

## ECCLESIOLOGY/ECUMENICS

- Topic:** Ecclesial Implications of the Proposal to Declare the Inapplicability of the Tridentine Condemnations of Justification
- Convener:** Susan Wood, Saint John's University, Colleagueville
- Moderator:** Gregory L. Sobolewski, St. Mary's University, Winona, Minnesota
- Presenters:** George Tavard, Assumption Center, Brighton, Massachusetts  
David W. Lotz, Union Theological Seminary, New York

George Tavard presented a history of the state of the question of the Tridentine anathemas on justification, the process of study, certain objections to the proposal for a declaration of nonapplicability of the condemnations on justification, and difficulties inherent to the project. The work initiated in Germany concluded that the mutual condemnations of Catholics and Lutherans as formulated in the sixteenth century on justification are no longer applicable today. Following this conclusion, the suggestion was made that in 1997, the 450th anniversary of the Tridentine decree on justification, some official organ of the Catholic Church would, in conjunction with the Lutheran World Federation, declare the anathemas obsolete. The Pontifical Council for the Unity of Christians created an international commission to assess this conclusion. Subsequently a task force drafted a Joint Declaration which awaits the action of the churches. Since the Lutheran World Federation is not a church and does not legislate for the churches, it must discover that a consensus among the member churches is in existence. The process of obtaining this consensus may be slower than originally anticipated, and one cannot predict that this may be achieved by 1997.

David Lotz presented some ecclesial implications of the proposal for a declaration of non applicability: (1) The declaration opens the way to visible unity. (2) Remaining differences are not church dividing in view of this "basic consensus." (3) All agreements between Lutherans and Roman Catholics will be fruitless in the absence of fundamental agreement on justification. (4) Both confessions acknowledge that the doctrine of justification is more than just one part of the totality of Christian doctrine; it has a critical and normative function because it focuses on the work of Christ. (5) The normative function ascribed to justification does not diminish the reality of the Church. (6) The removal of anathemas points forward to a reconciliation of teaching traditions with respect to the other church. (7) This reconciliation will bring a new self-understanding on the part of the two churches. (8) This will necessitate a process of reeducation

to eradicate prejudices. (9) Our "basic consensus" in the doctrine of justification must be mutually witnessed to in common prayer and praise, if not for the present in eucharistic fellowship, then at least in joint liturgies of the Word.

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## HISPANIC/LATINO THEOLOGIES

- Topic: A Discussion on Eldin Villafañe's *The Liberating Spirit:  
Toward a Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic*
- Convener: Orlando Espín, University of San Diego
- Panelists: María Pilar Aquino, University of San Diego  
Todd Salzman, University of San Diego

Professor Eldin Villafañe is a Latino Pentecostal social ethicist at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston. His book *The Liberating Spirit: Toward a Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) has become a landmark study for Latino Pentecostals. Villafañe attempts to retrieve Pentecostalism's tradition of social commitment and reflect on its implications for today's United States Latino Pentecostal churches. Villafañe challenges Pentecostals to acknowledge their cultural and religious ancestry (including their historical Catholic roots), and to recognize the social dimensions and consequences of Pentecostalism's understanding of gospel and church. The author makes and supports his argument in five chapters, presenting the Latino context, his understanding of various other Christian socioethical elaborations, and then his proposal for a Pentecostal social ethic that is both legitimately Latino and authentically Pentecostal. The Group on Hispanic/Latino Theologies decided to review Villafañe's book. Professors María Pilar Aquino and Todd Salzman provided distinct and complimentary perspectives on Villafañe's work.

Both Aquino and Salzman praised the author and his book for raising serious questions that confront all Latino Christians today, and especially for bringing up the social responsibilities of Latino Pentecostals. Both reviewers recognized Villafañe's theological service to the Pentecostal community and to the larger Latino Christian tradition. Aquino and Salzman also noted the respectful tone of Villafañe's discussion and critique of Catholicism in the United States Latino context.