su muerte y resurrección está íntimamente ligada a la última sección del libro. Sin embargo, la discusión acerca del nacimiento virginal en la primera sección del libro y la presentación del desarrollo histórico de la cristología en la segunda pueden ser integradas más contundentemente en la sección final. No obstante, el libro será sin duda valioso para la comunidad hispanohablante tanto en los Estados Unidos como en la América Latina. Podrá servir además como una introducción básica al pensamiento cristológico de estas comunidades.

L.S.

HERMENÉUTICA. PRINCIPIOS DE INTERPRETACIÓN BÍBLICA. Biblioteca teológica Concordia, Ed. Rodolfo Blank. Concordia, Saint Louis, 2006. 136 páginas. \$11.99.

Es frecuente que los libros que abordan este tema se presenten en el formato de un manual en el que se enumeran los principios hermenéuticos y se los ilustra con algún ejemplo de aplicación. Pocas veces tenemos posibilidad de ver de dónde brotan esos

principios: el por qué y las ventajas de su uso. En esta obra no sólo encontramos los principios, sino que podemos ver cómo y de dónde surgen.

El Dr. Blank expone los principios de una sana hermenéutica bíblica de manera novedosa, partiendo de la parábola del sembrador de Mateo 13. Esta parábola le permite al autor estructurar la obra a partir de un triple horizonte: 1) el sembrador, el autor o emisor de la Palabra; 2) la semilla, es decir el texto de la Palabra; y 3) la tierra, o sea, los receptores de la Palabra y su efecto sobre ellos.

En la primera parte, partiendo del testimonio de las Escrituras y de los padres, se remarca el origen, autoridad y propósito del texto bíblico, resguardando de manera adecuada el rol de los escritores humanos. El propósito unificado de todos los libros de la Biblia o la centralidad de Cristo son principios de interpretación que van brotando a partir una interesante argumentación, ilustrada con abundantes ejemplos y citas.

En la segunda parte, que es la más extensa, el autor expone en profundidad lo referente a la semilla o el texto. Se contraponen la legitimidad del texto bíblico frente a otras posibles “revelaciones” de Dios, tales como la conciencia o la naturaleza. En esta parte se exponen los distintos abordajes al texto, tales como la tipología, la profecía y la necesidad de considerar el género literario. Se hace un repaso de los métodos hermenéuticos abusivos a los que fue sometida la Escritura en el pasado. En contraste, el autor nos ilustra de forma favorable un ejemplo importante de interpretación no literal, el Cantar de los Cantares. Además se comparten las claves para la interpretación de las parábolas. Finalmente, en esta sección, se argumenta a favor de la claridad de la Biblia y se expone acerca del poder intrínseco de la Palabra.

En la tercera parte se expone el rol del lector frente al texto. En contraste con las hermenéuticas modernas que subordinan el significado del texto a la perspectiva del lector, el Dr. Blank recuerda la perspectiva correcta del creyente frente a las Escrituras. El penúltimo capítulo brinda al lector una referencia teológica básica para una interpretación adecuada: la distinción correcta entre la ley y el evangelio a fin de dar con el significado y aplicar el texto correctamente. El libro cierra con un interesante aporte: la necesidad del estudio de la Biblia en comunidad a fin de enriquecer la propia lectura con la perspectiva de los hermanos.

En resumen, estamos frente a un libro muy apropiado para aquellos que quieren aprender o repasar los sanos principios en los que se debe basar una correcta interpretación bíblica. El Dr. Blank no se propone ofrecernos una serie de lineamientos técnicos, pero sí logra ilustrarnos con buenos ejemplos sobre cómo encarar la tarea exegética. El enfoque original de partir de la parábola del sembrador y la gran cantidad de referencias, tanto históricas como actuales, representan el aspecto más valioso de esta obra. Sin duda, puede ser una lectura útil para pastores, estudiantes de teología y líderes laicos que buscan ser honestos en su lectura e interpretación de la Palabra de Dios.

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Summary

Although books on hermeneutics typically offer principles of interpretation and examples for application, few give us the possibility of seeing *where* these principles find their source, *why* or *how* these principles come about. Blank's work presents the *what* and the *how* of biblical hermeneutics.

The parable of the sower in Matthew 13 serves as the starting point and framework for the author's exposition of hermeneutical principles according to a threefold structure: 1) the sower, i.e., the author or communicator of the Word, 2) the seed, i.e., the text of the Word; and 3) the ground, i.e., receivers of the Word and its effect on them.

In the first section of the book, the author discusses the origin, authority, and purpose of the Biblical text, while providing an adequate account of the role of the human writers. The author arrives at the unified purpose of Scripture and its Christocentricity through a unique argumentation which is supported by various examples and references.

In the second section, the author contrasts the legitimacy of the biblical text and the appeal to other "revelations" of God through conscience or nature. Typology, prophecy, literary genre, and parables receive due attention. There is also a historical survey of some abusive moves towards non-literal readings of texts. By contrast, the author also presents in a favorable light an important illustration of a non-literal interpretation from Song of Solomon. Finally, the author discusses the clarity and intrinsic power of the Word.

In the third section, the discussion turns to the reader in his encounter with the text in such a way that the former is not subordinated to the latter. The use of the distinction between Law and Gospel should guide the reader's approach to the text as he seeks to gather its meaning and application. A final contribution of the work lies in the critical role it gives to the ecclesial reading and study of Scripture within the community of believers.

The author does not offer a highly technical treatment, focusing instead on illustrating for the reader practical ways to do exegetical work. Besides its many references, the work's greatest contribution lies in the author's originality in his approach to hermeneutics via the parable of the sower. We have before us a fine work on hermeneutics for pastors, students of theology, and lay leaders who seek to be honest in their reading and interpretation of the Word of God.

L.S.

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A Note for Contributors

We welcome your participation in writing articles for *Missio Apostolica*. Here are a few guidelines:

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- Some helpful websites with good writing tips are:
http://comp9.psych.cornell.edu/dbem/writing_article.html
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We also encourage you to contribute to our “Mission Observer” section of the journal: about 500 words, preferably one thematic thought or accent in a brief presentation. All writings should include a brief biographical note.

—ed

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