

PERSPECTIVAS

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FOURTEENTH ISSUE – SPRING 2017

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P E R S P E C T I V A S

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CONTENTS

Editorial [ENGLISH VERSION]	5
Editorial [SPANISH VERSION]	8
<i>Roberto Sirvent</i>	
Overview of Protestant Theology in Cuba during the Revolutionary Period	
<i>Ofelia Ortega</i>	12
The Spiritual Praxis of César Chávez [ENGLISH VERSION]	
<i>Robert Chao Romero</i>	24
La praxis espiritual de César Chávez [SPANISH VERSION]	
<i>Robert Chao Romero</i>	40
The Faith of Saints and Citizens in Public Spaces	
<i>Jonathan Calvillo</i>	57
The Young Lords and The People's Church: Social Movement Theory, Telling of Brown Power Movements Impact on Latino/a Religious History [ENGLISH VERSION]	
<i>Elías Ortega-Aponte</i>	67
Los Young Lords y la iglesia del pueblo: Teoría de movimientos sociales, hablando del impacto de los movimientos de poder marrones sobre la historia religiosa Latina. [SPANISH VERSION]	
<i>Elías Ortega-Aponte</i>	79
Is Liberation Theology a Political Theology?: Marcella Althaus-Reid's Critical Hermeneutics and the Queer Messianic Question of Marxism [ENGLISH VERSION]	
<i>Silas Morgan</i>	93
¿Es la Teología de la Liberación una Teología Política? La crítica hermenéutica de Marcella Althaus-Reid y la pregunta mesiánica Queer sobre el Marxismo [SPANISH VERSION]	
<i>Silas Morgan</i>	109

Latinas/os, Canada and Cosmopolitanism: A Look from its Exteriority <i>Néstor Medina</i>	126
Profeta Ana Maldonado: Pushing the Boundaries of Paradoxical Domesticity <i>Tito Madrazo</i>	140

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P E R S P E C T I V A S

SPRING 2017

Editorial [ENGLISH VERSION]

In an effort to continue its rich tradition of offering the Latina/o theological community a space for Latina/o thinkers in theology and religion to contribute to—and even begin—important scholarly conversations, our editorial team is proud to present the Spring 2017 issue of *Perspectivas*. We hope our readers will find this to be a valuable resource to foster critical and creative conversations in various religious, theological, and academic communities.

In the current issue of *Perspectivas*, our contributors draw on various fields of Latina/o, Latin American studies, and critical theoretical currents to address issues that readers will find especially relevant for our current political and social climate. The essays included cover a range of themes, from introducing readers to fascinating theological insights such as a Cuban theology of the “absurd,” to the import of “Abuelita Theology” for César Chávez’s social activism. As the reader will soon discover, the questions raised in these articles are timelier than ever: How do Latina/o communities reimagine and reclaim the concept of citizenship when the dominant society denies them this very title, along with the rights, privileges, and opportunities that come with it? What can the Young Lords Party teach us about radical activism and Latina/o religious history? How do the insights and practices of fringe and marginalized communities undermine the theoretical premises and promises of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism? In the process of navigating and thinking about these complex social justice issues, our readers are also invited by one contributor to ask: Just how queer is the messianic spirit of Marx and Marxism? And finally: How can a Pentecostal prophethood help liberate patriarchal conceptions of church leadership and domesticity?

The present collection of essays demonstrates a commitment to nuanced and imaginative thinking about the Latina/o experience that is engaging, thought-provoking, and grounded in real life issues pertaining to Latina/o (USA and Canada), Latin American, and Spanish-speaking Caribbean communities. The essays combine a scholarly commitment to broadening, complicating, and illuminating the lived faith experiences of these communities, with an approach that is accessible to wide and diverse audiences.

The first set of essays below focus on activism, community organizing, and social movements. Ofelia Ortega, in a paper originally presented at the 9th Annual *Herencia* Lectures, “A Past and Present Look at Protestant Cuban Theology,” at Princeton Theological Seminary, in September 2016, focuses on the development of protestant theology during Cuba’s revolutionary period. As part of her lecture, which was delivered in honor of Sergio Arce Martínez, Ortega outlines the primary cultural, political, and

religious influences of the period as well some key theological themes that resulted from this period. Among these include practices of love, presence, and participation; re-imagining ecclesiology, evangelism, and mission; theological engagement with culture, economy, and peace & reconciliation movements; and innovative theologies of the “desert” and the “absurd.” A key final theme, Ortega shows, is the crucial role that women’s perspectives played in the formation and development of Protestant Cuban theology.

Robert Chao Romero explores the Christian spirituality and commitment of the famed Chicano civil rights leader César Chávez in his contribution, “The Spiritual Praxis of César Chávez.” Chávez’s influences, Romero demonstrates, ranged from “Abuelita theology” and Roman Catholic social teaching to various community based principles about social organizing. Romero argues that although our historical memory indicates otherwise, much of Chávez’s activist effort were deeply rooted in his Christian spirituality. The great march from the Central Valley to Sacramento, for example, drew explicitly from theological traditions of penitence and pilgrimage. Moreover, according to Romero, Chávez saw fasting and prayer as essential practices to the grape strike and the broader farm worker struggle. Romero makes sure to complicate Chavez’s legacy, illuminating how the later Chavez faced a “spiritual decentering” that pulled him away from his activism’s humble theological roots. At the end, Romero challenges those who attempt to secularize Chávez’s life and vision. “They take the ‘Rev.’ away from King,” Romero writes, “and the ‘abuelita theology’ away from Chávez.”

In his “The Faith of Saints and Citizens in Public Spaces,” Jonathan Calvillo draws on his five years of ethnographic research in Santa Ana, California, to examine the intersections of religious affiliation and ethnic identity among various Latina/o communities. Calvillo shows how communal religious practices performed in public spaces pushed against the boundaries of citizenship, especially among undocumented residents and those who have experienced various forms of educational segregation and limited economic opportunity. In the midst of societal exclusion and marginalization, these Latina/o faith communities, Calvillo argues, used some acts of public faith as acts of resistance, providing creative alternatives to ground their local citizenship.

Elías Ortega-Aponte invites readers to consider the critical import of studying Brown Power Movements for the field of Latina/o religious history. By focusing particularly on the Young Lords Party, Ortega-Aponte addresses the dangers of leaving non-religious social movement histories relatively unexplored in Latina/o Religious Studies. His argument is an invitation for scholars in this field to take up “the task of analyzing religious Latino/a social movements and their contributions to Latino/religiosity” while also highlighting the rich contributions of those seeking “to theorize *la lucha* as lived by secular Latino/a Activism.” Ultimately, Ortega-Aponte illuminates the many insights that can be gained from engaging with organizations that are highly critical of Latina/o religious institutions.

Our issue then takes a strong theoretical turn, broadening the discussions and yet calling for more specific, local, on-the-ground analyses, which are engaged in the following section. In his essay, “Is Liberation Theology a Political Theology?: Marcella

Althaus-Reid's Critical Hermeneutics and the Queer Messianic Question of Marxism," Silas Morgan reveals a tension existing within the rising field of political theology, namely that its "Eurocentricity presents a problem for Latin American liberation theologies that are eager to escape the colonial clutches of the continent, that are looking for ways to recapture their indigenous vitality." To address a way forward for Latin American theologians, Morgan encourages us to draw on the work of Marcella Althaus-Reid, who draws on Paul Ricoeur to imagine a queer messianic politics "that is as Christological as it is Marxist." By situating Althaus-Reid in this way, Morgan invites the reader to position Latin American liberation theology as a political theology, one that both welcomes the rebirth of Marx yet also departs from methodologies of the contemporary European left.

Néstor Medina, in his article, "Latinas/os, Canada and Cosmopolitanism: A Look from its Exteriority," interrogates traditional discourses around ideas of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism and puts forth a broader evaluation of both ideas that "is only possible from its fringes, its exteriority." Focusing on the Canadian practice of multiculturalism as his case study, Medina centers his analysis on the Latina/o experiences of systemic discrimination and marginalization. "Latinas/os should be understood not as haphazardly adopting-mixing cultural elements," he writes, "but as immersed in an intentional process of simultaneous negotiation, disturbance, and interruption of conventional cultural grammars while remaining anchored in their cultural traditions, values, and customs: a *cultural syncopation*." Medina concludes by highlighting ways in which communities of faith can play a pivotal role in imagining new and safer ways for people to live together, embrace each other's cultures, and to encounter God.

The last written piece of this issue responds to the need for a more local, on-the-ground, analysis. In his "Profeta Ana Maldonado: Pushing the Boundaries of Paradoxical Domesticity," Tito Madrazo introduces readers to the Pentecostal prophetess' liberative vision imagined and practiced within a traditionally patriarchal space. While Madrazo describes Maldonado as adhering to a complementarian approach of church leadership, he rejects it as a passive acceptance or submission to patriarchy. Rather, Madrazo argues, Maldonado's "paradoxical domesticity" serves an empowering role for female ministers. In addition, he demonstrates how domesticity plays a fundamental role in how her community interprets and conceives of the *cobertura*, or covering. Madrazo ultimately highlights Maldonado as one of many spiritual intellectuals and visionaries within Latina Pentecostalism who have both wrestled with and resisted various religious hierarchies designed to privilege some voices over others.

Roberto Sirvent
Editor

P E R S P E C T I V A S

SPRING 2017

Editorial [SPANISH VERSION]

En un esfuerzo de continuar su rica tradición de ofrecer a la comunidad teológica Latina/o un espacio para pensadoras/es Latinas/os en teología y religión para contribuir a—y aun comenzar—conversaciones escolásticas importantes, nuestro equipo editorial se siente orgulloso de presentar el ejemplar de primavera 2017 de *Perspectivas*. Esperamos que nuestras/os lectoras/es lo encuentren ser una valiosa fuente para fomentar conversaciones críticas y creativas en varias comunidades religiosas y teológicas.

En el número actual de *Perspectivas*, nuestras/os contribuyentes toman de varios campos, desde estudios Latinas/os y Latinoamericanos a corrientes crítico teóricas, para abordar asuntos que las/os lectoras/es encontrarán relevantes para el clima político y social actual. Los ensayos incluidos cubren una gama de temas, desde introducir a las/os lectoras/es a fascinantes ideas teológicas como la teología cubana de lo “absurdo”, al aporte de la “teología de las abuelitas” para el activismo de César Chávez. Cómo las/os lectoras/es descubrirán pronto, las preguntas planteadas en estos artículos son más oportunas que nunca: ¿Cómo se re-imaginan las comunidades Latinas/os y reclaman el concepto de ciudadanía donde la sociedad dominante les niega ese mismo título, junto con los derechos, privilegios y oportunidades que le acompañan? ¿Qué puede el Partido de los Young Lords enseñarnos acerca de activismo radical e historia religiosa Latina/o? ¿Cómo los conocimientos y prácticas de las comunidades marginales y marginadas socavan las premisas teóricas y promesas del multiculturalismo y cosmopolitismo? En el proceso de navegar y pensar acerca de estos complejos asuntos de justicia social, nuestras/os lectoras/es también son invitadas/os por una de nuestras contribuidoras a preguntarse: ¿Cuán queer es el espíritu mesiánico de Marx y el marxismo? Y finalmente: ¿Cómo puede una profetiza pentecostal ayudar a liberar las ideas patriarcales del liderazgo de la iglesia y domesticidad?

La presente colección de ensayos demuestra un compromiso a un pensamiento matizado e imaginativo de la experiencia Latina/o que es atractiva, estimulante, y basada en asuntos de la vida real relacionados con comunidades Latinas (E.E.U.U. y Canadá), latinoamericanas y del caribe hispanoparlante. Estos ensayos combinan el compromiso académico de ampliar, complicar, e iluminar las experiencias vividas de estas comunidades, con un enfoque que es accesible a una audiencia amplia y diversa.

El primer grupo de los siguientes ensayos se enfoca en activismo, organización comunitaria y movimientos sociales. Ofelia Ortega, en un papel originalmente presentado en la 9na. Conferencia Anual *Herencia* (Annual *Herencia* Lectures), “Una

mirada al pasado y presente de la teología protestante Cubana” (A Past and Present Look at Protestant Cuban Theology), en el Seminario Teológico de Princeton, en septiembre 1916, se enfoca en el desarrollo de la teología protestante durante el periodo revolucionario cubano. Como parte de su conferencia, que fue presentada en honor de Sergio Arce Martínez, Ortega provee un bosquejo de las influencias culturales, políticas y religiosas principales y algunos temas claves que resultaron de ese período. Entre estos están incluidos el amor, la presencia, y la participación; la re-imaginación de la eclesiología, evangelismo y misiones; un repensar teológico con la cultura, economía, y movimientos de paz y reconciliación; y una innovadora teología del “desierto” y de lo “absurdo.” Un tema clave final, Ortega muestra, es el rol crucial que jugaron las perspectivas de las mujeres en la formación y desarrollo de la teología protestante Cubana.

Robert Chao Romero explora la espiritualidad y compromiso Cristiano del famoso chicano líder de los derechos civiles César Chávez en su artículo “La praxis espiritual de César Chávez” (The Spiritual Praxis of César Chávez). Las influencias de Chávez, demuestra Romero, abarcaban desde la “teología de las abuelitas,” a las enseñanzas sociales Romano Católicas, a varios principios comunitarios sobre organización social. Romero argumenta que aunque nuestra memoria histórica nos dice de otra manera, muchos de los esfuerzos activistas de Chávez estaban arraigados en su espiritualidad Cristiana. La gran marcha desde el Valle Central a Sacramento, por ejemplo, tomó explícitamente de tradiciones teológicas de penitencia y peregrinaje. Además, de acuerdo a Romero, Chávez vio el ayuno y la oración como prácticas esenciales en la huelga de las uvas y en la lucha mayor de los trabajadores agrícolas. Romero se asegura de complicar el legado de Chávez, iluminando cómo Chávez más tarde confrontó un “descentramiento espiritual” que lo alejó de las humildes raíces teológicas de su activismo. Al final, Romero desafía aquellas/os que intentan secularizar la vida y visión de Chávez. “Ellos/as quitan el ‘reverendo’ de King,” escribe Romero, “y quitan la ‘teología de las abuelitas’ de Chávez.”

Jonathan Calvillo, en su artículo, “La fe de los santos y ciudadanos en los espacios públicos” (The Faith of Saints and Citizens in Public Spaces), toma de su investigación etnográfica de los últimos cinco años en Santa Ana, California, para examinar las intersecciones entre afiliación religiosa e identidad étnica entre varias comunidades Latinas/os. Calvillo muestra cómo prácticas comunales religiosas actuadas en espacios públicos empujan en contra de los límites de ciudadanía, especialmente entre residentes indocumentados y aquellas/os que han experimentado varias formas de segregación educacional y oportunidades económicas limitadas. En medio de exclusión y marginación social, estas comunidades de fe Latinas/os, Calvillo argumenta, usan algunos actos de fe pública como actos de resistencia, proveyendo alternativas creativas sobre las cuales basan su ciudadanía local.

Elías Ortega-Aponte invita a las/os lectoras/es a considerar el aporte crítico de estudiar los movimientos de poder marrones (Brown Power Movements) para el campo de historia religiosa Latina/o. Al enfocarse particularmente en el Partido de los Young Lords, Ortega-Aponte aborda los peligros de dejar las historias de movimientos sociales no religiosos relativamente poco exploradas en los Estudios Religiosos Latinas/os. Su

argumento se lee mejor como una invitación a estudiosos en este campo a tomar la “tarea de analizar movimientos sociales Latinas/os religiosos y sus contribuciones a la religiosidad Latina/o” mientras también resaltar las ricas contribuciones de aquellas/os que buscan “teorizar *la lucha* como vivida por el activismo secular Latina/o.” Por último, Ortega-Aponte ilumina los muchos puntos de vista que se pueden obtener de la participación con las organizaciones que son muy críticas de las instituciones religiosas Latinas/os.

Nuestro ejemplar toma luego un giro teórico, ampliando las discusiones y, sin embargo, pidiendo análisis más específicos, locales, de base, que están incluidos en la siguiente sección. En su artículo “¿Es la teología de la liberación una teología política?: La hermenéutica crítica de Marcella Althaus-Reid y el mesianismo queer del marxismo” (Is Liberation Theology a Political Theology?: Marcella Althaus-Reid’s Critical Hermeneutics and the Queer Messianic Question of Marxism), Silas Morgan revela una tensión que existe dentro del creciente campo de teología política, a saber que su “eurocentrismo presenta un problema para las teologías latinoamericanas de la liberación que están ansiosas de escapar las garras coloniales del continente, que están buscando por maneras de recobrar su vitalidad indígena.” Para ofrecer un camino hacia adelante para las/os teólogas/os latinoamericanas/os, Morgan nos anima a tomar del trabajo de Marcella Althaus-Reid, quien a su vez toma de Paul Ricoeur para imaginar una política mesiánica queer “que es tan cristológica como Marxista.” Al situar a Althaus-Reid de esta manera, Morgan invita a las/os lectoras/es a posicionar la teología latinoamericana de la liberación como una teología política, que abraza el renacimiento de Marx, pero que también se separa de las metodologías de la izquierda europea contemporánea.

Néstor Medina, en su artículo, “Latinas/os, Canadá y el Cosmopolitanismo: Una mirada desde su exterioridad” (Latinas/os, Canada and Cosmopolitismo: A Look from its Exteriority), interroga los discursos tradicionales alrededor de las ideas del multiculturalismo y cosmopolitismo y ofrece una evaluación más amplia de ambas ideas que “es posible solamente desde sus límites, su exterioridad.” Enfocado en la práctica canadiense del multiculturalismo como su caso de estudio, Medina concentra su análisis en las experiencias Latinas/os de discriminación y marginalización. “Latinas/os deberían de ser entendidos no como adoptando-mezclando elementos culturales al azar,” él escribe, “sino como sumergidos en un proceso intencional simultáneo de negociación, perturbación, e interrupción de gramáticas culturales convencionales mientras permanecen anclados en sus tradiciones culturales, valores, y costumbres: un síncope cultural.” Medina concluye resaltando maneras en las que las comunidades de fe pueden desempeñar un papel esencial en la imaginación de formas nuevas y más seguras para que las personas vivan juntas, abracen sus culturas mutuamente, y se encuentren con Dios.

El último artículo responde a la necesidad de un análisis más local de base. En su artículo, “Profetisa Ana Maldonado: Empujando las fronteras de domesticidad paradójica” (Profeta Ana Maldonado: Pushing the Boundaries of Paradoxical Domesticity), Tito Madrazo introduce a las/os lectoras/es a la visión liberadora de profetiza pentecostal que es imaginada y practicada dentro de los espacios patriarcales

tradicionales. Mientras Madrazo describes a Maldonado como adscrita a una perspectiva complementaria de liderazgo en la iglesia, él lo rechaza como una aceptación pasiva o sumisión al patriarcado. Más bien, Madrazo argumenta que la “domesticidad paradójica” de Maldonado sirve para empoderar el rol de mujeres ministras. Además, el señala como la domesticidad juega un papel fundamental en cómo su comunidad interpreta y concibe *cobertura*. Madrazo finalmente resalta Maldonado como una de muchas intelectuales espirituales y visionarias dentro del pentecostalismo Latina/o que han luchado y resistido con varias jerarquías religiosas diseñadas para privilegiar algunas voces sobre otras.

Roberto Sirvent
Editor

Overview of Protestant Theology in Cuba during the Revolutionary Period¹

Rev. Dr. Ofelia Ortega

Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba and World Council of Churches

Abstract

There are several very important aspects in the development of a Cuban Protestant theology in Cuba. We might be surprised by the different names from the multicolored cultures that, since 1514, have contributed to our real Cuban theology emerging from many contextual situations of inconformity and protest. They are the precursors of Cuban Christian thought today.

In the present situation, the growth of the churches in Cuba has been a surprise, not only for the remnant churches in Cuba but for the Cuban government as well. The Holy Spirit could be very subversive, surprising us in our life of faith and testimony.

The transformation of our theological reflection guides us to develop main theological emphases that enrich our ecclesiology and our pastoral praxis.

Introduction

In his work “De Las Casas a Martí: raíces de liberación en la teología cubana” (“From Las Casas to Martí: the Liberating Roots of Cuban Theology”) theologian and Presbyterian historian Rafael Cepeda refers to those who initiated theological reflection in Cuba and remarks the following:

In the search for the Cuban theological roots, we are surprised by the finding of a multicolor culture within an insular world that contains particular expressions and typical sensitivity.

Cuban theology does not develop—as in many European nations—from one seed planted by one planter in a homogeneous land, but from diverse seeds in distant plots of land. Planters have come from all walks of land in disparate epochs, without the real intention of planting theology by means of established rules or systematic patterns. Real Cuban theology emerges—in most cases by way of an image or symbol—as the product of inconformity and protest.

¹ A version of this paper was delivered at the celebration in honor of Sergio Arce Martínez at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey, September 16th, 2016.

A quick revision of names and events leads us to meet, in the first place, that singular priest, Father Las Casas, whose struggle—using Martí's words—was kept vibrant, giving well-aimed blows during fifty years. From the biblical text, the deuterocanonical book of Ecclesiastics chapter 34, he denounced that “Stealing from the poor and offering it to God is like killing a child before the eyes of their father. The life of the poor depends on the little bread he has; he who takes it from him is a murderer. Taking the sustenance away from the poor is like killing him; taking the salary away from the worker is taking his life away.” (vv. 20-22)²

This struggle was the basis of Las Casas' sermon in the village of Sancti Spiritus on August 15, 1514. More recently, we observed the 502nd anniversary of that heroic indignation where Cuban theology was born. Thus began a journey that would witness a painful history of colonization; the end of the native presence; the arrival of the Spaniard and the African; the confrontation of empires over the Antillean island; the emergence of Cuban nationality; slavery and abolitionism; the struggles for independence; foreign occupation; civil wars and coup d'états; the Revolution of the 1930s and sugar-producing prosperity; and finally, the revolution led by Fidel Castro, which became radical until transforming Cuba into the first socialist country of the Americas. In the words of Sergio Arce,

We have to get to the bottom of the theological legacy of revolutionary action and reflection during the times of figures like Bartolomé de las Casas, Juan Conyedo, Espada, Caballero, Don Pepe Vélez, Varela, Sardiñas, Davidson, Someillán, Díaz, Collazo, Duarte, Eladio Hernández, José Antonio Echeverría, Frank and Josué País and Esteban Hernández. The list is not complete and will require a great effort of historical unraveling and socio-theological reflection.³

These people were people of faith, and their faith meant different perspectives because of their roles, their activities, and their way of looking at life. Some secular as well as Cuban church historians credit them with being precursors to contemporary Cuban Christian thought.

Nonetheless, let's look at the contributions by Cubans in the island to Protestant theology in the last six decades. It is not my intention to follow a strict chronological order. This paper does not intend to be comprehensive or definitive. To approach these characteristics it will be necessary to study the thinking and theology of the most conservative sectors, the way ministers were trained, and the general perspective of the major denominations. Having said that, I will limit this paper to discussing mainly the theological work of people trained in the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Matanzas founded in 1946.

Overview of the Protestant Presence in Cuba

² Rafael Cepeda Clemente: “De Las Casas a Martí: raíces de liberación en la teología cubana”, *Cuba Teológica*, 10 (2006): 3-4.

³ Sergio Arce Martínez: “Teología del pueblo: reto y legado”, *Cuba Teológica*, No. 1 (July-December 1982): 3.

In 2013 we celebrated the 130th anniversary of the presence and permanent ministry of Cuban Protestantism in the Island. This presence was not initiated by United States of America or English missionaries, as was the case with many Latin American countries. Its founders were Cuban, all of them in favor of independence. However, after the intervention of 1898 by the United States of America, missionary groups entered Cuba and established congregations throughout the country. This resulted in a gradual control of protestant churches by the United States, which marks a period of “Americanization” which would last until the 1960s.

It is worth remembering that the historical Protestant Churches that have been working in Cuba prior to 1902 were the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal and Quaker. The Disciples of Christ and the Congregationalists, which later came under Presbyterian jurisdiction, must also be mentioned. After some time, the Seventh Day Adventists arrived, and in 1930, fundamentalist and charismatic denominations like the Assemblies of God and other Pentecostals started missionary work, along with various groups denominated Church of God and other independent movements.

Precisely at that time two autochthonous movements were founded. The first one was a conservative Evangelical Association called “Los Pinos Nuevos”. The second one, though also evangelical, it had had adopted a degree of Pentecostalism in terms of worship and an Adventist observance of the Sabbath. They were called the Gideon Evangelical Band or International Evangelical Church Soldiers of the Cross of Christ.⁴

It must be highlighted that from the beginning, many of these churches had to wage a struggle for religious freedom and face the opposition of Catholicism, which saw them as invading the Cuban religious landscape of which they had had exclusivity until then. Obviously, this represented a great challenge.

The Present Situation

The advancement of churches has continued with ups and downs. We estimate that ranging from 300,000 to 500,000 people—or less than 5% of the total population—attend Protestant services regularly. There has been a phenomenon among the Protestants as something like 3,000 to 5,000 “church houses” or congregations have emerged, and which gather in private homes.

At present there are 54 denominations officially registered, though others take the risk of functioning without authorization. The largest is the Baptist denomination, divided into four groups: Western, Eastern, Free and Fraternity of Baptist Churches. Next are the Pentecostals, and their largest group is the Evangelical Pentecostal Church, also known as Assemblies of God. Then there are the Adventists, Methodists, and the Evangelical Convention Los Pinos Nuevos. The Presbyterian-Reformed Church is smaller than the aforementioned groups, but it has also grown substantially. The Episcopal Church has also grown but at a slower pace. Denominations that have been historically small in Cuba have experienced varying degrees of growth in the last few decades, including the

⁴ Cf. Marcos Antonio Ramos: *Nuevo diccionario de religiones, denominaciones y sectas* (Miami, FL: Editorial Caribe, 1998), 250, 130.

Evangelical League, the Apostolic Church, the Church of God, the Church of Christ, the Church of Nazareth, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Gideon Evangelical Band has reemerged after the restrictions suffered during the decades of the 60s and 70s.

It should be noted that even though a great part of the Cuban evangelical groups display fundamentalist leanings, there exists fraternal relations among many evangelical congregations and Catholic parishes at the local level. At the same time, there is a sector integrated by non-historical or fundamentalist denominations that does not have any relations with the Roman-Catholic Church or with the historical Protestant Churches.

Regarding pedagogy, and according to an analysis of the Annual Meeting of Collaborators and Referents of the Memorial Center Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., many churches include programs with characteristics such as hierarchical organization, patriarchal structures, theological dualism and conservative and biblically fundamentalism.

Among the main challenges faced by the churches, we find their noticeable growth coupled with the lack of theologically trained pastors and lay people.

Transformations in Theological Reflection as a Result of the Revolutionary Event

January 1, 1959 inaugurated a new era in all aspects of Cuban national life and, consequently, in Cuban ecclesial and theological history. It is unquestionable that since then the conditions for the formation of a diverse and renewed Protestant movement were set in place; since then a theological work has developed for almost six decades.

It is not easy to summarize the transformations occurred in theological reflection and in the complex ecclesial environment during this period of time. Neither can we speak of this task without at least summarily mentioning the ecclesial context in which this task has developed and that has decisively influenced it.

I will quote a brief outline of the Protestant movement during this period, as presented in the pages of the book *La siembra infinita: itinerarios de la obra misionera y la evangelización protestantes en Cuba*⁵ (*The Infinite Sowing: Itineraries of Mission Work and Protestant Evangelization in Cuba*), by historians Rafael Cepeda and Carlos R. Molina:

After the revolutionary triumph in 1959, outstanding sociopolitical modifications began to occur that greatly affected the life of Protestant churches negatively as well as positively. The loss of daily schools, the exodus of a great proportion of members and pastors, the regulation of some of their activities; the indirect pressure on some pastors in some places and direct action on others, generally in small populations, affected negatively the life and work of churches.⁶

⁵ Rafael Cepeda y Carlos R. Molina Rodríguez: *La siembra infinita. Itinerarios de la obra misionera y la evangelización protestantes en Cuba* (Quito / Ginebra / Matanzas: Ediciones CLAI / Consejo Mundial de Iglesias / Seminario Evangélico de Teología, 2011).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.

According to Cepeda and Molina, and despite the fact that in the last three decades very positive changes have taken place in the normative framework and in the policy of the State towards religion and believers, during almost half a century,

the regular realization of evangelization services in open places as streets and plazas has not been allowed; there are no “evangelical hours” on radio and TV, distribution or public sale of evangelizing literature; Christian education at schools or publication of religious books. The worshiping manifestations in churches have generally been limited to their premises and among their own people. However, there are wide programs of Christian education at all levels, Sunday schools, and fraternities of youth, women and men, etc. Likewise, several seminaries work and summer camps are held for children and young people, and diverse denominational and ecumenical publications are produced.⁷

In the midst of this context—which in the last few years has also been characterized by a greater social insertion of our churches—the theological topics developed have been diverse. During the first years of the revolutionary period some of the themes developed were *our presence* in the church (at a time when going to church was distinctly negative and belonging to the mass and political organizations implied a rejection of religious ideas, many believers stayed faithful) and *ecumenical unity* (we used to share with others, because we were few and that made us feel strong). Moreover, a *theology of suffering* and *kenosis* was also developed. As Christians we wondered about what to do with the loss of our social work. Also a *theology of hope* against all hope, giving emphasis to the intensity that the Lord would bring; an expectation for a favorable change. In this way we lived the ministry of “loving the enemy”, loving those who rejected us, and so the Church kept alive.

After 1961, when the socialist nature of the Revolution was announced and laws emerged depriving the Church of its schools and other properties, other events affected theological production. The unprecedented nature of the revolutionary process made it difficult to reflect on it. Only after some time had passed, the Church was able to acquire some training to theologize systematically. In addition, the United States of America economic embargo on Cuba—officially imposed in 1962—separated us from the world. This separation provoked a breaking with international civil and religious institutions.

In spite of all this, those who were looking for opportunities to insert themselves into the process took different positions from the 70s to the beginnings of the 80s. Some believed that the difficulty in the theological debates on the revolutionary process laid in the fact that the Church was not prepared to understand the Revolution. Others disagreed and did not consider this “theological immaturity” as the problem but the ecclesial-institutional factor; that is, the loss of influence, properties, prestige, etc. Meanwhile, some assumed a combination of both factors.

The specificity of being church and the role of schools and social work, after we lost them, were issues of much debate as well. However, there was advancement in the ecumenical work. Greater interecclesial connections emerged and grassroots ecumenism became larger than the institutional expressions. Then the question of what is

⁷ *Ibid.*

autochthonous emerged, when the churches became independent from the United States of America.

It was in this way that our theological work started. It was not structured or systematic but was a *campaign theology*; we talked about a *theology of incarnation* in the midst of the desertion and exodus of many ministers. There were few professors and students in the Evangelical Theological Seminary (SET for the acronym in Spanish) in Matanzas. The environment was difficult and turbulent. It was then that Francisco Norniella, a Presbyterian pastor and professor at SET devoted himself to the study of the book of Jeremiah (“You shall yet plant vines” Jeremiah 31:5).

Generally speaking, there were two theological tendencies: that of *coexistence* and *proexistence*; the former advocated coexisting at the margins of the present reality, while the latter was understood along the lines of cooperation. Politically, some theologians were branded as “CIA agents” while others were viewed as “Castro’s agents”. One group interpreted the Bible from the perspective of the existing political situation. Others spoke of “living in the desert,” “in exile,” or “in the return journey”. All this to say that, theological work was full of faith.

Some Foreign Influences

Foreign theological influence came to us through ecumenical movements like the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Christian Conference for Peace, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. This theological influence focused on how to adapt to a socialist regime, as was the case with Eastern Europe. There was very good influence from the Prague and Eastern Germany theologies. Russian theology did not contribute much, since it came from the Orthodox tradition, alien to us. Good influence came from the United States of America, from modern theologians, via WCC and other movements like the Universal Federation of Christian Students Movements (FUMEC by its acronym in Spanish). In the same way, biblical reading reappeared. Texts from thinkers such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Josef L. Hromádka, Mauricio López and Jürgen Moltmann, among others, were very useful too.

During the decades of the 60s and 70s, we received the visit of church leaders from socialist Eastern European countries sent by the WCC, to help us understand how the Church could practice its missionary work and witness to the Gospel in this new context. There were outstanding figures among them: Karoly Toth, Bishop of the Reformed Church of Hungary; Elizabeth Adler, Pastor of the Lutheran Church from Eastern Germany and an official from FUMEC; orthodox Priest Sokolosky, from the Russian Orthodox Church; and Milan Opocensky, from the Evangelical Church of Czech Brothers. A substantial contribution was made by Chirapurath Itty, from the Syrian Orthodox Church from India.

As I am today at Princeton Seminary, which has been the theological institution that received some of our best theologians for their training, I have to mention John A. Mackay’s visit to Cuba. Students at SET have used his *A Preface to Christian Theology* as a basic theology textbook since the decades of the 50s and 60s. We had the privilege of his visit in 1963, as a guest speaker at the First National Presbyterian Institute. At this

meeting, he talked to us about “the nature and mission of the church” and used the slogan of the Ecumenical Conference in Oxford in 1937: “May the Church be the Church.” Another influence was Lois Kroehler, a United States of America missionary in Cuba, who used her three presentations for composing the hymn *May the Church be the Church*, which today is sung in various Cuban churches.

In the framework of the international conference, *Missionary Heritage in Cuban Churches* held in 1984, speaking about the contributions of Latin America to our theology, the theology commission expressed:

We acknowledge the contribution of Latin American theological work to the development of the new Cuban theology, especially the effort to link faith and the best historical traditions to the reality of poverty and social injustice that our peoples live. The praxis of Christians devoted to finding a new Latin American order where God’s justice prevails was also important; by using the social sciences in this analysis which enables us to achieve a more objective recognition of the structures that attempt against life and its full realization.⁸

Main Theological Emphases

Although I will mention later some isolated data related to this issue, I wish to highlight here some of the distinctive signals of Protestant work in theology in the Cuban context.

A very important issue was wrestling with Marxism-Leninism (looking at the positive aspects in this theory). Marxist criticism to religion was used to improve ourselves in terms of the identity and the specificity of being Christian. We had no readily available paradigms or previous teachings that could help with this task, so the existing situation was unprecedented.

The Church was divided, not because of denominational issues but due to the political activity of many of its members and leaders. These tensions can be exemplified by the apologetic theology embodied by the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba (1977), and which delineated values for both Marxists and the Church. There was also a theology of incarnation. The youth especially lived incarnation despite ideological discrimination. This process led many to an improvement of their faith in the face of a hostile environment.

All this propitiated a wealth in theological reflection and insights. Most of what was produced could not be written due to lack of time or resources, since we did not have access to the publishing houses of the State. Regardless, the themes tackled by the different generations of protestant theologians in the last decades have been various and sundry.

In what follows, I outline some of those key theological themes that were developed during this complex period of theological reflection. First, *effective love*; we were inspired

⁸ “Conclusiones de la Comisión de Teología”, in *La herencia misionera en Cuba. Consulta de las iglesias protestantes realizada en Matanzas, Cuba, del 26 de octubre al 3 de noviembre de 1984*, Rafael Cepeda, ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial DEI, 1986), 120-121.

by the Camilo Torres Conference (1971-1983) in memory of the Colombian guerrilla-fighter priest by the same name. The conference helped us develop a theological reflection of a kenotic ecclesiology and an incarnational hermeneutics. This process facilitated our own radical contextual Cuban theological thinking. Second, *presence and participation*; due to the influence of the Christian Students Movement three small books were published that deeply influenced the Cuban theological reflection: *Evangelio para Ateos* (*Gospel for Atheists*) by Josef L. Hromadka, *Sincero para con Dios* (*Honest to God*) by Anglican Bishop J. A. T. Robinson, and *Un cristiano en la República Democrática Alemana* (RDA) (*A Christian in the GDR*) by Johannes Hamel. Third, *ecumenical theology* (during the 1960s-70s); we worked intensively in the production of christian education materials that included contextual theological reflections. Inspired by Paulo Freire's books and educational perspectives, we organized several theological seminars with theologians and social scientists in the Seminary of Matanzas.

Fourth, *being the church*, which ensued a process to become autonomous and self-sustained, and to work with a very specific mission in our society. We developed a "stewardship theology" during the 1970s and 80s. Fifth, a *theology of the desert*; we did not use the biblical paradigm of Exodus that was very relevant in the Latin America liberation theology because of the emigration in Cuba at the time. For us the main biblical paradigm during the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s was the desert. In the desert we learn to live as pilgrims (always walking). The desert is always an opportunity to change (to have a metanoia experience). Sixth, the relation between *theology and economy*; ecological issues and the biblical concept of work was a special emphasis in the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Reformed Church already in 1977. It is important to mention this influence in the theological reflection on economy in four documents in the years 2004, 2006 and 2012. The Accra Confession approved by the Alliance of Reformed Churches in 2004; the AGAPE Document presented by the WCC in the General Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil (2006); the "Sao Paulo Statement: International Financial Transformation for the Economy of Life" (2012); and The Oikotree Movement: Life-Enhancing Learning Together (2012). Seventh, a *theology of the absurd*, based on the prophets Habakkuk and Micah, with contributions by René Castellanos, Carlos M. Camps and the good work by Milca Quintana on Psalm 73: "Nevertheless, God".

Eighth, questions on the relation between *theology and culture* (during the 1970s-80s), how the renewal of our liturgy, music, art and films related to our theology. Lois Kroehler, José Luis Casal, José Aurelio Paz, Clara Luz Ajo and Pedro Triana participated actively in this area. Festivals of Cuban revolutionary Christian songs were celebrated. Ninth, the *existential dialogue between Christianity and Marxism*; this academic dialogue was marked by personal and not institutional interests. It took place between leaders of the Council of Churches and members of some state institutions like the School of Philosophy of Havana University and the America Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. On another level, the dialogue took place among the people of the church, that is, in their neighborhoods, schools, work places, in order to avoid discrimination. This was a fruitful dialogue that helped to change mutual attitudes and ways of thinking. Tenth, *theology of mission, evangelization and diaconal work*; Cuban churches found unique ways to develop their mission (house churches, popular readings of the Bible, etc). I think there have been great renewing elements yet to be

articulated theologically. During the so called “special period” the diaconal work of our churches was significantly relevant.

An eleventh theme that emerged was the connection between *theology and historical research*. The efforts made by Rafael Cepeda to liberate us from a historical heritage that had received the influence of United States of America missionaries and historians is praiseworthy. His study on “Cuban missionary patriots” provided us with a concept of mission linked to the reality lived by our people at the end of the 19th and the beginnings of the 20th century. We must highlight the work of young historian Carlos R. Molina as coauthor of *La siembra infinita* mentioned above, and compiler of *Protestantismo en Cuba. Recuento histórico y perspectivas desde sus orígenes hasta principios del siglo XXI* (*Protestantism in Cuba. A Historical Recounting; Perspectives from its Origins to the Beginning of the 21st Century*).⁹ Twelfth, the development of a *theology of peace and reconciliation*, which has been in practice since the 1960s in various contexts: in the Christian-Marxist dialogue; in the Camilo Torres Conferences; and in theological meetings between Cuban women and men from the island and those outside it. The Presbyterian Reverend Daniel Izquierdo and other Cuban theologians has delved into this issue. More recently, this topic re-emerged during the struggle for the liberation of the Five Cuban Heroes—which refers to the group of Cuban agents imprisoned in the United States of America, but who have already been released after the processes of normalization between Cuba and United States of America announced in 2014.

And finally, the development of a *Protestant theology from the perspective of women*. An important contribution to this discussion has been the publication of *Encontrar la propia voz. Obras y autoras relevantes del protestantismo en Cuba (1902-1959)* (2013) (*Finding Our Own Voice: Relevant Protestant Authors and Works in Cuba (1902-1959)*), produced by young theologian and researcher Beatriz Ferreiro García. This study rescues the thoughts of many Protestant women authors during the era of the Republic; the work of many of them extended even until after the revolutionary period had started. Moved by the prevailing situation, Christian leaders like Blanca Rosa Ojeda, Dora Valentín, Clara Rodés and Nerva Cot developed their theological reflections during the revolutionary period.

Other contemporary women theologians have made important contributions in various areas, such as Raquel Suárez (the necessary ecclesiology for Cuba); Izett Samá (Black theology in Cuba); Daylins Rufin (feminist theology in the Old Testament); Gisela Pérez (women’s ordination); Rhode González (women and Pentecostalism); Kirenia Criado (sexuality and the Bible); Dora Arce (feminist opening of the New Testament); Clara Luz Ajo (religious pluralism and intercultural theology) and Ofelia Ortega (gender and theology and feminist ethics). They have not been the only outstanding examples of theological work. More research is required to recover the contributions to theology by other women.

⁹ Carlos R. Molina Rodríguez: *Protestantismo en Cuba. Recuento histórico y perspectivas desde sus orígenes hasta principios del siglo XXI*, 3 vols., (La Habana / Matanzas: Editorial Caminos / Seminario Evangélico de Teología, 2011-2016).

As I close, I want to highlight the publishing panorama in Cuba. In the field of theology proper, in the last five decades Protestants have written relatively little. However,

the publication of a few books in the first decades of the Cuban Revolution was useful to make our theological thinking known abroad. The first of them was *Cristo vivo en Cuba: reflexiones teológicas cubanas* (*Christ Alive in Cuba: Cuban Theological Reflections*) and then *Religion in Cuba Today*, compiled by Alice L. Hageman y Philip E. Wheaton. In the 80s *La herencia misionera en Cuba* (*Missionary Legacy in Cuba*) sees the light of day. Although it is basically a history book, it has a lot of theological content within it. In addition, another important book was *Pensamiento reformado cubano* (*Cuban Reformed Thought*) –compiled by Francisco Marrero and published by the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba. This book brought together contributions by Sergio Arce, Carlos Camps, Rafael Cepeda and Adolfo Ham. More recently, Oscar Bolioli compiled a series of essays by Cuban authors in *The Caribbean: Culture of Resistance, Spirit of Hope*.¹⁰

As for periodicals, the magazine *Mensaje* occupies an important place; originally published by the Presbyterian Church, it was later put out by the Council of Evangelical Churches of Cuba. This collection marks a significant historical moment of ecumenical theological thought in Cuba. The Cuban journal of socio-theological thought, *Caminos* is another example. It is edited and produced by the Memorial Center Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This publishing house, which coincidentally opened its doors with the publication of José Martí: *su verdad sobre los Estados Unidos* (*Jose Marti: His Truth about the United States*), by Rafael Cepeda, has also published books by numerous other Cuban authors.

I should also mention some of the publications by the Center of Studies of the Council of Churches of Cuba, like the periodicals *Raíz y Ala*, *Análisis de la Realidad Actual*, and *Debarim*. Likewise, it is worth mentioning the biblical journals and volumes *Las siete y las setenta veces siete palabras*¹¹ (*The Seven and Seventy Times Seven Words*), by Sergio Arce and *Religión: poesía del mundo venidero. Implicaciones teológicas en la obra de José Martí*¹² (*Religion: Poetry of the Future World. Theological Implications in the Work of José Martí*) by Reinerio Arce Valentín. Other important compilations that include the treatment of national issues are *Carismatismo en Cuba; Y me series testigos. Un acercamiento a la evangelización y la misión desde Cuba* and *40 años de testimonio evangélico en Cuba*.¹³ (*Charismaticism in Cuba; And You shall be my*

¹⁰ Adolfo Ham Reyes: “Pensamiento teológico protestante: aportes cubanos en los últimos cincuenta años”, in *Protestantismo en Cuba. Recuento histórico y perspectivas desde sus orígenes hasta principios del siglo XXI*, vol. 2: *Visiones y perspectivas*, Carlos R. Molina Rodríguez, comp. (Matanzas / La Habana: Seminario Evangélico de Teología / Editorial Caminos, 2013), 216-217.

¹¹ Sergio Arce Martínez: *Las siete y las setenta veces siete palabras. Sermones predicados entre el Domingo de Pentecostés de 1995 y el Domingo de Pentecostés de 1997* (Quito / La Habana: Departamento de Comunicaciones del CLAI / Centro de Estudios del Consejo de Iglesias de Cuba, 1997).

¹² Reinerio Arce: *Religión: poesía del mundo venidero. Implicaciones teológicas en la obra de José Martí* (Quito: Ediciones CLAI, 1996).

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

Witnesses: An Approach to Evangelization and Mission from Cuba; and 40 Years of Evangelical Testimony in Cuba);

The publications by SET must be mentioned for their contributions. *Cuba Teológica*, founded by Sergio Arce in 1982, has focused on the dissemination of relevant studies carried out at SET in the different fields of teaching and research. *Didajé* began publishing in 1998 and is oriented to the formation and upgrading of pastors and lay people in biblical, theological, anthropological, and pastoral themes. A good number of theologians, pastors, preachers and leaders have given expression to their thoughts in their pages.

Evocation of Sergio Arce

We are here today to pay homage to Reverend Sergio Arce Martínez. I know that other people will speak about his important theological work including *La misión de la iglesia en una sociedad socialista*¹⁴ (*The Mission of the Church in a Socialist Society*) (1965) and *Teología en Revolución*¹⁵ (*Theology in Revolution*) (1988). Even with a whole series of papers and studies we could not give due recognition to the magnitude of the contributions by our beloved brother.

Sergio Arce was the Rector of the Seminary at times when there were not many students in the Seminary, yet, he was never discouraged. Whenever I saw him, I remembered the famous poem by the Cuban poet Fayad Jamís: “Life has given you so many blows; yet you continue giving dreams to life”.¹⁶ One of the recognitions he deserves is how he turned the Seminary, with its almost empty classrooms, into a real madness of faith, welcoming many people who were fighting for the liberation of Latin America, in the face of dictatorships in their countries during the 1970s. Eventually, some of them became martyrs of the faith, like Augusto Cotto and Mauricio López, among others. The Seminary welcomed them. Moved by and filled with hope, they returned to Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, with the certainty that changes would be produced for the common good of their peoples.

Only Arce’s immense heart could open the doors of the Seminary to welcome the suffering of Christian leaders and other faithful fighters, capable of facing adversity and reality sustained by their faith in the justice of the liberating God.

In other words, Sergio Arce’s life was made of concrete love; that is, service and availability. This quixotic theologian dared to initiate the process to have a Confession of Reformed Faith in 1977. And he also dared to be a “public theologian”, a role which he so admirably practiced in the Cuban Parliament and as a Deputy for the rural region of Perico, in the province of Matanzas.

¹⁴ Sergio Arce Martínez: *La misión de la iglesia en una sociedad socialista. Un análisis teológico de la vocación de la iglesia cubana en el día de hoy* (Matanzas: Seminario Evangélico de Teología, 1965).

¹⁵ Sergio Arce Martínez, *Teología en Revolución* (Havana, Cuba: Centro de Información y Estudio Augusto Cotto, 1988).

¹⁶ Fayad Jamís: *Con tantos palos que te dio la vida y otras canciones* (Matanzas, Cuba: Ediciones Vigía, 1987), 5.

I return to his words to finish this paper:

It is impossible to live without any ideology, without any religious doctrine or without any interpretation of the sense of history, personal as well as universal. The truth is that we either endorse an ideology, religious doctrine or interpretation of history or we endorse another. What theology must do is to judge the praxis of Christians from a perspective of faith to enable political, social and ideological options appropriated for the faith we say we have; in response to the demands of hope, justice and solidarity love that make human life characterized by a much more universalized brotherhood possible.¹⁷

May God Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ our Big Brother invoked in Arce's theology bless us and drive into reality the dreams of faith-trust, hope, tenderness and love.

¹⁷ Sergio Arce: "Itinerario teológico", in: *Panorama de la teología latinoamericana*, Juan José Tamayo-Acosta and Juan Bosch, eds. (Navarra, Spain: Verbo Divino, 2001), 130.

The Spiritual Praxis of César Chávez

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Abstract

Although César Chávez is revered as the most highly-regarded Latina/o civil rights icon of the 1960's, most scholars and activists overlook the profound role played by Christian spirituality in his personal life and the broader farm workers movement. This essay explores the spiritual formation and praxis of famed Chicano civil rights leader César Chávez during the famous grape strike of 1965-1970. Chávez fused popular Mexican religious symbols and practices such as La Virgen de Guadalupe, "peregrinación" (pilgrimage), and fasting, with Catholic social teaching, leading to the first successful unionization of farm workers in United States history.

• VEA LA PÁGINA 40 PARA LEER ESTE ARTÍCULO EN ESPAÑOL •

Introduction

César Chávez was the preeminent leader, voice, and public face of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's.¹ Chávez is to Latinas/os what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is to the African American community. Moreover, as the posthumous recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Aztec Eagle,² and a U.S. postage stamp in his honor, Chávez has been called the world's most famous Latino.³ Together with Dolores Huerta and Filipino organizers Larry Itliong and Phillip Vera Cruz, Chávez founded the United Farmworkers of America (UFW).⁴ The UFW fought

¹ I wish to express sincere gratitude to Rev. Marcos Canales of La Fuente Ministries of Pasadena First Church of the Nazarene. During a critical part of my academic journey in Latina/o religious studies, Rev. Canales introduced me to the field of Latina/o Theology. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewer who offered important suggestions which greatly strengthened this article.

² The Aztec Eagle is the highest recognition awarded by the Mexican government to a non-Mexican citizen.

³ Luis D. León, *The Political Spirituality of César Chávez* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 6.

⁴ Although popularly known as the UFW, Chávez's organization went through several name changes before finally landing on this name. The UFW was originally known as the Farm Workers Association

for increased wages and better working conditions for exploited California farmworkers and rose to national attention through the famous Delano grape strike and international boycotts of 1965-1970.

