Evangelical Review of Theology

GENERAL EDITOR: THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

Volume 34 · Number 4 · October 2010

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

Published by

Paternoster:
thinking faith

WEA
World Evangelical Alliance
Theological Commission

for
WORLD EVANGELICAL
ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

to fill this need (the Latin American Theological Fraternity) passed over this task, with its reduction of theology to missiology. Some Latin American theologians must say, 'Excuse me, I want to do "theoretical theology"' or 'I'm interested in *academia*'. But in saying this, we have to be aware that this is not a 'privative' issue of Latin American theology, or theology itself in our time. Other theoretical fields are suffering parallel movements in the legacy of North-American Pragmatism:[12] the legacy of Existentialism,[13] the postmodernist[14] mood, post-structuralism,[15] and even some kind of Marxism.[16] In all these manifestations we can find 'anti-theoretical' forces.

The idea of 'notion' (*Begriff* in Hegelian philosophy), is not a 'dead thought' or merely ideal reality that can be confronted with material reality: 'notion' is really living and has its own activity in history and reality. This approach seems to be obsolete, and today the 'important things' have nothing to do with 'thought': instead the focus is on action or praxis. Now I may be an 'idealist' or retrogressive, but I consider that thought does really matter; as a Christian evangelical, and a 'friend of Jesus Christ', theology is vitally important to me and has value in itself. So I am pleased to be a member of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance.

12 Related to names like Charles Peirce, William James, and recently, Richard Rorty.

13 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique (précédé de Question de méthode). Tome I Théorie des ensembles pratiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960); Jean-Paul Sartre, *El existencialismo es un humanismo* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del 80, 1992); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Le Être et le Neant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943); *El ser y la nada*, trans. Juan Valmar (Buenos Aires: Losada, 2004); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'El marxismo occidental', in *Las aventuras de la dialéctica*, trans. León Rozitchner (Buenos Aires: La Pléyade, 1974), 37-69; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Existencialismo y marxismo*, trans. Bernardo Guillén (Buenos Aires: Deucalión, 1954).

14 Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Minuit 1979); Marshall Berman, 'Brindis por la modernidad', in *El debate modernidad posmodernidad: edición ampliada y actualizada*, ed. Nicolás Casullo (Buenos Aires: Retórica Ediciones, 2004), 87-105.

15 Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); Jaques Derrida, *L'Ecriture et la Différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967).

16 Against this, see Alain Badiou, *Manifeste pour la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989); trans. *Manifiesto por la filosofía*, trans. Victoriano Alcantud Serrano (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión [orig. 1989], 2007); Alain Badiou, *San Pablo. La fundación del universalismo* (Madrid: Anthropos, 1999); Hannah Arendt, *The life of Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978); trans. *La vida del espíritu*, trans. Carmen Corral y Fina Birulés (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2002).

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The In-Roads of Evangelical Theology and the Evangelical Movement in Latin American Spanish-Speaking Countries

J. Daniel Salinas

KEYWORDS: *Latin American church, Pentecostalism, Latin American evangelical theology.*

I HAD THE PRIVILEGE of being born in an evangelical home. My father became an evangelical in his mid-twenties. He is now eighty-one, so he has been an evangelical for over half a century. Let me tell you what he has seen in his lifetime in the evangelical church. My father's conversion took place while he worked as a truck driver. A mechanic in his company shared the evangelical faith with him and then through Bible reading and conversations with other evangelicals, the Lord changed his heart.

At that time the evangelical church in Colombia was quite small (0.34%)[1] and depended heavily on foreign missionaries. During the mid 1950s, Colombia, my native land, was recovering from a period of extreme political violence that turned into a religious persecution by Catholic priests. Evangelicals were expelled from their farmlands and forced to flee to the cities without any recourse to reclaim their properties. My mother's side of the family had this experience, losing all their farming land and having to flee to the city. Furthermore, there was an official propaganda campaign where the military government accused evangelicals of having an alliance with communism in order to destroy national unity.[2]

1 P. S. J. Damboriena, *El Protestantismo en América Latina: La Situación del Protestantismo en los países latino-americanos* (Friburg, Switzerland: FERES, 1963), Vol.2, 25.

2 William Beltrán, 'El Evangelicalismo y el Movimiento Pentecostal en Colombia en el Siglo XX,' in *Historia del Cristianismo en Colombia: Corrientes y Diversidad*, ed. Ana María Bidegian, 451-480, (Bogotá: Taurus, 2004), 462.

