Key Themes and Writings for the Pastoral Minister

The body politic and the mystical body of Christ in the United States are becoming increasingly a global microcosm. Linguistic, racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious pluralism is a fact of life in both the society and the Church. Politicians are sharply attuned to this demographic phenomenon, especially during the electoral campaign, as they attempt to woo minority voters. The American Catholic church has always been an “institutional immigrant” but, with the arrival of the immigrants of the “Second Wave” (Allan Figueroa Deck)—Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Nicaraguans, and other Central and South Americans, Haitians, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Thai, Hmong, Filipinos, and others—its face has become multi-complexioned. It is estimated that annually three hundred thousand Catholics immigrate to the U.S., the equivalent of a mid-sized diocese. Currently, about one-quarter of sixty million American Catholics are of non-European extract. The Church not only faces new challenges with these newcomers but also can take advantage of the wealth of their cultural and religious traditions to renew and invigorate its life.

Church officials and theologians have just begun to come to grips with this new demographic pluralism. Last month in Los Angeles there occurred a celebration of cultural diversity in the American Catholic Church called Encuentro 2000 with the evocative slogan “Many Faces in God’s House.” Theologians, on their part, explored the implications of cultural pluralism for theology and ministry. What has resulted is a new way of doing theology called cross-cultural, inter-cultural, or contextual theology. This brief essay will summarize the main trends of this emerging theology, with particular reference to the three major ethnic groups in the American Catholic Church, and indicate some recent literature that even a busy priest or pastoral worker would do well to
peruse since it is a rare church minister today that is not called, at least occasionally, to serve people of different ethnic groups and cultures.

CROSS-CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

As opposed to the mono-cultural perspective which looks at reality from the point of view of a single culture, usually one’s own, judged to be superior to and normative for all others, the cross-cultural perspective attempts to understand what people are like on the basis of several cultures. In this perspective, which is a necessity in a culturally plural society, all cultures are seen to contain both strengths and weaknesses, both right and wrong. All of them, though not perfect, are, however, judged relatively adequate to their main purpose of helping their members cope with the various demands of life.

The cross-cultural perspective provides a fourfold benefit: (1) an enriched understanding and interpretation of one’s own socio-cultural matrix; (2) a more adequate understanding and interpretation of others in their own socio-cultural matrix; (3) an improved ability to communicate one’s message to people who do not share one’s socio-cultural matrix; and (4) as far as theology is concerned, a better understanding of the biblical message which is couched in socio-cultural terms other than one’s own and a more effective communication of this biblical message to people who share neither the socio-cultural matrix of the Bible nor one’s own.

One of the most helpful works on cross-cultural anthropology, some knowledge of which is indispensable for cross-cultural ministry, is Charles Kraft, Anthropology for Christian Witness (Orbis, 1996). Like its predecessor with a revealing subtitle, Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective (Orbis, 1979), this volume deals comprehensively with issues of culture and worldview; their relation to technology, economics, and religion; the role of language, art, education, family, and group in culture; and the dynamics of change in culture and worldview. Each chapter opens with reflections on how to integrate the theme under consideration with the Bible and ends with rich suggestions for applying anthropological insights to cross-cultural ministry.

As far as the method of cross-cultural or contextual theology is concerned, two works deserve special mention. The first, Stephen Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology (Orbis, 1992), presents a helpful overview of five models of doing theology in which the gospel, Christian tradition, culture and social change are related to each other. The first (translation) is by way of translating the gospel and Christian tradition into the categories of the local culture; the second (anthropological) by the use of social sciences; the third (praxis) by seeking socio-political liberation; the fourth (synthetic) by enriching the Christian faith and the local
culture by means of each other; and the fifth (transcendental) by the radical conversion of the individual. Bevans rightly suggested that these models are not mutually exclusive and the selection of one model rather than another depends on the circumstances in which one does theology.

The second is Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (Orbis, 1997). A sequel to *Constructing Local Theologies* (Orbis, 1985), this volume is a masterful guide as to how local theologies should be elaborated in the context of the current process of globalization understood both as extension of modernity by means of a single (capitalist) economy and new communication technologies and as compression of time and space with the blurring of cultural boundaries. This new context produces, according to Schreiter, a new understanding of the catholicity of the Church as marked by “a wholeness of inclusion and fullness of faith in a pattern of inter-cultural exchange and communication” (132). As a consequence, a new way of doing theology is required which is termed “inter-cultural” and in which theology is a “communication event” brought about by the speakers/hearers, the context, and the message.

Less technical and more praxis-oriented works on the theme of inculturation include Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for the Pastoral Worker* (Orbis, 1990), which is chock-full with very useful suggestions and is highly recommended to those interested in the practice of inculturation at the parish level; Richard G. Cote, *Re-Visioning Mission: The Catholic Church and Culture in Postmodern America* (Paulist, 1996), which offers an illuminating view of inculturation as a reciprocal process between faith and culture similar to the relationship in marriage; and Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith & Culture* (Paulist, 1998), which presents a helpful survey of the theology of inculturation from Vatican II to John Paul II and a clear explanation of post-modernism. Finally, an extremely helpful manual on inculturation and mission, which should grace the library of every pastor, is *Dictionary of Mission*, Karl Muller, Theo Sundermeier, Stephen Bevans, and Richard Bliese, eds. (Orbis, 1997).

