

UNITED STATES HISPANIC THEOLOGY

This is the second time that a workshop on United States Hispanic Theology has been organized for the CTSA Annual Convention. The two presenters were Gloria Loya, P.B.V.M., and Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J. The workshop dealt with two issues: a report on developments in the "birthing" of a United States Hispanic theology and a specific instance of this emerging theology, namely, some considerations for the doing of an Hispanic women's theology.

Deck's opening remarks focused on some news items that help contextualize the issue of U.S. Hispanic theology. He referred to the fact that the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS) was entering its fourth year of existence. The Academy has published a Directory with the names and addresses of forty-four members (regular and associate). For the past two years the Academy has devoted its annual convention to doing a kind of *teología de conjunto*. This is a Spanish term for "team theology," or "communitarian theology," a concept inspired on a similar approach to pastoral issues developed in Latin America and called *pastoral de conjunto*, "coordinated, team pastoral care."

ACHTUS chose as the themes for both its 1990 and 1991 conventions "the Cross and Mary." The themes take popular religiosity seriously as an important *locus theologicus* for the doing of theology especially in the Hispanic context. The first moment consisted in sharing one's personal experience of the Cross and Mary. At the end of a day's process of group reflection a kind of collective narrative emerged. This in turn became the text for the 1991 convention.

An analysis of the narrative revealed some foundational issues in U.S. Hispanic theology. One of them is this theology's "bridge" character, that is, its indebtedness to both Latin American and Anglo American culture and theological trends, but also its uniqueness as the reflection of U.S. Hispanics who may synthesize these experiences in their own novel way. Other characteristics were also noted such as the importance this theology gives to the prophetic dimension, rooted as it is in the experience of the popular masses, especially the poor. Unlike mainstream theologies, it acknowledges and is clear about its social location. This theology seeks to accompany the Hispanic peoples while articulating their historic experience of God within the larger mainstream theological and intellectual communities.

Deck noted this theology's emergent character and referred to the findings of Arturo Bañuelas who taught a Spring 1991 course at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley on the "Emerging U.S. Hispanic Voices in the Theologies of the Americas." Bañuelas generated a bibliography with more than 212 entries. With the assistance of student Eduardo Fernández, S.J., he identified thirty-one books and 181 articles. The authors are seventy-six percent male and twenty-four percent female. These very preliminary findings suggest that perhaps Hispanic women

are relatively more engaged in doing theology than is the case for mainstream U.S. women. Another interesting finding is that sixty-six percent of these writers are religious or clergy, while thirty-four percent are laity. Once again it would appear that, relatively speaking, U.S. Hispanic theology tends to have more lay participation than is the case for mainstream theologies. Finally, the two issues of greatest concern in the literature are (1) Hispanic pastoral care/ministry and (2) women's issues.

Gloria Loya, P.B.V.M., discussed an Hispanic women's liberation theology as an instance of an inchoate Hispanic pastoral theology. The starting point is experience reflected upon critically by the women themselves as well as by the social scientist and the theologian. Loya described the study she herself carried out with 170 Hispanic women in California. The women responded to an instrument designed to reveal their attitudes, values and concerns about life, faith and church. The trends and insights that emerged from the questionnaires stressed the central importance of faith in the lives of these women, a faith that is extremely personal and relational. Yet it became clear that the women are struggling to find a place in the church. They have, moreover, a deep interest in questions of spirituality and they thirst for justice. Loya noted that during the Fifth Centenary observances of 1992 the experiences of Hispanic women and their insights into the violence and alienation of conquest and colonialism (whether by the Spaniards centuries ago or Anglo-American imperialism today) will be at a premium. The symbols, myths, the pain and the promise of these women are a storehouse of powerful feminine images that can energize the process of liberation for all Hispanics today. The task of Hispanic women theologians, then, is to tap into this energy with the resources of theology. Loya, in a dissertation she is completing at the University of Salamanca, is attempting to do exactly that. At this workshop she was able to share only the initial stages of this process.

Several black Catholic women theologians were present at the workshop. A discussion followed the formal presentations in which Hispanic and black theologians, women and men, discussed certain common concerns and presuppositions suggested by the two presentations. They discussed the possibility of pursuing these common theological interests in the future at a formal gathering planned for 1992.

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