Although César Chávez is revered as the most highly regarded Latina/o civil rights icon of the 1960's, most scholars and activists overlook the profound role played by Christian spirituality in his personal life and the broader farm workers movement. In the words of Chávez, "Today I don't think I could base my will to struggle on cold economics or on some political doctrine. I don't think there would be enough to sustain me. For me, the base must be faith."⁵ This essay explores the spiritual formation and praxis of famed Chicano civil rights leader César Chávez during the famous grape strike of 1965-1970. Methodologically, it draws from the broad—and disparate-- secondary literature on the life Chávez. Some of this literature explicitly highlights the Christian spirituality of Chávez;⁶ most of it hints at the profound role of faith in his upbringing and praxis, but does offer explicit analysis of religion in the farmworkers movement.⁷ In addition to synthesizing the existing secondary literature, this essay is also based upon a systematic review of Chavez's own words about faith as expressed in his autobiography.⁸

This article follows a chronological analysis of the life of Chávez. It begins with discussion of his early familial upbringing in popular Mexican Catholicism and his later mentorship in Catholic social teachings by white clergyman Father Donald McDonnell. Building upon this Christian foundation and the practical skills gained as community organizer for the Alinksy-based Community Service Organization, Chávez led the UFW to historic victories over powerful agricultural interests in the Central Valley of California. Chávez fused popular Mexican religious symbols and practices such as La Virgen de Guadalupe, "peregrinación" (pilgrimage), and fasting, with Catholic social teaching, leading to the first successful unionization of farm workers in United States history. Despite his many successes, like many civil rights icons before and after, Chávez had moral failures. This essay also examines the decline and fall of Chávez following the movement's crescendo in 1975.

"Abuelita Theology" and the Early Years

César Chávez was born in 1927 to a moderately successful immigrant family in Yuma Valley, Arizona.⁹ The earliest members of the Chávez family immigrated to the United States in the 1880's from Chihuahua, Mexico. In Arizona, they established a freight

(April 1962) and the National Farmworkers Association (September 1962). Griswold Del Castillo and Richard A. García, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 35:37.

⁵ Jacques E. Levy, *César Chávez: Autobiography of La Causa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 27.

⁶ For example, see: Mario T. García, *The Gospel of César Chávez: My Faith in Action* (Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2007); Frederick John Dalton, *The Moral Vision of César Chávez* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003); and, Luis D. León, *The Political Spirituality of César Chávez*.

⁷ See, Del Castillo & García, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit*; Dan La Botz, *César Chávez and la Causa* (New York: Pearson, 2006); and Levy, *César Chávez*.

⁸ Levy, *César Chávez*.

⁹ Del Castillo and García, *César Chávez*, 4.

business and ran a family farm on 160 acres of land acquired through the Homestead Act. At the age of 38, César's father Librado left the family farm to marry Juana Estrada and become a small businessman. Librado owned a grocery store, auto repair shop, and poolroom. Following the onset of the Great Depression, however, the Chávez family lost their grocery store and moved back onto their grandmother's farm in Yuma.¹⁰ Eventually the farm was also lost, and, at the age of 12, Chávez, together with his parents and siblings, was launched into a lifetime of migrant labor in the fields of California.

The years spent on the farm with his grandmother, "Mama Tella," were deeply formidable for the young César. During these years he first felt the sting of racism in the public schools.¹¹ He was called "dirty Mexican" by classmates and was swatted with a ruler for speaking Spanish. Chávez recalled, "When we spoke Spanish, the teacher swooped down on us. I remember the ruler whistling through the air as its edge came down sharply across my knuckles."¹² Racial preference for white students was blatant, moreover, and when fights broke out between Mexican and Anglo students, teachers and administrators sided with the latter.

Unfortunately, such racist experiences were typical for Mexican Americans living in the Southwest during the first half of the twentieth century. Similar to African Americans, Latinos were segregated within poor neighborhoods through racially restrictive housing covenants.¹³ Segregated Latino communities were known as "colonias," or "barrios," and they proliferated throughout California, Arizona, Colorado, Texas, and New Mexico as part of the Great Mexican Migration of 1910-1930. During these years, 750,000 Mexican immigrants came to the United States in search of work and respite from the violence and disruption of the Mexican Revolution.¹⁴ They were recruited by the U.S. government and big business interests in order to fill labor shortages caused by WWI and the racist ban on immigration from Asia, and Southern and Eastern Europe. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917 closed off labor migration from China, Japan, the Philippines, and the entirety of Asia; the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, and the Immigration Act of 1924, limited migration from Southern and Eastern Europe to a trickle.¹⁵ As a consequence, the United States encountered vast labor shortages and turned to Mexico for its labor needs. Mexicans filled vital low wage roles in agriculture, railroad, construction, mines, and factory work. Though they were desired for their cheap labor, they were not welcomed as neighbors by their white counterparts. This gave rise to legalized Latino apartheid and the creation of hundreds of segregated Latino communities throughout the United States. Segregated housing, in turn, gave rise to segregated parks, pools, schools, restaurants, movie theaters, and even hiking trails and mortuaries!¹⁶ For

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³ Robert Chao Romero, "Doss v. Bernal: Ending Apartheid in Orange County," *UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Research Report* 14 (February 2012).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 2.

¹⁵ Harvard University Open Collections Program, "Key Dates and Landmarks in United States Immigration History," accessed October 3, 2016, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigration/timeline.html>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Latinos like César Chávez and his family, segregation was comprehensive and followed them from the cradle to the grave.

César's early years of living on the family farm were also important because of their impact upon his spiritual formation. His spirituality was shaped by his family and grounded in what Latina/o theologians have termed "Abuelita Theology."¹⁷ Because formal religious instruction is often lacking among Latinos, the best theologians of the Mexican American community are often grandmothers, or, "abuelitas." "Our *abuelitas* [grandmothers], *viejitas* [older women], and *madrecitas* [mothers] have been the functional priestesses and theologians of our *iglesia del pueblo* [church of the people]."¹⁸ In consonance with this common pattern, Chávez acquired Mexican popular Catholicism from his "abuelita," "Mama Tella." As an orphan, Mama Tella was raised in a convent, and it was there that she developed literacy in Latin and Spanish, as well as acquired a deep understanding of Christian doctrine.¹⁹ As the theologian of the family, it was she that taught César about prayer, the Catholic catechism, and devotion to the Virgin Mary. As Chávez later recalled:

"Mama Tella [grandmother] gave us our formal religious training...[S]he was always praying, just praying. Every evening she would sit in bed, and we would gather in front of her. ...After the Rosary she would tell us about a particular saint and drill us on our Catechism."²⁰

From his mother, Juana, César learned the biblical value of loving the poor. **I agree with this change.** As a faithful Catholic, Juana was deeply inspired by the life and ministry of Santa Eduvigis, (Saint Hedvig), who, in the 13th century was renowned for her generosity to the poor, the imprisoned, and the outcast.²¹ Following the example of Santa Eduvigis, Juana taught César, 'You always have to help the needy, and God will help you.'²² Reminiscent of the early Church, Juana searched the streets for people in need and invited them to her home for food and assistance. As later recounted by the adult César:

"On the saint's birthday, October 16, my mom would find some needy person to help, and, until recently, she would always invite people to the house, usually hobos. She would go out purposely to look for someone in need, give him something, and never take anything in return..."²³

The power of "Abuelita theology" is vividly exemplified in the story of César Chávez's first communion. Because the family lived many miles outside of Yuma where official catechism classes were held, the task of preparing César and his sister Rita for first

¹⁷ García, *The Gospel of César Chávez*, 25; Del Castillo and García, *César Chávez*, 5-6. Moises Sandoval, *The Mexican American in the Church: Reflection on Identity and Mission* (New York: Sadlier Books, 1983), 125.

¹⁸ Dalton, *The Moral Vision of César Chávez*, 33-34.

¹⁹ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 26.

²⁰ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 26-27.

²¹ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 25-26.

²² García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 26.

²³ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 26.

communion fell upon their abuela, Mama Tella.²⁴ One day, following the completion of Mama Tella's religious instruction, the Chávez family traveled to the Catholic Church in Yuma to request first communion. Initially the Anglo priest refused because they had not received formal religious instruction: "They haven't had any religious training. They can't take Communion...They must attend class here in Yuma first." To this, Juana retorted, "They can't because we live out in the valley twenty miles away. We can't travel that far every week." After a second stubborn refusal from the priest, she firmly insisted, "Well, ask them something." The priest proceeded to drill the Chávez children with questions from the Catholic catechism, and, because of their thorough training in "abuelita theology," César and Rita passed with flying colors. The children received their first communion the following day.²⁵

Similar to the biblical account of the Exodus, it can be said that the farm worker movement has its origins in women. The Israelite exodus from slavery in Egypt originated in the daring acts of faithful civil rebellion on the part of Moses' mother and sister Miriam; in a similar way, the farmworker movement began with the faithfulness of Chavez' mother Juana, and grandmother, Mama Tella, who first taught him to love God and care for the marginalized of society.

Following his family's flight from Arizona in the midst of the Great Depression, César spent his teenage years as a migrant farm worker in California.²⁶ The entire family picked fruits and vegetables in Brawley and Oxnard, and cotton in the San Joaquin Valley. Quite notably, it is during these years that César experienced, first-hand, the deplorable working conditions and exploitation of the farmworker community. As a teenager, he also continued to feel the sting of racism in the forms of segregated schools, housing, restaurants, stores, and movie theaters.²⁷ The adult Chávez recalled the extreme prejudice of the public schools:

"They would make you run laps around the track if they caught you speaking Spanish, or a teacher in a classroom would make you write 'I won't speak Spanish' on the board 300 times, or I remember once a teacher hung a sign on me that said 'I am a clown, I speak Spanish.'"

At the age of 17, César enlisted in the Navy to fight in World War II. After two years of service in the South Pacific, he returned to labor in the fields once more. In 1948, he married Helen Fabela and began a family. In 1952, they moved to San José where César acquired employment in a lumber mill.²⁸

The CSO and Catholic Social Teaching

It was in that same city of Saint Joseph that Chávez was introduced to the formal theology of social justice under the mentorship of white Roman Catholic clergyman Father Donald McDonnell.²⁹ The two met in a parish church in the barrio of Sal Si

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Griswold Del Castillo, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 18-19, 21.

²⁹ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 46-47.

Puedes, and McDonnell was one of four priests comprising the “Spanish Mission Band” which was assigned to ministry among Mexican rural communities such as San José and Stockton.³⁰ In an interesting side note, Chávez met Dolores Huerta, another key figure in the farmworkers’ struggle, through the work of the Mission Band in Stockton.³¹

Seeing his leadership potential, McDonnell took Chávez under his wing and introduced him to labor history, community organizing, and the social teachings of the Catholic church.³² In the words of Chávez:

“I began to spend a lot of time with Father McDonnell. We had long talks about farm workers. I knew a lot about the work, but I didn’t know anything about the economics...And then we did a lot of reading. That’s when I started reading the Encyclicals, St. Francis, and Gandhi and having the case for attaining social justice explained.”³³

Chávez was especially influenced by Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical, *Rerum novarum* (1891) and Pope Pius XI’s encyclical, *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) which discussed the moral duties owed by capital to labor.³⁴ According to papal teaching in *Rerum novarum*, employers possess a moral obligation to pay their workers wages which are sufficient to sustain the livelihood of their families.³⁵ Moreover, this encyclical upholds the right of workers to form trade union associations and to go on strike.³⁶ In powerful assertion of God’s love and concern for the poor and marginalized, Pope Leo XIII asserts in *Rerum novarum*:

“God Himself seems to incline rather to those who suffer misfortune; for Jesus Christ calls the poor “blessed”; He lovingly invites those in labor and grief to come to Him for solace; and He displays the tenderest charity toward the lowly and the oppressed.”³⁷

Following his formative spiritual training with Father McDonnell, Chávez went to work as a community organizer with the Community Service Organization (CSO).³⁸ The CSO was founded in Boyle Heights in 1948 by Edward Roybal (the first Latino elected to the Los Angeles City Council in the 20th century), Fred Ross, and Mexican American veterans. The CSO created a movement against discrimination in housing, employment,

³⁰ Griswold Del Castillo, *A Triumph of Spirit*; Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 48-49.

³¹ Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 49.

³² *Ibid.*, 48.

³³ *Ibid.* A further influence upon the Catholic spirituality of Chávez in his adult years was the Cursillo Movement or, Cursillos de Cristiandad. Frank Bardacke explores the ways in which Chavez’s participation in the Cursillo movement altered his social practice. See Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (Brooklyn: Verso Books, 2012).

³⁴ Dalton, *The Moral Vision*.

³⁵ “*Rerum Novarum*. On Capital and Labor. Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, May 15, 1891,” *Papal Encyclicals Online*, accessed September 29, 2016, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113rerum.htm>;

“*Quadragesimo Anno*. On Reconstruction of the Social Order. Encyclical of Pope Pius XI, May 15, 1931,” *Papal Encyclicals Online*, accessed, February 11, 2017, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius11/P11QUADR.HTM>

³⁶ Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 49.

³⁷ “*Rerum novarum*.”

³⁸ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 9.

and education, and sought to build a political power base for the Mexican American community in California. Through his work with the CSO, Chávez became immersed in the world of politics and community organizing, and also received mentorship by veteran labor organizers Fred Ross and Saul Alinsky. Chávez organized CSO chapters in small towns and barrios throughout California, led citizenship classes and voter registration campaigns, and served as a lobbyist for Mexican American issues in Sacramento. He served ten years as a community organizer among Mexican American urban populations in California and eventually rose to the rank of national director of the CSO.³⁹ Parenthetical deleted and footnote fixed.

Faith, Struggle, and Non-violence in the Farmworkers Movement

In 1962, Chávez quit his post with the CSO to pursue his dream of organizing Mexican farm workers.⁴⁰ With little funding and few supporters, Chávez, together with Dolores Huerta, Fred Ross, and cousin Manuel Chávez, launched the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) in the San Joaquin Valley.⁴¹ The NFWA functioned largely as a mutual aid association, as opposed to a traditional union, sponsoring burial insurance, a credit union, a gas station, and a grocery store.⁴² Chávez recruited new members for the NFWA on a grass roots level by going house to house and speaking to small groups of workers.⁴³ The house meeting strategy eased the fears of farmworkers because it allowed them to plan and organize outside of the purview of growers who might otherwise retaliate against them. In order to join, members were required to pay dues of \$3.50 each month.⁴⁴ This fostered a sense of commitment and ownership, as well as allowed the NFWA to remain independent and non-beholden to outside interests.

In 1965, the fledgling organization was asked by Larry Itliong and other Filipino leaders of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) to participate in a strike against the major grape growers of the Central Valley.⁴⁵ On Mexican Independence Day, September 16, 1965, Chávez and the NFWA voted unanimously to join the grape strike. As a natural outflow of their collaboration in the grape strike, the NFWA and the AWOC merged to form the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee on August 22, 1966.⁴⁶ The strike was to last five years and resulted in the first successful organizing of agricultural workers in U.S. history.⁴⁷ It also catapulted Chávez into international acclaim. In a strange twist of irony, Chávez did not even start the very

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9; Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 7.

⁴⁰ Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8; García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 11; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 47.

⁴² García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 11.

⁴³ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 162; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 46,49-50.

⁴⁴ La Botz, *César Chávez*, 47.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 53. To learn more about the important role of Filipino farmworkers in the UFW, see, the recent documentary, "Delano Manongs: Forgotten Heroes of the United Farmworkers." Accessed, October 3, 2016, <http://www.delanomanongs.com/about>

⁴⁶ "La Huelga Continues," UFW History, *United Farm Workers*, accessed September 29, 2016, <http://www.ufw.org/page.php?menu=research&inc=history/o3.html>. In 1972 the union became part of the AFL-CIO and changed its name to the United Farmworkers Union. Roger Bruns, *César Chávez: A Biography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005), xiv.

⁴⁷ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 1,12.

strike which made him famous. Perhaps God was keeping Chávez humble and showing him that his success did not originate in his own efforts but came from God alone.

The central role played by Christian faith in the life of Chávez and the farmworkers struggle is often overlooked. The radical uniqueness of the United Farmworkers movement was in fact its creative fusion of popular Mexican Catholicism, traditional Catholic social teachings, and Alinsky-based community organizing methods. In the words of noted Chicano historian Mario García, “[I]t was César’s faith more than anything else that provided the strength for his long and arduous struggles. His movement of farm workers was first and foremost a faith-based movement because César understood the power of faith.”⁴⁸ Chávez was open and direct about the critical role of faith in his union organizing efforts:

“Today I don’t think I could base my will to struggle on cold economics or on some political doctrine. I don’t think there would be enough to sustain me. For me, the base must be faith...While most people drawn toward liberalism or radicalism leave the church, I went the other way. I drew closer to the church the more I learned and understood.”⁴⁹ Original text reads this way.

The UFW fused popular Mexican religious symbols and practices such as La Virgen de Guadalupe, “peregrinación” (pilgrimage), and fasting, with Catholic social teaching. This religious praxis is most clearly embodied in the famous march to Sacramento, as well as in Chavez’s 25-day fast of 1968.

In March 1966, the farmworker movement garnered national attention as part of a famous 250-mile, twenty-five-day march from Delano to Sacramento.⁵⁰ Unknown to many, however, Chávez fashioned this famous march from the Central Valley to Sacramento as a penitential pilgrimage, or “peregrinación.” Drawing from popular Mexican religious tradition, he called the march, “Penitence, Pilgrimage, and Revolution.”⁵¹ According to Catholic tradition, penitence is a spiritual practice by which participants atone for their post-baptismal sins. Pilgrimage, moreover, is a spiritual practice through which pilgrims acquire merit before God. Chávez viewed the Sacramento march in terms of this Mexican, Catholic spiritual tradition:

“The penitential procession is also in the blood of the Mexican American, and the Delano march [1966] will therefore be one of penance—public penance for the sins of the strikers, their own personal sins as well their yielding perhaps to feelings of hatred and revenge in the strike itself. They hope by the march to set themselves at peace with the Lord, so that the justice of their cause will be purified of all lesser motivation.”⁵²

⁴⁸ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 31.

⁴⁹ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 27.

⁵⁰ Del Castillo and García, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 51.

⁵¹ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 12,16.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 96-97.

In further religious significance, the penitential pilgrimage was led by a priest in full clerical garb and a banner of La Virgen de Guadalupe.⁵³ Chávez and his followers arrived in Sacramento on Easter, and concluded their pilgrimage with the celebration of mass.⁵⁴

By 1968, some union members turned to violence in response to physical attacks on the part of the growers and a perceived lack of progress.⁵⁵ Demoralized workers threw nails on roads to flatten the tires of growers and the police, blew up irrigation pumps, and even burned down packing sheds full of grapes. In response, on February 15, 1968, Chávez embarked upon a 25-day fast in order to “bring the Movement to a halt, do something that would force them and me to deal with the whole question of violence and ourselves.”⁵⁶ The fast was aimed at reinforcing the UFW commitment to nonviolence, and it marked the second special turning point in the farm workers struggle.

For Chávez, fasting was a spiritual exercise and a form of penance for his own sins as well as those of his supporters.⁵⁷ It was not a “hunger strike” aimed at accomplishing a political goal or forcing his adversaries to submit to his demands.⁵⁸ Through fasting, he sought God’s divine intervention in “la causa” (the cause) and sought to purify himself and the farmworkers movement from sin and the temptation to appropriate violence. In fact, during each day of the strike, Chávez celebrated mass and received communion.⁵⁹ Such celebrations of mass were common throughout the strike and have been called “liturgies of protest.”⁶⁰ Speaking of the Christian underpinnings of his 1968 fast, Chávez stated:

“My fast is informed by my religious faith and by my deep roots in the Church. It is not intended as pressure on anyone but only is an expression of my own deep feelings and my own need to do penance and to be in prayer.”⁶¹

“I pray to God that this fast will be a preparation for a multiple of simple deeds of justice, carried out by men and women whose hearts are focused on the suffering of the poor and who yearn, with us, for a better world.”⁶² This is how the original text reads.

Chávez was misunderstood by many in the movement who viewed his fasting as heavenly “pie in the sky.” He received vehement critique from Tony Orendain, secretary

⁵³ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 24.

⁵⁴ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 95.

⁵⁵ La Botz, *César Chávez*, 92-93.

⁵⁶ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 272, 277.

⁵⁷ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 103.

⁵⁸ For a more detailed analysis of hunger strike v. fasting, see, Stephen R. Lloyd-Moffett’s article “The mysticism and social practice of Cesar Chavez” in *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, eds., Gaston Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁹ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 275.

⁶⁰ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 129.

⁶¹ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 110.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 103-104.

treasurer of the Union, as well as by supporters of Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation and other union progressives.⁶³ UFW attorney Jerry Cohen reflected honestly upon the liberal conundrum of purporting to support religious freedom, while at the same time denouncing religious expression as part of the farmworkers struggle: "It's strange how some people react who profess to believe in freedom of speech and freedom of religion. They tolerate anything except religion. A lot of liberals and radicals were pissed."⁶⁴

According to Dolores Huerta, Chávez viewed prayer and fasting as the keys to the success of the grape strike and the larger farm worker struggle:

"I know it's hard for people who are not Mexican to understand, but this is part of the Mexican culture—the penance, the whole idea of suffering for something, of self-inflicted punishment. It's a tradition of very long standing. In fact, César has often mentioned in speeches that we will not win through violence, we will win through fasting and prayer."⁶⁵

In the end, Chávez was vindicated. His fast engendered a critical turning point in the movement and, in the words of one observer: "The irony of the fast was that it turned out to be the greatest organizing tool in the history of the labor movement..."⁶⁶ According to Chávez, the results were "like a miracle" because "the work schedule began to pick up, dedication increased, and the whole question of using violence ended immediately."⁶⁷ The grape boycott expanded internationally, and the union even received a \$50,000 donation for the purchase of a new building. Bringing crucifixes and altars to La Virgen de Guadalupe, thousands of farmworkers visited Chávez at the Forty Acres headquarters in Delano, and even established a tent city.⁶⁸ In religious solidarity, moreover, Chávez and his many supporters celebrated mass together on a daily basis. The services were led by priests donning vestments made of union flags, and Holy Eucharist was celebrated with union wine and tortillas.

The fast garnered wide attention in the national media. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sent a telegram of support just one month before his assassination, and Chávez was also famously visited by Senator Robert Kennedy who was then a presidential candidate. On March 11, 1968, with Kennedy by his side, Chávez broke his fast with the celebration of mass on the back of a flatbed truck.⁶⁹

Chavez's firm belief in non-violence flowed centrally from his Christian convictions. These convictions were shaped most directly by the "abuelita theology" of his youth, Catholic social teachings, and the historical examples of St. Francis of Assisi, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.⁷⁰ For Chávez, non-violence was not the same as passivity,

⁶³ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 277.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 282.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁶⁸ Roger Bruns, *César Chávez*, xiii; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 94.

⁶⁹ Del Castillo and García, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 86; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 95.

⁷⁰ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 63-64; José-Antonio Orosco, *César Chávez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 24.

but involved the employment of peaceful, strategic methods such as boycotts, strikes, pilgrimages, prayer, and fasting: “People equate nonviolence with inaction—with not doing anything—and its not that at all. It’s exactly the opposite.”⁷¹ Chávez referred to this approach as “militant nonviolence” and Gandhian “moral jujitsu.”⁷² According to Chávez, moreover, the utilization of violence was ineffective because the growers wielded greater physical power through local police forces. Simply put, the growers would always win a violent standoff because they had the police on their side. To draw a biblical analogy, challenging the growers to a battle of physical force would be akin to the fledgling early Christian church waging direct war with Rome and Caesar’s mighty army.⁷³

César’s mother communicated to him the wisdom of non-violence through “dichos,” or Mexican folk sayings. These dichos challenged the logic of machismo and echoed Jesus’ admonitions to love your enemy and “turn the other cheek.” According to Chávez,

“She taught her children to reject that part of a culture which too often tells its young men that you’re not a man if you don’t fight back. She would say, ‘No, its best to turn the other cheek. God gave you senses like eyes and mind and tongue and you can get out of anything. It takes two to fight and one can’t do it alone.’”⁷⁴

Chávez also looked to history in search of successful role models of non-violent activism. Drawing from his Catholic background, he found inspiration in the story of Moses and the Israelite exodus from slavery in Egypt, as well as in the life of Christ and the Roman persecution of the early church. Gandhi was also a central inspiration:

“Some great nonviolent successes have been achieved in history. Moses is about the best example, and the first one. Christ is also a beautiful example, as is the way Christians overcame tyranny. They needed over three hundred years, but they did it. The most recent example is Gandhi. To me that’s the most beautiful one. We can examine it more closely because it happened during our lifetime.”⁷⁵

It is conceivable that Chávez viewed farmworkers as modern day Israelites who were being oppressed by the “Egypt” of his day--growers, police, and local political officials. Drawing another parallel to the experience of Jesus and the early church, perhaps he also viewed the growers as the Roman empire which violently oppressed the first century Jewish community.

Echoing the teachings of Jesus and the “dichos” of his early upbringing, Chávez viewed suffering, sacrifice, and love of enemy as the path to farmworker liberation.

⁷¹ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 65.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 63-64.

⁷³ For a more detailed discussion of non-violence and the spiritual praxis of Chávez, see: Antonio-Orosco’s *Cesar Chavez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence*.

⁷⁴ Orosco, *Common Sense of Nonviolence*, 24.

⁷⁵ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 270,271.

Although Chávez claimed that love of enemies was a key principal of non-violent resistance, he was honest in his assessment that this was difficult to embody:

“Love is the most important ingredient in nonviolent work—love the opponent—but we really haven’t learned yet how to love the growers. I think we’ve learned how not to hate them, and maybe love comes in stages.”⁷⁶

Central to Chavez’s practice of nonviolence were the beliefs that God was on the side of the farmworkers and that Jesus was the source of justice. The idea of God’s special concern for agricultural workers is supported poignantly in the book of James:

“4 Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. 5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.”
James 5: 4-6 (NRSV)

Because God had heard the cries of the farmworkers, moreover, victory in the grape boycott would come ultimately by the hand of God. It would not be the result of human efforts, no matter how strategic. In the words of César:

“The only justice is Christ—God’s justice. We’re the victims of a lot of shenanigans by the courts but ultimately, down the line, real justice comes. It does not come from the courts, but it comes from a set of circumstances and I think God’s hand is in it. God tends to write very straight with crooked lines.”⁷⁷

Although Chávez is often cited as an icon of cultural nationalism in Chicana/o Studies, like King, he subscribed to a notion of community which transcended racial and denominational boundaries.⁷⁸ Using the language of King, his vision was the “beloved community” of people of all nations, languages, and tongues (Revelation 7: 9-10; Galatians 3: 28-29).⁷⁹ In simple, poignant words, Chávez asserted that the goal of his movement was to help all of humanity, regardless of racial affiliation. Chávez opposed the extreme cultural nationalism which characterized some of the Chicano movement, and rejected narrow nationalism as racist and divisive:

“La Raza? Why be racist. Our belief is to help everyone, not just one race. Humanity is our belief.”⁸⁰

⁷⁶ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 116.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 31,32.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁹ For more on King’s notion of the “beloved community,” see, Hak Joon Lee, *We Will Get to the Promised Land: Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Communal-Political Spirituality* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006).

⁸⁰ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 131.

“[W]e oppose some of this La Raza business so much. We know what it does. When La Raza means or implies racism, we don’t support it. But if it means our struggle, our dignity, our cultural roots then we’re for it.”⁸¹

It is also worth noting that Chávez, like King, embraced Christian ecumenism. Although a devout Roman Catholic, Chávez partnered with both the Pentecostal community and the Protestant California Migrant Ministry.⁸² Under the auspices of the National Council of Churches, and the leadership of Presbyterian pastor Chris Hartmire, the CMM worked closely with the UFW and served as a catalyst for the recruitment of Protestant church support.⁸³ Chávez met Chris Hartmire and the CMM through organizers Fred Ross and Saul Alinsky.⁸⁴ The CMM underwrote many actions of the UFW and even developed a persuasive “huelga theology” to counter the protests of conservative critics.⁸⁵ In fact, many Protestants supported La Causa not only financially and theologically, but also by serving in picket lines and boycotts, writing letters to politicians and newspapers, and by documenting the violence of growers against the UFW.⁸⁶ CMM support of the UFW was not without a political cost, however, and the CMM faced strong opposition by Protestant growers, as well as by conservative forces within the Presbyterian denomination.⁸⁷ Drawing upon his interdenominational Christian experiences, Chávez redefined the Christian church in broad, ecumenical terms. He also strongly asserted that the Church should play a vital role in all justice movements:

“[W]hen we refer to the Church we should define the word a little. We mean the whole Church, the Church as an ecumenical body spread around the world, and not just its particular form in a parish in a local community...That Church is one form of the Presence of God on earth, and so naturally it is powerful. It is a powerful moral and spiritual force which cannot be ignored by any movement.”⁸⁸

The Decline of Chávez and the UFW

This essay has thus far focused upon the spiritual praxis of César Chávez and the UFW during the “glory years” of the first grape strike from 1965-1970. By the close of the 1960’s, nearly all grape growers had signed union contracts, and by 1970, the wages of farmworkers had increased by 40%.⁸⁹ For the next five years, the UFW continued in

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 135-136.

⁸³ Ronald A. Wells, “César Chávez’s Protestant Allies: The California Migrant Ministry and the Farmworkers,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* (Spring/Summer 2009), 5-16, accessed September 29, 2016, <https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/essays/essays/cec.pdf>; León, *The Political Spirituality*, 127-128. For further discussion of Protestant-farmworker coalitions, see, Alan Watt, “Farmworkers and the Churches”.

⁸⁴ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 162.

⁸⁵ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 128.

⁸⁶ Wells, “César Chávez’s Protestant Allies.”

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-13.

⁸⁸ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 46.

⁸⁹ La Botz, *César Chávez*, 199.

a series of victories against the growers, culminating in passage of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA) in May of 1975.⁹⁰ This legislation granted many concessions to the UFW, including the right to boycott, secret ballot elections, voting rights for migrant seasonal workers, and control over the timing of union elections.

According to historian Matthew García and others, Chávez and the UFW began a precipitous decline in November 1976 with the failure of Proposition 14.⁹¹ Spearheaded by Chávez, Proposition 14 sought to guarantee funding for the ALRA, as well to require unfettered access by union organizers to farm workers in the fields. Proposition 14 was solidly rejected by California voters by a 2 to 1 margin.⁹² Following this major political loss, it is said that Chávez became increasingly autocratic and dismissive of dissent. He also launched a purge of union staff and volunteers at union headquarters and throughout the country. According to Filipino farmworker leader Philip Vera Cruz: “In the UFW power was held by César alone, and he handed out some power to individuals at his direction.”⁹³

As a further means of establishing control, Chávez even tried to create a religious order centered upon his own personality and the New Age religion of Synanon.⁹⁴ One defining feature of Synanon was “the game.” As part of the game, one person sat in the middle of a circle while others hurled insults and accusations at her/him for one hour. The goal was to “yield truth, communication, a catharsis.”⁹⁵ Chávez became so strongly influenced by the teachings of Synanon that he even came to declare, “I use my aura to run the Union.”⁹⁶ According to religious studies scholar Luis León, Chávez “came to believe his own myth, exhibiting signs of megalomania and paranoia.”⁹⁷ By the late 1970’s, Chávez and the UFW seemed to be more closely associated with Synanon than with Catholicism.⁹⁸

In the wake of Synanon and Chávez’s autocratic purges and practices, many left the UFW.⁹⁹ Though the UFW would continue with some modicum of success for a number of years to come, by the time of Chávez’ death in 1993 the UFW plummeted in membership from a high of 80,000, to 5,000.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

The creative genius of Chávez as an organizer shone most brightly during the first grape strike. Drawing from the “abuelita theology” of his youth, Chávez uniquely fused

⁹⁰ Griswold del Castillo, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 128.

⁹¹ Matthew García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of César Chávez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 287, 289, 224, 239, 272; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 148.

⁹² Griswold del Castillo, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 130.

⁹³ La Botz, *César Chávez*, 151.

⁹⁴ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 146, 152.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹⁸ García, 285.

⁹⁹ La Botz, *César Chávez*, 148-149.

¹⁰⁰ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 16.

popular Mexican Catholicism, Catholic social teachings, and Alinsky-based community organizing methods, leading to the formation of the first successful agricultural union in United States history. The famous Easter pilgrimage to Sacramento and 25-day spiritual fast of 1968 represent sterling examples of this innovative fusion. Chavez's deep commitment to non-violence also flowed from his Christian faith and was inspired by the examples of Moses, Jesus Christ, the early church, Gandhi, and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. His Christian spiritual praxis was most prominent during the first decade of the farmworker movement.

From the perspective of church history, however, the movement began a steady decline after 1975 when Chávez took his focus away from Christ and became increasingly self-focused. Though he continued in his commitment to non-violence, he ignored two central principles of biblical teaching—servant leadership and abiding in Christ.

The Christian call to servant leadership was clearly articulated by Jesus in his rebuke of the disciples on the road to Jerusalem. Following the egoistic request of James and John to sit in positions of honor and authority next to Jesus in the coming Kingdom, Jesus explained to them the nature of “upside down” leadership in the Kingdom of God. Unlike Roman authorities who ruled by force and fiat, Jesus' followers were to lead based upon the model of humility and service:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20: 25-28 (NRSV)

Sadly, Chávez did not take this important aspect of Jesus' teaching to heart, and, as has been discussed, became increasingly authoritarian following the failure of Proposition 14 in 1975. In so doing, he mimicked the leadership model of the very growers which he opposed, and, as a consequence, fomented widescale rebellion among the leadership and rank and file membership of the UFW.

From the perspective of pastoral theology, Chavez's self-centeredness, by its very nature, caused him to take his eyes off of Christ who he claimed was the source of his earlier success. This spiritual decentering was demonstrated most clearly in his failed attempt to establish a religious group based upon his own personality, and by his self-proclamation: “I run the union with my aura.” As a result, he ceased to “abide in Christ,” and the decline of the UFW was the natural consequence. As Jesus teaches—ironically using the metaphor of grapes “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15: 5-6). The example of Chávez offers a clear warning to all Christians who aspire to a life of social justice and activism: Success in Christian social justice endeavors is not the product of human cleverness or carefully conceived strategies and tactics—it is first and foremost the fruit of God experienced in the lives of all those who would cling to Christ.

Unfortunately, the centrality of faith in the praxis of César Chávez, as well as in the lives of other civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., is often overlooked in both academic and activist circles. Almost without exception, academic and popular discussions of Chávez and King claim them as role models while at the same time scrubbing them of their Christian faith. They take the “Rev.” away from King and the “abuelita theology” away from Chávez. They also ignore the important role played by the Christian Church in the major civil rights successes of the 1960’s. Most have forgotten the spiritual roots of Chávez and King, and thereby forgotten the source of their power.

Remembering the spiritual roots and praxis of César Chávez is now more important than ever. In the wake of the recent presidential election and the tsunami of anti-immigrant sentiment and policy which has ensued, thousands of Latinas/os have been stirred to action. They look to Chávez as an icon of Latino social justice, but are unaware of the critical role which Christianity played in his organizing and praxis. Moreover, many wish to integrate their Christian spirituality with their activism but have few role models, either in the world of secular activism or the church. As an inspiring example for the rising generation of Latina/o activists, it is hoped that this essay will provide a roadmap of the basic spiritual principles and methods which empowered César Chávez and the United Farm Workers movement.

[This article was translated into Spanish by Néstor Medina]

La praxis espiritual de César Chávez

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Resumen

Aunque César Chávez es venerado como el más altamente reconocido icono de derechos civiles latinos de los 1960's, la mayoría de estudiosos e activistas pasan por alto el papel profundo que jugó la espiritualidad cristiana en su vida personal y, en general, en el movimiento obrero agrícola. Este ensayo explora la formación y praxis espiritual del famoso líder chicano de derechos civiles César Chávez durante la famosa huelga de las uvas del 1965-1970. Chávez fusionó símbolos religiosos populares mexicanos y prácticas, como La Virgen de Guadalupe, peregrinación, y ayuno, con la doctrina social católica, llevando a la primera exitosa sindicalización de obreros agrícolas en la historia de los Estados Unidos.

• SEE PAGE 24 FOR ENGLISH VERSION •

Introducción

César Chávez era el líder preeminente, la voz y el rostro público del movimiento México Americano de Derechos Civiles de los 1960's.¹ Chávez es para las/os Latinas/os lo que el Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. es para la comunidad Afro-americana. Además, como el recipiente póstumo de la Medalla Presidencial de la Libertad, del Águila Azteca,² y de la estampilla de correo en los Estados Unidos Americanos en su honor, Chávez ha sido reconocido como el Latino más famoso del mundo.³ Junto con Dolores Huerta y los organizadores Filipinos Larry Itliong and Phillip Vera Cruz, Chávez

¹ Deseo expresar mi gratitud al Rev. Marcos Canales de Ministerios La Fuente de Pasadena, la Primera Iglesia de los Nazarenos. Durante un periodo crítico de mi jornada académica de estudios religiosos Latinas/os, el reverendo Canales me introdujo al campo de la teología Latina/o. También estoy muy agradecido al crítico anónimo que me ofreció sugerencias muy importantes las cuales han fortalecido este artículo.

² El Águila Azteca es el reconocimiento más alto que el gobierno mexicano hace a una persona que no es ciudadana Mexicana.

³ Luis D. León, *The Political Spirituality of César Chávez* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 6.

fundó el sindicato de Los Trabajadores Agrícolas Unidos de América (TAUA).⁴ La TAU (En inglés UFW) luchó por el aumento de salarios y por mejores condiciones de trabajo para los trabajadores agrícolas explotados de California, y ganaron atención nacional a través de la famosa huelga de las uvas en Delano, California y los boicoteos internacionales de 1965-1970.

Aunque César Chávez es venerado como el más respectado ícono de los derechos civiles Latinos de los 1960's, la mayoría de estudiosos y activistas pasan por alto el profundo papel que la espiritualidad cristiana jugó en su vida personal y más ampliamente en el movimiento de los trabajadores agrícolas. En las palabras de Chávez, "Hoy yo no pienso que puedo basar mi voluntad en la lucha solamente en economía pura o alguna doctrina política. Yo no pienso que me podrían sostener. Para mí la base debe de ser la fe."⁵ Este ensayo explora la formación y praxis espiritual del famoso líder Chicano de los derechos civiles César Chávez, durante la famosa huelga de las uvas de 1965-1970. Metodológicamente, tomo de la amplia—y dispar—literatura secundaria acerca de la vida de Chávez. Alguna de esta literatura resalta explícitamente la espiritualidad cristiana de Chávez;⁶ la mayoría insinúa el profundo rol que la fe jugó en su educación y praxis, y ofrecen análisis explícitos acerca del papel de la religión en el movimiento de los trabajadores agrícolas.⁷ Además de sintetizar la literatura secundaria existente, este ensayo también se basa en un examen sistemático de las mismas palabras de Chávez acerca de su fe, como lo expresó en su autobiografía.⁸

Este artículo sigue un análisis cronológico de la vida de Chávez. Comienza discutiendo su temprana educación familiar dentro del catolicismo popular mexicano y su posterior mentoría en las enseñanzas sociales católicas por el clérigo Anglo Padre Donald McDonnell. Basado en los fundamentos cristianos y las habilidades prácticas que aprendió como organizador de la Comunidad para la Organización de Servicios Comunitarios usando el modelo Alisky, Chávez dirigió los Trabajadores Agrícolas Unidos a victorias históricas sobre intereses agrícolas en el valle central de California. Chávez fusionó símbolos y prácticas religiosas populares mexicanas tales como la Virgen de Guadalupe, "peregrinación," y ayuno, con las enseñanzas sociales católicas, que lo llevó a la primera exitosa sindicalización de trabajadores agrícolas en la historia de los Estados Unidos de América. Después de sus muchos éxitos, como muchos de los íconos de los derechos civiles antes y después, Chávez tuvo fracasos morales. Este ensayo

⁴ Aunque se le conoce popularmente como los Trabajadores Agrícolas Unidos (TAU), esta organización de Chávez pasó por varios cambios hasta que finalmente se quedara con este nombre. La TAU era conocida originalmente como la Asociación de Trabajadores Agrícolas (abril 1962) y también como la Asociación Nacional de Trabajadores Agrícolas (septiembre 1962). Griswold Del Castillo y Richard A. García, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 35, 37.

⁵ Jacques E. Levy, *César Chávez: Autobiography of La Causa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 27.

⁶ Por ejemplo, ver: Mario T. García, *The Gospel of César Chávez: My Faith in Action* (Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2007); Frederick John Dalton, *The Moral Vision of César Chávez* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003); y, Luis D. León, *The Political Spirituality of César Chávez*.

⁷ Ver Del Castillo & García, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit*; Dan La Botz, *César Chávez and la Causa* (New York: Pearson, 2006); y Levy, *César Chávez*.

⁸ Levy, *César Chávez*.

también examina el declive y la caída de Chávez, tras el crescendo del movimiento en 1975.

“Teología de las Abuelitas” y sus primeros años

César Chávez nació en 1927 a una familia inmigrante moderadamente exitosa, en el valle de Yuma, Arizona.⁹ Los primeros miembros de la familia Chávez inmigraron a los Estados Unidos de América en los 1800s desde Chihuahua, México. En Arizona, ellos establecieron un negocio de carga y dirigían una granja familiar en los 160 acres de tierra adquiridos por medio del Homestead Act (Ley de Asentamientos Rurales) (1862). A la edad de 38 años, el padre de César, Librado dejó la granja familiar para casarse con Juana estrada y se convirtió en un pequeño empresario. Librado era propietario de una tienda de comestibles, un taller de mecánica, y un salón de billares. Sin embargo, tras el inicio de la Gran Depresión, la familia Chávez perdió la tienda de comestibles y se mudaron de regreso a la granja de su abuela en Yuma.¹⁰ Eventualmente la familia también perdió la granja, y a la edad de 12 años, Chávez, junto con sus padres y hermanos, fue lanzado en una vida de trabajo migrante en los campos de California.

Los años que estuvo en la granja con su abuela, “Mama Tella,” fueron muy formidables para el joven César. Fue durante estos años que él primero sintió el aguijón del racismo en las escuelas públicas.¹¹ Sus compañeros de clase lo llamaban el “mexicano sucio” y los/as maestros/as le pegaban con la regla por hablar español. Chávez recordaba que “cuando él hablaba español, los/as maestros/as se abalanzaban sobre nosotros. Me recuerdo de la regla silbando a través del aire cuando su borde caía sobre mis nudillos.”¹² La preferencia racial por estudiantes blancos era obvia, además, y cuando surgía peleas entre estudiantes mexicanos y anglos, los/as maestros/as y administradores/as tomaban el lado de estos últimos.

Desafortunadamente, tales experiencias racistas eran típicas de la vida México-americana en el Suroeste, durante la primera mitad del siglo veinte. Así como los Afro-americanos, Latinas/os eran segregados dentro de vecindarios pobres por medio de acuerdos de vivencia con restricciones racializadas.¹³ Las comunidades Latinas segregadas eran conocidas como “colonias,” o “barrios,” y se multiplicaron en toda California, Arizona, Colorado, Texas, y Nuevo México como parte de la Gran Migración Mexicana de 1910-1930. Durante estos años, cerca de 750,000 inmigrantes mexicanos llegaron a los Estados Unidos de América buscando trabajo y descanso de la violencia y los disturbios de la Revolución Mexicana.¹⁴ Ellos fueron enlistados por el Gobierno de los E.E.U.U. y por grandes compañías para suplir la escasez de mano de obra causada por la segunda guerra mundial y la prohibición racista de inmigrantes de Asia y del sur y el este de Europa. El Chinese Exclusion Act (Ley de Exclusión China) de 1882 y la Asiatic Barred Zone Act (Ley de Prohibición de la Zona Asiática) de 1917 cerró la entrada

⁹ Del Castillo and García, *César Chávez*, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³ Robert Chao Romero, “Doss v. Bernal: Ending Apartheid in Orange County,” *UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Research Report* 14 (February 2012).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 2.

para trabajadores migrantes de la China, Japón, Las Filipinas, y toda Asia. Y la Emergency Quota Act (Ley de Cuota de Emergencia) de 1921 y la Immigration Act (Ley de Migración) de 1924 limitó la entrada de inmigrantes del Sur y Este de Europa a un chorrito.¹⁵ Como consecuencia, los Estados Unidos de América confrontaron gran escasez de trabajadores y se volcaron a México para suplir sus necesidades. Los mexicanos llenaron roles vitales con salarios bajos en agricultura, ferrocarril, construcción de minas, y trabajos de fábrica. Aunque eran deseados como mano de obra barata, ellos no eran bienvenidos como vecinos por los sectores blancos. Esto produjo la legalización de la segregación Latina y la creación de cientos de comunidades Latinas segregadas en todos los Estados Unidos de América. ¡La segregación de alojamiento, por su parte, produjo parques segregados, piscinas, escuelas, restaurantes, salas de cine, incluso rutas de senderismo y mortuorios segregados!¹⁶ Para Latinos como César Chávez y su familia, la segregación era exhaustiva y les seguía desde la cuna a la tumba.

Los primeros años de Chávez en la granja familiar fueron también muy importantes para su formación cristiana. Su espiritualidad fue formada por su familia y fundamentada en lo que las/os teólogas/as Latinas/os han llamado “teología de las abuelitas.”¹⁷ Porque Latinas/os a menudo carecen de instrucción religiosa, las mejores teólogas en las comunidades México-americanas son las “abuelitas.” “Nuestras *abuelitas, viejitas, and madreccitas* han sido las sacerdotas y teólogas funcionales de nuestra *iglesia del pueblo*.”¹⁸ De acuerdo con este patrón común, Chávez adquirió el catolicismo popular mexicano de su “abuelita,” “Mama Tella.” Como huérfana, Mama Tella creció en un convento, y fue allí que ella aprendió latín y español, como también adquirió un profundo entendimiento de la doctrina cristiana.¹⁹ Como la teóloga de la familia, ella fue quien enseñó a César acerca de la oración, el catecismo católico, y la devoción a la Virgen María. Como Chávez se recordaría:

“Mama Tella nos dio un entrenamiento religioso formal...Ella siempre estaba rezando, solo rezando. Cada noche ella se sentaba en la cama y nosotros nos reuníamos alrededor de ella...Después de un Rosario ello nos hablaba de un santo en particular y nos hacía preguntas acerca del Catecismo.”²⁰

De su madre Juana, César aprendió el valor bíblico de amar a los pobres. Como una católica fiel, Juana encontraba inspiración en la vida y ministerio de Santa Eduvigis, quien en el siglo 13 era conocida por su generosidad a los pobres, los encarcelados, y los marginados.²¹ Fue siguiendo el ejemplo de Santa Eduvigis que Juana le decía a César, “tú siempre debes ayudar a los necesitados y Dios te va a

¹⁵ Harvard University Open Collections Program, “Key Dates and Landmarks in United States Immigration History,” accessed October 3, 2016, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigration/timeline.html>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ García, *The Gospel of César Chávez*, 25; Del Castillo and García, *César Chávez*, 5-6. Moises Sandoval, *The Mexican American in the Church: Reflection on Identity and Mission* (New York: Sadlier Books, 1983), 125.

¹⁸ Dalton, *The Moral Vision of César Chávez*, 33-34.

¹⁹ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 26.

²⁰ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 26-27.

²¹ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 25-26.

ayudar.”²² Como la hacía la iglesia primitiva, Juana recorría las calles buscando personas necesitadas y les invitaba a su casa para comer y obtener ayuda. Como lo recuenta después el adulto César:

“El día del cumpleaños del santo, en octubre 16, mi mama buscaría alguna persona necesitada a quien ayudar, y hasta recientemente, ella les invitaba a la casa, usualmente personas sin hogar. Ella saldría con el propósito de encontrar a algún necesitado, darle algo, y nunca recibir nada a cambio...”²³

El poder de la “teología de las abuelitas” es ejemplificado vivamente por la historia de primera comunión de César Chávez. Porque la familia vivía muchas millas afuera de Yuma donde daban las clases de catecismo, la tarea de preparar a César y a su hermana Rita para la primera comunión le tocó a su abuela Mama Tella.²⁴ Un día después de terminar la instrucción religiosa de Mama Tella, la familia viajó a la iglesia católica en Yuma y pidieron tomar la primera comunión. Inicialmente el sacerdote Anglo se rehusó porque ellos no habían recibido instrucción religiosa formal: “Ellos no han recibido instrucción religiosa formal. No pueden tomar la Comunión...primero tienen que asistir a las clases aquí en Yuma.” Juana respondió diciendo “ellos no pueden porque vivimos en el valle a veinte millas. No podemos viajar tan lejos cada semana.” Después que el sacerdote se rehusó obstinadamente una segunda vez, ella insistió firmemente, “bueno, entonces pregúnteles algo.” El sacerdote procedió a examinar al hijo y la hija Chávez con preguntas del catecismo católico, y por su entrenamiento con la “teología de la abuelita,” César y Rita aprobaron fácilmente y recibieron su primera comunión el día siguiente.²⁵

Parecido al recuento bíblico de Éxodos, podemos decir que el movimiento de los trabajadores agrícolas tiene sus orígenes en las mujeres. El éxodo israelita de su esclavitud en Egipto se originó en la fiel rebelión civil de parte de la madre de Moisés y de su hermana Miriam; igualmente, el movimiento de los trabajadores agrícolas comenzó con la fidelidad de Juana, la madre de Chávez, y su abuela, Mama Tella, quien fue la primera de enseñarle el amor de Dios y el cuidado por los marginados de la sociedad.