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Therefore, when my dad became an evangelical he was taking a huge risk. He was becoming part of a very small minority without any civil rights in the midst of a culturally homogeneous Catholic society.

French sociologist Jean Pierre Bastian described evangelicals in Latin America as 'religious dissidents, adopting an exogenous religious worldview'. For Bastian, evangelicalism constitutes a minority and marginal 'continental subculture', a 'complex and plural religious movement… constituted by various types and characteristics'.[3] Following this idea of religious dissidence, Peruvian Samuel Escobar explained that, 'evangelical churches occupied in Latin America society the role of contestant groups to the official church, critical minorities, which together with other social groups wanted to open to the future a close and medieval society, marked still by feudalism'.[4]

I do not think my father would have used these exact words to describe his experience but for him the official church offered no spiritual life. We need to remember that the Catholicism that came to Latin America was a pre-Reformation, pre-Trent Catholicism. All the vices and problems of European medieval popular religion were exported to these lands.

Soon after conversion, my father, encouraged by a missionary, went to a Bible institute for a year, with the idea of becoming a minister. There he met and married my mother. Things did not work out as planned in order to become a pastor. After starting a family and returning to his former job, Dad together with a couple of other believers opened up a congregation in his neighborhood of lower class working people. He became a bi-vocational pastor, working during the day and preaching nights and weekends. He worked non-stop. A few years later, my father was part of a key movement. This was the movement from foreign to native leadership that took several years and a tug-of-war with the missionaries who thought the nationals were not ready to take over.

The experience that my father had starting a local congregation was extending all over the country, of course under the watchful eye of the missionaries. When the differences of methodologies, vision and probably some human pride became impossible to overcome, most of the churches of the denomination with which my father was associated decided to form a national denomination, cutting all ties with foreign organizations and funds. For better or worse my father was in the forefront of a new development of indigenous churches. I remember well when he told us the new name for our church. Initially things were done the 'old way' but not for long. Nationals proved to be aggressive evangelists and able administrators, even amidst continuous divisions and power struggles.

The new denomination grew swiftly and growth brought new challenges. There were not enough prepared people to lead the many new congregations; consequently the standards for pastors were lowered with the subsequent loss in depth. Teaching, in general, became superficial, emphasizing external behavior over doctrinal understanding. Some strong and charismatic pastors wanted to impose their personal agendas and branched out on their own, forming their private ecclesiastical empires. Many of these events were table talk at home and the subject for much prayer at the church.

Another aspect that was lost with the change in leadership from foreigners to nationals was the social work of the church. The congregation my father helped start also had an elementary school and a small clinic. My sisters and I attended the school and received medical attention at the clinic. Both the school and the clinic disappeared when the denomination split and the congregation went local. My sisters and I, together with 80 other children, were forced to find schools somewhere else. I guess finances were part of it. Most of the believers, including my father, were just trying to survive with meagre incomes and growing families. The school and the clinic were a big help to the church. Legal hurdles, lack of teachers and personnel were probably the main reasons. Also, it was not easy to break with financial dependency.

Over the years my father has also been instrumental in starting churches in some rural areas, as well as other urban congregations in the fast growing city. He travelled quite a bit during weekends to preach and teach in other places where groups of believers needed encouragement. This is a practice he continues today even in his advanced age. Not long ago and due to a combination of factors, my father left the denomination to which he had belonged for over four decades to support a group started by a self-appointed 'apostle', a new breed of leaders that is stirring the ecclesiastical waters. I was surprised by his strong support of this person even against his wife's advice.

Lately I heard he changed churches again. This time the reason was more logistical, a long walk to take public transportation and the time of the buses and late services. He now goes to a church a few blocks from home and when possible visits other congregations in the area. As one of my sisters says, it's good he keeps busy and has lots of friends. He has never suffered retirement depression. A life well lived!

I would say that my father's spiritual journey reflects in some ways the story of Latin American evangelicals. Churches with a strong missionary presence and support were generally the norm until the 1960s—including even the Pentecostal denominations. With few exceptions, like the Methodist Pentecostal Church in Chile, churches were a reflection of the dominant missionary presence. But soon native leaders started to come up and thus began a new chapter of the history of the church, the chapter of indigenous churches.

