

Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 33 · Number 3 · July 2009

Articles and book reviews reflecting global evangelical
theology for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith

Published by



for
WORLD EVANGELICAL
ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

Paul's strategy, then, in encouraging 'evangelism' and 'social action' was not so much to mention them, let alone spell out particular programs, but rather to encourage us to reflect on what it means that we are the children of God, and then encourage us to consider how that might work out in relation to those around us. If we think about it, this of course makes sense. The mission in which we are engaged is not *our* mission, but *God's* mission. Hence, it will be effective only if we understand our own identity in terms of God's identity. In God there is a perfect unity between words and deeds, character and action, and so to the extent that we are truly united to

Christ, our lives will similarly display a consistency between everything we are and do.

It is not *our* compassion that is relevant, but *God's* compassion flowing through us. It is not *our* evangelism or social action that matters, but *God's* work in the world exercised through us. That is why knowing who we are in Christ, reflecting on God's perfect character is what enables us to become integrated people. It is *Christ's* integral mission we join in rather than our own. Hence, it is not about dividing up particular *activities*, labelling them as one or the other, and then making sure we have a healthy mixture of both. Rather, it is about being the people of God in light of a world in need.

Holistic Mission Revisited: Theological insights from Argentina

David A. Roldán

KEYWORDS: *Integral mission, political theology, mission Dei, mega-church, education*

Míguez Bonino² and Richard Shaull were prominent theologians, and the Liberation Theology movement, where theologians such as Juan Luis Segundo,³ Gustavo Gutiérrez,⁴ Enrique

I Theoretical Backgrounds

In Argentina we have been talking about 'integral mission' since the 1980s, with the first (and main) publication of René Padilla,¹ and the various works of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL, Latin American Theological Fraternity). Although this was one of the most relevant contributions of FTL, it must be said that the biblical and theological foundations of this approach were inaugurated and developed in many cases in movements such as Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina (ISAL, Church and Society in Latin America), where José

² José Míguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); José Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); José Míguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Paul Davies, *Faith Seeking Effectiveness: The Missionary Theology of José Míguez Bonino* (Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 2006).

³ Some selected works are: Juan Luis Segundo, *¿Qué mundo? ¿Qué hombre? ¿Qué Dios?* (Santander: Sal Tarrae, 1993); Juan Luis Segundo, *El hombre de hoy ante Jesús de Nazaret* (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1982); Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberación de la teología* (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1975); Juan Luis Segundo, *Teología abierta para el laico adulto, 5 vols.* (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1968)

⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación: perspectivas*, 15^o ed. (Salamanca: Sígueme [orig. 1971], 1994); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente: Una*

¹ René Padilla, *Misión integral. Ensayos sobre el Reino y la Iglesia* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1986).

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Dussel⁵ and José Porfirio Miranda⁶ were the 'founding fathers'. We could also look back to European Political Theologies, like those of Jürgen Moltmann and Johann Baptist Metz, or even the Social Gospel (of Rauschenbuch) and the German Neo-Kantian theologian Albrecht Ritschl from the XIX Century (and his concept of 'building the Kingdom of God on Earth').⁷

One of the main efforts to develop a new anthropological approach to the Bible and Christian Theology in Latin America was the set of three books of Enrique Dussel, written in the late 1960s.⁸ The books are: *El humanismo*

semita (The Semite Humanism), *El humanismo helénico* (The Hellenistic Humanism) and *El dualismo antropológico de la Cristiandad* (The Anthropological Dualism in Christianity).⁹ In these books, Dussel demonstrates how the Hellenistic conception of the 'soul' over the 'body' was introduced into Christian anthropology, and then he claims to recover not only the unity of the person in the semitic concept of the human being, but also the Hebrew concept of *basar*, (flesh-hood, corporeality).¹⁰ Even though this analysis of Dussel—made in relation with his professor Paul Ricoeur in La Sorbonne, Paris—was scarcely known for many years, it represents a more satisfactory foundation for Integral Mission and Holistic mission than some other possibilities. As Hans Küng said, 'The problem of God is the problem of man, and the problem of man is the problem of God'.¹¹ To think about man in a dif-