Después que su familia se mudó de Arizona a mediados de la Gran Depresión, el joven Chávez gastó su adolescencia como un granjero migrante en California.²⁶ La familia entera recogía frutas y vegetales en Brawley y Oxnard, y algodón en el Valle de San Joaquín. Notablemente, es durante estos años que César experimentó en su propia vida las condiciones deplorables de trabajo y explotación en las que vivía la comunidad de trabajadores agrícolas. Como adolescente el continuó sintiendo el aguijón del racismo en la forma de escuelas, alojamiento, restaurantes, tiendas, y salas de cine segregadas.²⁷ El adulto Chávez recordaba el prejuicio extremo en las escuelas públicas:

²² García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 26.

²³ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 26.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Griswold Del Castillo, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

“Ellos te hacían correr vueltas alrededor de la pista si te encontraban hablando español, o los/as maestros/as en las clases te hacían escribir en el pizarrón ‘no hablaré español,’ o me acuerdo como una vez un maestro colgó una señal en mi cuello que decía ‘soy un payaso, yo hablo español.’”

A la edad de 17 años, César se enlistó en la armada para pelear en la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Después de dos años de servicio en el Sur del Pacífico, él regreso a trabajar en los campos una vez más. En 1948, él se casó con Helen Fabela y juntos comenzaron una familia. En 1952 ellos se mudaron para San José donde César consiguió empleo en una serrería.²⁸

La OSC y la enseñanza social católica

Fue en esa misma ciudad de San José donde Chávez fue introducido formalmente a la teología de justicia social bajo la mentoría del sacerdote anglo católico romano Padre Donald McDonnell.²⁹ Los dos se encontraron en una parroquia en el barrio de Sal Si Puedes, y McDonnell era uno de los cuatro sacerdotes que integraban la “Spanish Mission Band” (Banda de Misiones Españolas), a la cual le había sido asignado el ministerio a los mexicanos en las zonas rurales de San José y Stockton.³⁰ En otra nota de interés, Chávez conoció a Dolores Huerta, otra figura clave en la lucha de los trabajadores agrícolas, por medio de la Banda de Misiones en Stockton.³¹

Observando su potencial de liderazgo, McDonnell tomó a Chávez bajo su tutela y lo introdujo a la historia laboral, organización comunitaria, y a las enseñanzas sociales de la iglesia católica.³² En las palabras de Chávez:

“Yo comencé a gastar mucho tiempo con el Padre McDonnell. Teníamos largas conversaciones acerca de los trabajadores agrícolas. Yo sabía mucho del trabajo, pero no sabía nada acerca de la economía...Y luego el leía mucho. Entonces fue que yo comencé a leer las Encíclicas, San Francis, y Gandhi, que me explicaban el caso para obtener justicia social”³³

Chávez fue influenciado especialmente por el encíclico del Papa Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum* (1891) y el encíclico del Papa Pío XI, *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) los cuales discutían las responsabilidades morales que le debía el capital al trabajo.³⁴ De acuerdo a la enseñanza papal en *Rerum novarum*, los empleadores poseen la obligación moral de pagar a sus trabajadores salarios que son suficientes para sostener la vida de sus familias.³⁵ Además, este encíclico sostiene el derecho de los trabajadores de formar

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 18-19, 21.

²⁹ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 46-47.

³⁰ Griswold Del Castillo, *A Triumph of Spirit*; Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 48-49.

³¹ Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 49.

³² *Ibid.*, 48.

³³ *Ibid.* Otra influencia sobre la espiritualidad católica de Chávez en su adultez fue el movimiento de Cursillos del Cristianismo. Frank Bardacke explora las maneras de las que la participación de Chávez en el movimiento de Cursillos alteró su práctica social. See Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (Brooklyn: Verso Books, 2012).

³⁴ Dalton, *The Moral Vision*.

³⁵ “*Rerum Novarum. On Capital and Labor. Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, May 15, 1891,*” *Papal Encyclicals Online*, accessed September 29, 2016, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/l13rerum.htm>;

sindicatos y asociaciones de trabajo y de hacer huelga.³⁶ En una poderosa declaración del amor de Dios y de preocupación por los pobres y marginados, el Papa Leo XIII afirma en *Rerum novarum*:

“Dios mismo parece inclinarse a aquellas personas que sufren infortunio; porque Jesucristo llama a los pobres “benditos”; el invita amorosamente a los que están cargados y trabajados a que vengan a Él para encontrar consuelo; y Él muestra la más tierna caridad hacia los humildes y

Después de su entrenamiento espiritual formativo con el Padre McDonnell, Chávez fue a trabajar como organizador comunitario con la Organización para Servicio a la Comunidad (OSC).³⁷ La OSC fue fundada in Boyle Heights en 1948 por Edward Roybal (el primer Latino elegido al Consejo de la Ciudad de Los Ángeles en el siglo 20), Fred Ross, y veteranos México-americanos. La OSC creó un movimiento en contra de la discriminación en alojamiento, empleo, y educación, y buscaba construir una base de poder político para la comunidad México-americana en California. Por su trabajo en la OSC, Chávez fue sumergido en el mundo de la política y de organización comunitaria, como también recibió mentoría por los veteranos organizadores laborales Fred Ross y Saul Alinsky. Chávez organizó capítulos de la OSC en pueblos pequeños y barrios en toda California, dirigió clases de ciudadanía y campañas de registro para votantes, y sirvió como cabildero para asuntos México-americanos en Sacramento. Él sirvió diez años como organizador de la comunidad en la población México-americana en California, y eventualmente fue elevado al rango de director nacional de la OSC.³⁸

Fe, Lucha, y la no violencia en el movimiento de los trabajadores agrícolas

En 1962, Chávez abandonó su cargo con la OSC para perseguir su sueño de organizar a los trabajadores agrícolas mexicanos.³⁹ Con pocos fondos y pocos que lo apoyaban, Chávez, junto con Dolores Huerta, Fred Ross, y su primo Manuel Chávez, lanzó la Asociación Nacional de Trabajadores Agrícolas (ANTA) en el Valle de San Joaquín.⁴⁰ La ANTA funcionó mayormente como una asociación de ayuda mutua; en contraste a los sindicatos tradicionales, patrocinaba seguro de entierro, una unión de crédito, una gasolinera, y una tienda de comestibles.⁴¹ Chávez reclutó nuevos miembros para la ANTA a niveles de base, yendo de casa en casa y hablando con pequeños grupos de trabajadores.⁴² La estrategia de reuniones en las casas alivió los temores de los trabajadores agrícolas porque les permitió planear y organizarse afuera del ámbito de los cultivadores, quienes de otro modo podrían tomar represalias en contra de ellos. Para unirse, miembros era requeridos de pagar una cuota mensual de \$3.50.⁴³ Esto

“Quadragesimo Anno. On Reconstruction of the Social Order. Encyclical of Pope Pius XI, May 15, 1931,” *Papal Encyclicals Online*, accessed, February 11, 2017, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius11/P11QUADR.HTM>

³⁶ Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 49.

³⁷ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9; Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 7.

³⁹ Dalton, *The Moral Vision*, 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 8; García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 11; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 47.

⁴¹ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 11.

⁴² Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 162; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 46,49-50.

⁴³ La Botz, *César Chávez*, 47.

fomentó un sentido de compromiso y propiedad, como también permitió que la ANTA permaneciera independiente sin tener que responder a intereses externos.

En 1965, la organización naciente fue invitada por Larry Itliong y otros líderes Filipino del Comité Organizador de Trabajadores Agrícolas (COTA) a participar en una huelga en contra de los productores de uvas del Valle Central.⁴⁴ El día de la celebración de la independencia mexicana, septiembre 16 de 1965, Chávez y la ANTA votaron unánimemente a unirse a la huelga de las uvas. Como resultado natural de la colaboración en la huelga de las uvas, la ANTA y la COTA se fusionaron para formar el Comité Organizador de Trabajadores Agrícolas Unidos (COTAU) el 22 de agosto de 1966.⁴⁵ La huelga duró cinco años y resultó ser la primera organización de trabajadores agrícolas exitosa en la historia de los Estados Unidos de América.⁴⁶ También catapultó a Chávez al reconocimiento internacional. En un extraño giro de ironía, Chávez ni siquiera inició la misma huelga que lo haría famoso. Quizás Dios mantenía humilde a Chávez mostrándole que su éxito no se originaba en sus esfuerzos, sino que venía solamente de Dios.

A menudo se pasa por alto el rol central que jugó la fe cristiana en la vida de Chávez y en la lucha de los trabajadores agrícolas. El carácter radical único que tenía el movimiento de trabajadores unidos era de hecho una fusión creativa del catolicismo popular mexicano, las enseñanzas sociales del catolicismo tradicional, y los métodos de organización comunitaria basados en Alinsky. En las palabras del reconocido historiador Chicano, Mario García, “Fue la fe de César más que cualquier cosa la que le proveyó la fuerza en su larga y ardua lucha. Su movimiento de trabajadores agrícolas era primero que todo un movimiento basado en la fe, porque César entendía el poder de la fe.”⁴⁷ Chávez fue claro y directo acerca del papel de la fe en sus esfuerzos de organización sindical:

“Hoy yo no pienso que puedo basar mi voluntad en la lucha solamente en economía pura o alguna doctrina política. Yo no pienso que me podrían sostener. Para mí la base debe de ser la fe... Mientras la mayoría de las personas que se sentían atraídas al liberalismo o al radicalismo salían de la iglesia, yo fui en la dirección opuesta. Entre yo más aprendía y entendía, más me acercaba a la iglesia.”⁴⁸

La TAU fusionó símbolos religiosos populares mexicanos con prácticas tales como la devoción a la Virgen de Guadalupe, “peregrinación” y ayuno, con las enseñanzas sociales

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 53. Para aprender más acerca del importante rol que jugaron los trabajadores agrícolas Filipinos en la TAU, ver el nuevo documental, “Delano Manongs: Forgotten Heroes of the United Farmworkers.” Accessed, October 3, 2016, <http://www.delanomanongs.com/about>

⁴⁵ “La Huelga Continues,” UFW History, *United Farm Workers*, accessed September 29, 2016, <http://www.ufw.org/page.php?menu=research&inc=history/03.html>. En 1972 el sindicato se hizo parte de la Federación Laboral Americana-Congreso de Organizaciones Industriales y cambió su nombre al Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas. Roger Bruns, *César Chávez: A Biography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005), xiv.

⁴⁶ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 1,12.

⁴⁷ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 31.

⁴⁸ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 27.

católicas. Esta praxis religiosa fue encarnada más claramente en la famosa marcha a Sacramento, como también en el ayuno de 25 días de Chávez en 1968.

En 1966, el movimiento de los trabajadores agrícolas obtuvo atención nacional como parte de la famosa marcha de 250 millas, veinticinco días desde Delano a Sacramento.⁴⁹ Lo que muchos conocen, sin embargo, es que Chávez diseñó esta marcha famosa como un peregrinaje penitencial, o una “peregrinación.” Tomando de las tradiciones religiosas populares mexicanas, el llamó a la marcha: “penitencia, peregrinaje, y revolución.”⁵⁰ De acuerdo con la tradición católica, penitencia es una práctica en la que los/as participantes expían por sus pecados cometidos después del bautismo. Además, peregrinaje es una práctica espiritual por medio de la cual los/as peregrinos/as adquieren mérito delante de Dios. Chávez vió la marcha a Sacramento en términos de esta tradición espiritual mexicana y católica:

“La procesión penitencial está también en la sangre México-americana, y la marcha de Delano [1966] será también una de penitencia por los pecados de los huelguistas, sus pecados personales como también cuando ceden a sentimientos de odio y venganza en la huelga misma. Ellos esperan que con la marcha lograrán paz con el Señor, de manera que lo justo de su causa será purificada de otras motivaciones menores.”⁵¹

En mayor significado religioso, el peregrinaje penitencial era guiado por un sacerdote en su atuendo clerical completo, y una bandera de La Virgen de Guadalupe.⁵² Chávez y sus seguidores llegaron a Sacramento durante la Semana Santa, y concluyeron su peregrinaje con la celebración de la misa.⁵³

Ya para 1968, algunos miembros del sindicato se tornaron violentos como reacción de los ataques físicos de parte de los productores, y una percibida falta de progreso.⁵⁴ Los trabajadores desmoralizados arrojaron clavos en las carreteras para dañar los neumáticos de los carros de los cultivadores y de la policía, volaron las bombas de irrigación, e incluso quemaron los cobertizos de empaque llenos de uvas. A manera de reacción, Chávez se embarcó en un ayuno de 25 días en febrero 15 de 1968, con el fin de “detener el movimiento, hacer algo que nos obligaría a lidiar con el asunto de la violencia y de nosotros mismos.”⁵⁵ El ayuno estaba dirigido a reforzar el compromiso de la TAU a la no violencia, y marcó el segundo momento especial en la lucha de los trabajadores agrícolas.

Para Chávez, el ayuno era un ejercicio espiritual y una forma de penitencia por sus propios pecados y la de sus seguidores.⁵⁶ No era una “huelga de hambre” dirigida a

⁴⁹ Del Castillo and García, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 51.

⁵⁰ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 12,16.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

⁵² León, *The Political Spirituality*, 24.

⁵³ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 95.

⁵⁴ La Botz, *César Chávez*, 92-93.

⁵⁵ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 272, 277.

⁵⁶ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 103.

alcanzar una meta política o para forzar a sus adversarios a someterse a sus demandas.⁵⁷ Por medio del ayudo, él buscaba la intervención divina de Dios en “la causa” como buscaba purificarse a sí mismo y el movimiento de trabajadores agrícolas de sus pecados y de la tentación de apropiarse de la violencia. De hecho, durante cada día del ayuno, Chávez celebraba misa y recibía comunión.⁵⁸ Las celebraciones de misa eran comunes durante toda la huelga y se le ha denominado “liturgias de protesta.”⁵⁹ Refiriéndose a los fundamentos cristianos de su ayuno de 1968, Chávez afirmó:

“Mi ayuno es informado por mi fe religiosa y por mis profundas raíces en la iglesia. No lo intento para presionar a nadie sino solamente como una expresión de mi profundo sentimiento y de mi propia necesidad de hacer penitencia y de estar en oración.”⁶⁰

“Ruego a Dios que este ayuno sea una preparación para múltiples y simples acciones de justicia, llevadas a cabo por hombres y mujeres, cuyos corazones se enfoquen en el sufrimiento de los pobres y quienes añoran con nosotros por un mundo mejor.”⁶¹

Chávez fue malentendido por muchos/as en el movimiento que veían su ayuno como un “pastel celestial en el cielo.” Él fue criticado fuertemente por Tony Orendain, el secretario y tesorero del sindicato, como también otros/as que le apoyaban por ejemplo la Fundación de Áreas Industriales de Saúl Alinsky y otros sindicalistas progresivos.⁶² El abogado de la TAU, Jerry Cohen, reflexiona honestamente acerca del dilema confrontado por el sindicato mientras pretendía promover libertad religiosa, pero a su vez, denunciaba las expresiones religiosas que tomaban lugar en la lucha de los trabajadores agrícolas: “Es extraño como algunas personas reaccionan cuando profesar creer en la libertad de expresión y de religión. Ellos toleran cualquier cosa, excepto la religión. Muchos liberales y radicales estaban enojados.”⁶³

De acuerdo a Dolores Huerta, Chávez vio la oración y el ayuno como las claves para el éxito de la huelga de las unas y de la mayor lucha de los trabajadores agrícolas:

“Yo sé que no es fácil de entender para las personas que no son mexicanas, pero esto es parte de la cultura mexicana—la penitencia, la idea entera de sufrir por algo, de auto-castigarse. Es una tradición muy larga. De hecho, César decía a menudo en sus discursos que nosotros no ganaremos usando la violencia; nosotros ganaremos por medio de ayuno y oración.”⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Para un análisis más detallado de la huelga de hambre versus ayuno, ver el artículo de Stephen R. Lloyd-Moffett, “The mysticism and social practice of Cesar Chavez” in *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, eds., Gaston Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁸ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 275.

⁵⁹ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 129.

⁶⁰ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 110.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

⁶² Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 277.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 282.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

Al final Chávez fue vindicado. Su ayuno engendró un cambio crítico en el movimiento y, en las palabras de un observador: “La ironía del ayuno es que terminó siendo una de las mejores herramientas organizativas en la historia del movimiento laboral...”⁶⁵ De acuerdo a Chávez, los resultados fueron “como un milagro” porque “el horario de trabajo comenzó a aumentar, la dedicación creció, y la cuestión entera de usar violencia cesó inmediatamente.”⁶⁶ El boicoteo de las uvas se expandió internacionalmente, y el sindicato recibió una donación de \$50,000 para comprar un nuevo edificio. Muchos visitaron a Chávez en la sede de cuarenta acres en Delano, trayendo crucifijos y altares a la Virgen de Guadalupe, e incluso estableciendo una ciudad de tiendas de campaña.⁶⁷ Además, Chávez y sus muchos partidarios celebraban misa juntos todos los días, como expresión de solidaridad religiosa. Los servicios eran dirigidos por sacerdotes llevando vestimentas hechas de las banderas del sindicato, y la comunión era celebrada con el vino y las tortillas del sindicato.

El ayuno obtuvo amplia cobertura por los medios nacionales. Solamente un mes antes de su asesinato, El Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. envió un telegrama expresando su apoyo; Chávez fue famosamente visitado por el Senador Robert Kennedy, quien era el candidato presidencial. En marzo 11, 1968, con Kennedy a su lado, Chávez rompió su ayuno con la celebración de misa en la parte trasera de un camión de plataforma.⁶⁸

La firme creencia de Chávez en la no violencia fluía de sus convicciones cristianas. Esas convicciones fueron formadas más directamente por la “teología de las abuelitas” de su juventud, de las enseñanzas sociales católicas, y de los ejemplos históricos de San Francisco de Asís, Gandhi, y Martin Luther King, Jr.⁶⁹ Para Chávez, la no violencia no era lo mismo que ser pasivo, sino que involucraba el uso de métodos y estrategias pacíficas tales como boicoteos, huelgas, peregrinajes, oración y ayuno: “la gente igualan la no violencia con inacción—con no hacer nada—y no es eso en lo absoluto. Es exactamente lo opuesto.”⁷⁰ Chávez hablaba de su método como “la no-violencia militante” y el “Jiu-jitsu moral” Gandhiano.⁷¹ De acuerdo a Chávez, además, el uso de la violencia no era efectivo porque los cultivadores manejaban mayor poder por medio de las fuerzas de policía local. Dicho simplemente, los cultivadores siempre ganarían una confrontación violenta porque ellos tenían la policía de su lado. Trazando una analogía bíblica, retar a los cultivadores a una batalla de fuerza física sería como si el cristianismo primitivo naciente hiciera guerra contra Roma y el poderoso ejército del César.⁷²

La madre de César le comunicaba la sabiduría de la no violencia por medio de “dichos,” o refranes populares mexicanos. Estos dichos desafiaban la lógica del

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁶⁷ Roger Bruns, *César Chávez*, xiii; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 94.

⁶⁸ Del Castillo and García, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 86; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 95.

⁶⁹ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 63-64; José-Antonio Orosco, *César Chávez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 24.

⁷⁰ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 65.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

⁷² Para discusiones más detalladas acerca de la no violencia y de la praxis espiritual de Chávez, ver: Antonio-Orosco's *Cesar Chavez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence*.

machismo y hacían eco de las enseñanzas de Jesús, de amar al enemigo y de “poner la otra mejilla.” De acuerdo a Chávez,

“Ella les enseñó a sus hijos a rechazar esa parte de la cultura que muy a menudo les dice a sus jóvenes que uno no es hombre si no pelea. Ella diría, ‘no es mejor poner la otra mejilla. Dios les dio los sentidos como los ojos, la mente y la lengua, y uno puede salirse de cualquier cosa. Se necesitan dos para luchar, y una persona sola no lo puede hacer sola.’”⁷³

Chávez también buscaba en la historia por modelos exitosos de activismo no violento. Tomando de su trasfondo católico, el encontró inspiración en la historia de Moisés y del éxodo de Israel de Egipto, como también en la vida de Cristo y de la persecución de la iglesia primitiva por Roma. Gandhi fue una inspiración central:

“Algunos de los éxitos de la no violencia han sido alcanzados en la historia. Moisés es quizás el primer y mejor ejemplo. Cristo es también un ejemplo hermoso, como lo es la manera de la que los cristianos superaron la tiranía. Ellos necesitaron más de trescientos años, pero lo lograron. El ejemplo más reciente es Gandhi. Para mí, ese es el más bello de todos. Podemos examinarlo más de cerca porque ocurrió durante nuestra vida.”⁷⁴

Es concebible que Chávez miraba a los trabajadores agrícolas como israelitas modernos que estaban siendo oprimidos por el “Egipto” de sus días, los cultivadores, la policía, y oficiales políticos locales. Trazando otro paralelo con la experiencia de Jesús y con la iglesia primitiva, tal vez él también miraba a los cultivadores como el imperio romano que oprimían violentamente las comunidades judías del primer siglo.

Dando eco a las enseñanzas de Jesús y a los “dichos” de su temprana educación, Chávez veía el sufrimiento, el sacrificio y el amor a los enemigos como el camino hacia la liberación de los trabajadores agrícolas. Aunque Chávez clamaba que amar a los enemigos era una clave principal de resistencia no violenta, él era honesto en su evaluación insistiendo que no era fácil de encarnar.:

“El amor es el ingrediente más importante en el trabajo no violento—amar al oponente—pero realmente aún no hemos aprendido a como amar a los cultivadores. Creo que hemos aprendido a como no odiarlos, y quizás el amor llega en etapas.”⁷⁵

La creencia de que Dios estaba del lado de los trabajadores agrícolas y de que Jesús era la fuente de justicia era esencial a la práctica de no violencia de Chávez era. La idea de la preocupación especial de Dios por los trabajadores agrícolas es apoyada conmovedoramente en el libro de Santiago:

“4 Escuchen! El salario de los obreros que trabajaron sus campos, los cuales ustedes guardaron por fraude, claman, y los gritos de los que cosechan han alcanzado los oídos del Señor de los ejércitos. 5. Ustedes han

⁷³ Orosco, *Common Sense of Nonviolence*, 24.

⁷⁴ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 270,271.

⁷⁵ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 116.

vivido en la tierra en lujo y en placer; han engordado sus corazones para el día de la matanza. 6 Ustedes han condenado y matado el justo, que no los da resistencia.” James 5: 4-6 (NRSV)

Además, porque Dios había oído los gritos de los trabajadores agrícolas, la victoria del boicoteo de las uvas vendría últimamente de la mano de Dios. No sería el resultado de esfuerzos humanos, no importa cuán estratégico sea. En las palabras de César:

“La única justicia es Cristo—la justicia de Dios. Nosotros somos las víctimas de muchos engaños de las cortes, pero la verdadera justicia vendrá finalmente, después. No viene de las cortes, sino que viene de una serie de circunstancias, y yo creo que la mano de Dios está en ello. Dios tiende a escribir muy recto en líneas torcidas.”⁷⁶

Aunque a menudo Chávez es citado en los estudios Chicanas/os como un ícono del nacionalismo cultural, como King, él se suscribía a una noción de comunidad que trascendía fronteras raciales y denominacionales.⁷⁷ Usando el lenguaje de King, su visión era la “comunidad amada” de personas de todas las naciones y lenguas (Apocalipsis 7: 9-10; Gálatas 3: 28-29).⁷⁸ En palabras sencillas y conmovedoras, Chávez afirmó que la meta de su movimiento era ayudar a toda la humanidad, sin consideración de afiliaciones raciales. Chávez se oponía al nacionalismo cultural extremo que caracterizaba parte del movimiento chicano, y rechazaba el nacionalismo estrecho como racista y divisivo:

“La Raza? Porqué ser racistas. Nosotros creemos en ayudar a todas las personas, no solamente una raza. La humanidad es nuestra creencia.”⁷⁹

“Nosotros nos oponemos mucho a este negocio de La Raza. Nosotros sabemos lo que causa. Cuando La Raza significa o implica racismo, nosotros no lo apoyamos. Pero si significa nuestra lucha, nuestra dignidad, nuestras raíces culturales, entonces nosotros lo apoyamos.”⁸⁰

Vale la pena notar que Chávez, como King, abrazaron el ecumenismo cristiano. Aunque él era un devoto católico romano, Chávez se asoció con la comunidad pentecostal y el ministerio protestante para los migrantes en California (MPMC) (Protestant California Migrant Ministry).⁸¹ Auspiciada por el Consejo Nacional de Iglesias y el liderazgo del pastor presbiteriano Chris Hartmire, el MPMC trabajó muy de cerca con la TAU y sirvió como catalizador para reclutar el apoyo de la iglesia protestante.⁸² Chávez vino a conocer a Chris Hartmire y el MPMC por medio de los

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 31,32.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁸ Acerca de la noción de la “Comunidad Amada” por King, ver Hak Joon Lee, *We Will Get to the Promised Land: Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Communal-Political Spirituality* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006).

⁷⁹ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 131.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

⁸² Ronald A. Wells, “César Chávez’s Protestant Allies: The California Migrant Ministry and the Farmworkers,” *Journal of Presbyterian History*

organizadores Fred Ross and Saul Alinsky.⁸³ El MPMC financió muchas de las acciones de la TAU, e incluso desarrolló una “teología de la huelga” muy persuasiva contra las protestas de los críticos conservadores.⁸⁴ De hecho, muchos protestantes apoyaban *La Causa* no solo financiera y teológicamente, sino también sirviendo en las filas de piquete de huelga y los boicoteos, escribiendo cartas a los políticos y los periódicos, y documentando la violencia de los cultivadores en contra de los trabajadores agrícolas.⁸⁵ Sin embargo, el apoyo del MPMC a la TAU no ocurrió sin su costo político; La MPMC confrontó fuerte oposición de los cultivadores protestantes y de las fuerzas conservadoras dentro de la denominación presbiteriana.⁸⁶ Basándose en su experiencias cristianas interdenominacionales, Chávez redefinió la iglesia cristiana en términos amplios y ecuménicos. Él también afirmó fuertemente que la iglesia debería jugar un rol vital en todos los movimientos de justicia:

“Cuando nos referimos a la iglesia, deberíamos de definir la palabra un poquito. Nosotros queremos decir toda la iglesia, la iglesia como cuerpo ecuménico propagado alrededor del mundo, y no solo su forma particular en una parroquia en una comunidad local...La iglesia es una forma de la presencia de Dios en la tierra, de manera que naturalmente es poderosa. Es una fuerza moral y espiritual poderosa que no puede ser ignorada por ningún movimiento.”⁸⁷

El declive de Chávez y la TAU

Hasta aquí este ensayo se ha enfocado en la praxis espiritual de César Chávez y de la TAU durante los “días gloriosos” de la huelga de las uvas durante 1965-1970. A finales de los 1960, casi todos los cultivadores de uvas habían firmado contratos con el sindicato, y para 1970, los salarios de los trabajadores agrícolas habían aumentado 40%.⁸⁸ Los cinco años siguientes, la TAU continuó con una serie de victorias en contra de los cultivadores, lo cual culminó con la aprobación de la Ley de Relaciones Laborales Agrícolas en California (LRLAC) en Mayo de 1975.⁸⁹ Esta legislación concedió muchos derechos a la TAU, incluyendo el derecho de boicotear, derecho de elecciones por balota secreta, derecho de votos a los trabajadores migrantes de temporada, y control sobre el momento de tener elecciones sindicales.

(Spring/Summer 2009), 5-16, accessed September 29, 2016, <https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/essays/essays/cec.pdf>; León, *The Political Spirituality*, 127-128. For further discussion of Protestant-farmworker coalitions, see, Alan Watt, “Farmworkers and the Churches”.

⁸³ Levy, *Autobiography of La Causa*, 162.

⁸⁴ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 128.

⁸⁵ Wells, “César Chávez’s Protestant Allies.”

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-13.

⁸⁷ García, *Gospel of César Chávez*, 46.

⁸⁸ La Botz, *César Chávez*, 199.

⁸⁹ Griswold del Castillo, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 128.

De acuerdo al historiador Matthew García y otros, Chávez y la TAU comenzaron su declive precipitado en noviembre del 1976 con el fracaso de La Propuesta 14.⁹⁰ Con Chávez como punta de lanza, La Propuesta 14 buscaba garantizar fondos para la LRLAC, como también pedía acceso ininterrumpido a los trabajadores agrícolas en los campos por los organizadores sindicales. La Propuesta 14 fue rechazada rotundamente por los votantes californianos a un margen de 2 por 1.⁹¹ Después de su mayor pérdida política, se dice que Chávez se hizo crecientemente autocrático y despreciaba la disidencia. También lanzó una purga de personal sindical y de voluntarios en la sede del sindicato y en todo el país. Según el líder filipino de trabajadores agrícolas Philip Vera Cruz: “En la TAU el poder solo lo tenía César, él daba poder a ciertos individuos bajo su dirección.”⁹²

Chávez incluso intentó de crear una orden religiosa centrada en su propia persona y la religión de la Nueva Era de Synanon, como un medio de establecer control.⁹³ Una de las características de Synanon era “el juego.” Como parte del juego, una persona se sentaba en el centro de un círculo mientras otros le lanzaban insultos y acusaciones durante una hora. La meta era “producir la verdad, comunicación, una catarsis.”⁹⁴ La influencia de las enseñanzas de Synanon llegó a ser tan fuerte en Chávez, que hasta llegó a declarar, “yo utilizo mi aura para dirigir el sindicato.”⁹⁵ Según el estudioso religioso Luis León, Chávez “creía en su propio mito, exhibiendo señales de megalomanía y paranoia”⁹⁶ A finales de los 1970, Chávez y la TAU parecían estar asociadas más de cerca a Synanon que al catolicismo.⁹⁷

Muchos salieron de la TAU, a raíz de Synanon y de la purga y prácticas autocráticas de Chávez.⁹⁸ Aunque la TAU continuaría teniendo un poco de éxito por un número de años, para cuando Chávez falleció en 1993, la membresía de la TAU se había desplomado de un máximo de 80,000, a solamente 5,000.⁹⁹

Conclusión

El genio creativo de Chávez como organizador brilló más fuerte durante la huelga de las uvas. Tomando de la “teología de las abuelitas” en su juventud, Chávez fusionó de una manera original el catolicismo popular mexicano, las enseñanzas sociales católicas, y los métodos de organización comunitaria basados en Alinsky, que lo llevó a la formación del primer sindicato agrícola en la historia de los Estados Unidos de América. El famoso peregrinaje a Sacramento durante la Semana Santa y los 25 días de ayuno espiritual en 1968, representan ejemplos excelentes de esa fusión innovadora. El profundo compromiso que Chávez tenía a la no violencia también fluía de su fe cristiana

⁹⁰ Matthew García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of César Chávez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 287, 289, 224, 239, 272; La Botz, *César Chávez*, 148.

⁹¹ Griswold del Castillo, *A Triumph of Spirit*, 130.

⁹² La Botz, *César Chávez*, 151.

⁹³ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 146, 152.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹⁷ García, 285.

⁹⁸ La Botz, *César Chávez*, 148-149.

⁹⁹ León, *The Political Spirituality*, 16.

y era inspirado por los ejemplos de Moisés, Jesucristo, la iglesia primitiva, Gandhi, y el Reverendo Martin Luther King, Jr. Su espiritualidad y praxis cristiana fue más prominente durante la década del movimiento de los trabajadores agrícolas.

Desde la perspectiva de la historia de la iglesia, sin embargo, el movimiento comenzó a declinar después del 1975, cuando Chávez dejó de poner su enfoque en Cristo y se volvió cada vez más centrado en sí mismo. Aunque el continuó su compromiso por la no violencia, el ignoró dos enseñanzas bíblicas claves—liderazgo de servicio y permanencia en Cristo.

El llamado cristiano a un liderazgo de servicio fue articulado por Jesús en su regaño a los discípulos en camino a Jerusalén. Después que Santiago y Juan pidieron egoístamente sentarse en posiciones de honor y autoridad al lado de Jesús en el reino venidero, Jesús les explicó la naturaleza del liderazgo “al revés” en el reino de Dios. Diferente a como los romanos gobernaban por medio de la fuerza y fiat, Los que seguían a Jesús habría de dirigir a base de un modelo de humildad y de servicio:

“Ustedes saben que los gobernadores de los gentiles se enseñorean sobre ellos, y sus grandes son tiranos sobre ellos. No será de esta manera entre ustedes; sino quienquiera ser grande entre ustedes tendrá que ser su sirviente, y quien quiera ser el primero entre ustedes tendrá que ser su esclavo; así como el hijo del hombre no vino a ser servido sino a servir, y a dar su vida por rescate los muchos.” Mateo 20: 25-28

Tristemente, Chávez no tomó en su corazón estos aspectos importantes de las enseñanzas de Jesús, y como se ha discutido ya, él se hizo cada vez más autoritario después del fracaso de La Propuesta 14, en 1975. Al hacer eso, el imitó el modelo de liderazgo de los mismos cultivadores que oponía, y como consecuencia, fomentó una rebelión a gran escala de parte del liderazgo y la membresía de la TAU.

Desde la perspectiva de la teología pastoral, el egocentrismo de Chávez, por su naturaleza, causó que quitara sus ojos de Cristo, quien él clamaba había sido el origen de su éxito anterior. Esa descentralización espiritual fue demostrada más claramente en su fracasado intento de establecer una orden religiosa basada en su persona y so auto-proclamación: “Yo dirijo el sindicato con mi aura.” Como resultado, el dejó de “permanecer en Cristo” y el declive de la TAU fue su consecuencia natural. Como Jesús nos enseña—irónicamente usando la metáfora de las uvas—“yo soy la viña; ustedes son las ramas. Si permanecen en mí y yo en ustedes, ustedes llevarán muchos frutos; fuera de mí nada pueden hacer” (Juan 15:5-6). El ejemplo de Chávez nos ofrece una advertencia clara a todos/as los/as cristianos/as que aspiran a una vida de justicia social y activismo: el éxito en los esfuerzos cristianos por justicia social no es el producto de astucia cristiana y de estrategias y tácticas cuidadosamente concebidas—es, primero que todo, el fruto de Dios experimentado en la vida de todos aquellos/as que se aferran a Cristo.

Desafortunadamente, la centralidad de la fe en la praxis de César Chávez, así como en la vida de otros líderes de derechos civiles como Martin Luther King Jr., es a menudo ignorada tanto en círculos académicos como activistas. Casi sin excepción, las discusiones académicas de Chávez y de King los reclaman como modelos a seguir,

mientras a su vez los depuran de su fe cristiana. Ellos toman al “reverendo” de King y la “teología de las abuelitas” de Chávez. También ignoran el importante papel que la iglesia cristiana jugó en los grandes éxitos de los derechos civiles en los 1960. La mayoría se ha olvidado de las raíces espirituales de Chávez y de King, y por lo consiguiente se han olvidado del origen de su poder.

Recordar las raíces y practicas espirituales de Chávez es ahora más importante que nunca. A raíz de la presente elección presidencial y el tsunami de sentimientos y políticas anti-inmigrantes que ha surgido, miles de Latinas/os han sido movidas/os a la acción. Ellos/as miran a Chávez como ícono de la justicia social Latina/o, pero no están conscientes del papel que jugó el cristianismo en su organización y praxis. Además, muchas/os desean integrar su espiritualidad cristiana con su activismo, pero tiene pocos modelos a seguir, ya sea en el mundo del activismo secular o en la iglesia. Como ejemplo inspirador a la creciente generación de activistas Latinas/os, se espera que este ensayo pueda proveer un mapeo de los principios básicos y métodos espirituales que empoderaron a César Chávez y al Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas Unidos.

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The Faith of Saints and Citizens in Public Spaces

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Abstract

This article argues that public expressions of faith can function as enactments of citizenship among those for whom the status and privileges of formal citizenship are elusive. The concept of substantive citizenship provides a lens for examining how public faith bolsters local belonging. Based on ethnographic research conducted in Latinx communities in Santa Ana, California, this article highlights the public faith expressions of immigrants and the resulting local benefits. Public faith acts, in a sense, function as forms of resistance, enabling Latinx immigrants to care for their neighborhoods amidst discourses that classify them as unworthy of societal membership.

“If you really want to see what our religion is like, you have to come around here to the community, where the true religion takes place.” Such was the opinion of Edgar Olvera,¹ a lay Catholic leader, as to how I should go about conducting my research on Latinx religions. Numerous scholars of religious practices within U.S. ethnic enclaves would concur with Edgar, noting the propensity of public acts of faith for vesting a space with ethnic authenticity and performatively inscribing a group’s claims to local belonging.² The significance of public faith became increasingly evident through my five years of ethnographic research examining the influence of religious affiliation on ethnic identity in the Latinx enclaves of Santa Ana, CA.³ Acts of public faith were particularly important given Santa Ana’s demographics. Reflecting the local Latinx population, many of the Santa Ana residents that I interviewed and interacted with were

¹ Pseudonyms are used for research subjects’ names.

² Badillo, David A. 2004. “Mexicanos and Suburban Parish Communities Religion, Space, and Identity in Contemporary Chicago.” *Journal of Urban History* 31(1): 23-46; Knott, Kim. “Spatial theory and the study of religion.” *Religion Compass* 2, no. 6 (2008): 1102-1116; Orsi, Robert A. *Gods of the city: Religion and the American urban landscape*. Indiana University Press, 1999; Tweed, Thomas. 1997. *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami*. New York: Oxford University Press.

³ My research focused on questions of how religious affiliation influenced ethnic identity construction among Mexican and Latinx immigrants. Data collection involved conducting in-depth interviews with fifty congregants from Catholic and Protestant congregations serving the Latinx community of Santa Ana, CA. The role of public spaces in the barrio as sites of identity formation became apparent through the course of my research and drew a substantial amount of my attention.

undocumented. With a history of residential and educational segregation, limited economic opportunity, and struggles over political representation, many Santa Ana residents, including some with legal residency, found societal membership to be elusive. I propose that religious practices performed communally in public spaces can be understood as enactments of citizenship, particularly for members of groups whose societal membership is called into question. These acts are uniquely meaningful when engaged in by residents of neighborhoods most affected by mechanisms of exclusion. Some acts of public faith expand the common good and express a sense of local belonging, aspects which I argue are tied to particular forms of citizenship. By pushing against the boundaries of citizenship, these often mundane acts can serve as forms of resistance.⁴ In the sections to follow, I will describe my research context, discuss notions of citizenship, and examine the ways in which public acts of faith provide grounds for local citizenship claims in one majority Latinx city.

Community Context

Santa Ana, CA has a history replete with efforts from Latinx residents working to legitimize their local presence. Orange County, CA, has historically been home to numerous Latinx enclaves, with Santa Ana traditionally being home to the largest of these ethnic pockets. Historians recall Mendez vs Westminster, a 1947 case encompassing Santa Ana, which purported to end the segregation of Latino school children.⁵ The case would eventually provide a precedent for Brown v. Board of Education.⁶ Local swimming pools, movie theaters, and park areas were among the spaces where Latinx residents of a bygone era, primarily Mexicans, faced unjust restrictions.⁷

Subsequent generations of local Latinx activists hearken back to legacies of justice work. Issues that capture the efforts of city-based activists today include advocacy for immigrant rights, combating gentrification, assuring the rights of LGBTQIA individuals, decrying educational inequality, and spearheading health and housing initiatives. These initiatives are crucial as the city of 330,000 residents whose population is 80% Latino, half foreign born,⁸ is home to many residents endangered by their legal status. Moreover, the issues listed above intersect with legal status issues to heighten the vulnerability of local residents. The city council, the first among U.S. big cities to be composed entirely of Latinos, validated the arduous efforts of activists by declaring the city a “Sanctuary City.”⁹ Nevertheless, with a new federal administration in place,

⁴ See Jeffrey W. Rubin, David Smilde, and Benjamin Junge. "Lived Religion and Lived Citizenship in Latin America's Zones of Crisis: Introduction." *Latin American Research Review* 49, no. S (2014): 7-26, for a helpful discussion of how mundane acts of religion have the capacity to be acts of resistance even if they are not ostensibly framed as political acts. Direct social actions sponsored by faith-based institutions were present and significant within my field of research but are not the primary focus of this article.

⁵ Arriola, Christopher. "Knocking on the Schoolhouse Door: Mendez v. Westminster, Equal Protection, Public Education, and Mexican Americans in the 1940's." *La Raza LJ* 8 (1995): 166-207.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, “2010 State and County Quickfacts,” <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/> (accessed October 24, 2012).

⁹ See Cindy Carcamo, “Santa Ana Declares Itself a Sanctuary City in Defiance of Trump,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 2016. The Santa Ana city council voted on sanctuary status on December 6, 2016.

insecurities are at peak levels and even U.S. citizens in these communities must contend with the realities of having family members, friends, and neighbors struggling through issues of legal status. Communities of faith may become all the more important for residents seeking refuge, resources, and respect.¹⁰ It is in these spaces that many experience a sense of local belonging, an aspect of substantive citizenship. When these spaces of faith spill over into the public sphere, God is perceived as affirming that the excluded collectively are welcome. Through the sacralization of physical space, the excluded inscribe themselves upon the landscape and experience a sense of spatial belonging, even if just momentarily.

Citizenship and Public Faith

When I asked Patricia Martinez, a committed member of a local Pentecostal congregation, about how she identified ethnically, an addendum to her response took me by surprise:

Yo, mexicana y latina. Ni tengo ni papeles. Ni de aquí ni de allá.
Me, Mexican and Latina. I don't even have papers. I'm neither from here, nor from there.

Patricia expressed a sense of social dislocation in light of her unauthorized status. Though I did not ask her about her legal status, her response illustrated the fusion between legal status and ethnic identity that some immigrants experience. As Patricia does not have papers, she perceives she does not belong "here." Conversely, returning to Mexico would mean bidding farewell to her U.S. born children and grandchildren so she no longer feels that she is from "there." Patricia's conflation of legal status and belonging was part of her lived reality and is not far removed from popular discourse around U.S. citizenship policy.

The lived reality of citizenship is quite layered, both for those possessing formal citizenship, and those lacking it. Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul, for example, define citizenship as a "form of membership in a political and geographic community."¹¹ These scholars conceive of citizenship as involving four interlocking, shifting spheres: 1.) **Permission**, denoting legal status conferred on members by the state, 2.) **Privilege**, signifying rights afforded to members, 3.) **Participation**, referring to members' engagement in political and civic arenas, and 4.) **Place**, encompassing a sense of societal belonging.¹² Across historical periods and geographic regions, these components shift, with some gaining prominence and others waning.

The concept of substantive citizenship is especially important for understanding how marginalized populations lay claim to societal membership. According to sociologist Evelyn Nakano Glenn, substantive citizenship involves "local practices that

¹⁰ Charles Hirschman, "The Role of Religion in the Origins and Adaptation of Immigrant Groups in the United States." *International Migration Review* 38, no. 3 (2004): 1206-1233.

¹¹ Irene Bloemraad, Anna Korteweg, and Gökçe Yurdakul, "Citizenship and Immigration: Multiculturalism, Assimilation, and Challenges to the Nation-state." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34 (2008): 154.

¹² These categories are adapted from the four categories presented by Bloemraad et al., Ibid.

recognize or deny standing to certain groups and individuals irrespective of their formal standing under constitutional provisions or statutory law.”¹³ Substantive citizenship accounts for limitations within formal citizenship. Limitations to citizenship may include instances where the rights of formally recognized citizens are restricted or cases where contributing members of society lack legal citizenship status. Both types of discrepancies highlight disconnects between citizenship in practice and citizenship as a status. Such mismatches are salient at the local level where excluded populations negotiate the lived boundaries of citizenship. As Staeheli notes, “local scales are implicated in the restructuring of substantive citizenship.”¹⁴ In Santa Ana, for example, debates over sanctuary city status and over cutting city ties with ICE can be framed as a contestation of who should be afforded basic rights of safety. Beyond debates taking place within official civic chambers, acts of contestation and resistance also originate from “marginalized citizens and noncitizens who contest their exclusion,” according to Holsten.¹⁵ In describing the efforts of slum residents in Brazil to exercise basic rights, for example, Holsten employs the phrase “insurgent citizenship.”¹⁶ This Brazilian case study exemplifies a population that is contesting the boundaries of “illegality,” in this case related to restrictions on where to establish housing settlements when government provisions are lacking.

One potential route that is taken by those outside the boundaries of formal citizenship is to demonstrate diligently how one meets the criteria of formal citizenship. Guzman Garcia, for example, describes how broader logics of deportability and neoliberal citizenship influence the way undocumented immigrant members of a Pentecostal church in Fresno, California construct a sense of worthiness via their religious participation.¹⁷ In light of their faith commitments, these congregants lay claim to a “spiritual citizenship” which produces hope in a celestial future yet entails developing “good moral character” deserving formal state recognition. This is not to say that the state recognizes these efforts formally, but rather that individuals are highly invested in these efforts.

Public acts of faith, especially when performed communally, move beyond individual efforts as they have the power to call excluded communities into an experience of substantive citizenship. The public and communal aspects of these faith acts are important as they speak to the manner in which citizenship is more than a status mark of individual worthiness. Staeheli argues that while liberal and republican theories emphasize citizenship as an individual status, “the political reality is that citizenship is extended to social groups.”¹⁸ The citizenship deck is stacked against certain groups, and *papeles* are categorically meted out in unequal fashion. Public faith

¹³ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “Constructing Citizenship: Exclusion, Subordination, and Resistance.” *American Sociological Review* 76, no. 1 (2011): 1-24.

¹⁴ Lynn A. Staeheli, “Globalization and the Scales of Citizenship,” In *Geography Research Forum*, vol. 19 (2016): 66.

¹⁵ James Holston, “Insurgent Citizenship in an Era of Global Urban Peripheries,” *City & Society* 21, no. 2 (2009): 246.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Melissa Guzman Garcia, “Spiritual Citizenship: Immigrant Religious Participation and the Management of Deportability.” *International Migration Review* Fall (2016): 1-26.

¹⁸ Staeheli, “Globalization and the Scales of Citizenship,” 65.

acts provide an opportunity for those denied formal and/or substantive citizenship to say, “We are here,” and, “We have a stake in this neighborhood.” This is both a communal act of affirmation, and a concerted effort of community building. I now turn to examples of how public, communal acts of faith provide space for the enactment of substantive citizenship among Santa Ana’s residents.

Building Connections in the Community

Veronica Ochoa is a woman who participates in a form of substantive citizenship through her devotional practices, efforts which can essentially be classified as community organizing. Veronica’s public devotion is well recognized in her neighborhood. She is an undocumented immigrant from Mexico who provides for her family by selling food and by serving as a caregiver to local children. Neighbors know Veronica for a different type of care that she provides. Veronica has taken it upon herself to care for a local altar dedicated to the Virgen de Guadalupe. Veronica lives in a boxy, two-story apartment building of six units that faces an identical building. A broad open courtyard between the two buildings is inhabited most days by playful children and on weekends serves as celebration space. Nestled between an apartment building and a brick wall rests an altar to the Virgen de Guadalupe. The altar is a miniature house with a front entrance left open to reveal statues of the Virgen de Guadalupe. Veronica lives adjacent to where the altar is located and she voluntarily oversees the wellbeing of the altar; she cleans the shrine, checks the statues to ensure they are free of damage, and prepares statues for special celebrations that require them to be moved out of the altar. She also helps to organize celebrations focused on venerating the Virgen de Guadalupe at that specific altar. Neighbors in her apartment courtyard and in the surrounding buildings are aware of her commitment and follow her lead when special days such as the Day of the Virgen de Guadalupe come around.

As an undocumented immigrant, Veronica’s line of work in the informal economy minimizes her presence on the radar of local authorities. Despite her efforts to maintain a low profile, in her community Veronica is a recognized leader. Neither is her work isolated within her neighborhood. The objects of devotion that she cares for travel to other parts of the city and of the county. During various times of the year, representatives from other neighborhoods come to her altar to borrow the statues. Her barrio, often overlooked or feared because of its gang presence, is lifted to a place of honor; it holds spiritual significance because of the neighborhood altar that she oversees. Veronica sustains ties between neighborhoods through her devotional practices. This woman who has little to give financially, and superficially appears to have little influence, actually holds a place of importance. Her local parish recognizes her work and lists her name on church informational flyers as a contact person for events in her neighborhood.

Veronica’s activities exemplify substantive citizenship in several ways. Veronica helps to provide for the spiritual and emotional needs of her community, and facilitates organizing efforts which directly address disadvantages faced in her community. Her place in the community is affirmed by those that know her and her activities bring recognition to her community, aspects of substantive citizenship emphasized by Nakano-Glenn. That much of Veronica’s organizing efforts catalyze the involvement of

other women, reflects the visible, public contribution of women in migrant communities, challenging yet co-existing with traditional gender roles. Many of the communal faith gatherings I witnessed were indeed disproportionately led and attended by women. This shows an opposite trend to the male dominated hometown associations for Mexican immigrants documented by Goldring. Goldring notes that “the gendering of citizenship in transnational spaces may contribute to differences in feelings of membership and belonging in the relevant nations, and thus to the gender of membership in the nation.”¹⁹ In Veronica’s case, she is helping to bolster the citizenship of working class female neighbors in particular and of her community more broadly.

Listening to the Community

Arturo and Julieta Esparza are a married couple deeply committed to their Pentecostal church. As I got to know them I came to see their strong commitment to the well-being of their neighbors as well. While Julieta grew up in a Pentecostal church, Arturo recounts his experience of major transformation after arriving in the U.S. and finding his place at a Pentecostal church. An outgrowth of their *evangelico* theology, the Esparzas have a strong desire to share with others their *testimonio* of how Jesus Christ saved them. The Esparzas, however, opine that some members of their faith family are too quick to bolster boundaries against their acquaintances of different faiths. Instead, the Esparzas have invested in caring for their neighbors regardless of their faith background, and have thus gained the trust of many of their neighbors.

