

U.S. HISPANIC/LATINO/A THEOLOGY FOR MINISTRY

- Topic: "For This Generation and Those to Come: U.S. Hispanic/Latino/a Theology for Ministry"
- Convener: Gloria L. Schaab, Barry University
- Moderator: Mark Wedig, Barry University
- Presenters: Michelle A. González, University of Miami
Jorge Presmanes, Barry University
Elsie Miranda, Barry University
- Respondent: Alicia Marill, Barry University

In this session addressing theological and ministerial issues informed by Hispanic/ Latino/a experience, Michelle A. González's paper, "Are Cuban-Americans Latino/a? A Caribbean Theological Contribution," explored the Cuban-American religious worldview in light of Latino/a theological identity and discourse and in dialogue with popular devotion to *La Caridad del Cobre*. Through the markers of community, race, and suffering, González focused on the Cuban ethos shaped by Catholicism and African religion. She probed the dichotomy between popular and institutional religiosity in the Cuban-American community, explored the impact of race and racism derived from the Afro-Latin dimensions of Hispanic cultures, and reflected on the role of suffering as the pain of exile "saturated with nostalgia for the Cuba of the past." Echoing the insights of Zoé Valdés, González challenged the Cuban-American community "to feel the pain of their condition of exile yet not be consumed by it." Noting key themes in Latino/a theological investigation, González insisted that participation of African peoples in Latino/a history has been downplayed and called theologians to more nuanced elaboration of Latino/a identity and religiosity in their research.

In his paper, "*Predicamos: Toward a Latino/a Practical Theology of Preaching*," Jorge Presmanes, examined how a communal-based Hispanic practical liturgical theology can advance both the praxis and evaluation of contemporary preaching in Latino/a congregations. The model that Presmanes explored operates within the hermeneutical circle of *Ver-Juzgar-Actuar-Evaluar* and envisions the community of faith as locus of revelation and thus theological source for Christian tradition and preaching. The movement of a Latino practical theology of preaching begins with *el análisis de la realidad*, rooted in *lo cotidiano y la lucha*, which yields the community's faith-filled *sensus fidelium* and provides the "corollary relationship between the ancient text . . . and the contemporary assembly" through which the preacher interprets the texts of scripture and liturgy. The second praxis arising from this movement is a preaching event from the underside of culture that is "the fruit of the dialogue between the concrete experience of the liturgical assembly and the theological tradition." The hermeneutical circle is completed through two evaluative processes. The first ensures the consistency of community's *sensus fidelium* with Christian tradition [orthodoxy] and with Christian liberating practice [orthopraxis]. The second requires critical analysis of the preaching event by the preacher and the assembly "to see

if it enabled the assembly to hear God's call and respond to it in a faith-filled commitment to the liberating edification of the Reign of God."

In her paper, "*Animadores: The Education/Formation of Ecclesial Leaders for the Emerging Church*," Elsie Miranda pointed out that the next generation of pastoral leaders will be shepherding an emerging model of church rich in diversity and complex in need. This reality requires education and formation of leaders as *animadores* in the pluralistic context of the Body of Christ. *Animadores* emerges from the Latin verb *animare* which means "to animate" and "to fill with boldness and courage." Thus, this metaphor charges pastoral leaders with the task of breathing new life into the dry bones of the ecclesial body. It is apt since it grounds the theology and ministry in the work of the Holy Spirit and in the life of the community, promoting the mission that emerges from its baptismal call. Moreover, it provides a critical component that questions notions of *Hispanidad* and *lo cotidiano* that ignore internal socio-economic and political divisions in need of acknowledgement and healing. Finally, the metaphor calls for a multi-dimensional paradigm that legitimizes diverse contextual realities and enables the animated to be sent forth to bear witness for the new life of Church and society.

Alicia Marill responded within the context of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians in the U. S., emphasizing the liberative and transformative elements of Hispanic/ Latino/a theology grounded in community, praxis, and social justice. Marill affirmed Miranda's "use of words in Spanish that hold power" and noted the potential of her model for critical theological reflection arising from the life of the community. Presmanes' model, Marill observed, requires both a preacher attentive to the faith-filled intuitions of the people and a community capable of critical assessment of the preaching event. Marill's response to González engaged her exploration of '*cubanidad*' among second or third generation Cubans. She expanded Gonzalez's observations on Cuban community from its communal religiosity to its response to events with political or "unjust connotations" for the community. While supporting increased attention to Afro-Yoruban influence on Cuban identity, Marill challenged Gonzalez's assertions on institutionalized devotion to *La Caridad del Cobre*. Marill also affirmed the nostalgia of the exiled community as providing "the strength, boldness and creativity to become a thriving community . . . with an increasing, visible history in exile of commitment to the common good."

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