1960. Enrique Dussel, 'Conversación sobre la actualidad de la teología y filosofía de la liberación (entrevista personal)', entrevista, México DF, February 15, 2008

⁹ Enrique Dussel, *El humanismo semita. Estructuras intencionales radicales del pueblo de Israel y otros semitas* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1969); Enrique Dussel, *El humanismo helénico* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1975); Enrique Dussel, *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad. Desde los orígenes hasta antes de la conquista de América* (Buenos Aires: Guadalupe, 1974).

¹⁰ Later, Dussel made clear the relationship between the concepts of *Leiblichkeit* and *lebendige Arbeit*, and of Karl Marx in his main work, *Das Kapital*; Cf. Dussel, *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx*, 252, 264.

¹¹ Hans Küng, *La encarnación de Dios. Introducción al pensamiento de Hegel como prolegómenos para una cristología futura*, trans. Jimeno Rufino (Barcelona: Herder, 1974), 14.

reflexión sobre el libro de Job (Lima: CEP, 1986); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *El Dios de la vida*, 3^o ed. (Lima: CEP, 2004); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Beber en su propio pozo: en el itinerario espiritual de un pueblo* (Lima: CEP, 1983); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *La fuerza histórica de los pobres* (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1979).

⁵ Enrique Dussel, *Destrucción de la Cristiandad de Indias* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1978); Enrique Dussel, *Ética comunitaria* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Paulinas, 1986); Enrique Dussel, *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx* (Caracas: Fundación Editorial El Perro y la Rana [orig. 1983], 2007); Enrique Dussel, *Religión* (México DF: Editorial Edicol, 1977); Enrique Dussel, *Teología de la Liberación y ética. Caminos de liberación latinoamericana, II* (Buenos Aires: Latinoamericana Libros, 1972).

⁶ José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx y la Biblia: crítica a la filosofía de la opresión* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1972); José Porfirio Miranda, *El ser y el mesías* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973).

⁷ Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902).

⁸ These books were prohibited by the dictatorial military government in Argentina when they were published. In a recent interview with him, Dussel told me that the three books of anthropology were the result of research in

ferent way is to think about God in a different way, and his calling to a mission on earth.

II Mission concepts revisited

Since Johannes Verkuyl¹² and Charles van Engen¹³ taught us about *Missio Dei*, our understanding of the central role of God in *his* mission has changed forever. He wants to invite us to *his* mission on earth. Using Verkuyl's approach, van Engen summarises these classes of mission:

1. *Missio Dei*: the mission of God
2. *Missio Hominum*: God's missional use of human instruments
3. *Missiones Ecclesiarum*: God's many missions through the People of God
4. *Missio Política Oecumenica*: God's missional action in global civilization
5. *Missio Christi*: God's messianic mission through Jesus Christ
6. *Missio Spiritu Sancti*: God's mission through the Holy Spirit
7. *Missio Futurum/Adventus*: God's 'already/not yet' Kingdom mission in predictable future and through the surprising advent.¹⁴

Let me share some reflections about holistic mission in Argentina under

some of these categories.

In relation to *Missio Hominum* we may recognize that God is using people to increase his Kingdom through 'mega-churches' (churches of 20,000 people or more) and through Pentecostal pastors such as Carlos Annandonia, Claudio Freidzon, Osvaldo Carníval, Bernardo Stamateas and Guillermo Prein. We could also recognize here other categories like *Missiones Ecclesiarum* and *Missio Spiritu Sancti*. This model of mission and the practice of sharing the gospel by increasing local churches was prominent from 1980 to the first years of the twenty-first century. However, we can now identify some concerns with this 'hegemonic model'. Even though one of the most important church associations of Argentina (called ACIERA) follows this model of mission and ministry, there are other models that could offer useful insights gained through many years of refinement, as seen in the experiences of the Protestant churches generally. Unfortunately, the problems are not simple; the Protestant model has deficiencies too.