Arturo shares that several years ago, when his children were of school age, he noticed that the summer options for children in his community were few and far between. Given his passion for the game of *fútbol*, Arturo decided to start a co-ed children’s soccer league at a local park. He went door to door asking neighbors if their children were interested in participating in the league. He eventually was able to field several teams and would guide the teams to practice, and then to play against each other. Arturo saw this as an opportunity to share the love of Christ with his neighbors. After noticing a need, he was willing to engage the issue. As families began to build stronger bonds through the league that Arturo started, Julieta would often become the listening ear that parents would approach to share their stories. Julieta describes how in their times of deepest needs, some of the mothers in particular would trust her with their secrets. They respected Julieta’s advice and would seek her counsel. When the opportunity presented itself, Julieta would pray with her neighbors; she saw this as part of her ministry.

An important contribution put forth by Julieta and Arturo relates to their ability to listen to their community. Julieta and Arturo were initially able to facilitate community integration through listening to the needs of their neighbor. This involves both literal listening to conversations, as well as observation. Like Veronica above, Julieta and Arturo have helped to provide their community with a sense of empowerment. They

¹⁹ Luin Goldring, “The Gender and Geography of Citizenship in Mexico-US Transnational Spaces.” *Identities Global Studies in Culture and Power* 7, no. 4 (2001): 501-537.

have enacted not only their own citizenship but have encouraged that of their neighbors as well.

Sustaining a Sense of Peoplehood

Mercedes Uribe provides a gift to her community by instilling others with a sense of peoplehood, a key aspect in her enactment of substantive citizenship. In observing a neighborhood procession honoring La Virgen de Guadalupe, the faith of Mercedes stood out. Initially comprised of two dozen participants, the group swelled to nearly a hundred revelers largely due to Mercedes' hospitality. Mercedes' voice could be heard bidding neighbors to join a concluding celebration hosted at her home. Her devotion, embodied in steamy bowls of *posole* stew, a homily in hominy, accompanied by the boisterous laughter of volunteers, enveloped the street. Those yearning to recreate ethnic traditions found solace in the procession and at Mercedes' home.

The case of Mercedes illustrates the capacity of public acts of faith for sustaining collective ethnic identities. Every year leading up to Christmas, the traditions of *las posadas* enliven the streets of Santa Ana's barrios. Mercedes is known throughout her neighborhood for opening up her home to the traditionally nine days of posada celebrations. The reenactment of *las posadas*, commemorating Mary and Joseph seeking lodging in Bethlehem as Mary is with child, has been celebrated in Mexico for over 400 years.²⁰ Mercedes explained to me that numerous groups from her local parish contact her to use her home as a space to re-enact *las posadas*. According to Mercedes, "those nine days get filled up quickly! Some of them even want to go beyond the traditional nine days." In one of the most densely populated cities in the nation, space is at a premium. Many of Mercedes neighbors who live in crowded conditions are not only looking to re-enact *las posadas*, they themselves are living *las posadas*, as they seek room.

One of the strongest motivating factors for Mercedes' involvement in these celebrations is her desire to re-create traditions observed in Mexico. From her explanations, it is clear that she takes pride in providing for her neighbors an experience of remembering. Many of her neighbors cannot return to their homelands, but at her home their memories are renewed. Mercedes recounted the response of one surprised visitor who took part in a celebration at her home: "It's exactly like over there [in Mexico]!" He explained to her that he did not expect to experience something similar in the U.S. An often agreed upon definition of ethnicity in the social sciences accounts for "memories of a shared historical past."²¹ In creating space for performative acts of devotion, Mercedes is allowing her neighbors to recollect a shared past. Lest the uninitiated think that Mercedes' celebrations are only accessible to co-ethnics, she can also be seen welcoming Vietnamese and white neighbors into her home.

²⁰ Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, Genelle Gaudinez, Hector Lara, and Billie C. Ortiz, "There's a Spirit That Transcends the Border': Faith, Ritual, and Postnational Protest at the US-Mexico Border." *Sociological Perspectives* 47, no. 2 (2004): 133-159.

²¹ Richard Alonzo Schermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research*. New York: Random House, 1970, 12.

Some might argue that acts of devotion highlighting ethnic distinctions do not coincide with notions of citizenship, assuming that these acts isolate a particular group from broader “mainstream” U.S. culture. The views of the late Samuel Huntington, for example, would concur with this notion by going so far as to say that Latino migration, particularly from Mexico, is dividing the U.S. into “two peoples, two cultures and two languages.”²² Yet, scholars who study the socio-cultural incorporation of immigrants into U.S. society note the importance of cultural spaces for the vitality of immigrant households. It is often in spaces of ethnic performance that inter-generational ties are strengthened, and processes of adaptation are facilitated. Younger generations learn from the older, but are also able to provide input regarding their experiences. Warner notes that spaces of faith expression are effective sites of “selective acculturation,” a process wherein immigrants and their children are able to collaborate in maintaining ties to homeland cultures even as they adapt to receiving contexts. Furthermore, traditions such as *las posadas* have been in the Americas, including the U.S. Southwest, for centuries. These are not foreign practices, but essentially native practices, a blend between the Indigenous and the European, being sustained. Thus, the opportunities provided by these residents translate over to the wellbeing of their city, in ways that even state and local agencies are not equipped to accomplish.

The Role of Churches in Public Faith

The institutional backdrop for many of the participants I observed influenced modes of community engagement and of substantive citizenship enactment. Opportunities to engage local neighborhoods and discourses about local neighborhoods offered by churches were two important factors in the enactment of substantive citizenship. Church-sponsored activities that especially bolstered community engagement included prayer walks, peace marches, and cultural celebrations throughout residential neighborhoods. An important benefit to this institutional connection was that churches often collaborated with nonprofits, businesses, and city agencies to host public events. These collaborations strengthened ties between immigrants and local institutions. Activities of engagement less focused on propositional evangelism often garnered the highest rate of response from neighborhood residents. For example, hosting a handball tournament at a park was more likely to draw local participants than was an evangelistic campaign at the park. This point is primarily a commentary about modes of community engagement and participation rather than a critique of church evangelism efforts.

Direct efforts to reach non-members and invite them into the “fold,” also provided pathways of local engagement. When such events were framed as opportunities to save corrupt and immoral neighborhoods, local residents often perceived these events as acts of outsiders encroaching on locals. However, outreach events that involved community members in planning and staging, and highlighted residential community assets, were received more readily. Members of under-resourced communities, often seen solely as objects of community outreach, were effective at working within their own communities. As such, events were most successful when community members were leading the efforts themselves. The passionate faith expressed by the Catholic and Protestant

²² Samuel P. Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge,” *Foreign Policy* 141 (2004): 1.

parishioners I encountered did not require them to negate the presence of positive aspects within their communities.

The manner in which churches spoke about local neighborhoods was of significance. Discourses about the barrio correlated with the affective ties group members demonstrated toward their neighborhood. Messages spoken by church leaders, for example, correlated with how parishioners perceived their neighborhoods of residence and their role therein. Some Santa Ana parishioners internalized church messages emphasizing neighborhood problems, paralleling McRoberts' work among African American parishioners in Boston²³ where "the street" was the locus of vice and perdition. Members internalizing such messages were less likely to invest in and draw from the assets of their working-class communities. In contrast, parishioners that internalized church messages that valued local communities, spoke positively about the neighborhood they lived in and invested in the wellbeing of their neighbors. Parishioners tended to either take ownership of their neighborhoods or to retreat from their own residential communities. Immigrants who had more positive views of their communities were embedded within resource rich residential networks while immigrants with negative or apathetic views of their community held weaker ties to these residential networks. Moreover, messages reinforced by faith groups regarding local neighborhoods correlated with resource opportunities of group members.²⁴ In these ways, churches influenced how substantive citizenship was lived out at the neighborhood level.

Substantive Citizenship in a time of Insecurity

Since the writing of this article commenced, the new U.S. President and his administration have elevated the fears and anxieties of numerous populations in the U.S. Forms of substantive citizenship with insurgent inclinations will likely continue within sites such as Santa Ana, where ordered policies purport to brutalize community members. Efforts to alter the nation's trajectory will continue via formal political channels. Many advocate to both streamline formal citizenship pathways and to protect the rights of formal citizens whose rights are categorically denied. Social action rooted in faith surely has a role here. Perusing the work of civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, and Dolores Huerta highlight the prominence of faith in their acts of resistance. The efforts of the sanctuary movement in its past and recent iterations are also forms of resistance. As a corollary to these examples, I have argued that mundane acts constituting the spiritual rhythms of lower income and undocumented residents in cities like Santa Ana, are also acts of resistance. When communities on the periphery come together to worship, to care for each other's needs, and thus build the community as people of faith, these are acts of insurgent citizenship.

²³ Omar McRoberts, *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

²⁴ See Mario L. Small, *Villa Victoria: The Transformation of Social Capital in a Boston Barrio*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, for a valuable study on how perceptions of a residential neighborhood affect resident engagement within a Latinx neighborhood in Boston.

Communities of faith are uniquely positioned to serve the vulnerable in this season of insecurity. These communities can maintain ties with a broad network of institutions outside of themselves, even as they elevate the disenfranchised from within. Through institutional networks, communities of faith can serve as proxies for important civic institutions to which undocumented immigrants, for example, may not have access. Communities of faith can also serve as the collective megaphone through which marginalized communities speak. By embedding vulnerable populations within networks of local empowerment, faith groups bolster the substantive citizenship of excluded groups. Faith communities can thus occupy the space between legal and social aspects of citizenship, even as they struggle to close that gap. Affirmation of substantive citizenship is critical, as marginalized groups find themselves stuck in perpetual advent, waiting to be recognized formally. It behooves faith communities, nonprofits, and civic organizations to expand on these practices. The dignity of individuals and entire communities benefit from these efforts. Moreover, when the most vulnerable among us are lifted up, society as a whole flourishes.

The Young Lords and the People's Church: Social Movement Theory, Telling of Brown Power Movements Impact on Latino/a Religious History

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Abstract

In this essay, I argue for the importance of incorporating the study of Latino/a radicalism into the terrain of Latino/a religious history. Latino/a radical groups like the Young Lords/Young Lords Party that critiqued Latino/a religiosity aimed at exposing the gap between the praxis of faith communities and their faith affirmation through the lenses of radical activism. A consideration of Young Lords/Young Lords Party's engagement with religious institutions can offer insights into to the theorizing of Latino/a religious history from outside the boundaries drawn by religious practices but still, influenced by the ethos of religious community.

•VEA LA PÁGINA 78 PARA LEER ESTE ARTÍCULO EN ESPAÑOL •

Martha Arguello, in her article "Sisters, Brothers, Young Lords A Common Cause: 40 Years of Struggle and Remembrance," reflecting on the occasion of the 2008 DePaul's Exhibit *Radicals in Black and Brown*, made the following comment, "[B]efore leaving Chicago, I revisited the photographs displayed at DePaul. The decades old images reminded me that the issues we so vehemently fought for 40 years ago, still matter; the just society we envisioned is yet to come." For those invested in justice work and social justice education, engaging in critical retrospective practices should simultaneously affirm the ongoing importance of being committed to communal liberation and empowerment and also encourage mining the past to inform future work. The thinking anew fomented by reflecting in the history, contributions, and limitations of social movements highlight the importance of those episodes of unrest and organizing not as part of the particular accepted communal narratives, but as an utopian cartography foreshadowing spaces for future interventions. Just as the past imprints but does not precondition the present, the future starts taking shape in the now. Personally, my own rethinking of past events in Latino/a religious history has lead me to consider the Brown Power Movements, and in particularly the Young Lords, as an area in need of

engagement and of critical import for the study of Latino/a religious traditions.

In this essay, my efforts are directed at teasing out what I take to be potential contributions of the study of Latino/a radical groups like Young Lords Organization/Young Lords Party (YLO/P) for the study of Latino/a religious history.¹ The legacy of radical social movements remains contested terrain in which memory, archives, and witness contribute rich materials for interpretations.² To date the field of Latino/a Religious Studies has given prima consideration to those social movements with strong ties or direct association with religious traditions. In prioritizing the study of the histories of social movements closely linked with religious tradition, the people that build them and the communities they served have left the non-religious Latino/a social movement histories largely unexplored. The argument that I will be putting forward affirms the need to continue the task of analyzing religious Latino/a social movements and their contributions to Latino/a religiosity while it also seeks to emphasize the need for contributions that seek to theorize *la lucha* as lived by secular Latino/a Activism. Furthermore, I wish to call attention to how these radical movements can also provide resources for the theorization of social action as a radical spiritual praxis.³ My aim then is to reflect on the insights that can be gained from engagements with an organization that has been highly critical of Latino/a religious institutions. These critiques, presented below, were directed at what the YLO/P understood as a gap between what religious institutions claimed as their goal and what the radical organization understood to be the actions of these organizations—the proverbial dissociation between theory and praxis. In a curious turn of events, the strategy the YLO/P employed sought to model how to be a radical church for the people. For the YLO/P this meant that the work of a church, in addition to religious ritual, ought to be an active participant in political education, the arts, and the meeting of everyday needs like adequate nutrition, child care, and health care as integral components. The People's Church was a utopian experimentation of the liberating possibilities of a religion untethered to binds of the status quo.

Who were the Young Lords? And why did they think it necessary to carve out a space

¹As an organization, the Young Lords had two main chapters. The Chicago chapter is recognized as the genesis of the movement, and thus, the face of the organization. However, the New York chapter has received the most sustain attention. The New York chapter started out with the same name as the Chicago one, The Young Lords Organization, but eventually broke off from the Chicago chapter and named themselves the Young Lords Party.

² For insightful analysis on interpreting archives and the giving voices to those communities often marginalized from history creation in archival accounts, see the works of Jeannette A. Bastian "The records of memory, the archives of identity: celebrations, texts and archival sensibilities." *Archival Science* 13, no. 2-3 (2013): 121-131 and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

³ Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina religious-political activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2005). Luis D. Leo'n, *The Political Spirituality of Cesar Chavez: Crossing Religious Borders* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014). Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio P. Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, *Latino religions and civic activism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Loida I. Martell-Otero, Zaida Maldonado Pe´rez, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, *Latina Evange´licas: A Theological Survey from the Margins* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

within the confines of two local churches to give raise to churches for the people?⁴ At the closing of the 1960's, it became clear that the Civil Rights Era, in spite of victories in many fronts that promoted increased civil rights like voting, a measure of upward mobility to some segments of marginalized communities, and a modicum of improved educational access previously barred by segregation-era politics, was to be superseded by a different kind of political mobilization. In the face of the conservative backlash against the Civil Rights Era mobilization, simmering political strategies not invested in, and suspicious of limited integrationist politics, bubbled up to shape the political landscape of the incoming decade. These rising organizations understood, through watching how their predecessors were treated, that racism and capitalism fought back non-violence with aggression and opted to push back by other means if necessary to maintain white power and supremacy. In particular, the police arm of the state aimed most of its blows to people of color and impoverished communities—the threat to prosperity and order was attributed to the unrest of communities of color in need of reminder of who was in charge.⁵ The power of the ballot gained by people of color did not upend the use of the bullet against the marginalized communities. The death throes of the Vietnam War in the Eastern front shifted their geography to the United States of America. Coming to terms with the overrepresentation of men of color in the war effort, the rates of drug addiction as direct result of the war, and betrayed promises to returning veterans, solidified the suspicions that the full integration of people of color into the democratic dreams of the United States of America was more mirage than reality. But it also meant that new knowledge gained through military training would also be put to militant use.⁶ It is against this situation that, the Black Panthers Party emerged as a revolutionary vanguard from which other organizations like the Brown Berets and the Young Lords took leads in the efforts to organize within their communities.⁷

The Young Lords' activities during the late 1960s to mid-70's led to the establishment of various chapters in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. From its tough and humble beginnings as a turf gang in the cold streets of Chicago, the Young Lords emerged as an electrifying movement that captured the social imagination of

⁴ The term "the People," is open to multiple definitions and contestations; Darrel Wanzer-Serrano—provides a comprehensive analysis of the term in relations the Young Lords in his book, *The New York Young Lords and the Struggle for Liberation* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2015).

⁵ See Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁶ This transitioning from military to militancy among war veterans of color can be traced in the various political mobilization of veterans, often as protectors of communities. Veterans of color from WWII, and Vietnam, made central contributions to the organizing of groups like *Students Nonviolent Coordinating Committee* (SNCC) and the *Deacons for Self-Defense*, among other groups. They provided leadership and tactical know-how essential to community self-defense. See Charles E. Cobbs, *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

⁷ For a historical treatment of the rise and decline of Black Power, see Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006). He has also written on Black Power's contributions and connections to other communities of color. Also, Jennifer G. Correa offers an insightful analysis of the intersections between class, race, sexism and the ways in which the state can mobilize to neutralize radical organizing. See her "The Targeting of the East Los Angeles Brown Berets by a Racial Patriarchal Capitalist State: Merging Intersectionality and Social Movement Research." *Critical Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2011): 83-101.

community members during their times and continue to energize Latino/a activism today. Through door-to-door organization, direct action initiatives, and community service programs, the Young Lords were able to instigate life-giving options for Latinos/as communities at the edges of power. Their actions were directed at combating the establishment's lack of response to the plights of communities in various *barrios* across the United States of America. Through their community organizing, translation of Black Power ideology to the service of Latinos/as, and incorporation of political education drawing from Puerto Rican freedom fighters like Don Pedro Albizu Campos, the Young Lords sought to radicalize the Latino/a communities at various urban centers, located mostly in the USA Midwest or East Coast, and largely of Puerto Rican descent. The Young Lords not only embraced Latinos/as of other ethnic, national, and/or racial origins, but they also counted among their members a significant number of African-Americans. This practice of opening membership to other ethnic/racial communities was not only a reflection of the ethnic/racial composition and level of interculturalization with African-Americans in the cities with significant Latinos/as presence, but also pointed towards the internationalist dimensions of Black Radicalism.⁸

I am a researcher focusing primarily in the intersections of sociology of religion and cultural theory, with a particular interest in social movements. To this end, the Young Lords offer an interesting counterpoint to the rhythms of the nascent liberation theologies emerging at the time in which they were active. The rise of liberation theology and the Power Movements coincide in the social, political, and intellectual scene. More than a coincidence or curious phenomena, this intersection bears witness to a time of heightened social struggle and pushes against the structuring of a society promoted by capitalist forces and ensuing militarization of society. While their tactics and the ways in which they give shape to communities differ, Liberation Theology and Power Movements can be said to have a shared concern for the “least of these.” This essay is an initial contribution reflecting on the intersections between these two streams of radical thought and revolutionary living. It presents an opportunity to deduce possible strategies to think anew about the interconnection between religious commitments, spiritual practices, and civic engagements. Analyzing the trajectory of the Young Lords from a religious perspective allows for one to tease out the reasons why they were both critical and affirming of the potentials of religious communities. Even if the Young Lord did not fully identify with Latino/a religious practices, one can

⁸ A full account of the Young Lords Organization/Party is beyond the scope of my essay. In addition to primary source materials available at DePaul University, El Centro, at City University of New York, and Grand Valley State University, the following sources provide detail work on the Young Lords: Johanna Ferná ndez, *Radicals in the late 1960s: a history of the Young Lords Party in New York City, 1969-1974*, PhD Dissertation (New York: Columbia University, 2004); Iris Morales, Ana Celia Zentella, and Patria Rodríguez, *Palante, siempre palante!: the Young Lords* (New York, NY: SubCine, distributor, 2009); Miguel Meléndez, *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights With the Young Lords* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003); and Darrel Enck-Wanzer, *The Young Lords: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2010). In terms of the extension of Black Radicalism in the international scene see, Diane Carol Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) and Yuichiro Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism : Afro-Asian Solidarity in Twentieth-century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

understand them as offering a religious humanism opened to the influence and importance of religion in peoples' lives, yet not fully bounded to doctrinal questions and participation. The religious humanism I see present in the Young Lords was one focused instead on popular forms of religiosity, a central theme of Latino/a religious scholarship, and source of radical spirituality that prompted political actions. Latino/a religious scholarship recognizes the political dimension and transgressive potentials of popular religiosity.

A study of the Young Lords in connection to religion presents some interesting possibilities of which I will name three: 1) a way forward beyond the Western inspired secular/religious divide; 2) the fruitfulness of religious signifiers to operate outside of their particular religious tapping into larger webs of significations, and 3) the contribution of Power Movements to inspire religious dimensions to activism. This last possibility assumes that religion is not something existing in-and-of-itself out there, but perhaps may be better as sets of practices that incorporate multiple traditions and worldviews that undergo continual transformations.⁹ Of these three, this essay addresses the third point through an analysis of Young Lords' initiatives that gave rise to two distinct *People's Churches*: the Young Lords' *People's Church* in Chicago and New York. I will then offer my comments, based on social movement theory, of the potential lines of inquiry this may open.

The Young Lords' People's Church

For those of us interested in the scholarship of Power Movements and in the Young Lords in particular, the last few years have been exciting. A renewed interest in the decades of the 60's and 70's have brought works to light that lift up otherwise undiscussed dimensions of movements, like the central role women played. Among my favorites treatments that engage the Young Lords are Kamozi Woodard's *Do you Want to Start a Revolution*, Maylai Blackwell's *Chicana Power!*, Laura Pulido's *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left*, and Cynthia Young's, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of the US Third World Left*. A number of important articles have also been published like Darrel Enck-Wanzer's reflections on the Young Lords' *Garbage Offensive* and the analysis of the rhetorical power of "the people."¹⁰

As it pertains to the Young Lords and religion, my own article about the Young Lords in the *Hispanic Encyclopedia of Religion* (2009) presents how the actions of the Young Lords before and after the People's Church provide resources to nudge Latina/o ethics in a direction of dissent. I pursue this direction more fully in the writing of my dissertation, *Raised Fists in the Church! Afro-latino/a Praxis among the Young Lords Party*. There I suggested ways in which I understood them contributing to ongoing development of Latino/a Christian ethicists.¹¹ In his *Latina/o Social Ethics: Moving*

⁹See the work of Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived religion faith and practice in everyday life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)..

¹⁰Darrel Enck-Wanzer, "Trashing the System: Social Movement, Intersectional Rhetoric, and Collective Agency in the Young Lords Organization's Garbage Offensive," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92 No.2 (2006): 174-201; y "Decolonizing Imaginaries: Rethinking; 'the People' in the Young Lords' Church Offensive," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98 No. 1(2012): 1-23.

¹¹Eliás Ortega-Aponte, "The Young Lords People's Church," in *Hispanic American Religious Cultures*,

beyond Eurocentric Moral Thinking, Miguel De La Torre also makes reference to the Young Lords.¹² In his readings, he proposes that the Young Lords are important to how Latinos/as think about Christian ethics, yet he does not look deeper into their historical significance for Latino/a religious history. Far from exhaustive, this list is but a small sample of the academic work that has taken up the task of reflecting on the significance of these movements for the formative image of who we are as a nation.

In the past, the scholarly imagination emphasizes the events related to the Young Lords' chapter in New York City, overlooking the take-over of McCormick Seminary and the Armitage Street Methodist Church. Previously, I had followed the same path. This time, however, I will begin with the take-over of McCormick Seminary and the Armitage Street Church.

Young Lords, McCormick Seminary, and The People's Church at the Armitage Methodist Church

Wednesday, May 14, 1969, the Young Lords took over the Academic Administration building of McCormick Seminary! The Young Lords, alongside other community groups made 10 demands the previous week on May 7th. They demanded: funds for low-income housing and priority renting for poor and working class folks; a grant for community leadership program; and a Cultural Learning Center and funds for a Children Center. These demands came at the heels of an unfolding urban development projects by McCormick and DePaul, or as the Young Lords termed it, "urban removal program." The demands were met with a negative response. In the YLO paper vol. 1 no 2, we find the following words: "It is probably the first time in recent years in the USA when community residents, poor and working people, have seized and held a major community institution like McCormick for the purpose of gaining the fulfillment of a list of political and economic demands." Power Movements routinely practiced take-overs and walk-outs as a way to challenge the ruling organizational powers of community control.

The Young Lords' took over McCormick Seminary in an act of refusal to give in to the systematic erasure of the presence of Latinos/as in the surrounding Lincoln Park area in a time in which gentrification was pushing away low-income residents. Moreover, it was a push to hold accountable an institution whose basic role was to educate future clergy and challenge them to deal with everyday needs of the community where they existed. These daily needs included but were not limited to: affordable daycare for children, a soup kitchen for those struggling with access to adequate nutrition, affordable housing, and the curbing of gentrification as a preferred mode of expansion. Looking back, it should strike us as ironic that these once labeled revolutionary ideals by Power Movements are still serious needs today.

edited by Miguel A. De La Torre (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009). Elias Ortega-Aponte, *Raised fists in the Church!: Afro-Latino/a Practice Among the Young Lords Party: a Humanistic Spirituality Model for Radical Latino/a Religious Ethics*, PhD Dissertation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2011).

¹²Miguel A. De La Torre, *Latina/o Social Ethics: Moving Beyond Eurocentric Moral Thinking* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

In the end, several of these demands were met, as the Young Lords secured McCormick's commitment for a more responsible communal investment. Among these commitments were: 650k dollars to be invested in low-income housing; 25k to open a free health clinic and other funds to support legal support; and cultural preservation and promotion activities. Nevertheless, the most important outcome of the take-over was that it served as a reminder to what people working together can achieve.

The establishment of the *People's Church* in the Armitage Street Methodist Church followed a different path than the McCormick Seminary take-over but was motivated by similar communal needs. In short, the Young Lords and the Methodist established a relation that allowed for a partnership invested in community development. In the *People's Church* one will find more than cultural events, health clinics, food and clothing programs. More importantly, grass-roots education programs aiming at political and historical conscientization about the place of Latinos/as in the United States of America will be found here. The correspondence between the Mid-North Association and Bishop Prior during the months of June and September, McCutcheon's letters from the City Council of Chicago of September 2 and 17 of 1969, and various letters from community supporters and detractors show a high level of contestation taking place between politicians, church structures, and community members. Various questions were raised. Should suburban dollars for missions be spent on subsidizing "gang related activities"?¹³ Does revolutionary art cheapen a church wall and transforms it from a space of peaceful spiritual cove into a space to be feared? Should a church, otherwise empty during weekdays, use its space for community service? What is the role of a church in a local community? These among other challenging questions pepper these letters. Carl G. Mettling, at the time Superintendent of Chicago Northern district, Northern Illinois Conference of the Methodist Church wrote, "The Church has an unavoidable responsibility to the youth of Chicago on which it dare not turn its back, a responsibility to give not only the cup of cold water in Christ's name, but to aid in the search and struggle for a more humane society for all." Although the Armitage church was returned within a few months, the relation between the church and the Young Lords lasted for several years. The church was a center of leftist politics in the area. Moreover, Cha-Cha Jimenez, the Young Lords Chairperson led various forms of programming in the Armitage Church for various years.¹⁴

Let me give you a glimpse of a particular occasion, the celebration of the life and death of Reverend Bruce Johnson and his spouse Eugenia, a couple supportive of the Young Lords and tragically assassinated in 1969. During the funeral, the liturgists Sergio Herrero and Robert Wulff took those in attendance the following antiphonal reading of which I include a portion below:

A new people have emerged. The church is renewed. Not sometime. Not tomorrow. The victory is now...The Gospel is recovered, the laity are rising up. The task is coming clear. The People's Church is being born...

¹³These correspondences may be accessed through DePaul's Special Collections On-line Archives.

¹⁴Leonard G. Ramírez and Yenelli Flores, *Chicanas of 18th Street Narratives of a Movement from Latino Chicago* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

At a later point of this service we also witness the following reading:

The process of city justice continued to declare that poor people are a violation as they continue to harass the People's Day Care Center. ...We Stand open to the wholeness of life. We weep with those that weep. We rejoice with those that do rejoice. Lord we meet you as you were present in a man in the world...in the city...in the people...to you we offer the joy and sorrow of this day for transformation.

The Young Lords, NYC's People's Church

In December 1969, the *Young Lords Organization*, New York chapter, later the *Young Lords Party*, took over The First Spanish Methodist Church in Spanish Harlem. They occupied the sanctuary for two weeks. During this time, the organization established *The People's Church*. For this nascent organization, this happening proved a defining moment in their activism. For the community of *El Barrio*, this event brought to the larger public of New York and the nation the plight affecting their daily lives, capturing the attention of communication media and celebrities like Jane Fonda who visited the *People's Church*. It also marked a shift in the community's support for the radical organization that sought to champion the cause of the struggling community, and joining a tradition of radicalism in a time of the resurgence of Black Power. That most of the *muchachos/as* were from *el barrio*, second generation, largely Puerto Rican, and intercultural with the African-American community, exemplify the particular diasporic contours to this movement. Unlike the Armitage Street Church, the *People's Church* in NYC was short lived, lasting no more than a few weeks. Before the take-over, the Young Lords attempted to enter into conversations with the church to use the facilities during the times in which the church was not being used to run a daycare center, a soup kitchen, a free health clinic, and a host of other Serve the People Programs—which were routinely denied. Most of the church's membership was upwardly mobile Latinos/as who were able to leave *the barrio*, and who held a clear anti-communist/socialist stance. The relations with the Young Lords, a radical socialist organization, could only be but tense. In December the organization decided to take-over the building. After several days and tense stand-out with the police authorities, the Young Lords left the premises of the First Spanish Methodist Church. Nevertheless, the take-over was a catalyst in galvanizing community support for the Young Lords.

These two *People's Churches*, in spite of the similarities in aim and scope, namely, the service of the people and pushing local congregations to engage more actively within the community, present the distinctive ways in which ideas take root among particular communities. Although the NY chapter achieved more notable victories that were recorded in the national media, the Chicago chapter had a more lasting impact because of its more cultural and political savviness in their work with religious communities. Outcomes like this forces those of us who reflect in Latino/a communities to continually deepen our analysis of the intersections of race, geography, timelines, local histories, etc.

Reading the People's Church through Social Movement Theory: Some Considerations

Nineteen sixty nine proved an auspicious year for religious and theological studies. This year served as the birthdate of sorts for what some may consider liberation theology's break into the scene in the United States of America, continuing the push initiated by radical activism during the post-civil rights years and radical activism. The decades of the 1960's and 70's saw the publication of foundational texts to the movement that went on to be known as liberation theology(ies). Among these texts figure Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), Mary Daly's *Church and the Second Sex* (1968), James Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969), *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970), and Gustavo Gutierrez' *A Theology of Liberation* (1971). Among the themes that entered into and transformed the theological and religious discourse during these years are those of *the preferential option for the poor*, *concientization*, a nascent critique of sexism and patriarchy within the religious bodies and in society at large, and the rethinking of God as *Black*.¹⁵

Locating the take-over of the *Armitage Street Church* and *The First Spanish Methodist Church* attempts not to inscribe the event as part of historiography of Liberation Theology. Although the possible theoretical provocations such an attempt might stir may prove a tempting exercise, it would be disingenuous and dismissive of the drastic changes which took place in the 1960's. It is because of the wave of liberation movements unfolding during this time, and in light of the way in which the Young Lords Organization justified the creation of the *People's Church*, as a way to teach the church how to be church, that calls for attention to it alongside the history of Liberation Theology in general and Latino/a Theology in particular.

I read both of these instantiations of the *People's Church* through a conceptualization of dissent derived from sociological studies of social movements and contentious political studies.¹⁶ To understand this, I present a notion of dissent that will help navigate a way forward. What I see at play in both of the *People's Churches* is the creation of political actors and activation of contentious politics that branch into different paths. What is dissent and why is it helpful in thinking the importance of the *People's Church*? I see this notion of dissent primarily as being composed of four elements, although other configurations are possible. These elements are (1) oppositional consciousness, (2) framing, (3) political actors, and (4) contentious

¹⁵This is a good point to remembering the warning issued by Fredric Jameson in his 1981, *The Political Unconscious* and take it as a cautionary note that, scholars often come late but claim first finds as it pertain to ideas carrying social innovation. However, it should be recognized that many if not most of the liberatory insights of *Liberation Theology* were fermenting at a popular level before brewed into academic discourse, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), see chapters 1 and 2.

¹⁶To date, there is not an unified theory of dissent in the study social movements and contentious politics. Various approaches, however, enjoy a degree of preeminence among this complex and fast expanding field. My intent then is to incorporate from this field those elements that I find enable an adequate understanding of the dynamics of dissent to facilitate the argument I am presenting in this article. Some representative work in social movements and contentious politics are: Charles Tilly y Sidney G. Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, y Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contentions* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (New York, NY: The Cambridge University Press, 2003), Francesca Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

politics. Dissenters come to know the world in ways that interpose a different understanding of reality to current situations, are open and searching for new forms of knowing, and act in ways that challenge the status quo.¹⁷ The term “oppositional consciousness” names this understanding, and refers to a subjective dimension in which subjects from oppressed groups develop mental states (cognitions) in response to their oppressive realities that motivate them to challenge and undermine systems of oppression.¹⁸ In the case of the Young Lords, we can see these elements at work when they encounter particular social needs that religious organizations may be equipped to provide, often say that they will, but do not fully engage the community in meeting said needs.

Framing stands as an intermediary process between oppositional consciousness and the becoming of political actors. It refers to the practices by which individuals, groups, and/or communities use ideational and emotional resources to offer an account of particular events and to encourage certain actions.¹⁹ As an intermediary process, framing facilitates the transition into political actors of potentially dissenting subjects who understand their world through an oppositional consciousness.²⁰ The coming together of these two elements encourages the political actors to emerge.²¹ We can see the process of framing at work in the juxtaposition of the *People's Church* and the local church. Who is the church supposed to serve if not the people? The framing of a local church in said matter then ups the stakes of the work needed to be done and who is going to do it.

Belonging to a minoritized group is part and parcel of the stratification of societies in which practices of domination assist the organization of society and the partition of

¹⁷Latin American philosophy has developed this concept, perhaps more clearly than the sociological sources used in this work. For Latin American philosophy understanding the particular historical situation of the continent as it deals and free itself from the legacy of colonialism, the rise of nation-states, and the challenging of the elite that led to the resurgence of populist movements put at the center historical agency, subjects that know and act according to the exigencies of their situation.

¹⁸For studies that explore aspects of the role of cognition, politics, and social movements see Matthew D. Lieberman, Darren Schreiber and Kevin N. Ochsner, "Is Political Cognition Like Riding a Bicycle? How Cognitive Neuroscience Can Inform Research on Political Thinking," *Political Psychology* 24, no. 4 (2003): 681-704, Steven A Peterson, "Biology and Political Socialization: A Cognitive Developmental Link?," *Political Psychology* 4, no. 2 (1983): 265-288, James M. Jasper, "The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and Around Social Movements," *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 3 (1998): 397-424, Paul DiMaggio, "Culture and Cognition," *Annual review of sociology* 23, no. 1 (1997): 263-287, Ronald N. Giere and Barton Moffatt, "Distributed Cognition: Where the Cognitive and the Social Merge," *Social studies of science* 33, no. 2 (2003): 301, Andrew Jamison, "Social Movements and Science: Cultural Appropriations of Cognitive Praxis," *Science as Culture* 15, no. 1 (2006): 45-59, Drew Westen, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007).

¹⁹*Framing's* centrality to the reality of *dissent* is based on its epistemological power. As dissent requires new ways of both, knowing realities and the choosing of practices to enact change, knowledge then, and the mechanisms given rise to it gain central importance.

²⁰My assumption here is that having *dissenting thoughts*, or some knowledge of hidden realities and insights into the nature of oppression, does not automatically leads to the formation of dissenters. A transition from possible dissenters to political actors is necessary in order to talk about dissent and dissenters. However, this is not to imply that agents cannot move in and out of *dissent*. It is possible that some subjects may continually engage in acts of dissent while others do so occasionally.

²¹See Hank Johnston edited volume *Culture, Social Movements, and Protest*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009). This collection of essays makes use of the theory of *framing* to understand social movements. .

its resources. Therefore, oppositional consciousness requires that individuals identify themselves as belonging to a group negatively affected by a dominant group that subjects them to asymmetrical relations and distribution of social goods.²² There are various ways in which identification with an oppressed group takes place. Identification with oppressed groups may be either imposed, chosen, or mobilized as one of the individual or group possible constitutive identities.²³ These various forms of identification, whether through external imposition, self-choice, or an appropriation for political mobilization, point to the understanding that identities are fluid social constructs subject to modification and mobilization as individuals and groups see fit. Specific circumstances and contexts allow for an element of unknown possibilities that may be actualized through the unfolding of various encounters. Ultimately, identities are not fully under the control of individuals or groups. There are usually surprising developments that may influence the shape of particular identities.²⁴

Fueled by indignation over the experience of injustice, oppositional consciousness may lead individuals and groups toward becoming political actors. It is important to keep in mind that we need not assume a direct link between oppositional consciousness and political action. When an individual or a group feels indignation over their subordinated status and therefore moves to identify, condemn, and critique (a private as

²²I find useful Jane Mansbridge's definition of oppositional consciousness as: "Oppositional consciousness as we define it is an empowering mental state that prepares members of an oppressed group to act to undermine, reform, or overthrow a system of human domination. It is usually fueled by righteous anger over injustices done to the group and prompted by personal indignity and harms suffered through one's group membership. At a minimum, oppositional consciousness includes the elements of identifying with members of a subordinate group, identifying injustices done to that group, opposing those injustices, and seeing the group as having a shared interest in ending or diminishing those injustices. A more full-fledge oppositional consciousness includes identifying a specific dominant group as causing and in some way benefiting from those injustices. It also includes seeing certain actions of the dominant group as forming a 'system' of some kind that advances the interests of the dominant group. Finally, it can include a host of other ideas, beliefs, and feelings that provide coherence, explanation, and moral condemnation. See her "The Making of Oppositional Consciousness." In *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest*, edited by Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 4-5. However, I also wish to maintain a critical distance from this definition because it relies solely on an identity politics understanding of what identities are and thus may end up in a reification of group identities and not accounting for dissenting identities formed in opposition to the subordinate group identity or that challenge and seek to redirect a particular subordinated group identity through particular acts of framing. As it pertains to *contentious politics* see Charles Tilly, *Why? What Happens When People Give Reasons... And Why*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006) 4-11.

²³That identities may be given, chosen, or taken out of political motivation is useful when we think about identity politics' problem of handling the differences between race and ethnicity particularly in the U.S.A. context.

²⁴Here I am largely following Tilly and Tarrow's view of identity as being composed of four elements: "(1) a boundary separating me from you or us from them, (2) a set of relating within the boundary, (3) a set of relations across the boundary, and (4) shared understandings of the boundary and the relations." However, I am not in full agreement with Tilly and Tarrow's conceptualization of *political* identities resulting from government awareness of these identities. It is my estimation that this view operates within a narrow understanding of politics as relying solely in government's' acknowledgement of appropriate ways of being but also as limiting and setting the construction of boundary formations central to identity to pre-political process outside of contentious politics. See Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 78-9.

opposed to a public critique) the practices of the dominant groups does not necessarily mean that the individual or group would act politically. In fact, the group may restrict its actions to the civic arena without engaging in overt acts of dissent. When combined, oppositional consciousness and acts of framing birth political actors. In political actors, we have individuals or groups that develop a political identity that will move them to act contentiously. Political actors, therefore, collectively make and receive contentious claims that bear their interests and those of others.²⁵

When political actors, bearers of oppositional consciousness (applied through various framings and frames), engage in contentious politics one sees the coming together of three elements of social life, elements that Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow describe as follows: (1) contention—making and receiving claims, ranging from requests to demands, that impact someone's interests and the distribution of socially available resources; (2) collective action—namely the process of coordination efforts in support of a shared interest, which is not necessarily but may be contentious in nature; and (3) politics—through the interactions of claimants with governments.²⁶

As this pertains to the Young Lords, we can see that they reframe the meanings of "church" in social environments in which, as institutions, congregations were not fully active for the benefit of the people at large. It is important to keep in mind that the Young Lords did not see their actions as supporting or promoting Christianization; rather, they saw their actions as living out what they understood as the radical meaning of the Christian message: the bringing of good news of salvation and liberation. Moreover, the *People's Church* welcomed the real necessity of wading through multiple, and at times competing, interpretations toward revisioning. The mission of the *People's Church* in Armigate Street and later in Lexington and 111th Street in NY was to serve the people free of charge: to care for children, to provide meaningful education, to make available food and medical service.

ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

DePaul University, "The DePaul Community Collection,"

<http://libservices.org/contentdm/community.php>

*These collections make available important Lincoln Park Neighborhood materials. In addition, the *Young Lords Collection* at the DePaul offer access to the Young Lords Newspaper, *Pa'Lante* as well as other resources.

Grand Valley State University, "The Young Lords in Lincoln Park,"

<http://www.gvsu.edu/library/specialcollections/young-lords-in-lincoln-park-22.htm>

*This digital collection makes available a wide range of oral histories.

[This article was translated into Spanish by Néstor Medina]

²⁵Tilly and Tarrow allow for a wide range of what may be considered a political actor, included among them are, government agents, police, non-government actors, neighborhood groups, among others. Their qualification as political actors rest on their "making claims, receiving claims, or both. Political actors regularly form, change, and disappear," Tilly 4653 and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 4, 74.

²⁶Ibid., 4-5.

Los Young Lords y la iglesia del pueblo: Teoría de movimientos sociales, hablando del impacto de los movimientos de poder marrones sobre la historia religiosa Latina.

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Resumen

En este artículo, yo argumento sobre la importancia de incorporar el estudio del radicalismo latino/a en el terreno de la historia religiosa latino/a. Grupos radicales latinos/as como los Young Lords/Partido Young Lords que criticaban la religiosidad latino/a pretendían exponer la brecha entre la praxis de las comunidades de fe y sus afirmaciones de fe a través de la perspectiva del activismo radical. Una consideración del compromiso de los Young Lords/Partido Young Lords con las instituciones religiosas puede brindar ideas para la teorización de la historia religiosa latino/a desde afuera de los límites creados por prácticas religiosas, pero aún influenciado por el espíritu de comunidad religiosa.

• SEE PAGE 66 FOR ENGLISH VERSION •

Reflexionando acerca de la exhibición en la Universidad DePaul titulada *Radicals in Black and Brown (Los Radicales en negro y marrón)* en el 2008, Martha Arguello, en su artículo "Sisters, Brothers, Young Lords A Common Cause: 40 Years of Struggle and Remembrance," (Hermanas, hermanos, Young Lords, una causa común: 40 años de lucha y recuerdo) dijo lo siguiente: "antes de salir de Chicago, yo revisé las fotos presentadas en DePaul. La imágenes décadas de viejas me recordaron que los asuntos por los cuales peleamos tan vehementemente hace 40 años, aún son importantes; la sociedad justa que imaginábamos está aún por llegar." Para aquellas personas invertidas en el trabajo de justicia y educación de justicia social, el estar involucradas en prácticas críticas retrospectivas debería simultáneamente afirmar la importancia continua de estar comprometidos/as a una liberación y empoderamiento comunal, y también animar a minar el pasado para que informe esfuerzos futuros. Dicha manera de pensar fomentada nuevamente por la reflexión en la historia, las contribuciones, y las

limitaciones de movimientos sociales resalta la importancia de episodios de agitación y organización no como parte de las narrativas comunales aceptadas en particular, sino como una cartografía utópica que prefigura espacios de futuras intervenciones. De la misma manera de la que el pasado deja sus huellas sin preconditionar el presente, el futuro comienza a tomar forma en el ahora. Personalmente, mi propio repensar de eventos pasados en la historia religiosa Latino/a me lleva a los movimientos de Poder Marrón, y particularmente a los Young Lords, como un área de involucramiento y de aporte crítico para el estudio de las tradiciones religiosas Latinas.

En este ensayo, mis esfuerzos están dirigidos a aprovechar de lo que tomo como las contribuciones en potencia del estudio de grupos radicales Latinos/as como la Organización Young Lords / el Partido Young Lords (O/PYL) para el estudio de la historia religiosa Latina.¹ El legado de los movimientos sociales radicales sigue siendo un terreno disputado en donde la memoria, archivos, y testigos contribuyen ricos materiales para ser interpretados.² Hasta hoy, el campo de los Estudios Religiosos Latinos/as han dado consideración primaria a aquellos movimientos que tienen fuertes vínculos o que están directamente asociados con tradiciones religiosas. Al priorizar el estudio de las historias de los movimientos sociales estrechamente ligados a las tradiciones religiosas, la gente que los formó y las comunidades a las que sirvieron dejaron las historias de los movimientos sociales no religiosos Latinos/as grandemente inexploradas. El argumento que estaré ofreciendo afirma la necesidad de continuar la tarea de analizar los movimientos sociales religiosos Latinos/as y sus contribuciones a la religiosidad Latino/a mientras también busca enfatizar la necesidad de contribuciones que buscan teorizar *la lucha* como es vivida por activismo secular Latino/a. Además, mi objetivo es llamar la atención a como estos movimientos radicales pueden proveer recursos para la teorización de la acción social como una praxis espiritual radical.³ Mi intención es reflexionar sobre las ideas que se pueden obtener al involucrarse con una organización que ha sido muy crítica de las instituciones religiosas Latinas. Estas críticas, como lo explicaré más adelante, fueron dirigidas a lo que la O/PYL percibía

¹Como organización, los Young Lords tenían dos sucursales principales, la sucursal en Chicago, que se le reconocía como la original, y por lo mismo el rostro nacional. Esta sucursal se autodenominó la Young Lords Organization (Organización de los Young Lords). Y la sucursal de Nueva York, que comenzó con el mismo nombre pero eventualmente rompió con la sucursal de Chicago y, eventualmente, se auto nombró el Young Lords Party (Partido de los Young Lords).

² Para un análisis excelente acerca de la interpretación de archivos y de dar voz a aquellas comunidades que a menudo están ausentes de la creación de la historia en recuentos archivísticos, ver los trabajos de Jeannette A. Bastian "The records of memory, the archives of identity: celebrations, texts and archival sensibilities." *Archival Science* 13, no. 2-3 (2013): 121-131 and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

³ Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina religious-political activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2005). Luis D. León, *The Political Spirituality of Cesar Chavez: Crossing Religious Borders* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014). Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio P. Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, *Latino religions and civic activism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Loida I. Martell-Otero, Zaida Maldonado Pérez, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, *Latina Evangelicas: A Theological Survey from the Margins* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

como una brecha entre lo que instituciones religiosas clamaban como su meta y lo que la organización radical entendía por las acciones de estas organizaciones—la disociación proverbial entre la teoría y la praxis. En un curioso giro de eventos, la estrategia que la O/PYL empleó buscaba modelar como ser una iglesia radical del pueblo. Para la O/PYL esto significó que el trabajo de la iglesia, además de los rituales religiosos, debía de ser participación activa en la educación política, las artes, y de suplir las necesidades diarias tales como nutrición adecuada, cuidado de niños/as, y atención médica como componentes integrales. La Iglesia del Pueblo era un experimento utópico de las posibilidades liberadoras de la religión sin vínculos al statu quo.

¿Quiénes eran los/as Young Lords? y ¿Por qué pensaron que era necesario crear un espacio dentro de los confines de dos iglesias locales, para dar a luz iglesias para el pueblo?⁴ Al final de los 1960, era claro que la era de los Derechos Civiles tendría que ser reemplazada por una clase diferente de movilización política, a pesar de sus victorias en muchos frentes que promovieron el aumento de derechos civiles como el voto, una medida de ascendencia social para algunos segmentos de las comunidades marginadas, y un mínimo de acceso educativo previamente prohibido por la política de la era de segregación. Frente a la reacción conservadora en contra de la era de movilización de los derechos civiles, las estrategias políticas que no se invirtieron y sospecharon de la limitada políticas integracionistas burbujearon para formar el panorama político de la década siguiente. Estas organizaciones nacientes aprendieron de cómo sus predecesores fueron tratados, de que el racismo y el capitalismo luchaban en contra de la no violencia con agresión, y optaban por oponerse usando otros medios si eran necesarios para mantener el poder blanco y la supremacía. En lo particular, el brazo policíaco del estado apuntaba la mayoría de sus ataques a las personas de color y las comunidades empobrecidas—las amenazas a la prosperidad y al orden se atribuían a las agitaciones en las comunidades de color, que necesitaban que se les recordara quien estaba a cargo.⁵ El poder de la balota ganado por la gente de color no se sobreponía al uso de las balas en contra de las comunidades marginadas. La agonía de la guerra de Vietnam en el frente oriental traslado su geografía a los Estados Unidos de América. La consciencia de la sobre representación de hombres de color en los esfuerzos de guerra, los niveles de drogadicción como resultado directo de la guerra, y la traición de promesas a los veteranos que regresaban, contribuyó a solidificar las sospechas que la integración completa de las personas de color al sueño democrático de los Estados Unidos de América era más un espejismo que una realidad. Pero también significó que nuevos conocimientos adquiridos por el entrenamiento militar serían usados para la militancia.⁶ Es en contra de esta situación que el Black Panthers Party (Partido de las

⁴ El término “el pueblo” se presta a muchas definiciones y disputas; Darren Enck-Wanzer provee una análisis comprehensivo del término en relación a los Young Lords en su libro *The New York Young Lords and the Struggle for Liberation* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2015).

