

FOLLOW-UP SEMINARS TO PLENARY SESSIONS

A Matter of Life and Death: Theological Anthropology between Calvary and Galilee

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To open the conversation: Alejandro García-Rivera, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley

Alejandro García-Rivera began by underscoring key elements of his response to Roberto Goizueta's paper. He suggested that positing an anthropology without a corresponding cosmology leads to real difficulties, especially in the Hispanic tradition, where cosmology plays such a pivotal role. The relationship between anthropology and cosmology has bearing on several questions prompted by Goizueta. For example, if theological anthropology focuses primarily on the community as constitutive of the human person, is it not crucial to recognize that we are members of a community that includes the entire cosmos? In response, Goizueta agreed that cosmology and anthropology go hand in hand, and emphasized that it is important to avoid relativizing human suffering into some insignificant cosmic moment.

Professors Goizueta and García-Rivera then engaged in discussion with the audience. One participant, noting that U.S. Hispanic American theology often focuses on *abuelitas* and *abuelitos*, grandmothers and grandfathers, asked how the perspectives of younger generations of U.S. Hispanic Americans are influencing theological reflection. Goizueta responded that U.S. Hispanic American theologians encounter these perspectives daily as teachers. Their students take pride in connecting with their heritage and with their experience: they return to their grandparents to listen to their stories, with their interest awakened and their experience validated by what they learn from U.S. Hispanic American theologians.

Attention turned to discussion of the new *mestizaje* that younger generations of U.S. Hispanic Americans represent. For example, many young Latinos and Latinas are primarily English speaking, and are strongly influenced by popular culture. How can integration take place without assimilation? García-Rivera cited examples where traditional Hispanic expressions of popular Catholicism are being adopted enthusiastically by non-Hispanics, such as the Good Friday Santo Entierro. Goizueta noted that the term "Hispanic," originally an abstraction intended to trace a common thread through a variety of diverse communities, is

becoming more of a reality now that, for example, Mexicans in Chicago encounter Puerto Ricans. People whose heritage reflects the great diversity of Latin America now find themselves sharing in a common idiom. In this vein, García-Rivera emphasized that Latin American ecclesial development involved currents different from those that affected North America. In Latin America, the liturgy of symbols predominated over the liturgy of words. Goizueta added that the U.S. Hispanic American emphasis on narrative, the fruit of history and experience, continues to exert a profound impact on U.S. Hispanic American worship, with its focus on the way of the cross and Good Friday.

One participant, applauding Goizueta's efforts to make Hispanic theology accessible to non-Hispanics, raised two questions in this direction. First, referring to Goizueta's correlation between *mestizaje* and Galilee, to what extent does first century Galilee shed light on the late twentieth century experiences of Hispanics and others? Second, regarding Goizueta's suggestion that the women in the gospels who gave witness to the resurrection were not responsible for inflicting on Jesus the wounds he shows to Thomas, were not these women also in need of the reconciliation Jesus effected? To the first question, Goizueta noted that study of first century Galilee makes it clear that the sort of cultural diversity that the term *mestizaje* implies was intrinsic to Christianity from the outset. This provides a corrective to the false notion of a "pure" Christian faith where subsequent cultural expressions and developments are regarded as corruptions or as syncretistic accretions obscuring some perceived essentials. To the second question, about the women disciples and their witness to the resurrection, Goizueta suggested that the crucifixion itself can be seen as a place where reconciliation is both experienced and effected.

Mention of the crucifixion led one participant to recall Jon Sobrino's reflection on crucified peoples—the persecution and death not only of individuals but of entire movements—and to wonder what resurrection means in the light of what the crucified peoples of Latin America experience. Goizueta warned against identifying resurrection exclusively with its end result: how do we avoid disappointment when the world is not immediately transformed by our efforts and our struggles?

Another participant noted that *mestizaje* underscores the political function of religious symbols, e.g., the mobilizing function of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the farm workers' movement. This contradicts the modern current of increasing privatization of religious experience and symbols. García-Rivera suggested that symbols are not merely created; they are also discovered. Encountering a symbol involves appreciation of its depth. Goizueta identified bourgeois privatization and market instrumentalization as dangerous trends in the contemporary manipulation of religious symbols.

Calling attention to the challenges that Bartolomé de las Casas posed to theological reflection in centuries past, one participant asked the presenter and the respondent to identify challenges that U.S. Hispanic American theologians

address to theology today. Goizueta responded that individualistic and conceptualistic overemphases found in contemporary theology need correction. U.S. Hispanic American theologies, by retrieving ancient traditions and by surfacing ordinary experience and popular Catholicism as sources, offer one path toward such redirection. U.S. Hispanic American theologians are emphasizing communal, aesthetic, pneumatological and cosmological aspects of theology.

Goizueta and García-Rivera agreed that one contribution of U.S. Hispanic American theology to the whole of Catholic theology is its participation in the breakdown of some inadequate dichotomies, e.g., liberal vs. conservative. Both likewise affirmed that U.S. Hispanic American theologies are dynamic, self-critical work-in-progress, responsive to the communities from within which they emerge.

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