The hegemonic model has the following problems: First, the ministry is centred on an individual, not in the community; next, concern about the soul is much greater than the concern about the bodily and material aspects of life; finally, psychological problems are the centre of care (mainly in Bernardo Stamateas' model of ministry), and the gospel is offered mainly to solve psychological problems—along the lines of what might be called 'self-help', and 'self-care'. One important contradiction in this hegemonic model must be stated clearly: even though we talk a lot about self-help or

¹² J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, trans. Dale Cooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

¹³ Carlos van Engen, *El pueblo misionero de Dios* (Grand Rapids: Libros Desafío, 2004); Charles van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

¹⁴ These are categories that van Engen uses in his courses in the PhD program called PRODOLA (Latin American Doctoral Program).

self-care, it has nothing to do with developing the autonomy of individuals but instead pastoral ministry is carried out in an authoritarian manner. The people in these churches live subject to the will of the pastor.¹⁵

The excessive authoritarianism which characterizes the hegemonic model provokes some people to leave these mega-churches, most with bad feelings about future engagement with other local churches. This exodus signals a problem in this style of ministry. It is not holistic, nor concerned for the whole person, and it is not concerned to invest in the development of the person as a disciple of Christ. This should be a serious concern of the 'holistic mission': to care for people abused in 'mega churches'. This is one of the key issues in redefining mission in the Presbyterian Church of Argentina (San Andrés), and other churches, like the Mennonite and some Baptist churches.

III Choices in the way of transforming reality

Not all the aspects with hegemonic model are bad; there are some things

that the people (and pastors) of this model are doing well. In saying this, I am rejecting parts of the theory of Jean-Pierre Bastian who is one of the most important scholars in Protestant contemporary history in Latin America.¹⁶ But the principal interest of my reflections is the problem of time and history. Philosophically stated by Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Ernst Bloch, Hannah Arendt and Paul Ricoeur, the key problem of human actions is the problem of time, the historical condition of our existence, and the necessity to objectify our subjectivity.¹⁷

In this approach, symbolic reality and the objectification of our beliefs are central, mainly in institutional

¹⁶ Jean Pierre Bastian, *La Mutación Religiosa en América Latina* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997); Jean Pierre Bastian, *Historia del protestantismo en América Latina*, 2° ed. (México: Ediciones CUPSA, 1990). The Swedish scholar, Jean Pierre Bastian, recently received the prestigious Carnahan Chair at ISEDET; we do not see evolution in his research in last 15 years; there is some lack of update, mainly in Pentecostal approach, but also in new sociological approaches, like Michael Löwy's work, *Guerra de Dioses. Religión y política en América Latina*, trad. Josefina Anaya (México DF: Siglo XXI, 1999). Our reflections try to enrich Bastian's approach, and that of his colleague, our friend, Norman Rubén Amestoy.

¹⁷ The well known sociologist Peter Berger explains this theory, under the influence of Husserl's phenomenology, and his fellows Martin Heidegger and Alfred Schutz; Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966); Spanish translation, *La construcción social de la realidad*, trad. Néstor Míguez, 14° ed. (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 1968), 52 ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Hilario Wynarczyk et al., 'Héctor Aníbal Giménez y Carlos Annacondia', in *Nuevos movimientos religiosos y ciencias sociales* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1993), 49-96; Pablo Semán, 'Los filtros populares en la recepción de la Teología de la Prosperidad', in *XXII Reunión Anual de ANPOCS* (Caxambu: Mimeo, 1998); Pablo Semán, 'La recepción popular de la teología de la prosperidad', *Scripta Ethnológica* XXIII (2001): 145-162; In Sik Hong, *Vino nuevo en odres nuevos: la búsqueda de las pautas misiológicas ante los desafíos posmodernos (estudio de campo de la Iglesia Evangélica Bautista del Centro)* (Buenos Aires: Tesis Doctoral, ISEDET, 1999).

spheres. According to this view, the way we share our faith and the gospel in the public sphere is a key issue. Some Pentecostal pastors, like Claudio Freidzon, seeing this lack in his ministry—or a general lack in Pentecostal ministry in Argentina—started a process to create a Christian university. This is an important sign that we must recognize in theological reflection about holistic mission which scholars like Bastian are not watching: relevant impact on Argentinean society will be done through institutional efforts.