⁵ See Khalil Gibran Muhammad *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁶ La transición de la militar a la militancia entre veteranos de color puede ser rastreada en las varias movilizaciones políticas por veteranos, a menudo como protectores de las comunidades. Desde la primera guerra mundial, la segunda guerra mundial y la guerra de Vietnam, los veteranos han contribuido a las organizaciones de grupos como *Students Nonviolent Coordinated Committee* (SNCC) (El Comité

Panteras Negras) surgió como una vanguardia revolucionaria de la que otras organizaciones como las Brown Berets (Boinas Marrones) y los Young Lords tomaron ideas en sus esfuerzos de organización en sus comunidades.⁷

Las actividades de los Young Lords a finales de los 1960 y a mediados de los 1970 provocaron el establecimiento de varias sucursales en Chicago, Nueva York, y Filadelfia. Desde su fuerte y humilde comienzo como pandillas territoriales en las frías calles de Chicago, los Young Lords surgieron como un movimiento electrificante que capturaba la imaginación social de los miembros de la comunidad durante su tiempo de existencia y continúan dando energía al activismo Latino/a hoy. A través de una organización de puerta en puerta, iniciativas de acción directa, programas de servicio a la comunidad, los Young Lords pudieron instigar opciones de vida para las comunidades Latinas en los bordes del poder. Sus acciones estaban dirigidas a combatir la falta de respuesta por los establecimientos a la problemática de las comunidades en varios barrios en todos los Estados Unidos de América. Por medio de organización comunitaria, la traducción de la ideología del Poder Negro al servicio de los/as Latinos/as, y la incorporación de educación política tomada de combatientes por la libertad como Don Pedro Albizu Campos, ellos buscaban radicalizar las comunidades Latinas en varios centros urbanos, geográficamente localizados mayormente en el centro oeste o en la costa este en los Estados Unidos de América, y en gran parte de ascendencia puertorriqueña. Los/as Young Lords incluían Latinos/as de otros orígenes étnicos, nacionales y/o raciales, pero también contaban entre sus miembros un número significativo de afro-americanos. La práctica de aceptar miembros de otras comunidades étnicas/raciales era reflexión no solamente de una composición étnica/racial y nivel de interculturación con afro-americanos en las ciudades con una presencia Latino/a significativa, sino que también apuntaba hacia las dimensiones internacionalistas del Radicalismo Negro.⁸

Coordinado No-Violento de Estudiantes), y el *Deacons for Self-Defense* (Díaconos para la Defensa Propia), entre otros grupos. Ellos proveían liderazgo y conocimiento táctico esencial para la autodefensa de la comunidad. Ver Charles E. Cobbs, *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

⁷ Para un tratamiento histórico de la subida y disminución del Poder Negro, ver Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006). Joseph también ha escrito acerca de las contribuciones y conexiones del Poder Negro a otras comunidades de color. También Jennifer G. Correa ofrece un análisis excelente de las intersecciones entre clase, raza, sexismo y las formas en que el estado se puede movilizar para neutralizar organizaciones radicales. Ver su "The Targeting of the East Los Angeles Brown Berets by a Racial Patriarchal Capitalist State: Merging Intersectionality and Social Movement Research." *Critical Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2011): 83-101.

⁸ Un relato completo de la Organización y el Partido de los Young Lords va más allá del alcance de mi ensayo. Además de las fuentes primarias disponibles en la Universidad DePaul, El Centro en la City University de Nueva York, y la Universidad Estatal Grand Valley, proveen trabajos detallados acerca de los Young Lords: Johanna Fernández, *Radicals in the late 1960s: a history of the Young Lords Party in New York City, 1969-1974*, PhD Dissertation (New York: Columbia University, 2004); Iris Morales, Ana Celia Zentella, and Patria Rodriguez, *Palante, siempre palante!: the Young Lords* (New York, NY: SubCine, distributor, 2009); Miguel Meléndez, *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights With the Young Lords* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003); and Darrel Enck-Wanzer, *The Young Lords: A Reader*

Soy un investigador enfocado principalmente en la intersección entre la sociología de la religión y la teoría cultural, y con interés particular en los movimientos sociales. A este fin, los Young Lords ofrecen un interesante contrapunteo a los ritmos de las nacientes teologías de la liberación que surgieron al mismo tiempo en que estos últimos estaban activos. El levantamiento de la teología de la Liberación y los Movimientos de Poder coinciden en las escenas sociales, políticas e intelectuales. Más que una coincidencia o un fenómeno curioso, esta intersección da testimonio de un tiempo de mayor lucha social y empuje en contra de la estructuración de una sociedad promovida por las fuerzas del capitalismo y su posterior militarización de la sociedad. Mientras sus tácticas y las maneras en que dieron forma a las comunidades difieren, se puede decir que la teología de la Liberación y los Movimientos de Poder comparten la preocupación por los/as “más pequeños/as”. Este ensayo es una contribución inicial que reflexiona acerca de la intersección entre estas dos corrientes de pensamiento radical y vida revolucionaria. Y representa una oportunidad para deducir posibles estrategias para pensar de nuevo acerca de la interconexión entre compromisos religiosos, prácticas espirituales, e involucramientos cívicos. El analizar la trayectoria de los Young Lords desde una perspectiva religiosa nos permite sonsacar las razones por las que ambos eran críticos y afirmaban las potencialidades de las comunidades religiosas. Aun si los Young Lords no se identificaban completamente con las prácticas religiosas Latinas, uno puede entender que lo que ofrecían era un humanismo religioso abierto a la influencia e importancia de la religión en la vida de las personas, pero no completamente atado a las cuestiones doctrinales y la participación religiosa. En cambio, el humanismo religioso que veo en los Young Lords era uno enfocado en las formas populares de religiosidad, un tema central en los estudios académicos religiosos Latinos/as, y una fuente de espiritualidad radical que impulsó acciones políticas. La escolaridad religiosa Latina reconoce la dimensión política y transgresora de la religiosidad popular.

El estudio de los Young Lords conectado a la religión presenta interesantes posibilidades de las cuales nombraré tres: 1) una forma que supera la inspiración occidental de dividir lo secular y lo religioso; 2) la fecundidad de los significantes religiosos al operar afuera de sus particulares religiosos aprovechando las redes más grandes de significaciones, y 3) la contribución de los Movimientos de Poder para inspirar las dimensiones religiosas al activismo. Esta última posibilidad asume que la religión no es algo que existe por sí misma, allá afuera, sino que quizás puedan ser mejor como conjunto de prácticas que incorporan múltiples tradiciones y cosmovisiones que sufren continuas transformaciones.⁹ De estas tres, este ensayo responde al tercer punto a través de un análisis de las iniciativas de los Young Lords que dieron a luz a dos distintas *Iglesias del Pueblo*: La *Iglesia del Pueblo* de los Young Lords in Chicago y Nueva York. Después ofreceré mis comentarios basados en la teoría de movimientos

(New York: New York University Press, 2010). En términos de la extensión del Radicalismo Negro en la escena internacional ver, Diane Carol Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) and Yuichiro Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism : Afro-Asian Solidarity in Twentieth-century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

⁹Ver el trabajo de Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived religion faith and practice in everyday life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

sociales, de las posibles líneas de investigación que esto pueda abrir.

La Iglesia del Pueblo de los Young Lords

Para aquellos/as de nosotros/as interesados/as en el estudio académico de los Movimientos de Poder y en particular en los Young Lords, los últimos años han sido emocionantes. Un nuevo interés en las décadas de los 1960s y 1970s ha hecho relucir trabajos que resaltan otras dimensiones de los movimientos, como lo es el papel que las mujeres jugaron. Entre mis favoritos trabajos que discuten los Young Lords están *Do you Want to Start a Revolution* de Kamozi Woodard's; *Chicana Power!* de Maylai Blackwell; *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left* de Laura Pulido; y *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of the US Third World Left* de Cynthia Young. Un número de artículos importantes han sido también publicados como las reflexiones de Darrel Enck-Wanzer acerca de la *ofensiva de basura* de los Young Lords y el análisis del poder retórico del "pueblo."¹⁰

En lo que respecta a los Young Lords y la religión, mi propio artículo en la Enciclopedia Hispana de la Religión (2009) acerca de los Young Lords presenta como las acciones de los Young Lords antes y después de la Iglesia del Pueblo provee recursos para empujar la ética Latina hacia una dirección de disidencia. Yo persigo esta dirección más de lleno en mi disertación titulada *Raised Fists in the Church! Afro-latino/a Praxis among the Young Lords Party (Puños levantados en la iglesia! La praxis afro-latino/a entre los Young Lords)*. En ella sugerí formas en las que entendí que contribuían al desarrollo continuo de éticos cristianos Latinos/as.¹¹ En su *Latina/o Social Ethics: Moving Beyond Eurocentric Moral Thinking*, Miguel De La Torre también hace referencia a los Young Lords.¹² En sus lecturas, él propone que los Young Lords son importantes para entender como los/as Latinos/as piensan acerca de la ética Cristiana, pero él no ve más a fondo su significado histórico para la historia religiosa Latina. Lejos de ser exhaustiva, esta lista es una pequeña muestra del trabajo académico que ha tomado la tarea de reflexionar sobre el significado de estos movimientos para la imagen formativa de quienes somos como nación.

En el pasado, la imaginación erudita ha enfatizado los eventos relacionados con el capítulo de la ciudad de Nueva York de los Young Lords, pasando por alto la toma de control del Seminario de McCormick y la Iglesia Metodista de la calle Armitage (Chicago). Previamente yo había seguido el mismo camino. Esta vez, sin embargo, comenzaré con la toma de control del Seminario de McCormick y la Iglesia Metodista de

¹⁰Darrel Enck-Wanzer, "Trashing the System: Social Movement, Intersectional Rhetoric, and Collective Agency in the Young Lords Organization's Garbage Offensive," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92 No.2 (2006): 174-201; y "Decolonizing Imaginaries: Rethinking; 'the People' in the Young Lords' Church Offensive," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98 No. 1(2012): 1-23.

¹¹Elías Ortega-Aponte, "The Young Lords People's Church," in *Hispanic American Religious Cultures*, edited by Miguel A. De La Torre (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009). Elías Ortega-Aponte, *Raised fists in the Church!: Afro-Latino/a Practice Among the Young Lords Party: a Humanistic Spirituality Model for Radical Latino/a Religious Ethics*, PhD Dissertation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2011).

¹²Miguel A. De La Torre, *Latina/o Social Ethics: Moving Beyond Eurocentric Moral Thinking* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

la calle Armitage (Chicago).

Los Young Lords, el Seminario McCormick, y la Iglesia del Pueblo en la Iglesia Metodista de la calle Armitage

Miércoles 14, 1969, los Young Lords tomaron control del edificio de administración académica del Seminario McCormick! La semana anterior en Mayo 7, los Young Lords junto con otros grupos comunitarios hicieron diez demandas. Ellos demandaron: fondos para la vivienda de bajos ingresos y prioridad de alquiler para los pobres y gente de clase trabajadora; una subvención para un programa de liderazgo comunitario; y un centro de aprendizaje cultural y fondos para un centro de niños. Estas demandas llegaron en los talones de un despliegue de proyectos por el Seminario McCormick y la Universidad DePaul, o como los Young Lords lo llamaron, “el programa de desalojo urbano.” Las demandas recibieron una respuesta negativa. En el periódico YLO (Young Lords Organization) volumen 1, no. 2, encontramos las siguientes palabras: “es probablemente la primera vez en los últimos años que en los E.E.U.U. residentes pobres y gente trabajadora de la comunidad han tomado control de una importante institución en la comunidad como McCormick con el propósito de obtener el cumplimiento de una lista de demandas políticas y económicas.” Era la práctica rutinaria de los movimientos de poder de tomar control y de abandonos (de lugares) como maneras de desafiar los poderes de organización gobernantes de control de la comunidad.

Los Young Lords tomaron control del Seminario McCormick como un hecho de rehusarse a ceder a la supresión de la presencia Latina en el entorno del Parque Lincoln, en un tiempo cuando la gentrificación (elitismo residencial) estaba desplazando a los residentes de bajos ingresos. Además, era un empuje para responsabilizar una institución cuyo papel básico era educar al futuro clero y desafiarles a lidiar con las necesidades diarias de las comunidades donde existían. Esas necesidades diarias incluían pero no estaban limitadas a: guarderías asequibles para niños, un comedor de beneficencia para aquellos luchando con acceso a nutrición adecuada, vivienda asequible, y la restricción de la gentrificación como modo preferido de expansión. En retrospectiva, nos parecería irónico que estos ideales una vez etiquetados como revolucionarios por los movimientos de poder siguen siendo serias necesidades hoy en día.

Al final, varias de estas demandas fueron cumplidas, porque los Young Lords aseguraron el compromiso del Seminario McCormick a una inversión comunitaria más responsablemente. Entre estos compromisos se encontraban: 650 mil dólares para ser invertidos en viviendas de bajos ingresos; 25 mil dólares para abrir una clínica de salud gratuita y otros fondos para apoyo jurídico; y actividades de preservación y promoción cultural. Sin embargo, el resultado más importante de la toma de posesión fue que sirvió como recordatorio de lo que las personas que trabajan juntas pueden lograr.

El establecimiento de la *Iglesia del Pueblo* en la Iglesia Metodista de la calle Armitage siguió un camino diferente que la toma de control del Seminario McCormick, pero fue motivado por necesidades comunitarias similares. En breve, los Young Lords y los metodistas establecieron una relación que les permitió una asociación invertida en el desarrollo comunitario. En la *Iglesia del Pueblo*, uno encontraría más que eventos

culturales, clínicas de salud, y programas de comida y ropa. Lo que es más importante, se encontrarían programas de educación de base enfocadas en la concientización política e histórica del lugar de los/as Latinos/as en los Estados Unidos de América. La correspondencia entre la Asociación Mid-North y Bishop Prior durante los meses de junio a septiembre, las cartas de McCutcheon del Ayuntamiento de Chicago en septiembre 2 y 17 de 1969, y varias cartas de partidarios y detractores de la comunidad muestran un alto nivel de disputa entre políticos, las estructuras de la iglesia y miembros de la comunidad. Se plantearon varias preguntas. ¿Deberían dólares suburbanos para misiones gastarse para subsidiar “actividades relacionadas con las pandillas”?¹³ ¿Son las paredes de la iglesia abaratadas y transformadas de ser un espacio de espiritualidad pacífica a un espacio para tener miedo por el arte revolucionaria? ¿Debería la iglesia usar su espacio para servicio a la comunidad durante los días de semana cuando está vacía? ¿Cuál es el papel de la iglesia en la comunidad local? Estas entre otras preguntas desafiantes llenan estas cartas. Carl G. Mettling, quien era entonces el superintendente del distrito norte de Chicago, de la conferencia del norte de Illinois de la iglesia metodista, escribió, “la iglesia tiene la responsabilidad inevitable a la juventud de Chicago, a quienes no se atreve a darles la espalda, una responsabilidad a darles no solamente el vaso de agua fría en el nombre de Cristo, sino de ayudar en la búsqueda y la lucha por una sociedad más humana para todos.” A pesar de que la iglesia de Armitage fue retornada en unos meses, la relación entre la iglesia y los Young Lords duró varios años. La iglesia fue un centro de políticas izquierdistas en el área. Además, Cha-Cha Jiménez, el presidente de los Young Lords dirigió varias clases de programas en la iglesia de Armitage por varios años.¹⁴

Déjenme darles un vistazo de una ocasión particular, la celebración de la vida y muerte del Reverendo Bruce Johnson y su esposa Eugenia, una pareja que apoyó a los Young Lords y que fueron trágicamente asesinados en 1969. Durante el funeral, los liturgistas Sergio Herrero y Robert Wulff invitaron a los asistentes a que siguieran la lectura antifonal, de la que incluyo una porción abajo:

Un nuevo pueblo ha surgido. La iglesia es renovada. No en algún momento. No mañana. La Victoria es ahora... El evangelio es recobrado, el laicado se está levantando. La tarea se está esclareciendo. La iglesia del pueblo está naciendo...

En un punto posterior de este servicio también se presencia la siguiente lectura:

El proceso de justicia en la ciudad continuó declarando que la gente pobre es una violación mientras continúan acosando la guardería del pueblo. ...Nos abrimos a la plenitud de la vida. Lloramos con los/as que lloran. Nos regocijamos con los/as que se regocijan. Señor nos encontramos contigo como si estuvieras presente en un hombre en el mundo...en la ciudad...en el pueblo...te ofrecemos el gozo y el dolor de este día para una

¹³Esta correspondencia puede ser accedida por medio de la Colección Especial de Archivos en Línea de la Universidad DePaul.

¹⁴See Leonard G. Ramírez and Yenelli Flores, *Chicanas of 18th Street Narratives of a Movement from Latino Chicago* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

transformación.

Los Young Lords y la Iglesia del Pueblo de Nueva York

En diciembre 1969, el capítulo de Nueva York de la *Organización de los Young Lords*, eventualmente llamado *el Partido de los Young Lords*, tomó control de la Primera Iglesia Metodista Española en el Harlem Español. Ellos ocuparon el santuario por dos semanas. Durante este tiempo, la organización estableció la *Iglesia del Pueblo*. Para esta organización naciente, este hecho probó ser un momento definitivo en su activismo. Para la comunidad del *Barrio*, este evento trajo al público más grande de Nueva York y la nación la situación difícil que afectaba su vida diaria, capturando la atención de los medios de comunicación y celebridades como Jane Fonda, quien visitó la *Iglesia del Pueblo*. También marcó un giro en el apoyo de la comunidad por una organización radical que buscaba defender la causa de la comunidad en lucha, y unirse a la tradición del radicalismo en un tiempo de resurgimiento del Poder Negro. Que la mayoría de los *muchachos/as* eran del *barrio*, segunda generación, mayormente puertorriqueños, e interculturales con la comunidad afro-americana, ejemplificaba los contornos diaspóricos particulares a este movimiento. Diferente a la iglesia de la calle Armitage, la *Iglesia del Pueblo* de Nueva York no duró mucho, no más de unas semanas. Antes de tomar control, Los Young Lords intentaron entrar en conversación con la iglesia para usar las facilidades durante los tiempos en que la iglesia no estaba siendo usada para tener una guardería, un comedor de beneficencia, una clínica de salud gratis, y muchos otros programas para servir a la gente—los cuales les eran negados rutinariamente. La mayoría de la membresía era Latinos/as que habían ascendido socialmente y habían podido salir del *barrio*, y quienes sostenían claras posturas anti-comunistas/socialistas. La relación con los Young Lords, una organización socialista radical, no pudo ser sino tensa. En diciembre la organización decidió tomar el control del edificio. Después de varios días y tensas confrontaciones con las autoridades policíacas, los Young Lords abandonaron las facilidades de la Primera Iglesia Metodista Española. Sin embargo, la toma de control fue un catalizador para galvanizar el apoyo comunitario a los Young Lords.

Estas dos *Iglesias del Pueblo*, a pesar de sus similitudes en objetivos y alcance, es decir, el servicio de la gente y el empuje a las congregaciones locales a involucrarse más activamente dentro de la comunidad, presentan las formas distintas en que las ideas se arraigan entre comunidades particulares. Aunque el capítulo de Nueva York alcanzó más notables victorias que fueron grabadas en los medios de comunicación nacional, el capítulo de Chicago tuvo un impacto más duradero, debido a su mayor conocimiento cultural y política en su trabajo con las comunidades religiosas. Resultados como estos obligan a aquellos de nosotros que reflexionamos en las comunidades Latinas a profundizar continuamente nuestro análisis de las intersecciones de raza, geografía, líneas de tiempo, historias locales, etc.

Leyendo la Iglesia del Pueblo a través de la teoría de movimientos sociales: Algunas consideraciones

Mil novecientos sesenta y nueve demostró ser un año auspicioso para los estudios religiosos y teológicos. Este año sirvió como una clase de fecha de nacimiento de lo que

algunos pueden considerar como la ruptura de la teología de la liberación en la escena estadounidense, continuando su empuje por activismo radical durante los años pos-derechos civiles y el activismo radical. Las décadas de los 1960s y los 1970s vieron la publicación de textos fundamentales al movimiento que llegaron a ser conocidos como teología(s) de la liberación. Entre estos textos figuraron: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) de Paulo Freire's, *Church and the Second Sex* (1968) de Mary Daly, *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) y *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970) de James Cone's, y *A Theology of Liberation* (1971) de Gustavo Gutierrez. Entre los temas que penetraron y transformaron los discursos teológicos y religiosos durante estos años están: *la opción preferencial por los pobres*, *concientización*, una crítica naciente del sexismo y el patriarcado dentro de los cuerpos religiosos y en la sociedad en general, y un replanteamiento de Dios como *Negro*.¹⁵

Al localizar los intentos de toma de control de la iglesia de la calle Armitage y de la Primera Iglesia Metodista Española no se intenta inscribir los eventos dentro de la historiografía de la teología de liberación. Aunque las posibles provocaciones teóricas que tal intento pudiera suscitar pueden ser un ejercicio tentador, sería falso y despreciativo de los cambios drásticos que tomaron lugar en los 1960s. Es a causa de las ola de movimientos de liberación que se desplegaron durante este tiempo, y a la luz de las formas en que la Organización de los Young Lords justificó la creación de *la Iglesia del pueblo*, como una forma de enseñar a la iglesia cómo ser iglesia, que llama la atención junto con la historia de la teología de la liberación en general y la teología Latina en particular.

Leo estas dos instanciaciones de la *Iglesia del Pueblo* a través de una conceptualización de disensión derivada de los estudios sociológicos de movimientos sociales y los estudios políticos contenciosos.¹⁶ Para entender esto, les presento una noción de disidencia que ayudará a navegar un camino adelante. Lo que veo en juego en ambas *Iglesias del Pueblo* es la creación de actores políticos y la activación de políticas de contención que se ramifican en diferentes direcciones. ¿Qué es disidencia y porqué es útil para pensar en la importancia de la *Iglesia del Pueblo*? Entiendo esta noción de disidencia principalmente como compuesta de cuatro elementos, aunque otras

¹⁵Este es un buen momento para recordar la advertencia que Frederic Jameson hizo en 1981 en su *The Political Unconscious*, y tomarla como nota de precaución, de que eruditos a menudo llegan tarde a clamar que fueron los primero en encontrar las ideas que causan innovación social, pero debería de ser reconocido que muchas si no la mayoría de las ideas liberadoras de la *teología de la liberación* se estaban fermentando en los niveles populares antes de que se colaran dentro de los discursos académicos. Ver su *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), ver los capítulos 1 y 2.

¹⁶Hasta ahora no hay una teoría unificada de disensión en el estudio de los movimientos sociales y la política contenciosa. Sin embargo, varios acercamientos gozan de un grado de preeminencia en este campo complejo y de rápida expansión. Mi intención, entonces, es incorporar los elementos de este campo que yo considero permiten una comprensión adecuada de las dinámicas de disensión, para facilitar el argumento que estoy tratando de presentar en éste artículo. Unos trabajos representativos acerca de movimientos sociales y políticas de contención son: Charles Tilly y Sidney G. Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, y Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contentions* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (New York, NY: The Cambridge University Press, 2003), Francesca Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

configuraciones son posibles. Estas son los elementos (1) conciencia oposicional, (2) encuadre, (3) actores políticos, y (4) política contenciosa. Disidentes llegan a conocer el mundo en formas que interponen una comprensión diferente de la realidad a las situaciones actuales, se abren y buscan nuevas formas de conocimiento, y actúan en formas que desafían el statu quo.¹⁷ El término “conciencia oposicional” nombra esta comprensión, y se refiere a la dimensión subjetiva en la que sujetos de grupos oprimidos desarrollan estados mentales (cogniciones) como respuesta a sus realidades de opresión que les motiva a desafiar y socavar los sistemas de opresión.¹⁸ En el caso de los Young Lords podemos ver estos elementos trabajando cuando ellos confrontaban necesidades sociales particulares, para las que las organizaciones religiosas están equiparadas para proporcionar, que a menudo dicen que lo harán, pero que no se involucran completamente con la comunidad cuando suplen dichas necesidades.

El encuadre es un proceso intermediario entre la conciencia oposicional y el devenir de actores políticos. Se refiere a las prácticas por las cuales los individuos, grupos, y/o comunidades usan recursos ideacionales y emocionales para ofrecer un relato de eventos particulares y para alentar ciertas acciones.¹⁹ Como un proceso intermediario, el encuadre facilita la transición a actores políticos de sujetos potencialmente disidentes que entienden su mundo a través de una conciencia oposicional.²⁰ La unión de estos dos elementos anima a los actores políticos a emerger.²¹ Podemos ver el proceso de encuadre trabajar en la yuxtaposición de la *Iglesia del Pueblo* y la iglesia local. ¿A quién está la

¹⁷La filosofía latinoamericana ha desarrollado este concepto, quizás más claramente que las fuentes sociológicas que uso en este trabajo. Para la filosofía latinoamericana, comprensión de la situación particular histórica del continente a medida que trata con y se libera del legado del colonialismo, el surgimiento de los estados-nación, y el desafío de la elite que llevó a la resurgencia de los movimientos populistas, ponen en el centro la agencia histórica, sujetos que conocen y actúan de acuerdo a las exigencias de su situación.

¹⁸Para estudios que exploran aspectos del rol de la cognición, la política y los movimientos sociales, ver Matthew D. Lieberman, Darren Schreiber and Kevin N. Ochsner, "Is Political Cognition Like Riding a Bicycle? How Cognitive Neuroscience Can Inform Research on Political Thinking," *Political Psychology* 24, no. 4 (2003): 681-704, Steven A Peterson, "Biology and Political Socialization: A Cognitive Developmental Link?," *Political Psychology* 4, no. 2 (1983): 265-288, James M. Jasper, "The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and Around Social Movements," *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 3 (1998): 397-424, Paul DiMaggio, "Culture and Cognition," *Annual review of sociology* 23, no. 1 (1997): 263-287, Ronald N Giere and Barton Moffatt, "Distributed Cognition: Where the Cognitive and the Social Merge," *Social studies of science* 33, no. 2 (2003): 301, Andrew Jamison, "Social Movements and Science: Cultural Appropriations of Cognitive Praxis," *Science as Culture* 15, no. 1 (2006): 45-59, Drew Westen, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007).

¹⁹La centralidad del *encuadre* a la realidad de la *disidencia* está basada en su poder epistemológico. Como la disidencia requiere nuevas formas de conocer las realidades y de escoger las prácticas para ocasionar cambio, entonces el conocimiento y los mecanismos que le dieron lugar ganan importancia central.

²⁰Mi suposición aquí es que tener *pensamientos disidentes*, o algún conocimiento de realidades ocultas e ideas sobre la naturaleza de la opresión, no conduce automáticamente a la formación de disidentes. Una transición de posibles disidentes a actores políticos es necesaria para hablar sobre disidencia y disidentes. Sin embargo, esto no implica que agentes no puedan entrar y salir de la disidencia. Es posible que algunos sujetos continuamente se involucren en actos de disidencia, mientras otros lo hacen ocasionalmente.

²¹Ver el volume editado por Hank Johnston, *Culture, Social Movements, and Protest*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009). Esta colección de ensayos hace uso de la teoría del *encuadre* para comprender los movimientos sociales. This collection of essays makes use of the theory of *framing* to understand social movements.

iglesia supuesta a servir sino a la gente? El encuadre de la iglesia local en dicha manera aumenta las apuestas del trabajo que hay que hacer y quien va a hacerlo.

Pertenecer a un grupo minoritario es parte misma de la estratificación de las sociedades en las cuales prácticas de dominación ayudan a la organización de la sociedad y el repartimiento de sus recursos. Por lo mismo, la conciencia oposicional requiere que los/as individuos/as se identifiquen como pertenecientes a un grupo negativamente afectado por un grupo dominante que les somete a relaciones asimétricas y distribución de bienes sociales.²² Hay varias maneras en las que identificación con los grupos oprimidos ocurre. La identificación con los grupos oprimidos puede ser impuesta, escogida, o movilizada como una de las identidades constitutivas posibles individuales o colectivas.²³ Estas variadas formas de identificación, ya sea por imposición externa, la auto-elección, o la apropiación de movilización política, apuntan a la comprensión que las identidades son construcciones sociales fluidas sujetas a la modificación y movilización de como individuos y grupos lo consideran apropiado. Circunstancias y contextos específicos permiten que elementos de posibilidades desconocidas puedan ser actualizados por medio del despliegue de varios encuentros. Al final, identidades no están completamente bajo el control de individuos o grupos. Usualmente hay desarrollos sorprendentes que pueden influir la forma de identidades particulares.²⁴

²² Encuentro útil la definición de conciencia oposicional de Jane Mansbridge: "Conciencia oposicional cómo la definimos, es una estado mental de empoderamiento que prepara miembros de grupos oprimidos para actuar para socavar, reformar, o derrocar un sistema de dominación humana. Es alimentada usualmente por la ira justa por las injusticias hechas al grupo y motivada por la indignidad personal, y los daños sufridos por pertenecer a un grupo. Como mínimo, la conciencia oposicional incluye los elementos de identificarse con los miembros de un grupo subordinado, identificando injusticias hechas a ese grupo, oponiéndose a esas injusticias, y viendo al grupo como teniendo un interés compartido en terminar o disminuir esas injusticias. Una conciencia oposicional más completa incluye identificar un grupo dominante específico como el causante y, de alguna manera, beneficiándose de esas injusticias. También incluye ciertas acciones del grupo dominante formando alguna clase de "sistema" que avance los intereses del grupo dominante. Finalmente, incluye una multitud de otras ideas, creencias, y sentimientos que proveen coherencia, explicación, y condenación moral. Vea su "The Making of Oppositional Consciousness." In *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest*, edited by Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 4-5. Sin embargo, también deseo mantener una distancia crítica de esta definición porque se basa solamente en una comprensión de política de identidad, de lo que son las identidades, y puede así terminar en una reificación de las identidades del grupo y no dar cuenta de las identidades disidentes forman en oposición a la identidad del grupo subordinado o que desafían y buscan reorientar una determinada identidad de un grupo subordinado a través de hechos de encuadre. En cuanto a la *política contenciosa*, ver Charles Tilly, *Why? What Happens When People Give Reasons... And Why*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006) 4-11.

²³Que las identidades pueden ser dadas, escogidas, o sacadas de la motivación política es útil cuando pensamos en el problema de la política de identidad, de manejar las diferencias entre raza y etnicidad particularmente en el contexto de los Estados Unidos de América.

²⁴En su mayor parte, estoy siguiendo la perspectiva de Tilly y Tarrow que la identidad se compone de cuatro elementos: "(1) un límite que me separa de usted o a nosotros de ellos, (2) un conjunto de relaciones dentro del límite, (3) un conjunto de relaciones a través del límite, y (4) compartir la comprensión de los límites y las relaciones. Sin embargo, no estoy completamente de acuerdo con la conceptualización de Tilly y Tarrow de las identidades *políticas* resultantes de la conciencia gubernamental de estas identidades. Mi opinión es que este punto de vista opera dentro de una estrecha

Impulsado por la indignación sobre la experiencia de injusticia, la conciencia oposicional puede conducir a individuos y grupos a convertirse en actores políticos. Es importante tener en cuenta que no necesitamos asumir un vínculo directo entre conciencia oposicional y acción política. Cuando un/a individuo/a o grupo se siente indignado por su condición de subordinado y, por lo mismo, se mueve a identificar, condenar, y criticar (una crítica privada y no una crítica pública) las prácticas de los grupos dominantes no significa necesariamente que el/la individuo/a o grupo actuaría políticamente. De hecho, el grupo puede restringir sus acciones a la arena cívica sin involucrarse en actos manifiestos de disidencia. Cuando la conciencia política y actos de encuadre se combinan, nacen actores políticos. En actores políticos, tenemos individuos o grupos que desarrollan una identidad política que los llevará a actuar de manera contenciosa. Actores políticos, por tanto, colectivamente hacen y reciben demandas contenciosas que soportan sus intereses y los de otros.²⁵

Cuando los actores políticos, portadores de conciencia oposicional (aplicada por varios encuadres y marcos), se involucran en políticas contenciosas, uno puede ver la unión de tres elementos de la vida social, elementos que Charles Tilly y Sidney Tarrow describen de la siguiente manera: (1) contención—hacer y recibir demandas, desde peticiones hasta demandas que impactan los intereses de alguien y la distribución de recursos socialmente disponibles; (2) acción colectiva—es decir, el proceso de coordinación de esfuerzos de apoyo de un interés compartidos, lo cual no es necesariamente pero puede tener un carácter contencioso; y (3) la política—a través de la interacción de los reclamantes con el gobierno.²⁶

En lo que esto se refiere a los Young Lords, podemos ver que ellos replantean los significados de “iglesia” en entornos sociales en los que, como instituciones, las congregaciones no estaban plenamente activas para el beneficio del pueblo en general. Es importante tener en mente que los Young Lords no veían sus acciones como apoyando o promoviendo la cristianización. Más bien, veían sus acciones como viviendo lo que comprendían como el significado radical del mensaje cristiano: de traer las buenas nuevas de salvación y liberación. Además, la *Iglesia del Pueblo* dio bienvenida a la verdadera necesidad de vadear a través de múltiples, y a veces compitiendo, interpretaciones hacia una revisión. La misión de la *Iglesia del Pueblo* en la calle Armigate y después en Lexington y la calle 111 en Nueva York era servir a la gente de forma gratuita: cuidar a los/as niños/as, proporcionar educación significativa, y hacer disponible alimentos y servicios médicos.

compresión de política dependiendo solamente en el reconocimiento del gobierno de maneras apropiadas de ser, pero también como limitaciones y establecimiento de la construcción de formaciones fronterizas centrales a la identidad al proceso pre-político afuera de la política contenciosa. Ver Tilly y Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 78-9.

²⁵Tilly y Tarrow permiten una amplia gama de lo que puede considerar un actor político, entre ellos se incluyen agentes gubernamentales, policías, actores no-gubernamentales, y grupos vecinales, entre otros. Su calificación para actores políticos se basa en su “hacer reclamaciones, recibir reclamaciones, o ambas cosas. Los actores políticos regularmente se forman, cambian, y desaparecen.” Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 4, 74.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 4-5.

ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

DePaul University, "The DePaul Community Collection,"

<http://libservices.org/contentdm/community.php>

*Estas colecciones ponen a disposición importantes materiales de Lincoln Park Neighborhood. Además, la *Colección de lo Young Lords* en la Universidad DePaul ofrece acceso al periódico de los Young Lords, *Pa'Lante* como también otros recursos.

Grand Valley State University, "The Young Lords in Lincoln Park,"

<http://www.gvsu.edu/library/specialcollections/young-lords-in-lincoln-park-22.htm>

*Esta colección digital pone a disposición una gran gama de historias orales.

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Is Liberation Theology a Political Theology?: Marcella Althaus-Reid's Critical Hermeneutics and the Queer Messianic Question of Marxism

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Abstract

This article takes up the theory and theology of Argentinian theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid in order to explore the relationship between Latin American liberation theology and political theology. In particular, it traces a messianic Christological trajectory in Althaus-Reid's work that evinces a distinctive link between her queer Marxist critique of ideology and her "Indecent Theology."

• VEA LA PÁGINA 108 PARA LEER ESTE ARTÍCULO EN ESPAÑOL •

Introduction

Recent years have brought a resurgence of interest or, in the very least, a new visibility of religion and its continued importance for understanding our present social reality and global political order. It has cast significant doubts on the predictive accuracy of the secularization thesis, but also reintroduces foundational questions about the modern political imaginary, especially given the political – and at times quite violent – forms that religion has taken in these post-secular times. And yet, where some see danger, others find opportunity, and so many have welcomed the return of political theology to critical theory, social philosophy, and indeed, even in religious studies.¹

¹ For more in-depth discussions about the open questions in political theology today, see Péter Losonczi, and Aakash Singh, ed. *The Future of Political Theology: Religious and Theological Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2012); Creston Davis and Slavoj Žižek, ed. *Theology and the Political: The New Debate* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Hent de Vries, "Introduction: before, around, and beyond the theologico-political" in *Political Theologies Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, ed. Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 3-91.; Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward, ed. *The New Visibility of Religion Studies in Religion and Cultural Hermeneutics* (London: Continuum, 2008).

The so-called ‘return of political theology’ presents both challenges and opportunities for Latin American liberation theology. In some ways, it outlines once again the strong contrasts between Liberation theology and other forms of thought, highlighting the fact that Liberation theology is not merely a theology of context and social location, but as Gustavo Gutierrez has said, it is “a new way of doing theology” that reimagines what theology is and who theologians are.² And yet, the relationship between liberation theology and political theology is complicated, in large part, by the present cacophony surrounding political theology, especially in terms of what is meant by it and whether it is a welcome mark for the liberative theological project. The re-emergence of political theology, while it intersects in very interesting ways with themes and trajectories in Latin American liberation theologies, has primarily been a discourse in the European left – a development that Creston Davis has called the “Continental shift.”³ This Eurocentricity presents a problem for Latin American liberation theologies that are eager to escape the colonial clutches of the continent, that are looking for ways to recapture their indigenous vitality.

Yet, the term “political theology” is deeply contested, and insofar as its theoretical and historical roots seem grounded mostly in a post-war European context, it may be fair for liberation theologies to disparage the label, preferring either localist or contextualist understandings for its work. In this, they see much closer resemblances and common cause with postcolonial and indigenous methodologies than with the Western Marxist background that political theology shares with the contemporary European Left. This is increasingly the case with the second generation of Liberation theologians, who unlike their clerical male forerunners, who resonate less with the events and documents of the Second Vatican Council, and more with postmodern and postcolonial theory. And yet, the return of political theology is also shaped, if not followed by, the rebirth of Marxism and the rising interest in Marx’s writings themselves. The apparent correlation between these trajectories – “political theology” and the “rehabilitation of Marx and Marxisms” – may not sit well with a generation of liberation theologians who have taken their theoretical cues from elsewhere. The relationship between Marxism and Liberation theology has been a sore spot of controversy for many years, stemming at least in part by the accusations set forth in the Vatican “Instructions” from 1984 and 1986 from the then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger’s *Congregation for the Defense of the Faith* (CDF).

There is a history here that is important to understand. U.S. and European theologians in the decades after the Second World War found themselves engaged in a number of important theological and political dialogues with Marx’s writing and Marxism/s themselves, a consequence of the relative success of left-wing politics in the Caribbean, and South and Central America. Latin American liberation theology was often recommended as a ready candidate for the rapprochement that integrated Marxist social analysis and theory into theological and spiritual concerns, illustrating the apparent compatibility – or in the very least the lack of antagonism – between Marx/Marxism and the liberative concerns of Christian theology.

² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 12.

³ Creston Davis, “Political Theology—The Continental Shift.” *Political Theology* 11, no. 1 (2010): 5-14.

By this reading, Latin American Liberation theology, in turning to Marx's critique of capitalism, attempted to develop a theopolitical position of social criticism by holding a critical distance between theology's liberative roots in its biblical faith and its complicity with oppressive and exploitative economic and political systems. In so doing, it positioned Christianity in a critical relation to material conditions, so that its ideas were governed by liberating praxis, rather than classical wisdom or orthodox knowledges. This was recognizably Marxist in that Latin American liberation theologians mostly followed Marx's critique of capitalism based on theories of class struggle and surplus value, but it did not accept Marx's critique of ideology as applied to religion.⁴ As a result of this resistance to Marx's critique of religion, Liberation theology has struggled to integrate and constructively use the critique of ideology in their theologies in a sustained and material way. Instead, liberation theologies have responded to the Marxist critique of religion by admitting to the complicity of religion with the dominant social order, and so reconstruct theologies that offer alternative forms of belief and practice.

The responses to this challenge were often broad-based attempts to reform and reinterpret theology according to broadly Marxian standards, whether it meant critiquing Christianity's alignment with capitalism, acknowledging the centrality of class struggle for Christian politics ethics⁵, or implementing various versions of materialism (most of which rarely were truly Marxist forms).⁶ It acknowledged that if theology were to respond to Marx's critique of ideology, it would have to do so by securing its "oppositional status" in relation to its determining pressures and material locations, rather than mooring itself as a "countering" discourse that seeks to intervene into social reality as a ready alternative.⁷

The reception of Marx and Marxism into Latin American liberation theology was complicated by the populist interest in the pathos and rhetoric of class struggle and revolutionary praxis that animated left-wing revolutionary movements in Central and South America in the 1960s-1990s, as by the convergence of Catholic liberationist theology and leftist political work and activism, the brothers Cardinal and Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann from Nicaragua, for example, but also Colombian theologian Camilo Torres Restrepo, Ecuadorian bishop Leonad Proano, Brazilian Frei Betto, Chilean Eugenio Pizarro, and late Haitian Gerard Jean-Juste.

⁴ The idea that an a priori rejection of religion should be associated with and interpreted as properly Marxist is soundly rejected by Denys Turner, "Religion: Illusions and Liberation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 327-336, and more recently Roland Boer, *Criticism of Earth On Marx, Engels and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), and Alberto Toscano, "Beyond Abstractions: Marx and the Critique of the Critique of Religion." *Historical Materialism* 18 (2010): 3-20.

⁵ José Míguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1983).

⁶ Alister Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990); See also Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Marxism and Christianity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968); Denys Turner, *Marxism and Christianity* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983); Nicholas Lash, *A Matter of Hope: A Theologian's Reflections on the Thought of Karl Marx* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981). For more recent examples, see Andrew Collier, *Christianity and Marxism: A Philosophical Contribution to Their Reconciliation* (New York: Routledge, 2001) and Roland Boer, *Criticism of Earth On Marx, Engels and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁷ Peter Scott, *Theology, Ideology and Liberation* (New York, NY: Cambridge, 1994), 36.

The activism and praxis of liberation theologians seems to side rather frequently with the left coordinates of Marxist political aims, while the theological and theoretical articulations of the same repeatedly indicate a rather uneven and irregular pattern of attestation and distanciation. In particular, this uneasy dialectic finds an odd – rather I should say, queer – equilibrium in the work of Argentine Marcella Althaus Reid, who brings a queer messianic Marxism to bear on a critique of liberation theology that she terms “Indecent Theology.” Her aim is to bring out its inherent sexuality and in so doing, capitalize on the radical politics immanent to liberation theology but lost behind the hegemonic barriers set up by a male and heterosexual ecclesial class. That is, she uses queer messianic reading of Marx (along with postmodern and postcolonial theory) to set liberation theology against itself for its own sake. Althaus-Reid distances herself at key points from the Latin American liberationist tradition, critical of luminaries such as the Boff brothers and Gustavo Gutierrez. Yet, while many point to her insistence on a particular kind of sexual reading of theology – what she calls the indecency of God-talk – this article hopes to point to how her work is saturated by a queer messianic perspective that cannot but be seen as the mark of Marxism in her work. Thus, Marcella Althaus-Reid has a lot to tell us, then, about the theological legacy that resides still within the critique of religion by the Marxist left.

In what follows, I link Althaus-Reid’s queer hermeneutics to her theological method, showing how – and why – she gets to a queer messianic politics through a Ricoeurian detour that is as Christological as it is Marxist. This, I believe, helps position Latin American liberation theology, not only as a political theology, but one that can welcome the rebirth of Marx, not as it appears in the contemporary European left, but as the messianic *loca* of queer theological truth.

A Queer Theological Primer

Marcella Althaus-Reid is increasingly recognized as paradigmatic for the latest generation of contextual theologies that bring queer, postcolonial, and postmodern theory into conversation with Marxist liberation theologies. Her theology, designed as an ideologico-critical strategy, is queer, not only due to its interest in sexuality, but also because of her presuppositional conviction that feminist and liberation theology must actively take up the issues and questions of poverty and sexuality, not as add-ons to gender analysis, class interests, and the interrogation of race, but as central components of its search for God in/as queer life. Althaus-Reid contends that the central weakness of Liberation and Feminist theology is that they do not depart far enough from the orthodox consensus of the Christian tradition.⁸ They exist as primarily reformist movements that try to reconstruct the tradition, its language, and symbolic systems through its idolatry critique rather than the more radical dismantling called for by the queer critique of ideology. In doing so, they are actively “repeating the Law of the Father in their theological reflection, even if using political or postcolonial or even gender analysis, by not disarticulating the relation between the construction of sexuality and systematic theology

⁸ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 6-11.

in depth.”⁹ This “disarticulation” is the job of queer theology, which acts as an immanent critique of ideology that is political while also being self-reflexively theological. Althaus-Reid is of interest here because she introduces queer theory as a critical model that takes the negativity of immanent critique seriously, even if this might mean that theology must put some distance between itself and normative claims that are aimed at promoting specific plans or programs for social change.

She approaches theology with a Marxist class-consciousness and a Foucaultian concern with knowledge as power, but is mostly concerned using invisible histories and narratives of queer folks as a critical hermeneutics. Althaus-Reid is eager to dismantle the social, ecclesial, and political hegemonies that are installed and justified by theological means and enforced by theological boundaries. We must go beyond a theology for social transformation and enact the disarticulation of the sexual ideology prevalent in the history of Christian theology, a task that calls for a queering of theological truth, that highlights indecency, perversion, and deviance at the heart of a libertine theological rationality.¹⁰ This queer theo-logic rebels against the regulative strictures of heteronormativity and dissents from the classical formulations for the sake of the Other, claiming to bring good news to the marginalized: the queer, the displaced, the colonized, the poor. Althaus-Reid names “the Other side” as divine, as a political hierophant that appears and enacts itself in a resistant, insurrectionary, and so, non-ideological form:

The Other side is in reality a pervasive space made up of innumerable Queer religious and political diasporas, and a space to be considered when doing contextual Queer Theology. The Good News is that at that edge, still talking about the thousands of symbolic Nicaraguans present in every anti-capitalist demonstration, or the voices of people who stand up to claim the right to live in an alternative economic and spiritual system to the totalitarian globalization which has pervaded our lives, there is God...the God who has come out, tired perhaps of being pushed to the edge by hegemonic sexual systems in theology, has made God’s sanctuary on the Other side.¹¹

Althaus-Reid finds both liberation and feminist theologies to be inadequately severe and insidiously self-aggrandizing, allowing theology to remain complicit while championing its already privileged position as the object of the ‘preferential option’. Surely, Liberation theology should not be abandoned, for it was among the first to teach theology the political virtues of self-reflexive negativity:

Liberation theology has helped us unmask political interests masquerading as “God’s will” in theology. This is called ‘ideological suspicion’ in theology. To this

⁹ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (London: Routledge, 2003), 172.

¹⁰ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God* (London: SCM Press, 2004).

¹¹ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 4.

political suspicion, we are adding now a combination of suspicions in the making of theology: political, economical, racial, colonial, and also sexual.¹²

This characterization of critique as ‘suspicion’ comes from Marcella Althaus-Reid’s tutelage under Paul Ricoeur, for whom the ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ affords Althaus-Reid the background upon which to build her case for queering theology as a form of ideology critique. Althaus-Reid argues that the primary ideology facing theology today is its sexual ideology, not only patriarchy but also heterosexuality.

[Q]ueering the Scriptures will always be a project related to re-reading the patriarchs, for patriarchy is not a transcendental presence but has agents responsible for its order. To deconstruct the patriarchs means to deconstruct their law, for justice requires the vigilant revision (new visions) of the ideological construction of the divine and the social.... In this way deconstructing the patriarchs becomes part of what we can call a non-essential project of the hermeneutical circle of suspicion.¹³

To counter the economic and political effects of this patriarchy, she calls upon libertine paths discerned within the margins of churchly traditions of the sexually dissident. She calls this ‘Indecent theology’, and its primary goal is to instigate immanent processes of sexual ideological disruption within theology, or a ‘theological queering.’ This project requires a certain *critical* “style”, one that “outs” the theologian from positions and postures of power and legitimacy, and so guides them and the church to the tender, though impolite, demands of the periphery. The aim of this refusal of ecclesial authority and traditional legitimacy is not to re-establish the marginal at the center, but questions the idea of a normative center of theology at all. The problem with normativity is its idolatrous claims: it is “the praxis of specific heterosexual understandings elevated to a sacred level.”¹⁴ This idolatry cannot be remedied by simply incorporating underprivileged perspectives or marginalized sources into the normal flow of theological talk and acts. She likens this strategy (associated most closely with first-generation Liberation and second-wave feminist theologies) to the development strategy of capitalism. To underscore the Marxist mood of her point, Althaus-Reid turns to a queer hermeneutics that equal parts materialist and messianic:

To try to espouse development according to the logic of capital expansion creates the same confusion and contradictions as when theology tries to ‘incorporate’ a gender (not even sexual) balance in its discourse. What is urgently required is not the improvement of a current theology through some agenda such as gender and sexual equality, but a theology with a serious Queer materialist revision of its methods and doctrines...The aim of theological and economic reflection should not be a new system of distribution, but a different system of production...This

¹² Althaus-Reid, “What is Indecent Theology? Why Indecent?” on <http://www.althaus-reid.com/IT.html>, accessed January 31, 2013.

¹³ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 107.

¹⁴ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 9.

includes also consideration of the cost that such a theology must pay for the radical vision of its production.¹⁵

Althaus-Reid's understands ideology critique to be a form of queer thought. Queer thought subverts, "unshapes", disrupts, and unveils Christianity's sexual ideology, the way that theology supports and reflects the sacralization of heterosexual relations, which is then mapped and redistributed as a whole political project. For this to work, queer hermeneutics issue "the challenge of a theology where sexuality and loving relationships are not only important theological issues but experiences which un-shape Totalitarian Theology (T-Theology) while re-shaping the theologians."¹⁶ "T-Theology" is her shorthand for "theology as ideology, that is, a totalitarian construction of what is considered as 'The One and Only Theology' which does not admit discussion or challenges from different perspectives, especially in the area of sexual identity and its close relationship with political and racial issues."¹⁷ Theological queering displaces "T-Theology" from its tropic, corporate sites of economic exchange (the university, the church, academic marketplace, heavily policed peer-reviewed journals, et cetera) to the more vulgar, dirty, and non-civilized places of public, sexual life: bedrooms, bars, and alleyways. Such a dislocation shows that the God of "T-Theology" is "the non-relational God which does not survive well outside its ideological sites...Impurity may work here as an unveiling of sexual ideology in the construction of God."¹⁸

In order to break through into the policed boundaries of T-Theological discourse, it requires a sort of *guerrillera* strategy, one that she terms the "libertine hermeneutical circle", whereby she interprets the queer meaning of theological symbols, not by "adding queers and stir", but rather by practicing intertextual readings that bring queer texts, narratives, spaces, and histories to the theological foreground for the sake of dialogical displacement, to transport readers to perverse spaces of love, freedom, and hope: dungeons, bedrooms, and other sexually unusual locations.