These churches were in constant search of their own identity. Some continued with the traditions of the missionaries, while others trod new paths and developed different understandings of their faith. Pentecostalism became the predominant expression of these native churches. But even among Pentecostals there has been room for

3 J.P. Bastian, *Historia del Protestantismo en América Latina* (México: Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1990), 9.

4 Samuel Escobar, '¿Qué significa ser evangélico hoy?' *Misión* 1 (1982), 17.

lots of manipulation and creativity. As I mentioned earlier, personal agendas and leadership styles have atomized the churches into myriads of local congregations and denominations each one with historical amnesia and a sense of being better than its ancestors.

According to researcher Paul Freston,

> With variations, one can say that Latin American Protestantism is characterized by being highly practicing and fast-growing, predominantly lower class, and organized in a plethora of nationally run and even nationally created denominations. Perhaps two-thirds of Latin America's fifty million or so Protestants are Pentecostals… and this percentage is increasing. Protestantism is most pentecostalized in Chile (perhaps 80 percent) and least in the Andean countries (fewer than half).[5]

Divisions brought not only variety but also innovation. Somewhere in the process a stronger break gave birth to the so-called Neo-Pentecostals even though this name is not quite accurate. Pentecostals say they did not parent this baby and deny any connections. Neo-Pentecostalism has mixed popular beliefs, native spiritualities, some witchcraft, and a little bit of biblical teaching with the latest managerial theories and models to produce an explosive combo of religious empires.[6] Access to media and political connections have added to this latest ecclesiastical fashion, which enjoys a popularity seldom experienced before by any evangelical denomination or church.

Still the question remains if these movements could be considered evangelical at all. According to William Beltrán, a Colombian researcher associated with the National University, Neo-Pentecostals do not called themselves evangelical mainly because such a term 'is highly stigmatized' as a synonym of a 'religious fanatical'. Neither have they liked the name Pentecostal since they consider traditional Pentecostalism 'fundamentalist' and highly 'legalistic'.[7]

Another recent study of Colombian Pentecostals describes them as,

- Explosive and dynamic in the cities particularly among the more popular and impoverished population.
- Inarticulate, anarchical, and conflictive among themselves and with the Catholic Church.
- Potentially able to mobilize for electoral purposes, socially passive, and an atomizer of the religious field and spirituality.[8]

Furthermore, even with a completely Latin American leadership, churches in general have not become doctrinally and theologically independent. With a few exceptions, even today theological trends from the north are accepted and assimilated without questioning. 'Church Growth', 'Spiritual Warfare', 'Spiritual Mapping', 'New Apostles' together with the accompanying methodologies have inundated these lands.

I remember a conversation with a missionary among Quechuas in Bolivia. He explained that for a Quechua person it usually takes close to five years to change the animistic worldview with spirits (good and evil) in nature. My missionary friend explained that it is a huge change when a Quechua person says that the God of the Bible is the only God and the whole earth is his. But when the 'Spiritual Warfare' doctrine came with its teaching of regional and local spiritual beings and several spiritual hierarchies, it gave the people the idea that their animistic beliefs were right and they did not need to change them. According to my friend, the 'Spiritual Warfare' theory pushed back many years the evangelistic effort among Quechuas and made it a hundred times more difficult.[9]

When I was able to visit the United States in my early thirties, I realized that the liturgy I grew up with was a direct translation from the Anglo-Saxon tradition. The music, the organization of religious ceremonies, the Sunday school materials, age separations, etc. were all a copy of how things were done in the missionaries' home countries. Rene Padilla explains that this is a clear sign of theological dependency.

> The Latin American church is a church without its own theological reflection. Does anyone doubt it? Let them check out how much of our Christian literature is translated from English and how little we have written. Let them see how much of our preaching is reduced to a mere repetition of badly assimilated doctrinal formulas, without any insertion in our historical reality. They should look at how many of our churches keep the theological colouring of the founding missions and understand theological studies basically as the study of the doctrinal distinctiveness of the churches to which they owe their origin. They should examine the faculty and the programs of most of our seminaries and Bible institutes. Let them review our hymns and songs. The analysis of all these aspects of our ecclesiastical reality will show them that our 'theological dependency' is as real and urgent as the dependency that characterizes Third World countries. It is true that here and there some Latin Americans have started to stammer out their 'own' theology but their efforts are still incipi-

5 Paul Freston, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America* (Oxford; OUP, 2008), 15.

6 See, Segura Osías, 'El evangelicalismo popular: ¡Una cosmovisión sincrética!', Paper presented at the FTL consultation 'Por una iglesia renovada y siempre renovándose', San José, Costa Rica, October 21st, 2005.