At the popular level in Argentinean society, it is true that Catholic people and institutions are taken seriously; the same can be said for the Adventist Church,¹⁸ as well as Jewish people and institutions. However, everybody knows that the evangelical movement, its pastors and its institutions are not taken seriously. As my father, Alberto, says, today if a pastor has a bad pronunciation of verbs, the people don't care about what he is saying. In other words, after 30 years of a revival led by Pentecostal Churches—and the growing mega-church model—now the form (how we do the things, and how we say the things) is as relevant as the content (what we do or say).

We need to make a distinction between how people relate to other individuals (as persons), *prochain*, and how they relate to others in their social or institutional function, *socius*. In this vein, if we look back to philosophers

like Hannah Arendt¹⁹ and Paul Ricoeur,²⁰ we can be challenged to think seriously in regard to our institutional commitment. The 'short' relation with the other (the second person, 'you') does not exclude the 'long' relationship with the other as that one represents a social role (frequently in the third person, 'he'). And Ricoeur—the Protestant philosopher—has the courage to say that love, *caritas*, can be expressed not only in short relationship (*vis-à-vis*, face to face), but through institutions!²¹

IV The Importance of the Education

Summarising my position, I suggest the following thoughts to increase the integral value of the whole person in the ministry:

As Plato indicated, the key to transform future is the *paideia*, the educational movement of founding a new kind of society. As Werner Jaeger said,

¹⁹ I want to emphasize her apology for the 'public and political sphere' over the existential project of Martin Heidegger, in Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1958); Hannah Arendt, *The Life of Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978). Her remarks against the failure of existentialism must be applied also to theology.

²⁰ In most of his work, but especially in the article 'El yo, el tú y la institución', in Paul Ricoeur, *Educación y política* (Buenos Aires: Docencia, 1984).

²¹ Paul Ricoeur, 'El socius y el prójimo,' in *Política, sociedad e historicidad*, trans. Néstor Corona, Ricardo García, and Mauricio Prelocher (Buenos Aires: Docencia, 1986), 33-44.

¹⁸ They have one of the most important universities outside of Buenos Aires city, in Entre Ríos.

Plato thought that the goal was to build the ideal State into the soul of future rulers.²² Even with a critical approach to Hellenistic anthropology (for example, with Dussel), we cannot reject the idea of building a better society through the education of young people, as Psalm 37:31 suggests: 'The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip'. So, holistic mission must have in mind how to educate young people. In Argentina, we must start to think in increments of 5, 10 and 20 years' time. We are not doing that now, but some hopeful signs are beginning to emerge.

Religious experience needs to be communicated well to young people. We must recognize that all religious experiences are expressed in some kind of language; and religious experience is articulated in symbolic language.²³ So, we must pay attention not only to *what* we do, but *how* we do it: educational formation of our leadership is crucial here. The problem of how we communicate a religious experience, the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is related to our historical conditions as human beings. Here in

Argentina, even people like me, growing up in the early 1990s, are being challenged to make our language and symbols accessible to young people. For example, young people do not pay attention to a sermon if it exceeds 20 minutes (or even worse: they don't pay attention at all).