The point is not to merely revel in the sexual fun of it all, to fetishize experimentation, play, and transgression, but instead to unravel the edges of a Christian god who "comes out" from underneath the shadowy restrictions of the heterosexual parental imagery, and shows itself to be not only queer, but also libertine. In this way, the intertextual strategy of queering hermeneutics through dialogical displacement moves theology into diasporic and exilic spaces, those marginal theological locales where "the libertine is amongst us and is buried in us. The theological subjects cross all the sexual constraints of ideal heterosexuality."¹⁹ Althaus-Reid invites theological subjects to do what they are already doing: doing theology with rosaries in one hand and a condom in the other, telling the stories and biographies of sexual migrants, whose "walking" brings them to the very borders of love, pleasure, and struggle. For her, this is Christologically justified. The messianic power of Christ is found in the displaced character, not only of a body broken

¹⁵ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 148.

¹⁶ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 8.

¹⁷ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 172n4.

¹⁸ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 37.

¹⁹ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 26.

by empire and state violence, but also of the post-resurrection Spirit who mixes with the air and soil to give life to lost histories and marginalized desires.

Althaus-Reid believes the criticality of theology against itself requires a certain indecent style, both formally and otherwise: “that is the scandalous position of what I have previously called Indecent Theology: a theology of liberation which, while exceeding the ideas of colonial liberation, surpasses the discourse of the correct God while searching for a more equivocal theological reflection.”²⁰ She disparages a shift in contemporary theology that celebrates the emancipatory impulse and contextual particularity of liberation theology, but shows more interest in establishing differing norms than in the negativity of critique, a position incompatible with the queer ways of knowing she privileges.²¹ The goal of Indecent Theology is not constructive, but critical:

after all, even the God at the margins of many radical theologies has become only a lateral shadow or God-mirror. But the aim of the corruption of the ideology of normativity by sexual contamination, which informs our Queer theological path, is to move objects and subjects of theology around, turning points of reference and re-positioning bodies of knowledge and revelation in sometimes unsuitable ways.... The point is that we cannot think a Queer God without understanding different sexual ways of knowing.²²

Indecent theology is a critical theology, whose political mode is informed by fugitivity and peripherality, rather than re-centering or acting. Critique is an interpretative activity, not a directly actionist one. To queer theology is not to propose new theological forms that replace the dominant ones presently at hand, but to question whether or not ‘correct’, ‘normative’, or ‘centered’ are properly theological qualities. We must resist the temptation to replace or supplant the heteronormative ideology by instituting the queer as a norming, centering, legitimating discursive regime, which only reinscribes the theo-logic of the normal. We do not want to center or norm the queer, says Althaus-Reid. The only way we get to a truly indecent Christology is if we take up the displacement of marginality, in the “not-normal”. To be centered, to be legitimate, is to accept the central authority of heterosexual patriarchies: this marks the difference between a feminist strategy and a postcolonial one. Althaus-Reid seeks a theology of that which is truly marginal, that eschews authority, legitimacy, centeredness, and refuses to be co-opted by central discourses of theological power; “Normality... disenfranchises the real-life experience of people by forcing them to adapt to an idealized discourse... theology becomes a distorted praxis, which far from liberating, itself enslaves even more.”²³

But is the political refusal to be centered – to be normed – all that assures us that queer theological thinking is exempt from being ideological, in Althaus-Reid’s view? What is inherently non-ideological about the concepts of hybridity, diaspora, or the fetish? What is critical about the queer tactics of disruption, hyphenation, or the use of autobiographical narratives? What methodological provisions are put into place that

²⁰ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 44.

²¹ Elizabeth Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 54.

²² Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 52.

²³ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 64.

restrict Althaus-Reid's critical categories from simply replacing or substituting themselves as ideologies within a queer theology of God, of humanity, and of sexuality?

Queering hermeneutics by outing theology as politics

To answer this question is to take a step back into Althaus-Reid's queer hermeneutics. My hope is that this will foreground the queer Marxist messianic power that politicizes Indecent Theology in its distinctly negative way. We begin by first linking Althaus-Reid's theological perspective to her interpretation theory. It is interesting to note that she wrote her dissertation on Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics and its influence on the methodology of Latin American liberation theology. Her theology is a queer one, not only due to its interest in sexuality, but because of her presuppositional conviction that Feminist Liberation Theology must actively take up the issues and questions of poverty and sexuality, not as add-ons to gender analysis, class interests, and the interrogation of race. This project requires a certain 'style', one that "outs" the theologian from positions and postures of power and legitimacy, and to the tender though impolite demands of the periphery: the transgression of ecclesial authority and traditional legitimacy, not for the sake of re-establishing the marginal at the center but betraying the idea of a normative center of hermeneutics at all. To queer hermeneutics is to recognize that the Latin American community of poor women are divine *tout court*; it is to name the suffering woman as the arbitrator, the communitarian agent whose 'permutative' readings disrupt Theology, 'cross-dressing' it, so that it (Theology) can pass as politics.

What is unique about Althaus-Reid's theological perspective is that she is actively trying to "out" theology as ethics through a reimagining of the hermeneutical circle *as a critical theory*. This allows theology to actively transgress the borders of hermeneutics and ethics in ways that queer the normativity of ethics, but also performativity as coital acts of love that belongs not in churches, but in marginal sexual spaces (e.g., gay bars, sex dungeons, trans-orgies, and gloryholes).²⁴ We should blush and stammer when acting theologically because theology is always a public sex act. Sexuality is constitutive of all attempts to give rise to the interpretive expression of the sacred. Theology is only truly god-talk when it is indecent, impolite, and dissident, when it exposes itself as a subversive "guessing game" far more exploratory and experimental than it is revelatory and authoritative. When the religious authorities – the ecclesial dictators who police the discursive regime of theological knowledge and speech – seek to censor, silence, or put theology on a "seven-second delay", it testifies to theology as its most liberative moment – the moment of its horrifying indecency, when it has become most dangerous, when it is most able to speak for and give voice to the dead and gone, the long-forgotten, those who are not merely marginalized (at least the marginalized are represented by social order *as* marginalized), but the invisible, those whose bodies do not register as human. When theology exceeds that borders of decency, as deemed appropriate by the ethereal powers that govern our speech acts, when it is transgressive, perverse, libertine, this is when theology is *most* theological: when it crossed over past the sexual ideologies into a contextual location when we can hear the queer voice of God again from queer locales and within disruptive assemblages. It is here that theology "outs" itself as politics but it needs queer hermeneutics to do it, and this hermeneutic comes to Althaus-Reid through the

²⁴ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 3, 93.

queering of a Marxist messianic power. This dynamic gives Indecent Theology its queer aesthetic and epistemology, but also its political character. It is what makes Liberation theology truly a political theology in ways quite different from the Eurocentric disciplinary forms within academia.

Central to Althaus-Reid's "indecent" theology is a queering of hermeneutics into politics, as so to surface the messianic power that lies within the queer theological subject. As such, the hermeneutical circle, most visible in her collection of essays, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*, is important, most notably for the kind of theological and political readings that a queer interpretative theory affords us.

The Hermeneutical Circle in *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*

For the purposes of this article, I want to reconstruct Althaus-Reid's "queering" of the hermeneutic circle into a certain kind of queer Marxist Christology that functions both as an ideology critique and a politics, a move that I understand as thoroughly messianic, but in a queer way. This, I hope, illustrates what it means to think of Liberation theology as a political theology shaped by a Marxist ideology critique.

First, a few words about the structure of *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*: Althaus-Reid first introduces the question of the "sexuality" of Liberation Theology (Part 1), which results eventually in a "sexual queering" of hermeneutics (Part 2). This materialist analysis asks whether or not Liberation theology's reticence about its colonial memory had allowed it to become commodified and so further distanced from the real political lives and struggles of poor women, whose memories of militant resistance can provide subversive strategies to resist the essentialist allure of the exotic, the native, and the indigenous. (Part 3) This refusal to homogenize is what brings Indecent theology and Queer theology into a political alliance. When theology is marginal, when it is incubated in communities, spaces, and languages that are indeterminate and promiscuous, it produces relations of solidarity and affectivity that happen "off the radar" of franchisement, institutionalization, and "official" endorsement: the strategic regimes of tenure and legitimacy.

Here we see Althaus-Reid developing key elements of her queering of the hermeneutical circle. She starts in chapter 1 by laying out the dialogical method of seeing theology as a form of "walking with" with the memories of the past struggles of suffering Latin American women (told in mythological texts). "Walking with" (doing the "caminata") highlights the importance of the dialogical style of doing theology for a coherent, liberative praxis in the act of theology, and so extends the idea of a "hermeneutics of suspicion" to a genealogical Christology that seems quite Foucaultian. It establishes a different hermeneutical circle for a theological ethics, one that is required if one is to do Christology from the indecent perspective of a queer and dissident sexuality. Linking theology to sexuality is a hermeneutical journey where subjects and identities live and struggle at borderlands and interstitial spaces, where the method by which we read texts and understand their meaning is taken up as the political task of solidarity with and advocacy for those histories and memories of both the sacredness of women and the economic independence, both of which are direct causalities of colonial conquest and

heterosexual domination. To read through “the mirror of Otherness” is to welcome both subversion and vulnerability; it is to allow the history of women’s suffering to function as a hermeneutical clue for how we understand our theology, a Christology that considers the natality of Jesus to be a communitarian process of becoming the messiah, occasioned by the Herodic project of *conquista* and mutilation: the murder of the innocents that (theologically) repeats itself in the history of “woman serpents”, who too have been abducted, beaten, and sliced apart by the Herodic forces of colonial Christendom who were threatened by the queer messianic forces alive and well in women’s ministry.

This hermeneutical process is exemplified in a progressive chain of critical theologies that use “the feminist body” as an actively political space which produces queer and indecent re-readings of Christology: these dialogical interpretations understand the past and present experiences of poor and suffering woman to be modes of theological production that disclose, not only to the primordial link between god-talk and sexuality, but in turn emphasize a messianic “Christ” that is always more than the biblical or “historical” Jesus²⁵, for it always engendered, indeed, birthed from, the community of women whose prophetic denunciations of patriarchy and heterosexualism engender an interpretative “resymbolization” that reopens the closed order of theological discourse. The indecenting of this Theology plays on the regulations of decency in order to naturalize and sacralize a political economy of sexuality, only thinly disguised as Theology. In this way, Althaus-Reid mobilizes hermeneutics as ideology-critique, using sexual practices, transgressive or taboo sexual acts, unusual locales of sexual activity, dissident sexual positionings, deviant partnerings, fantasies and fetishes of women, all as theological acts, acts that disclose theological truth, for the community of women whose dialogue includes indecent stories about their bodies, the Eucharistic nature of their sexual acts, and god’s presence in and for them. Indecent hermeneutics is practiced from within those deviant historical, religious, and cultural spaces where the experiences, reflections, and bodily acts of the Latin American poor and sexually dissident (critically) identify heterosexuality as an ideology and (constructively) reclaim deviant ways of knowing and loving.

The queer turn to Sexuality as the hermeneutic for reinterpreting theology acts as an ideology critique of the enduring patriarchy and heterosexuality of liberation theology, blunting the effectiveness of the liberationist’s class analysis and materialist critique of exploitation and oppression. A sexualized rethinking of the hermeneutical circle critiques the discursive regime of heterosexuality “as a way of thinking”, opening theology to the Queer as a different aesthetic and epistemology, a different way of thinking sexually that goes to sexual dissidents in order to expose heteronormativity as a culturally and politically produced evil that trades in *idealizations* which keep theology removed from “sexual critical reality.”

Hermeneutics as Radical Conscientization: Queering Ricoeur through Marx

Paul Ricoeur is all about distinctions and detours. Reading Ricoeur drives me mad: I drink way too much when reading him, and as I weave through the pages, I find myself wondering when we will get “back” to “the point.” My battered copies of his texts are full

²⁵ Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*, 92.

of arrows and lines, trying desperately to tie me, the reader, back to the “central argument.” The irregular way that Ricoeur’s dialectic takes the reader along, the way it slides out of view, marks the spatial confluence between poststructuralist and queer readings, particularly their respective ways of queering hermeneutics into politics; that is, reading Ricoeur and finding Marx. In what follows, I try to trace two Ricoeurian distinctions that I think are important if we are to understand Althaus-Reid’s queering of hermeneutics into politics: (a) the distinction between critique of ideology and hermeneutics of tradition, and (b) the distinction between subjectivism and structuralist approaches to textual readings.

First, Althaus-Reid understands the task of hermeneutics to be not only the understanding of a text, but also the critique of ideologies acting within the worlds that it produces and operates within, as well as the interpreters and actions involved in its reading. Ricoeur’s intervention in the Gadamer-Habermas debate was guided by his commitment that the critique of ideology and the hermeneutics of tradition are interdependent, while Gadamer and Habermas played each other through the opposition between understanding and explanation. Gadamer’s view was that the function of tradition as an ontology — our pre-understandings, prejudices, effective historical consciousness — limits possible meanings. Habermas, aspiring to the final ideal of human emancipation, as all good critical theorists do, claimed that such constraints can be ultimately overcome. As such, distancing, or the adoption of a stance of critical self-understanding that requires the interpreter to “distance” herself from the text, is akin to ideology critique, but cannot be separated from tradition. Ricoeur sought a method to uncover the ontological structures of meaning and to produce an interpretation of the “type of being-in-the-world unfolded *in front of* the text” rather than which is *behind* the text, hidden psychological intentions, for example.

Second, Althaus-Reid’s stated commitment to “reader-response” criticism is supported in part by the post-structuralism of Ricoeur’s interpretation theory. Ricoeur makes a distinction between subjective and structuralist approaches to reading in relation to what he sees as the referential function of a text, which relates to both its meaning and significance. The subjectivist approach constructs “the world behind the text” while also presupposing the “pre-understanding” of the interpreter, which can never be fully transcended. Alternatively, the structuralist approach adjourns referring to “the world behind the text” and focuses instead on identifying and classifying the parts within the text and their interconnections. Two points can be identified here: first, there is the naïve surface meaning of the text, referring most specifically to the narrative of the myth, for example. But, secondly, what understanding needs is a depth semantics, a critical reading that finds the sense of the text as it is disclosed in the front of the text: “what has to be understood is not the initial situation of discourse, but what points towards a possible world...Understanding has less than ever to do with the author and his situation. It seeks to grasp the world-propositions opened up by the reference of the text.”²⁶ This is what the text (in the wide sense) is “about” as a non-ostensive reference which passes beyond the author’s intentions. For understanding to be achieved requires an affinity between the reader and this “aboutness”. As Ricoeur concludes, understanding is entirely mediated by

²⁶ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 87.

the whole of “the explanatory procedures” which precede it and accompany it, by which Althaus-Reid means the queer and indecent permutations produced by acts of love, devotion, and sexuality understood as conscientization practices:

What we have said about the depth semantics that structural analysis yields rather invites us to think of the sense of the text as *an injunction coming from the text*, as a new way of looking at things, as *an injunction to think in a certain manner*.²⁷

How does she adapt Ricoeur’s hermeneutical circle in queer and postcolonial perspective? To think queer-ly is to think along postcolonial lines; the postcolonial critique is a queer one. Queer thought is always sexual, but not in an essentialist way that bifurcates “sexuality” from other forms of life, speech, and action. Sex as a speech act is the same kind as theology. So queer is always about sexuality but also introduces a frame and field of reference of thought transgresses the heteronormative frame of reference to which it is confined by the sexual ideologies of patriarchal gender ordering. Yet, this transgression precedes the subject; it happens without the subject becoming aware of it, and so it is here that Althaus-Reid queer hermeneutics into “conscientization”, or as I said before, reads Ricoeur and finds Marx.

Like Ricoeur, Althaus-Reid identifies the basic tensions and conflict in Liberation Theology and seeks to accomplish their resolutions in an interpretative synthesis, with the help of postcolonial and queer forms of thinking and acting. The tensions and conflicts in the task of indecent theological hermeneutics do not come so much from the dialectic between explanation and understanding, but rather between epistemologies and sexualities. Queer epistemologies recognize how the structures and meanings placed on human bodies keep the human from being sexual and restrict sexual thoughts from taking hold in human ways. In Rancièrian terms, sexuality is that part of the human that has no part; it is defined by its non-being, by its not-being-recognized. Althaus-Reid, then, theorizes Indecent hermeneutics as a Marxist pedagogy, or what Paulo Freire called “conscientization”, that teaches political subjects to see themselves again as political subjects. Hermeneutics is performed as an act of conscientization, whereby in attending to particular locales, practices, stories, and communities, it produces “the generative themes” necessary for the repositioning and repartnering of queer and indecent theologies of, for and by sexual deviants and economic dissidents.

If hermeneutics is a practice of conscientization, a kind of pedagogy from which we will lean to think in a certain manner, Althaus-Reid identifies two kinds of (theological) interpretations that come about as a result: ones that (a) legitimize the structures of power, and ones that (b) question the interpretation and the power itself. Ricoeur calls the latter “a reading of rupture”, which actualizes the positive role of the imagination of a community, in an ongoing process of interpretation of their own faith and everyday reality. For Althaus-Reid’s interpretation theory, the text we interpret is always already interpreting us. This is a process of self-understanding: understanding a text requires a reading that interprets a text and allows us to be interpreted by the text. This hermeneutical materialism becomes the methodological scaffolding for her queering of

²⁷ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 88.

theology into politics.

Central to her conscientizing hermeneutics is the generative function of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of poor Latin American women and marginalized sexual dissidents, whose dialogues about their sexualities as expressed in their theological practices are properly Marian in their fecundity: they give birth to the messianic Christ. She incarnates Ricoeur's 'hermeneutic of attestation' (she takes up attestation as a historized bodily act, a sexual performance of deviance) because if truth is to be found in hermeneutics, it will be an apocalyptic truth about history, a rupture that comes from historical voices, from the past memories and histories of those original and indigenous women from the "rings of hell" who have struggled and suffered the most from the theological hands of colonializing, occupying, mutilating forces within the church.²⁸ She seeks a hermeneutics that will produce a Christology that will redeem the "memory of past sufferers"²⁹ one that will allow their prophetic testimony to be heard, and for their critical histories to be accounted for in the communitarian dialogue within *rejunte*. The politics of Indecent theology activate the liberative praxis that is celebrated by Liberation theologians, but turns it against them repeatedly, reminding all those who have ears to hear: "Redemptive practices are those which let the memories of bodies that have been loved outside the limits of heterosexual ideologies to become sacred."³⁰

And it is here that her hermeneutics – or rather, shall we say, her critical hermeneutics a la Ricoeur strikes yet another queer tone (which is also a Marxist note), and follows yet another detour, this time toward a kind of messianism that has found its way into the heart of political theology itself. I am presenting the "messianic" here as a site of rapprochement whereby liberation theology can see itself as its own form of political theology, and so can perhaps lead to an embrace of its own Marxist identity as a queer messianism.

Althaus-Reid understands messianic power to reside, not in the Great Figure, the Transcendental Signifier, or the Church, much less in theory or Theology, but rather in those queer and unsightly locales where God is nowhere to be found: the God-forsaken peoples, places, and histories. Althaus-Reid gives theological option to the "extremely marginalized subject, almost a 'dammed' subject. Such is the privileging of the S/M practitioner, the poor transvestite, the de Sade reader, or the promiscuous 'out of the closet' heterosexual subject."³¹

When discussing the legacy of Marxism within liberation theology, Kristien Justaert echoes Althaus-Reid's extension of "the preferential option for the marginalized" from praxis to revelation,

²⁸ Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*, 148.

²⁹ One should hear traces of Walter Benjamin's notion of 'weak messianic power', especially as it is appropriated by political theologian Johann Baptist Metz. For recent treatments of Walter Benjamin's place in contemporary theological discourses, see the excellent *Walter Benjamin and Theology*, ed. Colby Dickinson and Stephane Symons. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016.

³⁰ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 134.

³¹ Marcella Althaus-Reid, "The Bi/girl Writings: From Feminist Theology to Queer Theologies," in *Post-Christian Feminisms: A Critical Approach*, ed. Lisa Isherwood and Kathleen McPhillips, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 105.

“it is in the ‘face’ of the oppressed that God can be found, and from the perspective of the ‘poor’ (in a broad sense) that resistance must grow. The Marxist interpretation of economic and social relations in the reality in which we live is then used as a *means* to reach the final objective of liberation theology: the liberation of the poor and thereby, the installation of God's Kingdom on earth.”³²

I agree fully with Justaert, and yet she is not entirely right in the sense that I think that Althaus-Reid follows Jacques Derrida's reading of Marx and Marxism as having a spectral account of justice's relation to social reality, which incidentally draws it close to Christianity, perhaps closer than is comfortable for either. The “messianic” for Derrida is best represented by “the spirit of Marxism,” the incessant “calling”, the announcement of the deferred, but always imminent, advent of justice.³³ The power of the messianic is not in its being realized in history, in its concrete installation as policy or procedure, but rather its pure, undeconstructable, ineffable presence *as* absence. In short, the messianic spirit of Marx and Marxism is queer. The ability of the “messianic” to help subjects imagine a world, to make and re-make the world (what Daniel Barber has recently called the “theological task of immanence”)³⁴, is excessive in its unwillingness to come to form; its transgressive refusal to institute itself with content's heavy letters. The “messianic” character of justice, then comes, from its negativity, its failure to enunciate itself; its anarchic power comes from its weakness, its infinite promise from its not-yet-determined horizons, from the fact that it remains unplugged from the socio-symbolic order, that it lacks intelligibility within political coordinates of the present.

This rings true with the queer experience of not belonging, not fitting, not conforming within binary systems, dyads, coordinates, or symbolic continuums. The fact that so many queer bodies, voices, and histories are unspoken, absent (but always present, too), negated by sexual narratives of normativity, is what enables the queer theological subject to know the most about what must be done to bring justice into the world or to discover God again. Christianity's queer messianic power is its political core – and is that which positions it in a mutual relation of founding and perseveration with Marxism: Marxism expresses the political core of Indecent theology in materialist terms, and it is Christianity, in these post-secular times, that keeps the coming promise of Marxism's messianic power infinitely open.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the critical-political goal of Althaus-Reid's theological hermeneutics is negative: to wake Theology up from its amnesia, its forgetfulness about the political acts of the theological symbols of Christianity that ignore the sexual dissidents whose love and freedom have been actively undermined by the ideological fences of the totalizing heteronormativity of the theological tradition. It is to dismantle the sexual ideology of theology in order to rediscover the true face of God as part of the queer theological quest. Towards this end, Althaus-Reid's theology employs divine immanence as its central

³² Kristien Justaert, “Liberation Theology: Deleuze and Althaus-Reid.” *SubStance* 39, no. 1 (2010): 154-164.

³³ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 1-60.

³⁴ Daniel Barber, *Deleuze and the Naming of God: Post-secularism and the Future of Immanence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 1-9.

thesis: the radical theology of the Incarnation and the cruciformic admission of divine impotence presents her with the fundamental theological principle she needs to interpret God as queer, to find in Christ a messianic *loca*, and so invests God-forsaken peoples, places, and histories with the grace of the divine Spirit. Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again ... but no one knows when or where, even if we do know that whatever bodily form it appears, it will be queer indeed.

In the introduction, I asked to what extent can we speak of Latin American liberation theology as political theology – both as a disciplinary field and frame of inquiry. This question is important insofar as political theology has emerged again as a central organizing point for contemporary discussions across the critical humanities, including discourses that have deeply shaped the Liberation theology tradition like poststructuralist and queer theory. Marcella Althaus-Reid is a unique example of Latin American liberation theology because she employs ideology critique, a feature both of Western Marxism and political theology, in ways that press Liberation theology against its own actionist tendencies, asking it to examine itself as it squirms in its chair as she describes the live and work of theologians “under the bridge.” Theoretically, she gives an Derridan account of eschatological justice for queer folk that turns to a dialectical hermeneutics that decenters normativity and rethinks the political in political theology in a negative direction, eschewing the re-centering temptations of normativity. The revolutionary high jinks of indecency, promiscuity, and queer failure will never be televised.

This is not only just to revel in the sexual fun of it all, the fetishization of experiment, but in order to unravel the edges of a Christian god who comes to us in eschatological drag of Trinitarian excess that “comes out” from the shadowy restrictions of the heterosexual parental imagery. In this way, the intertextual strategy of queering hermeneutics through dialogical displacement moves theology into diasporic and exilic spaces, those marginal theological locales where “the libertine is amongst us and is buried in us. The theological subjects cross all the sexual constraints of ideal heterosexuality. Queer Theology has welcomed the ‘SMers’, the 24/7s, leather folk, genderfuckers and *Travas* (the Argentinian nickname for transvestites) into the midst of its hermeneutical circle and theological enquiries.”³⁵ It is ostensible that this invitation is a hermeneutical one: to welcome theological subjects to do what they are already doing, doing theology with rosaries in one hand and a condom in the other, is to tell stories, biographies, of sexual migrants, whose “walking” brings them to the very borders of love, pleasure, and struggle. To do theology indecently – to do theology as queer – is not limited to one’s own sexual identity or practice, but rather is a way of understanding, a practice of interpretation, a political hermeneutics, that repositions the queer and indecent Subject in theology through attestations to deviance, dissidence, perversity, and promiscuity, a circle that considers these stories of libertine bodies as the hermeneutical keys to discerning God’s action and presence in the world today.

[This article was translated into Spanish by Néstor Medina.]

³⁵ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 26.

¿Es la Teología de la Liberación una Teología Política? La crítica hermenéutica de Marcella Althaus-Reid y la pregunta mesiánica Queer sobre el Marxismo

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Resumen

Este ensayo analiza la teoría y teología de la teóloga argentina Marcella Althaus-Reid con el propósito de explorar la relación entre la teología de la liberación latinoamericana y teología política. En particular, traza una trayectoria cristológica mesiánica en el pensamiento de Althaus-Reid que demuestra un vínculo distintivo entre su crítica Maxista queer de la ideología y su “Teología Indecente.”

• SEE PAGE 92 FOR ENGLISH VERSION •

Introducción

Los últimos años han traído un resurgimiento de interés o, por lo menos, una nueva visibilidad de la religión y su continua importancia para comprender nuestra realidad social presente y el orden político global. Ha planteado dudas significativas sobre la exactitud predictiva de la tesis de la secularización, pero también reintroduce cuestiones fundamentales sobre el político imaginario moderno, sobre todo teniendo en cuenta las formas políticas, ya a veces bastante violentas, que la religión ha adoptado en estos tiempos post-seculares. Sin embargo, donde algunos ven peligro, otros encuentran oportunidades, y muchos han acogido con beneplácito el retorno de la teología política a la teoría crítica, a la filosofía social e incluso a los estudios religiosos.¹

¹ Para una discusión más a fondo sobre las preguntas abiertas de la Teología Política hoy, vea Péter Losonczi, and Aakash Singh, ed. *The Future of Political Theology: Religious and Theological Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2012); Creston Davis and Slavoj Žižek, ed. *Theology and the Political: The New Debate* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Hent de Vries, “Introduction: before, around, and beyond the theologico-political” in *Political Theologies Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, ed. Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 3-91.; Michael

El llamado "retorno de la teología política" presenta ambos desafíos y oportunidades para la Teología Latinoamericana de la Liberación. De alguna manera, señala nuevamente los fuertes contrastes entre la Teología de la Liberación y otras formas de pensamiento, resaltando el hecho de que la Teología de la Liberación no es meramente una teología de contexto y ubicación social, sino que, como ha dicho Gustavo Gutiérrez, "una nueva forma de hacer teología" que re-imagina lo que es la teología y quienes son los teólogos.² Sin embargo, la relación entre la Teología de la Liberación y la Teología Política se complica, en gran parte por la cacofonía actual que rodea a la Teología Política, especialmente en lo que se refiere a ella y si es una marca de bienvenida para el proyecto teológico liberador. El resurgimiento de la Teología Política, aunque intersecta de manera muy interesante con temas y trayectorias en las Teologías Latinoamericanas de la Liberación, ha sido principalmente un discurso en la izquierda europea –un desarrollo que Creston Davis ha llamado el "giro continental".³ Este eurocentrismo presenta un problema para las Teologías de Liberación Latinoamericanas que están ansiosas por escapar de las garras coloniales del continente que están buscando maneras de recuperar su vitalidad indígena.

No obstante, el término "Teología Política" es profundamente discutido y, en la medida en que sus raíces teóricas e históricas parecen fundadas sobre todo en un contexto europeo de posguerra, puede ser justo que las Teologías de la Liberación desprecien la etiqueta, prefiriendo el contexto localista o contextualista por su obra. En esto ven semejanzas mucho más cercanas y causas comunes con metodologías postcoloniales e indígenas que con el fondo marxista occidental que la Teología Política comparte con la izquierda europea contemporánea. Esto es cada vez más el caso con la segunda generación de los teólogos de la liberación, que a diferencia de sus clérigos predecesores masculinos que resuenan menos con los acontecimientos y documentos del Concilio Vaticano II y más con la teoría posmoderna y postcolonial. Y sin embargo, el regreso de la Teología Política también está moldeado, si no seguido, por el renacimiento del Marxismo y el interés creciente por los escritos de Marx. La correlación aparente entre estas trayectorias—la "Teología Política" y la "rehabilitación de Marx y los marxismos"—puede no caerle bien a una generación de teólogos de la Liberación que han tomado sus señales teóricas de otra parte. La relación entre el Marxismo y la Teología de la Liberación ha sido un punto doloroso de controversia durante muchos años, derivada al menos en parte, de las acusaciones establecidas en las "Instrucciones" del Vaticano de 1984 y 1986 de la entonces Congregación para la Defensa de la Fe del Cardenal Ratzinger(CDF).

Hay una historia aquí que es importante entender. Los teólogos de Estados Unidos de America y europeos en las décadas posteriores a la Segunda Guerra Mundial se vieron involucrados en numerosos diálogos teológicos y políticos importantes con los escritos de Marx y el/los marxismo/s como consecuencia del relativo éxito de la política de izquierda en el Caribe y del Sur y Centroamérica. La Teología Latinoamericana de la Liberación fue recomendada a menudo como un candidato listo para el acercamiento

Hoelzl and Graham Ward, ed. *The New Visibility of Religion Studies in Religion and Cultural Hermeneutics* (London: Continuum, 2008).

² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 12.

³ Creston Davis, "Political Theology—The Continental Shift." *Political Theology* 11, no. 1 (2010): 5-14.

que integró el análisis social marxista y la teoría en preocupaciones teológicas y espirituales, ilustrando la aparente compatibilidad —o al menos la falta de antagonismo— entre Marx/Marxismo y las preocupaciones liberadoras de la teología cristiana.

Con esta lectura, la Teología de la Liberación Latinoamericana, al centrarse en la crítica de Marx al Capitalismo, intentó desarrollar una posición teo-política de la crítica social al mantener una distancia crítica entre las raíces liberadoras de la teología en su fe bíblica y su complicidad con los sistemas económicos y políticos opresivos y explotadores. Al hacer esto, posicionó al cristianismo en una relación crítica con las condiciones materiales, de modo que sus ideas fueron gobernadas por la praxis liberadora, más que por la sabiduría clásica o los conocimientos ortodoxos. Esto era reconociblemente marxista en que los teólogos latinoamericanos de la Liberación siguieron en gran parte la crítica de Marx del Capitalismo basada en teorías de la lucha de clase y de la plusvalía, pero no aceptaron la crítica de Marx de la ideología aplicada a la religión.⁴ Como resultado de esta resistencia a la crítica de Marx de la religión, la teología de la Liberación ha luchado para integrar y utilizar constructivamente la crítica de la Ideología en sus teologías de una manera sostenida y material. En cambio, la Teología de la Liberación ha respondido a la crítica marxista de la religión al admitir la complicidad de la religión con el orden social dominante y, por tanto, reconstruir teologías que ofrecen formas alternativas de creencia y práctica.

Las respuestas a este reto eran a menudo intentos amplios de reformar y reinterpretar la teología de acuerdo con estándares ampliamente marxistas, ya fuera criticando la alineación del cristianismo con el capitalismo, reconociendo la centralidad de la lucha de clases por la ética política cristiana,⁵ o implementando varias versiones del materialismo (la mayoría de las cuales rara vez eran verdaderamente formas marxistas).⁶ Reconoció que si la teología tendría que responder a la crítica de Marx a la ideología, tendría que hacerlo asegurando su "estatus de oposición" en relación con sus presiones determinantes y lugares materiales, en vez de amarrarse como un "contra" discurso que buscaba intervenir en la realidad social como una alternativa lista.⁷

La recepción de Marx y el marxismo en la teología de la liberación latinoamericana fue complicada por el interés populista por el patetismo y la retórica de la lucha de clases y la praxis revolucionaria que animaron los movimientos revolucionarios de

⁴ La idea de un rechazo *a priori* de la religión debe asociarse e interpretarse como propiamente Marxista según es ampliamente rechazado por Denys Turner, "Religion: Illusions and Liberation," en *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 327-336, y más recientemente Roland Boer, *Criticism of Earth On Marx, Engels and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), y Alberto Toscano, "Beyond Abstractions: Marx and the Critique of the Critique of Religion." *Historical Materialism* 18 (2010): 3-20.

⁵ José Míguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1983).

⁶ Alister Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990); See also Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Marxism and Christianity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968); Denys Turner, *Marxism and Christianity* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983); Nicholas Lash, *A Matter of Hope: A Theologian's Reflections on the Thought of Karl Marx* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981). Para ejemplos más recientes, ver Andrew Collier, *Christianity and Marxism: A Philosophical Contribution to Their Reconciliation* (New York: Routledge, 2001) y Roland Boer, *Criticism of Earth On Marx, Engels and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁷ Peter Scott, *Theology, Ideology and Liberation* (New York, NY: Cambridge, 1994), 36.

izquierda en América Central y América del Sur en los años sesenta y noventa, como de la convergencia de la teología liberacionista católica y del trabajo y activismo político izquierdista, los hermanos Cardenal y Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann de Nicaragua, por ejemplo, pero también el teólogo colombiano Camilo Torres Restrepo, el obispo ecuatoriano Leonad Proano, el brasileño Frei Betto, el chileno Eugenio Pizarro y el haitiano ya fallecido Gerard Jean-Juste.

El activismo y la praxis de los teólogos de la liberación parece unirse con bastante frecuencia, con las coordenadas izquierdas de los objetivos políticos marxistas, mientras que las articulaciones teológicas y teóricas de los mismos indican repetidamente un patrón desigual e irregular de atestiguación y distanciamiento. En particular, esta dialéctica intranquila encuentra un extraño—aunque debo decir queer equilibrio—en la obra de la argentina Marcella Althaus Reid, que trae un Marxismo mesiánico *Queer* a una crítica de la teología de la liberación que ella denomina "Teología Indecente." El objetivo es sacar a relucir su sexualidad inherente y, al hacerlo, capitalizar la política radical inmanente a la teología de la liberación, pero perdida detrás de las barreras hegemónicas establecidas por una clase eclesial masculina y heterosexual. Es decir, ella utiliza la lectura mesiánica *Queer* de Marx (junto con la teoría posmoderna y poscolonial) para establecer la teología de la liberación contra sí misma por su propio bien. Althaus-Reid se distancia de puntos clave de la tradición liberacionista latinoamericana, criticando a luminarias como los hermanos Boff y Gustavo Gutiérrez. Sin embargo, aunque muchos apuntan a su insistencia en un tipo particular de lectura sexual de la teología—lo que ella llama la indecencia de la plática de Dios—este artículo intenta señalar cómo su trabajo está saturado por una perspectiva mesiánica *Queer* que no puede sino ser vista como la marca del Marxismo en su obra. Así que, Marcella Althaus-Reid tiene mucho que decirnos entonces sobre el legado teológico que todavía reside dentro de la crítica de la religión por la izquierda marxista.

En lo que sigue, enlace la hermenéutica queer de Althaus-Reid con su método teológico, mostrando cómo—y por qué—llega a una política mesiánica queer a través de un desvío Ricoeuriano que es tan cristológico como marxista. Creo que esto ayuda a posicionar la teología latinoamericana de la liberación, no sólo como una teología política, sino una que puede acoger el renacimiento de Marx, no como aparece en la izquierda europea contemporánea, sino como la verdad mesiánica teológica *loca* de queer.

Unas bases teológicas Queer

Marcella Althaus-Reid es cada vez más reconocida como paradigmática para la última generación de teologías contextuales que llevan la teoría *queer*, poscolonial y posmoderna a una conversación con las teologías Marxistas de la liberación. Su teología, diseñada como una estrategia ideológico-crítica, es *queer*, no sólo por su interés en la sexualidad, sino también por su convicción presuposicional de que la teología feminista y de la liberación deben abordar activamente los temas y las cuestiones de la pobreza y la sexualidad, pero no como añadiduras al análisis de género, intereses de clase y el interrogatorio de la raza, sino como componentes centrales de su búsqueda de Dios en/como la vida *queer*. Althaus-Reid sostiene que la debilidad central de la teología de la liberación y la feminista es que no se apartan lo suficiente del consenso ortodoxo de la

tradición cristiana.⁸ Existen como movimientos principalmente reformistas que tratan de reconstruir la tradición, su lenguaje y sistemas simbólicos a través de su crítica de la idolatría en lugar del dismantelamiento más radical que exige la crítica *queer* de la ideología. Al hacerlo, están activamente "repitiendo la Ley del Padre en su reflexión teológica, aunque utilicen análisis políticos, postcoloniales e incluso de género, al no desarticular la relación entre la construcción de la sexualidad y la teología sistemática a fondo".⁹ Esta "desarticulación" es obra de la teología *queer*, que actúa como una crítica inmanente de la ideología que es política, mientras que también es auto-reflexivamente teológica. Althaus-Reid es de interés aquí porque introduce la teoría queer como un modelo crítico que toma en serio la negatividad de la crítica inmanente, incluso si esto pudiera significar que la teología debe poner cierta distancia entre sí y las afirmaciones normativas que están destinadas a promover planes o programas específicos para el cambio social.

Ella se acerca a la teología con una conciencia de clase marxista y una preocupación Foucaultiana con el conocimiento como poder, pero se ocupa principalmente de usar historias invisibles y narrativas de gente queer como una hermenéutica crítica. Althaus-Reid está ansiosa a dismantelar las hegemonías sociales, eclesiales y políticas que son instaladas y justificadas por medios teológicos y se imponen por límites teológicos. Debemos ir más allá de una teología para la transformación social y poner en marcha la desarticulación de la ideología sexual que prevalece en la historia de la teología cristiana, una tarea que pide una extravagancia de la verdad teológica que pone de manifiesto la indecencia, la perversión y la desviación en el corazón de una racionalidad teológica libertina.¹⁰ Esta teo-lógica *queer* se rebela contra las restricciones reguladoras de la heteronormatividad y disiente de las formulaciones clásicas por el bien del Otro, pretendiendo traer buenas noticias a los marginados: los *queer*, los desplazados, los colonizados, los pobres. Althaus-Reid llama "el otro lado" como divino, como un hierofante político que aparece y se encierra en una forma resistente, insurreccional y por lo mismo, no ideológica:

El Otro lado es en realidad un espacio omnipresente formado por innumerables diásporas religiosas y políticas *Queer*, y un espacio a considerar cuando se hace la teología *Queer* contextual. La Buena Nueva es que en ese límite, todavía hablando de los miles de nicaragüenses simbólicos presentes en cada manifestación anticapitalista o de las voces de las personas que se levantan para reivindicar el derecho a vivir en un sistema económico y espiritual alternativo a la globalización totalitaria que ha impregnado nuestras vidas, hay Dios ... el Dios que ha salido, cansado quizás de ser empujado hacia el precipicio por los sistemas sexuales hegemónicos en la teología, ha hecho el santuario de Dios en el Otro lado.¹¹

⁸ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 6-11.

⁹ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (London: Routledge, 2003), 172.

¹⁰ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God* (London: SCM Press, 2004).

¹¹ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 4.

Althaus-Reid considera que las teologías de la liberación y las feministas son inadecuadamente severas e insidiosamente de auto-engrandecimiento, permitiendo que la teología siga siendo cómplice mientras defiende su privilegiada posición como objeto de la "opción preferencial". Seguramente, la teología de la liberación no debe ser abandonada, ya que fue una de los primeros en enseñar a la teología las virtudes políticas de la negatividad auto-reflexiva:

La teología de la liberación nos ha ayudado a desenmascarar los intereses políticos disfrazados de "voluntad de Dios" en la teología. Esto se llama "sospecha ideológica" en la teología. A esta sospecha política agregamos ahora una combinación de sospechas en la elaboración de la teología: política, económica, racial, colonial y también sexual.¹²

Esta caracterización de la crítica como "sospecha" proviene de la tutela de Marcella Althaus-Reid bajo Paul Ricoeur, para quien la "hermenéutica de la sospecha" le proporciona a Althaus-Reid la base sobre la cual construir su caso para *queering* su teología como una forma de crítica ideológica. Althaus-Reid sostiene que la ideología primaria que enfrenta la teología hoy en día es su ideología sexual, no sólo el patriarcado, sino también la heterosexualidad.

El aplicar *queering* a las Escrituras siempre será un proyecto relacionado con la relectura de los patriarcas, porque el patriarcado no es una presencia trascendental, sino que tiene agentes responsables de su orden. El deconstruir a los patriarcas significa deconstruir su ley pues la justicia requiere la revisión vigilante (nuevas visiones) de la construcción ideológica de lo divino y lo social...De esta manera, la desconstrucción de los patriarcas se convierte en parte de lo que podemos llamar un proyecto no esencial del círculo hermenéutico de la sospecha.¹³

Para contrarrestar los efectos económicos y políticos de este patriarcado, ella hace un llamamiento a caminos libertinos discernidos en los márgenes de las tradiciones eclesiásticas de los disidentes sexuales. Ella llama a esto la "teología indecente" y su objetivo principal es instigar procesos inmanentes de la interrupción ideológica sexual dentro de la teología, o un "*queering* teológico". Este proyecto requiere cierto "estilo crítico", uno que "saque" al teólogo de posiciones y posturas de poder y legitimidad y así los guíe y la iglesia a las demandas tiernas, aunque descorteses, de la periferia. El objetivo de este rechazo de la autoridad eclesial y de la legitimidad tradicional no es restablecer al marginal en el centro, sino cuestionar absolutamente la idea de un centro normativo de la teología. El problema con la normatividad es su afirmación idólatra: es "la praxis de las comprensiones heterosexuales específicas elevadas a un nivel sagrado".¹⁴ Esta idolatría no puede ser remediada simplemente incorporando perspectivas desprotegidas o fuentes marginadas en el flujo normal de conversaciones y actos teológicos. Ella asimila esta estrategia (asociada más estrechamente con la liberación de primera generación y las teologías feministas de segunda ola) a la

¹² Althaus-Reid, "What is Indecent Theology? Why Indecent?" en <http://www.althaus-reid.com/IT.html>, accesado en Enero 31, 2013.

¹³ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 107.

¹⁴ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 9.

estrategia de desarrollo del capitalismo. Para subrayar el ánimo marxista de su punto, Althaus-Reid se vuelve a una hermenéutica queer que es en partes iguales materialista y mesiánica:

Intentar abrazar el desarrollo según la lógica de la expansión del capital crea la misma confusión y contradicciones que cuando la teología intenta "incorporar" un equilibrio de género (ni siquiera sexual) en su discurso. Lo que se requiere urgentemente no es la mejora de una teología actual a través de una agenda como el género y la igualdad sexual, sino una teología con una seria revisión materialista *Queer* de sus métodos y doctrinas...El objetivo de la reflexión teológica y económica no debe ser un nuevo sistema de distribución, sino un sistema de producción diferente...Esto incluye también la consideración del costo que esa teología debe pagar por la visión radical de su producción.¹⁵

Althaus-Reid entiende crítica a ideología como una forma de pensamiento *queer*. El pensamiento *Queer* subvierte, desnaturaliza y desvela la ideología sexual del cristianismo de la manera en que la teología apoya y refleja la sacralización de las relaciones heterosexuales, que luego es mapeado y redistribuida como un proyecto político completo. Para que esto funcione, la hermenéutica *queer* lanza "el desafío de una teología en la que la sexualidad y las relaciones amorosas no son sólo temas teológicos importantes, sino experiencias que desintegran la teología totalitaria (Teología-T), mientras re-formando a los teólogos".¹⁶ "Teología-T" es su forma abreviada de decir "teología como ideología", es decir, una construcción totalitaria de lo que se considera como "la una y única teología", que no admite discusión o desafíos desde diferentes perspectivas, especialmente en el área de la identidad sexual y su estrecha relación con asuntos políticos y raciales".¹⁷ El queering teológico desplaza a la "Teología-T" de su trópico, sitios corporativos de intercambio económico (la universidad, la iglesia, el mercado académico, las revistas científicas fuertemente controladas, etcétera) a lugares más vulgares, sucios, y los lugares no civilizados de la vida pública sexual: dormitorios, bares y callejones. Tal dislocación muestra que el Dios de la "Teología-T" es "el Dios no-relacional que no sobrevive bien fuera de sus sitios ideológicos...La impureza puede funcionar aquí como un develar de la ideología sexual en la construcción de Dios."¹⁸

Para penetrar en los límites policíacos del discurso Teológico-T, se requiere de una especie de estrategia *guerrillera*, que ella denomina el "círculo hermenéutico libertino" por el cual interpreta el significado *queer* de los símbolos teológicos, no "añadiendo *queers* y revolviendo", sino practicando lecturas intertextuales que llevan textos, narrativas, espacios e historias queer al primer plano teológico en miras del desplazamiento dialógico, para transportar a los lectores a espacios perversos de amor, libertad y esperanza: mazmorras, dormitorios y otros lugares sexualmente inusuales.

El punto no es simplemente deleitarse en la diversión sexual de todo, fetichizar la experimentación, el juego y la transgresión, sino de desentrañar los bordes de un dios

¹⁵ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 148.

¹⁶ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 8.

¹⁷ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 172n4.

¹⁸ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 37.

cristiano que "sale" de debajo de las restricciones sombrías de la imagen parental heterosexual y se muestra ser, no sólo *queer*, sino también libertino. De esta manera, la estrategia intertextual de hermenéutica queer a través del desplazamiento dialógico traslada a la teología a espacios diaspóricos y exiléticos, a esas localidades teológicas marginales donde "el libertino está entre nosotros y está enterrado en nosotros. Los sujetos teológicos cruzan todas las restricciones sexuales de la heterosexualidad ideal."¹⁹ Althaus-Reid invita a los sujetos teológicos a hacer lo que ya están haciendo: hacer teología con rosarios en una mano y un condón en la otra, contando historias y biografías de migrantes sexuales, cuyo "andar" los lleva a las fronteras del amor, el placer y la lucha. Para ella, esto es Cristológicamente justificado. El poder mesiánico de Cristo se encuentra en el carácter desplazado, no sólo de un cuerpo quebrantado por el imperio y la violencia del estado, sino también del espíritu post-resurrección que se mezcla con el aire y el suelo para dar vida a historias perdidas y deseos marginados.

Althaus-Reid cree que la criticidad de la teología contra sí misma requiere un cierto estilo indecente, tanto formalmente como de otra manera: "Esa es la escandalosa posición de lo que he llamado anteriormente Teología Indecente: una teología de la liberación que mientras excede las ideas de liberación colonial, supera el discurso del Dios correcto en busca de una reflexión teológica más equívoca."²⁰ Desprecia un cambio en la teología contemporánea que celebra el impulso emancipatorio y la particularidad contextual de la teología de la liberación, pero muestra más interés en establecer normas diferentes que en la negatividad de la crítica, una posición incompatible con los modos de conocer *queer* que ella privilegia.²¹ El objetivo de la Teología Indecente no es constructivo, sino crítico:

después de todo, incluso el Dios al margen de muchas teologías radicales, se ha convertido en una sombra lateral o espejo divino. Pero el objetivo de la corrupción de la ideología de la normatividad por la contaminación sexual, que informa a nuestro camino teológico *Queer*, es mover objetos y sujetos de teología alrededor, convirtiendo puntos de referencia y reposicionando cuerpos de conocimiento y revelación en formas a veces inadecuadas...El punto es que no podemos pensar un Dios *Queer* sin entender diferentes formas sexuales del saber.²²

La teología indecente es una teología crítica, cuyo modo político es informado por la fugacidad y la periferia, en lugar de volver a centrar o actuar. La crítica es una actividad interpretativa, no una acción directamente accionista. Hacer la teología queer no es proponer nuevas formas teológicas que reemplacen a las dominantes que se encuentran actualmente, sino de cuestionar si "correctas," "normativas" o "centradas" son o no son propiamente cualidades teológicas. Debemos resistir la tentación de reemplazar o suplantar la ideología heteronormativa instituyendo al queer como un régimen discursivo de normalización, centralización y legitimación, que sólo reinscribe lo teológico de lo normal. No queremos centrar o normalizar lo extraño (lo queer), dice

¹⁹ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 26.

²⁰ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 44.

²¹ Elizabeth Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 54.

²² Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 52.