7 Cely Beltrán, William Mauricio, *Fragmentación y recomposición del campo religioso en Bogotá: un acercamiento a la descripción del pluralismo religioso de la ciudad* (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2009), 180.

8 Pablo P. Moreno, *Escenarios de la presencia evangélica en Colombia 1991-2001*, Ponencia presentada en la primera consulta nacional sobre la paz, 49ª asamblea nacional de CEDECOL, Cali, Colombia, Mayo 27-31, 2002, 3.

9 Personal conversation with D. Delzer, missionary with the Brethren in Sucre, Bolivia.

ent and do not affect by any means the total picture the church in Latin America presents, that is, a church without a theology, without conscientious reflection that serves the Word of God.[10]

What Padilla wrote in the early seventies is still relevant today. There is a need to work out a Latin American evangelical theology. Today if we visit a church, a seminary, or a Bible institute in any country of Latin America we will probably find mostly translated textbooks and curricula. For example, as of today, there is no systematic theology text written by Latin Americans. What we see in the majority of churches is a flood of books by the evangelical gurus from the North without any criteria to filter them. You can find books by Don Carson or Wayne Grudem alongside books written by Benny Hinn and Jerry Falwell. The predominant tendency today is the so called 'prosperity gospel' even among some traditional denominations. Only a handful of churches know the theological proposal that the Latin American Theological Fraternity-FTL has developed in four decades of work. By and large, theological dependency still characterizes the evangelical church in Latin America.

Thus, evangelicals in Latin America are still searching for their identity. In spite of decades of indigenous leadership and national denominations we have not yet answered in unison the question of what it means to be the people of God in this continent. Most have their eyes fixed on the North Atlantic theological and methodological latest trends. Maybe we are experiencing a prolonged adolescence, procrastinating as long as possible being responsible adults. We need to be centred in the Scriptures and totally dependent on the Holy Spirit to take the challenge of becoming an instrument of transformation in God's hands.

But so far we have remained at the fringes of history. A university student told me once that if one day evangelicals completely disappear nobody will miss them. They contribute almost nothing to civil society in a macro-level. Since this conversation I have tried to show otherwise, but the more I research the more difficult it is to find hard evidence to prove that is not the case. Perhaps I should revisit more often my father's journey and see what his conversion has meant not only for him but mainly for me.

10 C. René Padilla, 'La Teología en Latinoamérica', *Pensamiento Cristiano* 19, no. 75 (1972): 206.

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Poverty and the Gospel: The Case of Haiti

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KEYWORDS: *Theodicy, colonialism, nationalism, missions, evangelism justice, health*

POVERTY IS PERHAPS the most stubborn and troubling ill of our world. It is a plague that affects a very large portion of the human race and keeps billions from reaching the potential that God intends for them. Because it interferes with the fulfillment of God's purpose for human life, it is an ill that must be combated by the gospel wherever it is found—its stubbornness notwithstanding.

Perhaps in no other part of the world has this enemy of human flourishing been more voracious and brutal than the Caribbean nation of Haiti—my homeland. Although situated in a region of the world classified as middle income, Haiti has never moved remotely close to that status during its life as a nation. Once recognized as the most productive of France's many colonies, the country, which has earned the distinction of being the first independent black republic of the world and a beacon of freedom in the Americas, has been reputed as the poorest country in the western hemisphere.

For Haitians, this label which has become a leading descriptor for the country has always been a cause of great angst. It pains us because it virtually overshadows all the positive features of the country's culture, its proud achievements, and the positive traits of the character of its people. It grieves us even more intensely when we realize that, though pejorative, the description is nonetheless accurate.

The evidence in support of the unfavourable assessment is irrefutable and apparent to the naked eye. The statistics establishing the country's appalling condition are common knowledge: eighty percent of the population of 9,000,000 live under the poverty line. Fifty percent of these live in abject poverty, surviving on a pittance of $1 per day. Well over fifty percent of the population is illiterate. Two-thirds of its workforce is unemployed. Thousands are working in near slavery conditions in the sugar cane plantations of the Dominican Republic.

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