V The Gospel in the Public Sphere

Today, in the twenty-first century, many Pentecostal pastors and leaders of mega-churches think that 'reason' is opposed to 'spiritual action' or 'faith'. I cannot reproduce other works here, but there are several models of articulating faith and reason in a more constructive way.²⁴ In these models, categories like *Missio Política Oecumenica*, *Missio Christi* and *Missio Futurum/Adventus* become central. In regard to *Missio Política Oecumenica* we, in Argentina, must learn how to develop a better way of sharing the gospel in the public sphere. Even when some efforts are made through an evangelical political party, or when some political officials are evangelical, the problem still is the 'public theological discourse'. In many cases, these evangelical brothers that represent evangelicals in the public sphere do not respect personal freedom of conscience or do not reject manipulation of people. The traditional Latin American concept of '*clientelismo político*' (political patronage, the ability of political actors to have uncondi-

tional support from their constituents) is often a reality in evangelical churches or in pastoral leadership. So, non-evangelical political actors find evangelical leadership 'a good target' (because they may represent many votes).

VI The Gospel in the Church

In relation to *Missio Christi*, the challenge is to know the consequences of the 'historical Jesus' in Christology. The pastor may not be able to take on any longer 'a messianic role'. Rediscovering the historical Jesus can challenge the pastoral abuse of power in many evangelical communities: humility, power-service leadership, rejecting the popular acceptance of seeking the first places (Mark 10). Today, in Argentina, we can say that pastoral abuse of power is an obstacle to holistic mission. Many people cannot receive pastoral care because they have been abused by their pastors,²⁵ or because they assume there are no other options. In Argentina, if we were able to incorporate the theological reflection of the historical Jesus in our pastoral role, our preaching would be different and better (challenging our people to a deep change in leadership and in society at large).

With this we arrive at the final point of my argument: knowing the limits of the minister, pastor or local church. In most of the books concerning integral mission, the question about the social responsibility of the church is central, but it is based on a misunderstanding: in the context of Modernity and the Enlightenment, the State has the function of guaranteeing social justice or social welfare. Only when it fails to work does the church intervene. According to this conception, the main task of the church is to challenge the State to fulfil its commitment, because our main activity, as the church, is to preach the gospel. In contrast to this idea, we can learn from Liberation Theology, that it is necessary also to have a good political theology; we can also learn from Karl Barth that our main responsibility is to preach a transforming gospel.²⁶

The choice we have to confront in holistic mission is this: either we try to get as many people into heaven, despite manipulation and power abuse, or we try to make disciples who are able to have autonomy and real freedom. Freedom is not the main subject of our preaching in our churches. Nonetheless, we have to think of ways to make it happen.

22 Werner Jaeger, *Paideia. Los ideales de la cultura griega. Tomo II*, trans. Joaquín Xirau (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1942), 446.

23 Paul Ricoeur, *Finitude et Culpabilité. II La symbolique du mal* (Paris: Aubier—Éditions Montaigne, 1960), 11 ss, 323 ss; Paul Ricoeur, *Fe y Filosofía: problemas del lenguaje religioso*, trans. Juan Carlos Gorlier and Néstor Corona (Buenos Aires: Docencia—Almagesto, 1990); José Severino Croatto, *Los lenguajes de la experiencia religiosa. Estudio de fenomenología de la religión* (Buenos Aires: Docencia, 1994), 35 ff.

24 David A. Roldán, 'Modelos históricos de articulación entre la fe y la razón,' *Mnesis* 2 (2006): 111-114; and *Teología y cultura* 6 (2006): 47-56.

25 In these subjects, we have to learn from theories like Leonardo Boff, *Igreja: carisma e poder. Ensaio de Ecclesiologia militante* (San Pablo: Editora Ática, 1994); Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004); Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll NY: Hyperion Books, 1993); Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness* (Orbis Books, 1988).

26 To try to find a possible relationship between these two different traditions is part of my theological project. A beginning can be read in David A. Roldán, *Teología crítica de la Liberación. A propósito de Iván Petrella* (Buenos Aires: Mimeo, 2008). The task is to find a way to articulate a relevant theological discourse in the realm of 'interiority' (Barth and existentialist tradition) and 'exteriority' (Marxism, political theology and Liberation Theology).