Althaus-Reid. La única manera de llegar a una Cristología verdaderamente indecente es si tomamos el desplazamiento de la marginalidad, en el "no-normal". Estar centrado, ser legítimo, es aceptar la autoridad central de los patriarcados heterosexuales: esto marca la diferencia entre una estrategia feminista y una poscolonial. Althaus-Reid busca una teología de lo que es verdaderamente marginal, que tuerce la autoridad, la legitimidad, centralidad, y se niega a ser cooptada por los discursos centrales del poder teológico; "La normalidad...priva la experiencia real de las personas forzándolas a adaptarse a un discurso idealizado...la teología se convierte en una praxis distorsionada, que lejos de liberarse, esclaviza aún más".²³

Pero, ¿es la negativa política a estar centrada, a ser normada, todo lo que nos asegura que el pensamiento teológico *queer* está exento de ser ideológico, a juicio de Althaus-Reid? ¿Qué es inherentemente no ideológico acerca de los conceptos de hibridez, diáspora o el fetiche? ¿Qué es crítico acerca de las tácticas *queer* de la interrupción, la separación por guiones o el uso de narrativas autobiográficas? ¿Qué disposiciones metodológicas se ponen en práctica para restringir las categorías críticas de Althaus-Reid de simplemente sustituir o sustituirse como ideologías dentro de una teología *queer* de Dios, de la humanidad y de la sexualidad?

Hacer a la hermenéutica *queer* al exponer la teología como política

Responder a esta pregunta es dar un paso atrás en la hermenéutica *queer* de Althaus-Reid. Mi esperanza es que esto pondrá en primer plano al poder mesiánico marxista *queer* que politiza la Teología Indecente en su forma claramente negativa. Empezaremos por vincular primero la perspectiva teológica de Althaus-Reid con su teoría de la interpretación. Es interesante notar que escribió su disertación sobre la hermenéutica de Paul Ricoeur y su influencia en la metodología de la teología Latinoamericana de la liberación. Su teología es *queer*, no sólo por su interés en la sexualidad, sino por su convicción presuposicional de que la Teología de la Liberación Feminista debe abordar activamente los asuntos y cuestionamientos de la pobreza y la sexualidad, no como complementos al análisis de género, intereses de clase y el interrogatorio de la raza. Este proyecto requiere un cierto "estilo," uno que aleje al teólogo de posiciones y posturas de poder y legitimidad, y a las exigencias tiernas, aunque descorteses, de la periferia: la transgresión de la autoridad eclesial y de la legitimidad tradicional, no por el bien de restablecer lo marginal en el centro, sino de traicionar la idea de un centro normativo de la hermenéutica. Hacer la hermenéutica *queer* es reconocer que la comunidad latinoamericana de mujeres pobres es simplemente (*tout court*) divina; es nombrar a la mujer sufriente como el árbitro, el agente comunitario cuyas lecturas "permutativas" interrumpen la Teología, "cruzándola", para que pueda (la Teología) pasar como política.

Lo que es original en la perspectiva teológica de Althaus-Reid es que ella está tratando activamente de "exponer" la teología como ética a través de una re-imaginación del círculo hermenéutico *como una teoría crítica*. Esto permite a la teología transgredir activamente las fronteras de la hermenéutica y la ética en formas que interrumpen (*queer*) la normatividad de la ética, pero también la performatividad como actos coitales

²³ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 64.

de amor que no pertenecen en las iglesias sino en espacios sexuales marginales (por ejemplo, bares gay, mazmorras sexuales, orgías transexuales, y agujeros gloriosos).²⁴ Debemos sonrojarnos y tartamudear al actuar teológicamente porque la teología es siempre un acto sexual público. La sexualidad es constitutiva de todos los intentos de dar lugar a la expresión interpretativa de lo sagrado. La teología es verdaderamente una charla sobre Dios cuando es indecente, descortés y disidente, cuando se expone como un "juego de adivinanzas" subversivo que es mucho más exploratorio y experimental que revelador y autoritario. Cuando las autoridades religiosas –los dictadores eclesiales que gobiernan el régimen discursivo del conocimiento teológico y del habla– tratan de censurar, silenciar o poner a la teología en un "retraso de siete segundos", atestigua la teología como su momento más liberador –el momento de su horrible indecencia, cuando se ha vuelto más peligrosa, cuando más capaz de hablar y dar voz a los muertos ya los desaparecidos, a los olvidados por largo tiempo, a los que no son meramente marginados (al menos los marginados están representados por el orden social *como* marginados), pero los invisibles, aquellos cuyos cuerpos no se registran como humanos. Cuando la teología sobrepasa las fronteras de la decencia, según las apropiadas por los poderes etéreos que gobiernan nuestros actos de habla, cuando es transgresora, perversa, libertina, es entonces cuando la teología es *más* teológica: cuando cruza más allá de las ideologías sexuales hacia un lugar contextual cuando podemos escuchar de nuevo la voz *queer* de Dios desde los lugares *queer* y dentro de las asambleas disruptivas. Es aquí donde la teología "se expone" así misma como política, pero necesita una hermenéutica *queer* para hacerlo, y esta hermenéutica llega a Althaus-Reid a través de perturbación de un poder mesiánico marxista. Esta dinámica da a la Teología Indecente su estética y epistemología *queer*, pero también su carácter político. Es lo que hace que la teología de la Liberación sea verdaderamente una teología política de formas muy diferentes de las formas disciplinarias eurocéntricas dentro de la academia.

Parte misma de la teología "indecente" de Althaus-Reid es la conversión (*queering*) de la hermenéutica en política, para aflorar así el poder mesiánico que se encuentra dentro del sujetoteológico *queer*. Como tal, el círculo hermenéutico, más visible en su colección de ensayos, *De la Teología Feminista a la Teología Indecente*, es importante, sobre todo para el tipo de lecturas teológicas y políticas que una teoría interpretativa *queer* nos ofrece.

El Círculo Hermenéutico en De la Teología Feminista a la Teología Indecente

Para los propósitos de este artículo, quiero reconstruir el *queering* (alteración) de Althaus-Reid del círculo hermenéutico en cierto tipo de cristología marxista que funciona doblemente como una crítica ideológica y una política, un movimiento que yo entiendo como completamente mesiánico, pero de una manera *queer*. Esto, espero, ilustre lo que significa pensar en la teología de la Liberación como una teología política modelada por una crítica de la ideología marxista.

En primer lugar, unas pocas palabras sobre la estructura en *De la Teología Feminista a la Teología Indecente*: Althaus-Reid introduce primero la cuestión de la

²⁴ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 3, 93.

"sexualidad" de la Teología de la Liberación (Parte 1), que eventualmente resulta en un "queering sexual" de la hermenéutica (Parte 2). Este análisis materialista pregunta si la reticencia de la teología de la Liberación sobre su memoria colonial le había permitido mercantilizarse y por lo mismo distanciarse más de las verdaderas vidas políticas y luchas de mujeres pobres, cuyos recuerdos de resistencia militante pueden proporcionar estrategias subversivas para resistir el encanto esencialista de lo exótico, lo nativo y lo indígena. (Parte 3) Este rehusarse a homogenizar es lo que lleva a la Teología Indecente y a la teología *Queer* a una alianza política. Cuando la teología es marginal, cuando se incuba en comunidades, espacios y lenguas indeterminadas y promiscuas, produce relaciones de solidaridad y afectividad que se producen "afuera del radar" del franquismo, la institucionalización y el respaldo "oficial": los regímenes estratégicos de tenencia y legitimidad.

Aquí vemos a Althaus-Reid desarrollando elementos claves de su *queering* del círculo hermenéutico. Comienza en el capítulo 1 esbozando el método dialógico de ver a la teología como una forma de "caminar con" los recuerdos de las luchas pasadas de las mujeres latinoamericanas sufrientes (contadas en textos mitológicos). "Caminar con" (hacer la "caminata") pone de manifiesto la importancia del estilo dialógico de hacer teología por una praxis coherente y liberadora en el acto de la teología, extendiendo así la idea de una "hermenéutica de sospecha" a una cristología genealógica que parece bastante Foucaultiana. Establece un círculo hermenéutico diferente para una ética teológica, que se requiere si uno ha de hacer la cristología desde la perspectiva indecente de una sexualidad *queer* y disidente. Vincular la teología a la sexualidad es un viaje hermenéutico donde los sujetos y las identidades viven y luchan en las fronteras y espacios intersticiales, donde el método por el que leemos los textos y entendemos su significado es tomado como tarea política de solidaridad y defensa de esas historias y recuerdos, tanto de la sacralidad de las mujeres como de la independencia económica, ambas causales directas de la conquista colonial y de la dominación heterosexual. Leer el "espejo de la Otridad" es acoger tanto la subversión como la vulnerabilidad; es permitir que la historia del sufrimiento de las mujeres funcione como clave hermenéutica de cómo entendemos nuestra teología, una cristología que considera la natalidad de Jesús como un proceso comunitario de convertirse en el Mesías, ocasionado por el proyecto Herodista de *conquista* y mutilación: el asesinato de los inocentes que (teológicamente) se repite en la historia de las "mujeres serpientes", que también han sido secuestradas, golpeadas y cortadas por las fuerzas Heroditas de la cristiandad colonial que fueron amenazadas por las queer fuerzas mesiánicas vivas y bien en el ministerio de mujeres.

Este proceso hermenéutico se ejemplifica en una cadena progresiva de teologías críticas que utilizan el "cuerpo feminista" como un espacio político activo que produce lecturas *queer* e indecentes de la cristología: estas interpretaciones dialógicas comprenden las experiencias pasadas y presentes de la mujer pobre y sufriente son modos de producción teológica que revelan no sólo el vínculo primordial entre hablar de Dios y la sexualidad, sino que a su vez hacen hincapié en un "Cristo" mesiánico que es siempre más que el Jesús bíblico o "histórico"²⁵ pues siempre engendró, ciertamente, nació de la comunidad de mujeres cuyas denuncias proféticas del patriarcado y del

²⁵ Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*, 92.

heterosexualismo engendran una "re-simbolización" interpretativa que reabre el orden cerrado del discurso teológico. El hacer indecente esta Teología juega con las regulaciones de la decencia usadas para naturalizar y sacralizar una economía política de la sexualidad, apenas disfrazada de Teología. De este modo, Althaus-Reid moviliza la hermenéutica como crítica-de-ideología, utilizando prácticas sexuales, actos sexuales transgresivos o tabúes, lugares inusuales de actividad sexual, posiciones sexuales disidentes, parejas desviadas, fantasías y fetiches de mujeres, todo como actos teológicos, actos que revelan la verdad teológica para la comunidad de mujeres cuyo diálogo incluye historias indecentes sobre sus cuerpos, la naturaleza eucarística de sus actos sexuales y la presencia de Dios en y para ellos. La hermenéutica Indecente se practica desde dentro de esos espacios históricos, religiosos y culturales desviados donde las experiencias, reflexiones y actos corporales de los pobres latinoamericanos y sexualmente disidentes (críticamente) identifican la heterosexualidad como ideología y (constructivamente) reclaman las formas desviadas de saber y amar.

El giro a la Sexualidad como la hermenéutica para reinterpretar la teología, actúa como una crítica ideológica del duradero patriarcalismo y heterosexualidad de la teología de la liberación, atenuando la efectividad del análisis liberacionista de clase y crítica materialista de la explotación y opresión. Un repensar sexualizado del círculo hermenéutico critica el régimen discursivo de la heterosexualidad "como una forma de pensar", que abre la teología a lo queer como una diferente estética y epistemología, una diferente forma de pensar sexualmente que va hacia los disidentes sexuales para desenmascarar la heteronormatividad como un mal cultural y político producido que negocia con *idealizaciones* que alejan a la teología de su "realidad crítica sexual".

La Hermenéutica como Concientización Radical: *Queering* a Ricoeur a través de Marx

Paul Ricoeur se trata de distinciones y desvíos. Leer a Ricoeur me enloquece: bebo mucho al leerlo, y mientras me entrelazo a través de las páginas, me encuentro preguntándome cuándo "volveremos" a "el punto". Mis maltratadas copias de sus textos están llenas de flechas y las líneas, tratando desesperadamente de amarrarme, el lector, de nuevo al "argumento central." El modo irregular que la dialéctica de Ricoeur lleva al lector, la forma en que se desliza fuera de la vista, marca la confluencia espacial entre lecturas postestructuralistas y *queer*, particularmente sus respectivas maneras de convertir (queer) la hermenéutica en política, es decir, leer a Ricoeur y encontrar a Marx. En lo que sigue, trato de trazar dos distinciones Ricoeurianas que considero importantes si queremos entender como Althaus-Reid (*queering*) convierte la hermenéutica en política: (a) la distinción entre la crítica de la ideología y la hermenéutica de la tradición, y (b) la distinción entre el subjetivismo y los enfoques estructuralistas a las lecturas textuales.

En primer lugar, Althaus-Reid entiende que la tarea de la hermenéutica no es sólo la comprensión de un texto, sino también la crítica de las ideologías que actúan dentro de los mundos que produce y dentro de los cuales opera, así como de los intérpretes y acciones involucradas en su lectura. La intervención de Ricoeur en el debate de Gadamer-Habermas se guio por su compromiso de que la crítica de la ideología y la hermenéutica de la tradición son interdependientes, mientras Gadamer y Habermas se

jugaban entre sí a través de la oposición entre comprensión y explicación. La opinión de Gadamer era que la función de la tradición como una ontología –nuestros pre-entendimientos, prejuicios, conciencia histórica efectiva—limitan los significados posibles. Habermas, aspirando al ideal final de la emancipación humana, como lo hacen todos los buenos teóricos críticos, afirmó que tales restricciones pueden ser superadas en última instancia. Como tal, la distanciación, o la adopción de una postura de autocomprensión crítica que requiere que la intérprete se "distancie" del texto, es similar a la crítica de ideología, pero no puede separarse de la tradición. Ricoeur buscó un método para descubrir las estructuras ontológicas del significado y para producir una interpretación del "tipo de ser-en-el-mundo desplegado *frente* al texto", en lugar de lo que está *detrás* del texto, las intenciones psicológicas ocultas, por ejemplo.

En segundo lugar, la afirmación comprometida de Althaus-Reid con la crítica "respuesta del lector" es apoyada en parte por el post-estructuralismo de la teoría de la Interpretación de Ricoeur. Ricoeur hace una distinción entre los enfoques subjetivos y estructuralistas de la lectura en relación con lo que él ve como la función referencial de un texto, que se relaciona tanto con su significado como con su significancia. El enfoque subjetivista construye "el mundo detrás del texto", mientras también presupone la "pre-comprensión" del intérprete, que nunca puede ser totalmente trascendida. Alternativamente, el enfoque estructuralista se aplaza refiriéndose al "mundo detrás del texto" y se centra en cambio en identificar y clasificar las partes dentro del texto y sus interconexiones. Aquí se pueden identificar dos puntos: en primer lugar, el significado ingenuo *superficial* del texto, que se refiere más específicamente a la narrativa del mito, por ejemplo. Pero, en segundo lugar, lo que necesita la comprensión es una semántica profunda, una lectura crítica que encuentra el sentido del texto tal como se revela al frente del texto: "lo que hay que entender no es la situación inicial del discurso, hacia un mundo posible ... El entendimiento tiene menos que ver con el autor y su situación. Busca comprender las proposiciones del mundo abiertas por la referencia del texto."²⁶ Esto es "acerca" de que es el texto (en sentido amplio), como una referencia no ostensiva que va más allá de las intenciones del autor. Para que se logre la comprensión se requiere una afinidad entre el lector y este "acerca de". Como concluye Ricoeur, la comprensión está completamente mediada por la totalidad de los "procedimientos explicativos" que la preceden y la acompañan, por medio de los cuales Althaus-Reid se refiere a las permutaciones *queer* e indecentes producidas por los actos de amor, devoción y sexualidad entendidos como prácticas de concientización:

Lo que hemos dicho acerca de la semántica de profundidad que el análisis estructural produce más bien nos invita a pensar en el sentido del texto como *un precepto que proviene del texto*, como una nueva manera de ver las cosas, como *un mandato a pensar de cierta manera*.²⁷

¿Cómo ella adapta el círculo hermenéutico de Ricoeur en la perspectiva *queer* y postcolonial? Pensar de manera *queer* es pensar a lo largo de líneas postcoloniales; La crítica postcolonial es *queer*. El pensamiento *queer* es siempre sexual, pero no de una manera esencialista que bifurca la "sexualidad" de otras formas de vida, habla y acción.

²⁶ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 87.

²⁷ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 88.

El sexo como un acto de hablar es el mismo tipo que la teología. Entonces *queer* es siempre sobre la sexualidad, pero también introduce un marco y un campo de referencia de pensamiento que transgrede el marco de referencia heteronormativo al que está confinado por las ideologías sexuales de ordenamiento patriarcal de género. Sin embargo, esta transgresión precede al sujeto; sucede sin que el sujeto se dé cuenta de ello, y así es aquí que Althaus-Reid convierte en *queer* la hermenéutica en la "concientización", o como he dicho antes, lee Ricoeur y encuentra a Marx.

Al igual que Ricoeur, Althaus-Reid identifica las tensiones básicas y el conflicto en la teología de la liberación y busca lograr sus resoluciones en una síntesis interpretativa, con la ayuda de las formas de pensamiento y actuación postcolonial y *queer*. Las tensiones y conflictos en la tarea de la hermenéutica teológica indecente no provienen tanto de la dialéctica entre explicación y comprensión, sino más bien entre epistemologías y sexualidades. Las epistemologías *queer* reconocen cómo las estructuras y los significados colocados en los cuerpos humanos impiden que el ser humano sea sexual y, por lo tanto, controlan que los pensamientos sexuales se apoderen de maneras humanas. En términos ranciénicos, la sexualidad es aquella parte del humano que no tiene parte; se define por su no-ser, por su no-ser-reconocido. Althaus-Reid, entonces, teoriza la hermenéutica Indecente como una pedagogía marxista, o lo que Paulo Freire llamó "concientización", que enseña a los sujetos políticos a verse de nuevo como sujetos políticos. La hermenéutica se lleva a cabo como un acto de concientización, en el cual, atendiendo a determinados lugares, prácticas, historias y comunidades, produce "los temas generativos" necesarios para el reposicionamiento y el reencuentro de teologías *queer* e indecentes de, por y para desviados sexuales y disidentes económicos.

Si la hermenéutica es una práctica de concientización, una especie de pedagogía de la que nos inclinaremos a pensar de cierta manera, Althaus-Reid identifica dos tipos de interpretaciones (teológicas) que surgen como resultado: aquellas que (a) legitiman las estructuras de poder, y aquellos que (b) cuestionan la interpretación y el poder mismo. Ricoeur llama a este último una "lectura de la ruptura", que actualiza el papel positivo de la imaginación de una comunidad, en un proceso continuo de interpretación de su propia fe y de la realidad cotidiana. Para la Teoría de la Interpretación de Althaus-Reid, el texto que interpretamos siempre nos está interpretando. Este es un proceso de auto-comprensión: entender un texto requiere una lectura que interprete un texto y nos permita ser interpretados por el texto. Este materialismo hermenéutico se convierte en el andamiaje metodológico para su convertir (queering) de la teología en política.

Parte central de su hermenéutica de concientización es la función generativa de las Comunidades Eclesiales Básicas de mujeres latinoamericanas pobres y disidentes sexuales marginados, cuyos diálogos sobre sus sexualidades expresadas en sus prácticas teológicas son propiamente marianas en su fecundidad: ellas dan a luz al Cristo mesiánico. Ella encarna la "Hermenéutica de la Atestiguación" de Ricoeur (ella toma la atestación como un acto corporal histórico, una actuación sexual de la desviación) porque si la verdad se encuentra en la hermenéutica, será una verdad apocalíptica sobre la historia, una ruptura que proviene de voces históricas, de las memorias pasadas y de las historias de esas mujeres originarias e indígenas de los "anillos del infierno," que han luchado y han sufrido más de las manos teológicas de las fuerzas colonizadoras,

ocupantes y mutiladoras dentro de la iglesia.²⁸ Ella busca una hermenéutica que produzca una cristología que redimirá la "memoria de los que han sufrido en el pasado",²⁹ que permitirá que su testimonio profético sea escuchado y que sus historias críticas sean contabilizadas en el diálogo comunitario dentro del *rejunte*. La política de la teología Indecente activa la praxis liberadora que es celebrada por los teólogos de la Liberación, pero la vuelve contra ellos repetidamente, recordando a todos aquellos que tienen oídos para oír: "Las prácticas redentoras son las que permiten que los recuerdos de los cuerpos que han sido amados fuera de los límites de las ideologías heterosexuales se hagan sagrados."³⁰

Y es aquí donde su hermenéutica –o mejor dicho, su hermenéutica crítica al estilo Ricoeur, golpea otro tono más *queer* (que es también una nota marxista), y sigue aún otro desvío, esta vez hacia una especie de Mesianismo que encontró su camino en el corazón mismo de la teología política. Estoy presentando lo "Mesianico" aquí como un sitio de acercamiento en el cual la teología de la liberación puede verse como su propia forma de teología política, y por lo tanto, quizás, puede llevar a un abrazo de su propia identidad marxista como un mesianismo *queer*.

Althaus-Reid entiende que el poder mesiánico reside, no en la Gran Figura, en el Significante Transcendental, o en la iglesia, mucho menos en teoría o Teología, sino en esos lugares *queer* y desagradables donde Dios no se encuentra en ninguna parte: los pueblos, lugares e historias abandonados por Dios. Althaus-Reid ofrece una opción teológica al "sujeto extremadamente marginado, casi un sujeto 'condenado.' Tal es el privilegio del practicante de S/M, el travesti pobre, el lector de *Sade*, o el sujeto heterosexual promiscuo 'fuera del closet'".³¹

Cuando se discute el legado del Marxismo dentro de la teología de la liberación, Kristien Justaert hace eco de la extensión de Althaus-Reid de "la opción preferencial para los marginados" de la praxis a la revelación,

"es en la 'cara' de los oprimidos que Dios puede ser encontrado, y de la perspectiva de los *pobres* (en un sentido amplio) que la resistencia debe crecer. La interpretación marxista de las relaciones económicas y sociales en la realidad en la que vivimos se utiliza entonces como un *medio* para alcanzar el objetivo final de la teología de la liberación: la liberación de los pobres y, por lo tanto, la instalación del Reino de Dios en la tierra."³²

Estoy de acuerdo completamente con Justaert y, sin embargo, no está del todo correcta en el sentido de que Althaus-Reid sigue la lectura de Marx y el Marxismo de

²⁸ Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology*, 148.

²⁹ Se debe escuchar fragmentis de la noción del "poder mesiánico débil" de Walter Benjamin, especialmente como se apropia el teólogo político Johann Baptist Metz. Para tratados recientes del lugar de Walter Benjamin en los discursos teológicos contemporáneos ver el excelente *Walter Benjamin and Theology*, ed. Colby Dickinson and Stephane Symons. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016.

³⁰ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 134.

³¹ Marcella Althaus-Reid, "The Bi/girl Writings: From Feminist Theology to Queer Theologies," en *Post-Christian Feminisms: A Critical Approach*, ed. Lisa Isherwood and Kathleen McPhillips, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 105.

³² Kristien Justaert, "Liberation Theology: Deleuze and Althaus-Reid." *SubStance* 39, no. 1 (2010): 154-164.

Jacques Derrida como un relato espectral de la relación de la justicia con la realidad social, lo que, por cierto, la aproxima al cristianismo, tal vez más cerca de lo que es cómodo para ambos. El "mesiánico" para Derrida es mejor representado por "el espíritu del Marxismo", el incesante "llamado", el anuncio del aplazado, pero siempre inminente, advenimiento de la justicia.³³ El poder de lo mesiánico no está en su realización en la historia, en su instalación concreta como política o procedimiento, sino más bien en su presencia pura, indestructible e inefable como ausencia. En resumen, el espíritu mesiánico de Marx y el Marxismo es *queer*. La capacidad de lo "mesiánico" para ayudar a los sujetos a imaginar un mundo, hacer y re-hacer el mundo (lo que Daniel Barber ha llamado recientemente la "tarea teológica de la inmanencia"),³⁴ es excesivo en su falta de voluntad para llegar a la forma; su rechazo transgresor a instituirse con las pesadas letras del contenido. El carácter "mesiánico" de la justicia viene entonces de su negatividad, de su fracaso a enunciarse; su poder anárquico proviene de su debilidad, su infinita promesa de sus horizontes aún no determinados, del hecho de que permanece desconectado del orden socio-simbólico, de que carece de inteligibilidad dentro de las coordenadas políticas del presente.

Esto suena verdadero con la experiencia *queer* de no pertenecer, no haber, no conformarse dentro de sistemas binarios, díadas, coordenadas o *continuums* simbólicos. El hecho de que tantos cuerpos, voces e historias *queer* no estén expresadas, ausentes (pero siempre presentes, también), negadas por las narrativas sexuales de la normatividad, es lo que permite al sujeto teológico *queer* saber más sobre lo que se debe hacer para traer justicia en el mundo o para descubrir a Dios de nuevo. El poder mesiánico *queer* del cristianismo es su núcleo político—y es lo que lo sitúa en una relación mutua de fundación y perseverancia con el Marxismo: el Marxismo expresa el núcleo político de la teología Indecente en términos materialistas, y es el cristianismo, en estos tiempos post-seculares, el que mantiene infinitamente abierta la promesa venidera del poder mesiánico del Marxismo.

Conclusión

En última instancia, el objetivo político-crítico de la hermenéutica teológica de Althaus-Reid es negativo: despertar a la Teología de su amnesia, su olvido sobre los actos políticos de los símbolos teológicos del cristianismo que ignoran a los disidentes sexuales cuyo amor y libertad han sido socavados activamente por las cercas ideológicas de la heteronormatividad totalizadora de la tradición teológica. Es dismantelar la ideología sexual de la teología para redescubrir el verdadero rostro de Dios como parte de la búsqueda teológica *queer*. Para ello, la teología de Althaus-Reid emplea la inmanencia divina como su tesis central: la teología radical de la encarnación y la admisión cruciforme de la impotencia divina le presenta el principio teológico fundamental que ella necesita para interpretar a Dios como *queer*, encontrar en Cristo una *loca* mesiánica, e invierte así a los pueblos, lugares e historias abandonados por Dios con la gracia del Espíritu divino. Cristo ha muerto, Cristo ha resucitado y Cristo

³³ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 1-60.

³⁴ Daniel Barber, *Deleuze and the Naming of God: Post-secularism and the Future of Immanence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 1-9.

vendrá de nuevo...pero nadie sabe cuándo ni dónde, aunque sabemos que cualquiera que sea la forma corporal que aparezca, será ciertamente *queer*.

En la introducción pregunté hasta qué punto podemos hablar de la teología de la liberación Latinoamericana como teología política, tanto como campo disciplinario o como de marco de investigación. Esta cuestión es importante en la medida en que la teología política ha surgido nuevamente como un punto central de organización de las discusiones contemporáneas a través de las humanidades críticas, incluyendo discursos que han moldeado profundamente la tradición de la teología de la liberación como la teoría postestructuralista y *Queer*. Marcella Althaus-Reid es un ejemplo original de la teología latinoamericana de la liberación porque emplea la crítica de la ideología, una característica tanto del marxismo occidental como de la teología política, de manera que presiona a la teología de la liberación contra sus propias tendencias accionistas, pidiéndole que se auto-examine mientras se retuerce en su silla al describir la vida y el trabajo de los teólogos "bajo el puente". Teóricamente, da un relato *Derridano* de la justicia escatológica para la gente *queer* que se convierte en una hermenéutica dialéctica que descentra la normatividad y repiensa lo político en la teología política en una dirección negativa, torciendo las tentaciones de recentralización de la normatividad. Nunca serán televisadas las travesuras revolucionarias de la indecencia, la promiscuidad y el fracaso *queer*.

Esto no es sólo para deleitarse con la diversión sexual de todo, la fetichización del experimento, sino para desentrañar los bordes de un Dios cristiano que viene a nosotros en el arrastre escatológico del exceso trinitario que "sale" de las sombrías restricciones de la imagen parental heterosexual. De esta manera, la estrategia intertextual de cambiar (*queering*) la hermenéutica a través del desplazamiento dialógico traslada a la teología a espacios diaspóricos y exiléticos, a esos locales teológicos marginales donde "el libertino está entre nosotros y está enterrado en nosotros." Los temas teológicos cruzan todas las restricciones sexuales de la heterosexualidad ideal. La teología *Queer* le ha dado la bienvenida a los '*SMers*', a los 24/7s, a los *leather folks*, a los *genderfuckers* y los travas (el apodo argentino de travestis) dentro de su círculo hermenéutico y sus investigaciones teológicas."³⁵ Es evidente que esta invitación es hermenéutica: dar la bienvenida a sujetos teológicos para hacer lo que ya están haciendo, hacer teología con rosarios en una mano y un condón en la otra, es contar historias y biografías de migrantes sexuales, cuyo "caminar" los lleva a los bordes del amor, placer y lucha. Hacer teología indecentemente –hacer teología como *queer*– no se limita a la propia identidad o práctica sexual, sino más bien es un modo de entender, una práctica de interpretación, una hermenéutica política, que reposiciona el Sujeto *queer* e indecente en la teología a través de atestiguación de la desviación, la disidencia, la perversidad y la promiscuidad, un círculo que considera estas historias de cuerpos libertinos como las claves hermenéuticas para discernir la acción y presencia de Dios en el mundo de hoy.

[Este artículo fue traducido al español por Néstor Medina.]

³⁵ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 26.

**Latinas/os, Canada and Cosmopolitanism:
A Look from its Exteriority**

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Resumen

The adequacy of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism as labels to describe ethnoculturally plural metropolises is the focus of this paper. It draws from the Canadian social experiment and argues that multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism refer to complex mechanisms of population control and exclusion. Taking the Latina/o experience as vantage point, the author proposes that the pervasive notion of cosmopolitanism is better understood from the perspective of those that are left outside of its sociopolitical and economic apparatus.

Introduction

In light of the present retrenchment of racialized and culturalized Eurocentrism, what do multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism as discourses and proposed alternative phenomena to the melting pot offer to the Latina/o experience? My contention in the first section of this paper is that for all their attempt at undoing and undermining Eurocentrism, these discourses merely reconfigure it as the critical apparatus and vantage point from which they imagine “multicultural” societies. I insist that multiculturalism—more locally—and cosmopolitanism— more globally—are two cognate ideas couched within the scope of the present globalizing economical calculus that puts in place the mechanisms necessary for population control in culturally diverse contexts, while simultaneously ensuring that everything is up for sale, bodies, cultural traditions, and even citizenship

Instead, in the second section of this paper, I propose that a fuller evaluation of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism is only possible from its fringes, its exteriority. I argue that it is those people who are unable to “pay” the entrance “fees” into cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism who constitute the undesirable human surplus, the exteriority of this growing system. Drawing on the Latina/o experience of marginalization and systemic discrimination, I argue that it is the exteriority—the

human surplus—of this growing system, who should be the base upon which cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism is analyzed and interrogated

Contrary to those who claim that what is emerging is a global cosmopolitan culture, and taking the Canadian experiment of multiculturalism as focus of analysis, I argue that what is taking place can be more appropriately identified in terms of syncopation, a strategic in and out movement between cultures and identities. I argue that Latina/o communities are a good test case of this complex life-dynamic of syncopation, by which they engage and challenge inherited and pervasive cultural and identity frames by simultaneously inhabiting multiple cultural and identity spaces, without surrendering their own ethnocultural identity.

Cosmopolitanism and Multiculturalism: The Canadian Experiment

The debates on Cosmopolitanism, that is, the idea of a shared morality and the construction of societies where cultural (and religious) plurality is the social norm are predicated on two fundamental “values”: One, locally, for a diverse society to exist it is necessary that the population learns to respect the cultural boundaries of each other’s neighbours. And two, globally, the population ought to recognize their collective moral responsibility for every human being—the citizens of the world, including some distant others who are also our global neighbors. Anthony Appiah identifies these two values as two different chronologically sequential strands of cosmopolitanism.¹ In a somewhat idealized way, he notes that these two values together make it possible for the realization that we can learn from each other’s differences.²

In Canada, there is disconnect between this set of “cosmopolitan” or “multicultural” values and how things take place on the ground. The cosmopolitan society preserves the bifurcation of reality as private versus public, whereby one’s cultural background is reserved for the private-personal dimension while one is expected to perform within the scope of the (one) dominant culture in the public sphere—a kind of functional Anglophonesty or Francophonesty.³ The Canadian population (born and immigrants) has been sold to the idea of Canada as a welcoming country. We often brandish one of the key instruments behind this notion, the Multiculturalism Act⁴ as foundational to Canada’s tolerance and openness. The Multiculturalism Act did in fact put the spotlight

1. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006).

2. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, 4.

3. Augie Fleras tells us that multiculturalism has to do with unity and national unity. Ethnic groups are accepted but they should keep their culture in the private sphere and support the natural, nation-building processes of integration and assimilation. Augie Fleras and Jean Elliot, *Multiculturalism in Canada: The Challenge of Diversity* (Scarborough, Ontario: Nelson Canada, 1992), 132.

4. The policy was adopted in 1971 by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, but became law until 1988: It ensured that equality was given to all Canadian citizens, the rights of the Aboriginal peoples was recognized, and Canada’s official languages (French and English) were also set. Its two fundamental principles are that all citizens are equal and have the freedom to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage; and that all citizens have full and equitable participation of individual and communities of all origins in all aspects of Canadian society: English French as the two languages; Aboriginal rights; Equality of rights regardless of colour, religion; minorities’ right to enjoy their cultures.

on Canada's cultural diversity while taking attention away from Canada's racialized and (polite) racist social structures. What is not often admitted is that the Multiculturalism Act was first and foremost an instrument to avert a dispute with the Francophone population of the province of Quebec that threatened to rip the country into two.⁵ It succeeded in granting the Francophone equal founding status with the Anglophones, but it made other ethnocultural groups socially and politically subaltern.

In Canada, cosmopolitanism shares in the semantic field with multiculturalism. On one hand, multiculturalism emphasized cultural coexistence while subsuming other cultures under a dominant public culture, to which all citizens ought to ascribe in order to contribute to the social program.⁶ On the other hand, cosmopolitanism understands cultural boundaries not as clearly demarcated silos but as dynamic, fluctuating, moveable targets. Both celebrate cultural diversity, but while in multiculturalism the social and civic duty is tolerance, in cosmopolitanism citizens learn to respect cultural differences while caring for each other's shared humanity. Other aspects of cosmopolitanism will become apparent in what follows as I attempt to look at this phenomenon from the perspective of the insiders and its outsiders.

The cosmopolitan nature of Canada is no accident. For over 50 years now, Canada has opened the door for immigrants because of its low birth rate. In order for Canada to thrive immigrants are necessary. It is this part of the story that is emphasized and for which Canada is portrayed as a welcoming and kind country. Also, officially Canada is described as a multicultural-cosmopolitan nation, with three founding nations: The First Nations, the French and the British. On the ground, it operates within a bicultural and bilingual frame.⁷ It is Canada's multicultural Act and policy of increased immigration that have created the conditions for the emergence of multi-cultural

5. According to Eva Mackey the policy of multiculturalism owes its beginning to the Bilingualism and Biculturalism commission. Particularly was created to deal with the Quebec 'problem.' See Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 63.

6. I am not spending time discussing the melting pot simply because I believe it has been overcome by the phenomena of multiculturalism. Stated clearly, the melting pot is an unabashed cultural assimilationist agenda, which is unapologetic about the privileging of one culture, usually Anglo Western European. Multiculturalism, meanwhile, is the claim that it is possible to share a geographical and social space with respect and tolerance. It does not seek to force other cultures into assimilation, but still preserves the racialized and cultural hierarchies between groups. At the same time, its unabashed assimilationist character and preservation of the uneven power differential between the dominant culture and the subaltern-marginalized ones is not reason to replicate it. Here I share Gorringer's claim that the melting pot of the US and Britain do not melt, they only reproduce ethnic and racial divisions from generation to generation. See Timothy J. Gorringer, *Furthering Humanity: A Theology of Culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 240. Yet, Angela Davis agrees that "the metaphor that has displaced the melting pot is the salad. A salad consists of many ingredients, is colorful and beautiful, and it is to be consumed by someone." So she enquires "Who consumes multiculturalism" (Angela Y. Davis, "Gender, Class and Multiculturalism: Rethinking 'Race' Politics," 45, in Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism* [Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996].).

7. The commission made suggestions to move from bilingualism and biculturalism to official multiculturalism which was adopted as official policy in October 8 1971. Moreover, Pierre Elliot Trudeau announced this as 'Multiculturalism within a Bilingual framework.' See Mackey, *The House of Difference*, 64.

cosmopolitan social environments in their various expressions in Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto.

Canada's multicultural and cosmopolitan vision has not gone unchallenged, particularly its depiction as a benevolent state. In its present configuration it is structurally ethnocentric. It forces minoritized groups to adopt the dominant cultures (French and English) and accompanying cultural implications (values, custom, religion).⁸ From the perspective of racialized cultures, the present policy becomes an instrument for the preservation of the "purity" of the dominant culture while domesticating ethnic differences.⁹ The reduction of the First Nations to the status of ethnic groups helps manage the relationship between the state and this potentially threatening minoritized population, while it legitimizes itself as benevolent.¹⁰ The government claims it "recognizes" and celebrates diversity while placing limits to diversity itself: "acceptable forms of difference" are those that participate in and contribute to the project of nation building and unity.¹¹ In the words of Eva Mackey, "Ethnic groups are mobilized as picturesque and colourful helpmates and allies in the nation-building project."¹² For Mackey, by defining and recognising others as "ethnocultural groups," the policy of multiculturalism provided the means through which cultural difference became politicised, but also politically manageable through the funding of "cultural programmes," the main function of the early policy of multiculturalism.¹³ If Foucault was correct that the creation of knowledge has as its central goal the control of the population, within the context of Canada multicultural cosmopolitanism functions as critical technology of cultural power, population control, and neutralization of differences, while simultaneously concealing Anglo Eurocentric

8. See Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2000), 111–15.

9. According to Gita Sahgal and Nira Yuval-Davis: In multiculturalism, "cultural differences between various groups in society become of paramount importance, rather than tackling the central problem of racism itself; unequal power relations which bring about 'modes of exclusion,' inferiorisation, subordination and exploitation." Cited in Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 243.

10. Mackey, *The House of Difference*, 63.

11. Mackey, *The House of Difference*, 65–66.

12. Mackey, *The House of Difference*, 66.

13. Mackey, *The House of Difference*, 65. On one hand, Michelle Wallace is right that while "multiculturalism is not the promised land but it stands for something worth pursuing, namely the recognition of the significance of cultural diversity and of integrating the contributions of minority groups into the fabric of society. Cited in Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 247. However, she seems oblivious to the fact that multiculturalism perpetuates notions of ethnic difference while not challenging inherited racialized hierarchies. On the long term, it makes the Other groups more "visible" while creating the social apparatus that creates the differences between founding nations and "new" arrivals. In doing so, it highlights the government's kindness in welcoming the Other.

white domination.¹⁴ In other words, the present cultural architecture is designed to push forward the interests of the government with minimal interruptions.¹⁵

In practical terms, in Canada the idea of a society where a plurality of cultures live together serves as instrument for political maneuvering. Charles Taylor argues that “recognition” is an aspect to which all groups are entitled in this society.¹⁶ He is correct that nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.¹⁷ Yet, he blames people’s nonrecognition on their “self-deprecation.” The first task toward “recognition,” he observes, is to purge themselves of imposed and destructive identities.¹⁸ But Taylor conveniently leaves unchallenged the fact that present societal structures are predicated on a colonizing power differential and historical imaginary.¹⁹ Himani Bannerji insists that the construction of “visible minorities” as a social imaginary and the architecture of the “nation” built with a “multi-cultural mosaic” can only be read together with the engravings of conquests, wars and exclusions.²⁰ Within this context, the hegemonic character of Canadian versions of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism becomes apparent by the very ease with which elite anglo-European culture can function as “culture” and can, therefore, claim universality and transcendence, while non-European others are particularized.²¹ The specter of the British Empire still has a formative role in the construction of the Canadian “cosmopolitan” imaginary: the all-powerful “white” hand extends its “recognition” to the others but not without first working such recognition into the state apparatus of population control and imaginary of Canada as a kind and welcoming

14. Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 2000). She adds, “Due to the selective modes of ethnicization, multiculturalism is itself a vehicle for racialization. It establishes anglo-Canadian culture as the ethnic core culture white “tolerating” and hierarchically arranging others around it as “multiculture” (ibid., 78).

15. Augie Fleras tells us that in the short run one can say that the state looks after all of its citizens. But in the final analysis the actions of the state have the effect of preserving power distributions and resource allocation in a capitalist system. See Fleras and Elliot, *Multiculturalism in Canada*, 94–95.

16. Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992, 1992), 25–74.

17. Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” 25.

18. Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” 26.

19. According to Bannerji, Taylor “makes the “others” responsible for initiating the struggle for recognition, for pushing this basic human need into the realm of politics by constantly speaking of rights, by using the machinery of liberal democracy to force recognition from ‘us’”(Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation*, 136).

20. Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation*, 92–93.

21. Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” 136. Taylor refuses to recognize the political nature of the very situation where some culture are non-adjectivally self-centred as Canadians or national culture, while others are designated ethnicities or multicultures. Those part of the multicultures or whose identities are hyphenated are viewed as “less pure” than the “full-fledged” Canadians. On the other side, many view the hyphen as a reminder that they are not fully Canadians. Fleras and Elliot, *Multiculturalism in Canada*, 133. On this same point Bannerji insists that “Regardless of my official status as a Canadian citizen, I, like, many others, remained an “immigrant.” The category “Canadian” clearly applied to people who had two things in common: their white skin and their European North American (not Mexican) background” (Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation*, 64). In Canada, the complexity is not merely reflective of skin colors; rather, they reflect the ideological, political, and cultural assumptions and administrative practices of the Canadian State. See Ibid.

country.²² This dynamic is exemplified by Srinivas Krishna, director of the Indian Canadian film *Masala* (1992) as he comments: “Fine, I have a Canadian passport. I’ve spend a lot of time here. But there is no Canadian cinema with reference to my film.” He continues, “Whether I’m a Canadian or an Indian is irrelevant. That kind of nation-state way of dividing culture is irrelevant to my personal experience. If you can’t subscribe to the dominant definition, you either spend your life banging away at that door, or it becomes irrelevant to you...”²³ In the United States this is also exemplified in the movie *Born in East L.A.*, wherein Rudy Robles—playing the main character of the movie—tells the Immigration officers: “I am an American, Idiots!” But it does not matter what he thinks of himself; rather, what “the idiots” think of him is what determines his fate. As a result he is deported back to Mexico, where he is thought to belong by the idiots.²⁴

It is this dynamic in the politics of recognition that sets the tone for the construction of the cosmopolitan society. Differences are disarticulated, notions of racism are neutralized and deemed matters of a long gone dark past, cultural distinctiveness is folklorized and turned into products for global consumption, and the particular privileges of a given cultural group such as the first nations is subsumed under the idea that “all are taken care of in the same way,” “there is no room for favoritism.”²⁵ In practical terms, the cosmopolitan society claims equality for all but not equity; claims inclusivity but not inclusiveness, claims respect but detracts affirmative action.²⁶ Its objectives are to stifle dissent of potentially troublesome minorities while reinforcing

22. Whenever the government chooses to remove its hand of recognition it can simply dispose of those people who disrupt the social imaginary. The latest example was the introduction of Bill C 24 by which people who were not born in Canada can be stripped of their citizenship. Under this law, the only Canadians who can never lose their citizenship are those born in Canada who do not have another nationality (and are not eligible to apply for another nationality). No matter what crimes they may be accused of, these first-class citizens can never have their citizenship taken away. On the other hand, Canadians with another nationality (and those who are eligible to obtain another nationality) now have second-class status, even if they were born in Canada: under Bill C-24, their citizenship can be stripped. This was also accompanied by the assault by the Harper government against women wearing a niqab, being required to remove it in their citizenship ceremony.

23. Thomas Waugh, “Home is not the Place One Has Left Or *Masala* as ‘a Multi-Cultural Culinary Treat?’” in *Canada’s Best Features: Critical Essays on 15 Canadian Films*, vol. 56, Eugene P. Waltz, Cross / Cultures (Amsterdam; New York, NY: Rodopi, 2002), 56:269. He continues, “If you come from India and you live here, and you live everywhere - I’ve lived in the States, in India and here - then you can’t claim any kind of essentialist ground. You can’t say, I am an Indian,” or an American or a Canadian. You become some kind of colonial hybrid. You become like a weed in the garden. The only comforting thing about that feeling is that it’s going to increase, because more and more of the world is becoming like that” (269).

24. I am borrowing this example from the analysis by Alicia Gaspar de Alba in her “Born in East L.A.: An Exercise in Cultural Schizophrenia,” in *The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998), 226–29.

25. For example, The Party Quebecois while supporting native self-government denies the aboriginal peoples the right of sovereignty or the right to secede from Quebec. Michael Keating, “Canada and Quebec: Two Nationalisms in the Global Age,” in *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1997), 174.

26. The latest issue was the appointment of equal men and women to cabinet by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and many people started to argue for merit as the criterion and not gender or ethnic background. The assumption was that “meritocracy” is value free and neutral.

the privilege of the ruling classes. On the surface diversity is celebrated but the population is misled into acceptance of the status quo.²⁷

The genius of concepts like cosmopolitanism is that they claim to provide an “adequate” description of the present social contexts in many cities, where peoples from different cultural groups are being thrown together each responding to the present globalizing economic forces. At a surface level of cultural and identity discourse, cosmopolitanism seems to counter racist sentiments. Instead of supporting ideas for ethnoracial and cultural “purity,” the experiment of cosmopolitanism seems to buttress notions of porous identities and political borders, a new type of “hybrid” culture different from the earlier model of melting pot. As a result, many see the promise of one culture emerging with the necessary material for global human inclusiveness, which inherently carries the antidote to racism, and the willingness to respond to the moral collective responsibility for our shared humanity.²⁸

Contesting Cosmopolitanism from its Exteriority: The Latina/o Experience

As I have indicated earlier, not all groups fit or are welcome in the present cosmopolitan scheme. The contested nature of how identity is defined in Latina/o communities in Canada (and the United States of America) illustrates both the complexities and the fallacies of the myth of multiculturalism,²⁹ and of the emerging proposal of cosmopolitanism. I propose that the experiences of ordinary people in Latina/o communities in relation to multiple ethnocultural identities offer new ways of understanding these dynamics. At its best and at its worst, the composition of our communities forces us to deal with the multiple intersections and crossings of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities.³⁰ Nevertheless, surface readings of our experiences of intermixture have often been interpreted as promising spaces for conceptualizing emerging cosmopolitan and multicultural identities. For example, Jacques Audinet takes a round-about way to speak of the present global exchange of cultures, peoples, and traditions. His concern is the *peaceful* coexistence of cultural groups within a shared geographical-national-global space.³¹ He sees what is taking place with the present influx of peoples as a colourful dynamic of biological and cultural exchanges and

27. Fleras and Elliot, *Multiculturalism in Canada*, 96.

28. The latest expression of this was the response by the French president who invited the “world” community to respond to the present immigration crisis conflict in Syria; Afganistan, Eritrea and Kosovo, Iraq, Albania, Nigeria, Serbia, Ukraine. See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911> (accessed November 19, 2015).

29. Jorge J.E. Gracia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000).

30. Néstor Medina, “Mestizaje,” in *Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. David Fergusson, Karen Kilby, Ian McFarland, and Iain Torrance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Néstor Medina, “The Religious Psychology of *Mestizaje*: Gómez Suárez de Figueroa or Garcilaso de la Vega,” *Pastoral Psychology* 57 (September 2008): 115–24; Néstor Medina, *Mestizaje: (Re)Mapping “Race, Culture, and Faith in Latina/o Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009).

31. This “peace” is like the Hunger Games.... The system is set for a certain group who enjoy the benefits of the present structures but all must participate (even seem happy about it) for keeping the peace and world peace is our ultimate goal. World peace is predicated in injustice and war outside of the spaces of the privileged few.

not, as I am arguing, as the masked by-product of Western European and Anglo North Atlantic ethnocentrism.³² So he proposes *mestizaje* (intermixture) as the lenses for understanding the eventual outcome of the multi-cultural city-world.³³ The reality of the global and local plurality of ethnocultural groups sets the conditions that lead to *mestizaje*, which for him basically means the emergence of one global mixed cosmopolitan identity.³⁴ Multiculturalism is a prerequisite to the present reality and future orientation toward intermixture.

Audinet's position is far too romantic. The structural processes by which intermixture is taking place is not peaceful at all. It is the negative effect of multiple violent factors such as war, poverty, human trafficking, contamination of the environment, erosion of local-national market capabilities, underscored by the rapacious nature of the present globalizing economic market capitalist networks. Not surprisingly, he also fails to identify the equally violent and disturbingly destructive nature of the history of *mestizaje*.

Another example is Richard Rodríguez's idea of the "Browning" of the United States (and the world).³⁵ Also wrestling with the idea of multiculturalism, he celebrates the subversive role of love bringing about the blending of "races" and inevitably undermining the dominant "white" society.³⁶ Aware of the violent history of the Spanish invasion of Mexico, he claims that the undergoing browning is "reversing" the dynamics of colonialism; intermixture through subversive love is the way by which Latinas/os (for him Mexicans) take back what is theirs. As he views it, then, the future direction of the world is brown!³⁷

No doubt Rodríguez sees browning as the solution to racism, but when viewed from the perspective of cosmopolitanism browning turns counterproductive as it supports the very thing Rodríguez condemns: browning inevitably results in depriving specific cultural collectives of their right and capacity to label themselves. The asymmetrical power differential perpetuated by notions of the melting pot, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism again lurk behind romantic affirmations of love: who does the

32. Ethnocentrism is not the only thing that Gorringe identifies in the present cultural imperialism of the "West." As he argues, it is not an "invasion of weak cultures by strong ones but almost the opposite – a sort of cultural decay spreading from the West to the rest of the world. The institutions of capitalist modernity colonize the cultural space of less developed societies, stifle cultural creativity and lead to disenchantment with tradition" (Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 94).

33. Jacques Audinet, *The Human Face of Globalization: From Multicultural to Mestizaje*, trans. Francest Dal Chele (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, Inc, 2004).

34. I think he uncritically or romantically borrowed this from Virgilio Elizondo (he was his dissertation advisor) and saw it as the alternative to melting pot. Essentially, his proposal is that of a melting pot. Here he also resonates with José Vasconcelos' notion of the fifth race. See José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica: Misión de la raza iberoamericana*, Asociación Nacional de Libreros (México D.F.: Litografía Ediciones Olimpia, S.A., 1983).

35. Richard Rodríguez, *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2003).

36. Richard Rodríguez, "The Brown God: Reflections on Multiculturalism," paper presented at the Hispanic Theological Initiative Regional Conference (Boston College, 2003).

37. Here, Rodríguez resonates with Virgilio Elizondo's dictum: The Future is *Mestizo*. See Virgilio Elizondo, *The Future is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2000).

labelling and what are the motivations behind it is at stake here. Moreover, adopting “brownness”—as a celebration of the present intermixing of human collectives—runs the danger of effectively erasing, once and for all, the victims of such a violent past: the murdered, the raped, those whose lands were stolen, and those who must migrate to survive. All of which figure prominently as the exteriority of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism.

According to Ulf Hannerz cosmopolitanism entails relationships to a plurality of cultures but not the cultural communities of which they are part. Cosmopolitanism (and multiculturalism) he claims, “includes a stance toward diversity itself, toward the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience.”³⁸ He adds, “a more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It is an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity.”³⁹ In the same breadth, he asserts that the cosmopolitans surrender to the “alien” culture vis-à-vis the culture where they originated; they operate under the premise of mastering cultures and finding themselves at home in multiple cultural contexts.⁴⁰

By Hannerz’ account, Latinas/os easily fit within the label of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. I would argue that Latinas/os carry in their bodies the competence to engage multiple cultures.⁴¹ The difference between Latinas/os and the cosmopolite (for Hannerz cosmopolitan) is that the latter can always choose to and in fact do disengage from their cultures. They possess mastery of the cultures and their cultures do not possess them; cultures are for them malleable entities that can easily be abstracted, shed, and often reduced to a series of artifacts and products disconnected from the history of a people.⁴² Meanwhile, Latinas/os engage diverse ethnocultural communities in a creatively dynamic and fluid ways but as part of their own existential experience of being Latinas/os. This engagement is not the result of an individual’s exploratory ventures but part and parcel of belonging to the Latina/o diverse communities.

38. Ulf Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone, A Theory, Culture & Society Special Issue (London, UK: Sage Publications, 1995), 239.

39. Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” 239.

40. Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” 242.

41. Hannerz adds that the cosmopolitans are those acquainted with more cultures, *aficionados*, that view cultures as works of art. He avers that cosmopolitanism can be a matter of cultural competence both of the generalized and more specialized kinds. See Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” 239.

42. Hannerz explains: The Cosmopolitan’s surrender to the alien culture implies autonomy vis-à-vis the culture where he originated. He has his obvious competence with regard to it, but he can choose to disengage from it. He possesses it, it does not possess him. Cosmopolitanism becomes proteanism. Some would eat cockroaches to prove the point, others need only eat scargots. Whichever is required, the principle is that the more clearly the alien culture contrasts with the culture of origin, the more the former would even be seen with revulsion through the lenses of the latter, the more conspicuously is surrender-a form of mastery at home. See Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” 240–44.

Moreover, the cultural “competence” of the cosmopolite is undergirded by a centre-periphery power differential that caters to them; “the institutions of the transnational cultures tend to be organized so as to make people from Western Europe and [Anglo] North America feel as much at home as possible.”⁴³ Several assumptions are made concerning the cosmopolite-cosmopolitan in terms of financial resources, institutional educational level, language they speak, nationality and documentation they carry, and whether they are from the urban centers. Not surprisingly, the philosopher Roy Weatherford is happy to see English replace all other languages as a result of the dominance of the USA as an economic and entertainment superpower. In his view, we are about to become “one world, one government, one culture.”⁴⁴ Thomas Friedman confirms: “the hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist ... And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley’s technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.”⁴⁵ In other words, cosmopolitanism leaves unchallenged the social, cultural, political and capitalist economic edifice and structures that make cosmopolitanism possible, while at the same time sounding progressive toward the celebration of other cultures.

We see then that notions such as cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism function as smoke screens hiding and perpetuating uneven racialized cultural and political power relations.⁴⁶ They promote the Westernization of the globe and the consequent suffocating of non-western cultures.⁴⁷ It is for this reason that I insist that the “we” in cosmopolitanism ought to be interrogated from its exteriority;⁴⁸ that is, from the

43. Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” 244.

44. Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 88.

45. Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 88.

46. In the words of Pope Francis, “One of the most important contributions we can make to critical contemporary culture is to show that the structural injustice in the world is rooted in value-systems promoted by a powerful modern culture which is becoming global in its impact” (Society of Jesus, “Decree 4: Our Mission and Culture,” Published Conference Proceedings of the General Congregation 34 [1995], 109, <https://www.gonzaga.edu/about/Mission/docs/GC34Decree4OurMissionandCulture.pdf> [accessed August 10, 2015]).

47. Serge Latouche, *The Westernization of the World: The Significance, Scope and Limits of the Drive Toward Global Uniformity*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996) Ziauddin Sardar adds that “In social life, as in nature, monocultures are doomed to extinction. The flow of cultural ideas and products, as those of commodities and goods, is strictly one-way: from the west to the Third World. One doesn’t see an Indian Michael Jackson, a Chinese Madonna, a Malaysian Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Moroccan Julia Roberts, Filipino New Kids on the Block, a Brazilian Shakespeare, an Egyptian Barbara Cartland, a Tanzanian Cheers, a Nigerian Dallas, Chilean Wheel of Fortune, or Chinese opera, Urdu poetry, Egyptian drama, etc. on the global stage. The global theatre is strictly a western theatre, a personification of western power, prestige and control” (Ziauddin Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture* [Chicago, IL: Pluto Press, 1998], 22.).

48. As Sardar notes, “The postmodern, [multicultural and cosmopolitan] ‘we’ is thus not a pluralistic, global we: it applies to those in North America and Europe, who are consciously or unconsciously, genuinely confronted by choices about lifestyles, belief systems and ‘realities’. The enslaved by poverty and those trapped in an oppressive modernity do not have the luxury of postmodern freedom of choice: circumstances dictate their lifestyles and reality. Thus, postmodernism is not only an occidental challenge and a western opportunity, it is the privilege of a particular group within western society” (Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other*, 20). He adds that postmodernism (and I would add multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism), far from being a new theory of liberation, when viewed from the perspective of the Other, the non-western cultures, is simply a new wave of domination riding on the crest of colonialism

vantage point of *los desechados*, those peoples who play a disruptive “insignificant” “inconsequential” role in the construction of the present “multi-cultural” global imaginary, and whose status as *surplus population*, is directly connected to the capitalist economic apparatus of exploitation of people⁴⁹ and lands, and the destruction of local communities and ecosystems by corporations.⁵⁰ Lifting the complexities of cosmopolitanism from its exteriority, Pope Francis asserts:

Cities are multicultural; in the larger cities, a connective network is found in which groups of people share a common imagination and dreams about life, and new human interactions arise, new cultures, invisible cities. Various subcultures exist side by side, and often practice segregation and violence. ...[in those cities] there are people who have the means needed to develop their personal and family lives, but there are also many “non-citizens”, “half citizens” and “urban remnants”. Cities create a sort of permanent ambivalence because, while they offer their residents countless possibilities, they also present many people with any number of obstacles to the full development of their lives⁵¹

Nowadays, those facing enormous obstacles are the immigrants. But these people travel not out of luxury but are *forced* to migrate and relocate.⁵² They leave their homes not because of the desire to explore new cultures and communities—as the cosmopolite does— but simply because they want/need to survive.⁵³ The development of any notion of collective morality, therefore, must emerge from those inhabiting these spaces of

and modernity. See Ibid., 13. Moreover, Enrique Dussel argues that the myth of “modernity” must be interrogated by its underside, by those outside of “modernity.” Modernity must be measured by the violence exacted against the indigenous peoples and the African slaves. It must also be measured by the subsequent exploitation orchestrated by such a “world-system” (*sistema-mundo*) when it was imposed upon the rest of the world. He concludes that, all these elements are constitutive both of Europe today and of the myth of Modernity, which begins in 1492 because of the conquest of the Americas and not in the Enlightenment. See Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, ed. and trans. Eduardo Mendieta (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996).

49. As Pope Francis notes, “We cannot ignore the fact that in cities human trafficking, the narcotics trade, the abuse and exploitation of minors, the abandonment of the elderly and infirm, and various forms of corruption and criminal activity take place. At the same time, what could be significant places of encounter and solidarity often become places of isolation and mutual distrust” (Francis, *Laudato Si [Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Good]* [2015], 75,

[Http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf) [accessed September 3, 2015]).

50. The latest example is the forced relocation of entire communities, more than 30 million people affected by the collapse of polluted water from the Samarco mine in Minas Gerais, Brazil. See <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/nov/13/brazils-slow-motion-environmental-catastrophe-unfolds> (Accessed November 20, 2015). Another example was the migration of children who were forced to migrate and leave their families behind because of gang-related crime. See (http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/07/15/us/questions-about-the-border-kids.html?_r=0 (accessed November 20, 2015).

51. Francis, *Laudato Si [Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Good]*, 74.

52. In 1975 there were two million refugees, by 1995 that amount had risen to twenty seven million, in 2015 it is estimated that there are 60 million refugees in the world and growing.

53. It is for this reason that Hannerz lumps immigrants with tourists and distinguishes them from the cosmopolitans, because for them involvement with other cultures is a “necessary cost.” See Pnina Werbner, “Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2–3 (May 2006): 497.

exteriority, from the spaces of the bioeconomical and the biopolitical. They do not fit the cosmopolitan imaginary,⁵⁴ those whom the system needs to be stripped of their human rights, whom no country protects, the immigrant, the undocumented, who are left stranded in a liminal space of lawlessness, and where they can be exploited and killed, or die with no police protection.⁵⁵ Latinas/os and Latin Americans in their complex and contested multiply diverse, multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual realities are part of this growing periphery of cosmopolitan imaginaries. They are joined by eleven million in the United States of America and an estimated 120,000 undocumented in Canada, who have been deemed undesirable and under persecution, and who live in limbo outside the spaces of the cosmopolitan.

It is evident that Latinas/os and Latin Americans have joined the ranks of those who travel across borders, establish transnational relations, and enrich many cities and places in the Americas and the rest of the world with their multiple cultural traditions.⁵⁶ From such a perspective many would think that Latinas/os are joining forces toward the construction of an elite global localized cosmopolitan culture—or vernacular cosmopolitanism, as Pnina Werbner would put it.⁵⁷ However, I would also argue against concluding with Rodríguez and Audinet that what is taking place is a type of renewed

54. Ziauddin Sardar reminds us that the exteriority of cosmopolitanism is quite large. We know, he writes, “that at least one billion global citizens – that’s one in five – live in abject poverty, with insufficient shelter, food and other basic amenities. These are the smallholder farmers, landless peasants, artisans, fishermen, nomads, indigenous peoples, the bulk of whom live in rural areas. These individuals do not suffer from richness of choice: they cannot choose not to live below the poverty line” (Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other*, 19).

55. See the teen who was shot by an immigration officer and whose family cannot sue the officer because they are Mexicans. <http://thinkprogress.org/immigration/2015/04/27/3651450/unarmed-mexican-teen-shot-by-border-patrol/> (accessed November 20, 2015). An example of was the image of the little Syrian boy (Aylan Kurdi) at the Turkish shore who drown as their family sought refuge in Canada. The mother, Rehan 35 and his brother Galip 5 also died. Father Abdullah survived. Or the thousands of Africans who have died/drowned trying to get to Europe. See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/19/700-migrants-feared-dead-mediterranean-shipwreck-worst-yet> (Accessed November 25, 2015). See also <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/16/afghan-refugee-shot-dead-police-turkey-enter-bulgaria> (accessed November 25, 2015).

56. Hannerz is correct that because of transnational cultures many people are interacting with more than one culture. Those cultures, he claims, are entangled with each other. He cautions, however, that many of those “cultures” are merely expansions of Western Europe and Anglo North America. (244) Seemingly considering present global dynamics as the development of one cosmopolitan world culture he adds that is “created through the increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures, as well as through the development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory” (Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” 237).

57. See Werbner, “Vernacular Cosmopolitanism”. The present cultural tsunami is the accelerated “growth of a transnational class comprised of intellectuals, bureaucrats, politicians, business people, journalists and diplomats...They share procedures, working practices and organizational cultures...” There is a ‘global culture’, claims Anthony King, it is that which enables “an increasing number of scientists, academics, artists and other elites ... of widely different nationalities, languages, ethnicities and races to communicate more easily with each other than with others of their own ethnic or national background” (Gorringer, *Furthering Humanity*, 90).

energy toward intermixture, or even a kind of cultural bricoleur, by which Latinas/os pick from multiple other cultures the parts that suit them.⁵⁸

I am not saying that Latinas/os are closed to external cultural influences or resist mixing with other cultural groups. Yet, the idea of hybridity in the sense of the amalgamation and mixing of different elements does not adequately describe the dynamics at play.⁵⁹ Instead, I propose that Latinas/os more often engage in a kind of functional cosmopolitanism or what I call a *cultural syncopation*.⁶⁰ By cultural syncopation, I mean that Latinas/os cross and disrupt cultural boundaries as an existential expression of their culture and identity, creating along the way a new grammar for engagement and interaction whereby they develop strategies to get in and out of cosmopolitanism while celebrating their own cultural traditions.⁶¹

Latinas/os should be understood not as haphazardly adopting-mixing cultural elements but as immersed in an intentional process of simultaneous negotiation, disturbance, and interruption of conventional cultural grammars while remaining anchored in their cultural traditions, values, and customs: a *cultural syncopation*. Latinas/os engage in a social multicultural reimagining that disrupts monolithic identity markers and clearly defined cultural boundaries. But these are not cosmopolitan strategies, rather, they are strategies for life, for what is necessary to live.⁶² Immanuel Wallerstein is correct that in the present culturally plural context, the very construction

58. Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," 240.

59. Sardar points out that "Powerful and dominant culture does not combine with [what it perceives as] a weak and dependent one to produce synthesis, it simply absorbs it. The weaker partner is not synthesised it is overwritten, reforged according to the principles and agenda of the dominant order. Postmodern synthesis is a euphemism into Western civilization" (Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other*, 23).

60. Surely, some Latinas/os elites are involved in the pursuit of experiencing other cultures, and in so doing become agents of that elite version of cosmopolitanism. Technology is a powerful force propelling these changes; its celebration is a kind of neo-colonialism. On one hand, technology does not necessarily translate into the improvement of the human condition. On the other hand, technology is too closely linked to colonialism: "The right to dominance...is a direct attribute of technology deriving from its obvious superiority.' Neo-colonialism is a matter not just of markets, but of science, technology, economics and the values of progress which they enshrine. Signing up to development means "being in communion with the religion of science and revering technology" (Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity*, 89).

61. While Latinas/os display enormous pliability in adapting other cultural traditions, what is happening is not the taking on and merely mixing elements but a more intentional process of negotiation by which they still preserve their traditions, values, cultures, without disconnecting themselves from their cultural tradition. The closest term that describes this dynamic is "working-class cosmopolitanism. See Werbner, "Vernacular Cosmopolitanism," 497. In this particular way, Latinas/os join the list of oxymoronic concepts that have stemmed from cosmopolitanism in its attempt at explaining local phenomena such as: Cosmopolitan patriotism, rooted cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan ethnicity, and discrepant cosmopolitanism. See *Ibid.*, 496.

62. Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López, foreword by Renato Rosaldo (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

of culture, and I would add identity, become the ideological battle-ground as cultural communities oppose the dominant cannibalizing cultural historical system.⁶³

As this stage it is worth asking what about questions of religious faith. Certainly, faith plays a key role at this juncture as it provides protective infrastructures for Latin American undocumented immigrants to carve a social space of their own and for Latinas/os to preserve their cultures, to go in and out of cosmopolitanism in a safer environment.⁶⁴ The faith/the churches become the cultural centers and the safer environments for envisioning a shared collective morality oriented toward those outside cosmopolitanism.⁶⁵ I would argue that it is doing this kind of church that people encounter God.

63. Immanuel Wallerstein, "Culture as an Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System," in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone, A Theory, Culture & Society Special Issue (London, UK: Sage Publications, 1995), 39.

64. Here I want to emphasize that while the majority of those who find themselves outside of the cosmopolitan spaces are from the majority world, there is a growing number of "whites" and people from the global north who are also experiencing the negative effects of being outside the cosmopolitan spaces. In the words of Linda Martín Alcoff, "I would suggest that today, more and more whites are experiencing a similar disequilibrium, as they come to perceive the racial parameters that structure whiteness differently in different communities – white and non-white – and may find that none of these can be made coherent with their own preferred body or postural image" (Linda Martín Alcoff, "Toward a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment," *Radical Philosophy* 95 [May/June 1999]: 20).

65. Néstor Medina, "Being Church as Latina/o Pentecostals," in *Church in an Age of Global Migration: A Moving Body*, ed. Susanna Snyder, J., Joshua Ralston, and Agnes M. Brazal, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue Series (New York, NY: Palgrave, MacMillan, 2015).

Profeta Ana Maldonado: Pushing the Boundaries of Paradoxical Domesticity

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Resumen

This article analyzes the concept of “paradoxical domesticity” at work in the life and ministry of la profeta Ana Maldonado. Paradoxical domesticity has been defined by Gastón Espinosa as a phenomenon in which Latina ministers are required to be bold evangelists and submissive housewives in equal measure. A close examination of Maldonado’s rhetoric, however, reveals that she is not merely the byproduct of a particular ethnic and religious movement. Within a world of “paradoxical domesticity,” Ana Maldonado preserves and creates space for herself and other women through her example, rhetoric, and supernatural imagination.

The lights come up in the American Airlines Arena on October 9th, 2009. Situated on the shore of Biscayne Bay in downtown Miami, the arena shares some of Miami’s priciest real estate with a long list of luxury hotels and destination restaurants. The venue opened on December 31, 1999, with a Gloria Estefan-headlined, millennium-celebrating concert.¹ Six years later, the hometown Miami Heat with their superstar players Shaquille O’Neal and Dwyane Wade celebrated their first NBA championship in the building. But on this balmy South Florida day, a different kind of cultural production is taking place.

A hush falls over the more than 10,000 attendees as a diminutive woman steps to the podium. Her auburn hair is clipped back into a voluminous ponytail but also extends in bangs over her forehead. She wears red and black high heels and black slacks, but her jacket demands the most attention. Styled like a military officer’s uniform, the crimson red jacket with its brass buttons and black epaulets serves as a visual corollary to Ana Maldonado’s authoritative style of preaching. She paces the

¹ “Gloria Estefan And American Airlines Arena To Host Hottest Millennium Extravaganza In Miami,” PR Newswire, May 5, 1999, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/gloria-estefan-and-americanairlines-arena-to-host-hottest-millennium-extravangza-in-miami-74404522.html>.

platform continuously, leaning forward slightly toward the audience. As she gathers steam in particular moments of exhortation, she crouches down, gripping the microphone tightly in her left hand. Caught up in the passion of the moment, she leaves her translator behind. The typical clarity of her Colombian accent gives way to a more guttural form of speech, as phrase builds upon phrase. Maldonado accents the words with a fierce bobbing of her head and pumping of her flexed right arm.

On this day, she speaks at the Conferencia Apostólica y Profética (Apostolic and Prophetic Conference, or CAP), part of the constellation of ministries that constitutes Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús (King Jesus International Ministries), the church founded by Maldonado and her husband Guillermo in Miami in 1996. Beginning with a small group meeting in the living room of their house,² the Maldonados have grown El Rey Jesús into a megachurch with a weekly attendance of 12,540.³ Alongside the explosive growth of their congregation, Guillermo and Ana have seen a similar increase in their own respective profiles as *Apóstol* (Apostle) and *Profeta* (Prophetess) that has allowed them to draw the luminaries of the Pentecostal world to CAP. Cash Luna, Heidi Baker, Rod Parsley, Renny McLean, Prophetess Cathy Lechner, and Benny Hinn have all headlined the event, making CAP a must-attend event for thousands of pastors and pastoral couples from dozens of countries.

It is in front of this audience that Ana Maldonado paces, declaring that God has given her a specific message for El Rey Jesús and this event. This was not a matter of her intuition or of some vague divine impression. God had *spoken* to her.⁴ He had said, “Pray Isaiah 60...intercede Isaiah 60...pray it for the entire month of December because certainly the word that I have for Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús is Isaiah 60.”⁵ She gestures firmly with her right fist like a judge banging a gavel to symbolize the absolute certitude with which this message was given/received. She then describes her own momentary uncertainty as to God’s intention, only to have the voice of God thunder in, “*Levántate porque la gloria de Jehová ha nacido sobre ti!*” (Arise because the glory

² “Nuestra Historia,” Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.elreyjesus.org/acerca-de-nosotros/historia/>.

³ “Database of Megachurches in the United States,” Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/database.html>.

⁴ Susie C. Stanley argues that Pentecostal preachers have long legitimized their messages by portray themselves as passive instruments through which God speaks. She cites such early examples as W.H. McGowan who claimed that God preached using her lips and tongue and Aimee Semple McPherson who described her preacherly role as “the mouthpiece of the telephone,” “the key on the typewriter,” and “the mouth through which the Holy Ghost can speak.” (Susie C. Stanley, “Wesleyan/Holiness and Pentecostal Women Preachers: Pentecost as the Pattern for Primitivism” in *Philip’s Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*, eds. Estrella Alexander and Amos Yong (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 35.)

⁵ Ana Maldonado, “CAP 2009 Sermon,” accessed April 13, 2015 <http://www.elreyjesus.org/video/cap-09-profeta-ana-maldonado/>. For the majority of this paper, I will translate Maldonado’s speech and writing into English except for certain instances in which the original Spanish provides helpful nuance.

of Jehovah has been born upon you!).⁶ Of course, it is Maldonado herself who portrays God in this dramatic re-enactment. Within the American Airlines Arena, she is both the hearer and the deliverer of the message, and in the intensity of her movement and speech she becomes the message itself.

This prophetic word, originally intended as a word of hope for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the reclamation of its identity as a political and spiritual power, was now to be understood, according to Maldonado's revelation, as a foretelling of the immediate future of El Rey Jesús. She was so sure of God's intention, she shares with the CAP audience, that she immediately called her network of intercessors within the church and around the world to begin focusing their efforts on praying this promise into being. This is Ana Maldonado as the anointed prophetess, hearing directly from God and singlehandedly mobilizing the men and women under her spiritual authority to help her fulfill a divine mandate that she now embodies.

Then suddenly, her tone changes. The one who channels the divine revelation and commands the multitudes recalls the conversation in which she first shared this prophetic word with her husband and asked to share it at this very conference.

Ana: *Yo le dije a mi esposo, yo le dije, "Mi amor, dame cinco minuticos porque voy a declarar una palabra para 2009."*

(I said to him, I said, "My love, give me just five little minutes⁷ because I am going to declare a word for 2009.")

Y él me dijo (And he said to me)

Guillermo: *"Mija, perdona, pero no podemos."*

(My daughter,⁸ pardon, but we can't.)⁹

The video recording perfectly captures this moment of collision between prophetic prerogative and wifely submission. The woman whose throaty utterances have brought the crowd to its feet goes to her husband asking for only five "little minutes" as if even this small request is likely to be interpreted as an imposition. She holds her forefinger and thumb close together for added emphasis. The same hand that pounded as an

⁶ Ibid. Maldonado offers a rough quotation of Isaiah 60:1, omitting a phrase and substituting the image of glory being born rather than rising or dawning. The translator is more textually accurate, but fails to capture Maldonado's passion as she screams out this scriptural declaration.

⁷ "Minuticos" is a diminutive form of the word for minutes and emphasizes the shortness of the time. I have rendered this conversation in its original Spanish precisely to capture the richness of these vernacular expressions.

⁸ "Mija," a contracted form of "mi hija," literally means "my daughter," but men and women also commonly use it as a term of affection, especially to refer to a younger female within the family. In either sense, it reveals, at the very least, a sense of gentle condescension.

⁹ Ibid.

authoritative fist only moments before now embodies a habituated deference to another hierarchy. Even a *profeta* knows her limitations.

Guillermo's short response reinforces his authority and offers a subtle reminder, by referring to her as "*mija*," of the connection between Ana Maldonado's dual roles of anointed Prophetess and submissive wife. Ana portrays her prophetic ministry as one of divine unction, but it cannot be easily separated from her marriage to Guillermo, which both legitimates and limits it. In *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action*, Gastón Espinosa describes this phenomenon as "a kind of paradoxical domesticity" in which Latina ministers "are exhorted to be both End-Times prophetesses and evangelists in the public sphere and devoted mothers and good wives in the private sphere."¹⁰ In a broader sense, Ana Maldonado navigates a familiar landscape for women in contemporary American religion in which ministerial and marital vocation often remain intertwined, but she is not merely the byproduct of a particular religious era or ethnic and religious movement. Within a world of "paradoxical domesticity," Ana Maldonado preserves and creates space for herself and other women through her example, rhetoric, and supernatural imagination.

Holding the Line

The paradoxical domesticity posited by Espinosa arises from the clash between traditional patriarchy and the liberative tendencies of Pentecostalism for women. Although Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús officially advertises itself as a nondenominational church, it clearly possesses a Pentecostal orientation in the apostolic and prophetic strain. Guillermo's education includes a Master's degree in Practical Theology from Oral Roberts University, and the website for El Rey Jesús touts the church's belief in "the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues" as well as "the power of the Kingdom to heal the sick, cast out demons and perform miracles, marvels, signs, and wonders."¹¹

In addition to these beliefs, the Maldonados are heirs to the Pentecostal understanding of a moment of "calling" as the primary distinction between clergy and laity.¹² This calling is typically communicated (by men or women) to the community in the form of first person "call-to-preach narratives" which are accepted as "sacred stories" given the centrality of testimony in Pentecostalism.¹³ Also necessary is the demonstration by both women and men of having received the baptism of the spirit,

¹⁰ Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 284.

¹¹ "Nuestro Credo," Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.elreyjesus.org/acerca-de-nosotros/nuestro-credo/>.

¹² Charles H. Barfoot and Gerald T. Sheppard, "Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: The Changing Role of Women Clergy in Classical Pentecostal Churches," *Review of Religious Research* 22.1 (1980), 2.

¹³ Elaine J. Lawless, "Not So Different a Story After All," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 44.

which often manifests itself in *glossolalia*, or speaking in tongues.¹⁴ The primacy of the experience and testimony of the individual along with the belief among Pentecostals that they were (and are) living in the last days in which sons *and daughters* will prophesy¹⁵ led them to accept the ministry of women much earlier than older Protestant denominations.

These liberative tendencies led to what Charles Barfoot and Gerald Sheppard refer to as the period of “Prophetic Pentecostalism” from 1901-1920 during which opportunities flourished for women to preach and lead congregations.¹⁶ The ministries of such prominent figures as Maria Woodworth-Etter and Aimee Semple McPherson overlapped during this time period. Both originally engaged in ministry as part of a husband and wife team, but gradually staked their own individual claims to preacherly authority “by employing revivalist methods infused with popular notions of womanhood, and combined with Pentecostal biblical and theological tropes and sensibilities.”¹⁷ What Maria Woodworth-Etter and Aimee Semple McPherson did on regional and national stages, many other female ministers replicated less visibly.

But this golden era did not last long for most white Pentecostal women. Barfoot and Sheppard build upon Max Weber’s theory that non-privileged classes (which typically offer greater opportunities for women in religious leadership) begin “reacting against pneumatic manifestations of charisma by women as they become more regimented and routinized.”¹⁸ They find this process of routinization taking place in Pentecostal movements, especially the Assemblies of God, from the 1920s onward. Barfoot and Sheppard conclude that the percentage of ordained female clergy in Pentecostal bodies decreases “annually as these movements lose their prophetic emphasis.”¹⁹ They theorize that in the future “shared spousal ministry may offer the closest approximation to equal status for most women.”²⁰

Espinosa claims that the doors have not closed for Latina Pentecostal ministers to nearly the same degree that they have for their white counterparts. Focusing again on the Assemblies of God, he writes that there has been “no great reversal in the accumulation of power or the right to ordination for women in the Latino AG [...] as

¹⁴ Jane E. Soothill, *Gender, Social Change and Spiritual Power: Charismatic Christianity in Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 54.

¹⁵ Joel 2:28-29, “Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.” NRSV.

¹⁶ Barfoot and Sheppard, “Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion,” 4.

¹⁷ Leah Payne, *Gender and Pentecostal Revivalism: Making a Female Ministry in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Palsgrave MacMillan, 2015), 131.

¹⁸ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 104.

¹⁹ Barfoot and Sheppard, “Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion,” 16. These findings were based upon evidence reviewed in 1980.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

there was for Euro-American AG women.”²¹ Perhaps this is due to the fact that while white Pentecostals as a whole have climbed the socio-economic ladder, the Latino Pentecostal community has lagged behind due to structural inequalities and the recent reality of immigration for many of its members. According to Weber’s theory, they have not yet become so regimented or routinized as to squeeze women out of the pulpit.

This does not mean, however, that Latina Pentecostal ministers have not encountered their own stresses. Compared to the rapid flourishing and subsequent perishing of opportunities for Euro-American AG women, Espinosa characterizes the journey of Latina Pentecostals as a long “uphill struggle against gender discrimination and the right to full ordination.”²² The opportunities/expectations of paradoxical domesticity have been in effect for them from the very beginning of the Pentecostal Movement during the Azusa Street revivals. The first Latina Pentecostal preacher to be mentioned in media coverage of Azusa Street was simply referred to as the wife of a “Spanish preacher” who preached the gospel with him.²³ Neither was mentioned by name, but the implication was that Rosa López (the minister to whom the article made reference) gained entry into the preaching sphere through her marriage to her husband Abundio who could legitimately bear the title of preacher. Indeed, many of the earliest Latina Pentecostal preachers within the Latino Asambleas de Dios tradition were married to men who were also ordained. Single women often encountered more difficulty in receiving official denominational recognition of their calling. As the economic and political clout of the Latino population in the United States continues to expand and Latino Pentecostal churches grow in size and prestige, the pressure of routinization faced by Latina clergy only increases. In a recent study²⁴ of Latina Pentecostal ministers in Newark, NJ, Otto Maduro found that a majority of them began their ministries in a supportive role alongside their husbands before gaining legitimacy as *pastoras* in their own right.

In this world, Ana Maldonado plays an important role by holding the line for current and future Latina clergy. She accomplishes this both through her example and her rhetoric. Unlike the wives²⁵ of many Latino Pentecostal megachurch pastors, Ana Maldonado’s ministry is not specifically limited to women. When she has a prophetic word to share as she did at CAP in 2009, it is not just about women’s roles, but for the church and even the Apostolic and Prophetic movement as a whole. And it is Maldonado herself who shares this word to an audience of both men and women, defying those who adhere to Paul’s advice to Timothy that a woman should neither teach

²¹ Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 283-284.

²² Gastón Espinosa, “‘Third-Class Soldiers’: A History of Hispanic Pentecostal Clergywomen in the Assemblies of God” in *Philip’s Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*, eds. Estrella Alexander and Amos Yong (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 96.

²³ *Ibid.*, 285.

²⁴ Otto Maduro, “Becoming Pastora: Latina Pentecostal Women’s Stories from Newark, New Jersey,” in *Global Pentecostal Movements: Migration, Mission, and Public Religion*, ed. Michael Wilkinson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 195-210.

²⁵ Mariam Delgado, whom I will discuss in the following section, is a clear example of a pastor’s wife whose ministry is focused almost entirely upon women and “women’s issues.”

nor have authority over a man.²⁶ In her leadership at El Rey Jesús and in her writing, Ana Maldonado ministers to both men and women primarily in the areas of prayer and spiritual warfare.

In the introduction to *De la Oración a la Guerra (From Prayer to War)*, Maldonado explores her own ability/authority to minister through the writing of a book:

Many times I doubted before beginning to write this book—because my husband is an excellent teacher; I admire him very much! He is a good father, husband, pastor; and I used to think... ‘Why should I write if my husband already writes?’ But what really led me to do it was the desire to identify myself with many women and men who I know that, when they read it, will be touched and confronted to leave their complaint and fulfill the call of God on their lives.²⁷

Although this apologia contains more than a little rhetorical genuflection toward her husband, Ana Maldonado also claims an authority to write for a mixed audience, not because she is Guillermo’s wife, but because she is certain that her work will be used by God to complete his will in the lives of both men and women. I am not suggesting that Ana Maldonado’s deference is purely performative in this instance, but in this introduction she is also very clear that she is contributing something new and valuable that her husband (excellent teacher though he may be) either has not done or cannot do.

In the dedication of *Manual de Vida para Intercesores (Life Manual for Intercessors)*, Ana Maldonado is even more explicit about the divine authorization of her work:

During these ten years of ministry, I have had a teacher, especially in the area of intercession and prayer. He has been the one who each morning has awakened me at dawn and has given me the physical, emotional, and mental strength to raise myself up; just as he has given me the battle strategies to fight with boldness and authority. I dedicate this life manual to my teacher and prayer partner, to the precious Holy Spirit, God the Father and God the Son, who daily clothe me with their power and anointing.²⁸

Maldonado begins this dedication as if she intends to thank another human being who served in the role of mentor. As the language indicates someone who was with her every morning, the reader might even anticipate that she is about to thank Guillermo. Then in a stunning rhetorical turn, Maldonado instead points to an intimate relationship with the entire Trinity, which has fulfilled not only the mentoring role of teacher, but even the more coequal role of prayer partner. Here, it is not just Ana Maldonado’s work that will be blessed by God’s providence or be useful by its own merit.

²⁶ In I Timothy 2:12, Paul writes, “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.” NRSV.

²⁷ Ana Maldonado, *De la Oración a la Guerra* (Miami: GM International, 2005), 13.

²⁸ Ana Maldonado, *Manual de Vida para Intercesores* (Miami: ERJ Publicaciones, 2006), 7.

Ana Maldonado herself is blessed, clothed daily with the full power and anointing of the Trinity with whom she is intimately acquainted.

Ana Maldonado devotes considerable time to empowering female pastors (whether solo pastors or co-pastors with their husbands) for their ministry by reminding them of their own connection to power and anointing. She calls these women *Déboras* in the spirit of the Old Testament prophetess and judge and has written a book for them called *Déboras Al Frente de la Batalla* (*Deborahs on the Battlefield*). This work offers a full-throated defense of the equal value of women in the kingdom of God:

Woman was created by God, in his image and likeness; therefore man cannot consider her to be an inferior being; since God made all things good and greatly, the order in which he created them has nothing to do with their calling, purpose, or importance, because before creating the man, he created the animals and this does not make the animals superior to man.²⁹

Building on this fundamental conception of equality, Ana Maldonado presents the case for women in ministry and closes the book with testimonies of women who are serving the church faithfully.

The aim of *Déboras al Frente de la Batalla* is clearly to empower women who still face the stifling forces of routinization and what Maldonado refers to as “errant machismo.”³⁰ Espinosa found this machismo to be a constraining factor for some Latina Asambleas de Dios co-pastors whose husbands were jealous of their superior preaching abilities.³¹ Hopefully, these women will be able to convert their husbands in the way that Guillermo Maldonado himself has been converted. In the foreword to this same work, Guillermo writes of the change that took place in his life and led him from his previous chauvinism to the belief that women could live out a calling as apostles, prophetesses, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. He describes this move toward spiritual gender egalitarianism as a divine transformation:

For some time, because of the teaching I received, I thought that women should not do anything in ministry, that their work was simply to remain seated, but thanks be to God my mind was opened, God spoke to me and now I understand that the woman is powerful and is being raised up to advance the kingdom.³²

Guillermo Maldonado points to a direct revelation from God for his change of mind, but it seems likely that his wife Ana was also an embodied part of this revelation through her example, teaching, and writing among Latino Pentecostals today.

²⁹ Ana Maldonado, *Déboras Al Frente De la Batalla* (Miami: ERJ Publicaciones, 2007), back cover. This back cover blurb is a compilation of Maldonado’s own text from several different locations within the book.

³⁰ Ibid., 17.

³¹ Gastón Espinosa, ““Third-Class Soldiers,”” 107.

³² Ana Maldonado, *Déboras Al Frente De la Batalla*, 17.

Domesticity in Context

Ana Maldonado is a beneficiary of and a spokesperson for the liberative impulses within Pentecostalism for female clergy, but she also advocates domesticity in her speaking and teaching ministry. In her lists of what a woman can and should be,³³ she typically begins with “wife” and “mother” and always foregrounds respect and submission to one’s husband as a primary calling. Based on an exegesis of Proverbs 31, Ana Maldonado describes woman as the helpmate of man, and further explains that she is: “the complement, not the one who does everything and directs or chokes her husband with jealousy and manipulation, but rather the one who protects through intercession and repairs the breach for this man and his ministry.”³⁴ This complementarian stance is more than simply acceptance of patriarchy or performative ploy. Just as Ana Maldonado empowers female ministers based on her understanding of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, she also encourages domesticity as part of her community’s conception of “covering.” In this regard, domesticity is not paradoxical at all but analogous to the overall structure of many churches within Latino Pentecostalism.

In the introduction to *Déboras al Frente de la Batalla*, Maldonado describes the importance of Deborah’s husband Lappidoth to Deborah’s ministry as prophetess and judge. Lappidoth is only mentioned once in all of scripture, in Judges 4:4, and then only in passing,³⁵ but from this brief appearance Ana Maldonado explains that “Lappidoth represents Deborah’s covering, the Bible mentions him, thus demonstrating that she was not a chicken without a head.”³⁶

Fully understanding the implications of covering for the husband-wife relationship requires a more thorough investigation of the critical role that covering plays in the quasi-denominational structure of El Rey Jesús and its many partnering congregations. El Rey Jesús defines *cobertura*, or covering, on their website:

A spiritual covering is a spiritual father who becomes a fountain in which we find nourishment, wisdom, protection and counsel. It is a father who invests all of his available resources in a son or in a church, so that it might reach its purpose or destiny.³⁷

³³ These kinds of aspirational catalogues of feminine vocation appear in several chapters of *Déboras*, but can be seen most clearly on page 30: “A virtuous woman...can fulfill various functions at the same time: wife, mother, worker, preacher and many other roles that each woman should play daily.”

³⁴ Ana Maldonado, *Déboras Al Frente De la Batalla*, 31.

³⁵ Judges 4:4 “At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel.” NRSV.

³⁶ Ana Maldonado, *Déboras Al Frente De la Batalla*, 22

³⁷ “¿Qué es cobertura?”, Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.elreyjesus.org/red-apostolica/%C2%BFque-es-cobertura/>.

In the loosely connected world of nondenominational Pentecostalism, covering is a spiritual feudal system that provides a mechanism for apprenticeship, endorsement, and accountability. Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús counts 205 churches in 36 different countries under the covering of Guillermo Maldonado and his *Red Apostólica Vino Nuevo* (New Wine Apostolic Network).³⁸ The process of being accepted under Guillermo's apostolic covering is a lengthy one and involves the scrutiny of various documents (photos, marriage certificates, letters of reference).³⁹ The applicant church must be of sufficient size, and its pastor must have a compelling testimony, a willingness to adopt Guillermo's vision, and no outstanding obligations to any other covering network.

To directly challenge the validity of a husband's covering for his wife would be to undermine the framework that governs the relationships between churches and pastors as well. While adherence to traditional patriarchy may also play a role in her rhetoric, this understanding of ecclesial context better informs Ana Maldonado's support of domesticity and submission as the proper female posture within the larger hierarchy of covering.

Shared Spousal Ministry

Barfoot and Sheppard point to "shared spousal ministry" as a kind of lamentable consolation prize for Pentecostal women who are being denied equal status as ministers, but within this somewhat maligned category, Ana Maldonado is nonetheless blazing a different trail from many of her contemporaries. Consider for example, the case of Mariam Delgado, wife of Alberto Delgado, who is listed as the co-pastor of the Miami Pentecostal megachurch Alpha & Omega. The main campuses of Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús and Alpha & Omega are less than twelve miles apart. Alpha & Omega has an average attendance of 2100,⁴⁰ but Alberto and Mariam extend their influence regionally and internationally through the broadcasts of their television and radio program *Todo es Posible*.

On Alpha & Omega's website, the page dedicated to the "co-pastors" focuses almost entirely on Alberto's testimony, education, and achievements. Pastora Mariam Delgado receives only the briefest mention as co-host of *Todo es Posible*. The final sentence of the page clearly delineates the relative importance of each of the Delgados to Alpha & Omega: "More than 26 years have passed and God has grown his [Alberto's] work alongside his wife Mariam, his two children Veronica and Alberto, Jr., and his three grandchildren."⁴¹ The work is Alberto's, and Mariam, at least grammatically, has played no more significant a role in its growth than their children and grandchildren. The page

³⁸ "Coberturas," Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.elreyjesus.org/red-apostolica/coberturas/>.

³⁹ "Membresía," Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.elreyjesus.org/red-apostolica/membresia/>.

⁴⁰ Hartford Institute for Religion Research. "Database of Megachurches in the United States."

⁴¹ "Nuestros Pastores," Alpha & Omega Church, accessed April 13 2015, <http://www.alpha-omega.org/nuestros-pastores/>.

also has a link to Mariam's own page with multiple photos of her in pastel sweater sets. When pictured with Alberto, she typically stands behind one of his shoulders. Mariam does not preach in front of men and women but devotes her time primarily to women's and children's ministries at Alpha & Omega. She has written two devotional books for women that are advertised on her own page. One of them, *Mantente en Línea (Keep Yourself in Shape)*, features a silhouette of a woman's body with a measuring tape drawn around the waist. Although the primary purpose of the book is to help readers become "One-of-a-Kind Women"⁴² spiritually, there is a not-so-subtle message that this is to be at least partially achieved through conformity to certain standards of physical beauty. Mariam Delgado continues this theme in her segments of *Todo es Posible* in which she often features cooking segments to help female viewers lose weight or fashion segments that highlight current trends.

Just down Florida Highway 874, Ana Maldonado is carrying out a very different kind of shared spousal ministry. The webpage dedicated to the co-pastors of Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús gives equal space to both Guillermo and Ana. Academic credentials and ministerial achievements appear in equal measure under both their names.⁴³ Although Ana occasionally appears with Guillermo in their telecasts, she is just as likely to speak or preach by herself to audiences of men and women. Most of her writing targets a mixed audience and deals with themes of spiritual warfare and prayer that are at the very heart of the supernatural orientation of El Rey Jesús. Clearly, not all shared spousal ministries are created equal.

Natural and Supernatural Courses of Action

Ana Maldonado's shared spousal ministry offers a fascinating scenario in which to see the practical outworking of her complementarianism. On one hand, the fact that Guillermo Maldonado often writes the forewords for her books raises questions about the balance of power in their marriage and ministry. Certainly, there have been no instances of Ana writing the foreword for any of Guillermo's books. Then there is also the way in which Ana felt as though she could only ask her husband for five "little minutes" on the big stage at CAP 2009. In that narrative, Ana shares that Guillermo originally denied her those minutes. It appears as if the story is over, but Ana Maldonado does not appear defeated. With a wry smile, she tells the audience that she and her intercessors continued praying nonetheless. Within a few months of telling her husband that God's prophetic message for El Rey Jesús was Isaiah 60, Guillermo began preaching that message from the pulpit. Whether or not he gave credit to Ana for the original reception and dissemination of that divinely given word, Ana claims the prophetic mantle for herself. Her presence at CAP bears witness to the fact that her husband's word is not final. God's word is final, and in the context of their shared spousal ministry, she is just as likely to hear the divine word as he is.

⁴² This is the English translation of both the book's stated goal and the name of Mariam Delgado's women's ministry, *Mujer Unica*.

⁴³ "Nuestros Pastores," Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.elreyjesus.org/acerca-de-nosotros/nuestro-pastores/>.

But this equal access to revelation does not permit Ana to challenge her husband's authority directly and in worldly terms. She does not go to a board of directors or to the other conference participants to stage a coup. Instead, she challenges him on a spiritual plane. According to Ana Maldonado, her prayer warriors directly influenced the supernatural activity that changed the direction of Guillermo's preaching. Maldonado characterizes this approach as that of a Débora as opposed to a Jezebel. Building a typology upon the reviled and manipulative queen of Old Testament narratives, Ana Maldonado describes Jezebels as women, and more specifically co-pastors, who have personal agendas, who want to direct and control the church, and who pursue competition and rivalry.⁴⁴ According to Maldonado, all women have to resist the spirit of Jezebel within themselves, but they also need to fight for what they believe God has given them.

This fight includes taking every natural opportunity they have been given and claiming new territory on the supernatural battlefield that Ana Maldonado describes. The opportunity ultimately given to Maldonado at CAP 2009 was a short morning slot, but throughout her address she pushes back at her boundaries. As she begins to talk about what it means to declare, she apologizes for not having the time to explain more about the spiritual significance of declarations. She pauses, puts her hand on her hip and says, "But we don't have the time."⁴⁵ She doesn't name Guillermo as the one responsible for her lack of time, but the audience perceives that the Profeta is being restrained nonetheless and begins to boo. Maldonado pauses and then says, "My God..." with an air of resignation.⁴⁶ Not only is the audience missing out, but her lack of time is impinging on the fulfillment of the very will of God. After another dramatic pause, she asks the audience not to misunderstand her—it wasn't "that the pastor told her no, just that there wasn't enough time."⁴⁷ As she restates this reason, she raises her right palm and leans her head to one side, re-enacting Guillermo's attempt to deflect criticism. The effect is to gently mock Guillermo and the institutionalization that has confined her prophetic word to this morning prayer session.

Then, Maldonado begins to reframe the importance of this morning slot. The morning is the time when women should get up "while their husbands are still sleeping," go to be part of the intercession ministry, and, through prayer, "discover the strategies of hell" so that they can derail them.⁴⁸ This encouragement blends the natural and supernatural aspects of Ana Maldonado's push against hierarchy. Women are not to be slowed down by husbands who don't want them to get up too early. Maldonado says that those husbands will answer some day in a judgment scene that she envisions as having to watch a DVD of their lives in the presence of God.⁴⁹ At this point, the cheers in the audience come largely from women. Women, according to Maldonado, also must

⁴⁴ Ana Maldonado, *Déboras Al Frente De la Batalla*, 108-109.

⁴⁵ Ana Maldonado, "CAP 2009 Sermon."

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

understand that the morning is the best time to catch the Devil off guard and let him know that he has no authority over their husbands, their families, or their ministries.

Ultimately, this is a woman's primary place in Maldonado's teaching—on the front lines of a supernatural conflict with the devil for the sake not only of her family but for the kingdom of God itself. If men are to be the spiritual leaders who hear from God on matters of direction,⁵⁰ then women are to be leaders on a new battlefield, protecting the family and the church from supernatural evil. This is not an ancillary ministry within the orbit of Ministerio Internacional El Rey Jesús. Due to the way in which they foreground the supernatural, spiritual warfare becomes the primary ministry, the way of bringing healing, power, and blessing into the lives of the faithful while thwarting the schemes of the devil. Although Ana Maldonado offers training in intercession and spiritual warfare to men and women alike, she claims the greater status in this arena for women.

Conclusion

Upon closer inspection, the life and ministry of Ana Maldonado presents a certain conundrum. Which lens offers the clearest view of her place in the landscape of contemporary American religion? Into which category does she most clearly fit? She is not merely the submissive wife of a conservative megachurch pastor, nor does she overshadow her husband through her own particular ministry. She submits to her husband's covering in an ecclesial environment bound together by networks of covering, but she also pushes back against his authority using the natural and spiritual means at her disposal. Ana Maldonado offers a compelling portrait of the kind of Pentecostal Latinas described by Espinosa who "have generally stayed the course and continue to quietly and skillfully negotiate their own space" while dealing with "gender bias and discrimination and an uphill calling."⁵¹

Paradoxical domesticity as a descriptor is generally true of her context in which ministerial and marital vocation intersect, but it implies a static condition which denies the dynamic reality of Ana Maldonado. Watching Ana Maldonado and reading her words, one understands quickly that she is not merely a cultural byproduct—she is a force shaping the culture around her. As Profeta and wife, mentor and mother, messenger and message, Ana Maldonado is battling against the natural and supernatural world for her place, and the place of other *Déboras* in the kingdom. Of course, Maldonado is only one of the pioneering *Déboras* currently at work within the Latino Pentecostal world, albeit one with a considerably visible platform. Whether she is fully aware of it or not, she is part of a long line of women who have wrestled with religious hierarchy and even with their own husbands for their place as preachers, leaders, and prophetic voices. Due to the segmented reality of Latino Pentecostalism, these struggles are recapitulated within large denominations, local *concilios*, and rapidly-expanding apostolic networks. But with each new *Débora*, the possibilities for

⁵⁰ Although Ana Maldonado has already cast doubt on Guillermo's ability to hear in the matter of receiving Isaiah 60 as a prophetic word.

⁵¹ Gastón Espinosa, "'Third-Class Soldiers,'" 110.

Latina ministers seem to grow. The five *minuticos* that Ana Maldonado asked for at CAP will gradually expand into greater space for Latina *profetas* and *pastoras* to exercise their gifts.