BLACK CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

As Diana L. Hayes has pointed out with justified pride, today Black Catholics in the United States have come of age, with 2.3 million members, 14 active bishops, 300 priests and brothers, 400 permanent deacons, and 300 women religious. To get a sense of the history of American Black Catholics, the volume by Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (Crossroad, 1992) is required reading. Davis begins with the African roots of American Black Catholicism and
ends with the Second Vatican Council. His poignant concluding words are worth quoting in full: “The story of African American Catholicism is the story of a people who obstinately clung to a faith that gave them sustenance, even when it did not always make them welcome. Like many others, blacks had to fight for their faith; but their fight was often with members of their own household. Too long have black Catholics been anonymous. It is now clear that they can be identified, that their presence has made an impact, and that their contributions have made Catholicism a unique and stronger religious body” (259).

One of these contributions is theological. One collection of essays, Diana Hayes and Cyprian Davis, eds., Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States (Orbis, 1998), presents an overview of the history of American Black Catholicism, aspects of Black Catholic systematic theology and their ethical, pastoral and liturgical implications. It gathers together the who’s who of Black Catholic theology: besides historian Cyprian Davis, Diana Hayes, Jamie Phelps, M. Shawn Copeland, Bryan Massingale, Toineet Eugene, Giles Conwill, Clarence Rufus Rivers, and D. Reginald Whitt. Themes discussed include slavery and Black faith, Jesus and the mission of the Church, womanist theology, theological method, social ethics, liturgical renewal, spirituality, catechesis, and liturgical adaptation. For further information on Black liberation theology, one can consult Diana Hayes, And Still We Rise: An Introduction to Black Liberation Theology (Paulist, 1996).

HISPANIC/LATINO THEOLOGY

It is predicted that by 2050 Hispanics will make up one-fourth of the U.S. population. In recent years the presence of Hispanics has increased dramatically in the American Catholic Church. Currently there are 24 Hispanic bishops, and 10 percent of the men who were ordained to the priesthood nationwide in 1998 were Hispanic. In the last decade Hispanic/Latino theology has grown by leaps and bounds, thanks to the foundation of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHITUS) and its Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology.

An earlier helpful collection of essays presenting Latino theology is Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective, Arturo Bañuelas, ed. (Orbis, 1995). It discusses the identity of Hispanic theology, its methodology, mujerista theology, social ethics, spirituality, and ecumenism. The authors are as it were the “founding members” of Hispanic theology and include Virgilio Elizondo, Fernando Segovia, Samuel Soliván-Román, Arturo Bañuelas, Roberto S. Goizueta, Sixto García, Ana María Pineda, Harold Recinos, Orlando Espín, Ada María Isasi-Díaz, María Pilar Aquino Vargas, Eldin Villaña, Allan Figueroa Deck, and Justo González. Among these Virgilio Elizondo, the founder of the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio, stands out as
the “father” of Hispanic theology; his numerous works, in particular his *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Orbis, revised and expanded, 2000), continue to inspire Hispanic theologians.


For general introductions to Hispanic theology, besides the volume edited by Arturo Bañuelas mentioned above, the following can be consulted: *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States*, ed. Allan Figueroa Deck (Orbis, 1992); *We Are a People! Initiatives in Hispanic American Theology*, ed. Roberto S. Goizueta (Fortress, 1992); *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenges and Promise*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando Segovia (Fortress, 1996); and Roberto S. Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Orbis, 1995). The most recent collection of essays by twelve theologians on Catholic systematic theology, *From the Heart of Our People*, Orlando Espín and Miguel H. Díaz, eds. (Orbis, 1999) represents the fruit of a year-long symposium on theology done *latinamente*. It also illustrates a way of doing theology known as *teología de conjunto*, that is, theology done together in discussion, mutual critique, and collaboration. Besides the veterans of Hispanic theology, new faces include Alejandro García-Rivera, Jean-Pierre Ruiz, Gary Riebe-Estrella, Jeanette Rodriguez-Holguín, and Ruy G. Suárez Rivero. Topics covered by the essays are theological method, the ministry of the theologian, Latino metaphysics, *fiesta*, biblical hermeneutics, grace and sin, Mariology, ecclesiology, ecology, and theological education. It also contains an informative bibliography of Hispanic theology.

Finally, the most recent voice in American cross-cultural theology is that of Asians. Here important contributions have been made by non-Catholic theologians. A general introduction to Asian-American theology is *Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective*, Peter C. Phan and Jung Young Lee, eds. (The Liturgical Press, 1999).

The late Korean theologian Jung Young Lee was an influential figure. Among his twenty books, the most important are *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Fortress, 1995), which describes the reality of an immigrant as someone standing between two cultures and beyond both, and suggests how Christian doctrines can be reformulated from this perspective, and *The Trinity in Asian Perspective* (Abingdon, 1996), which interprets this central Christian doctrine from the perspective of the yin-yang philosophy. Taiwanese Choan-Seng Song, also a prolific author, articulates a liberation theology with the use of stories. Of his many books, the most recent *The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology* (Fortress, 1998) explores Christian faith under the rubrics of life, hope, faith, and love. Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama develops a cross-cultural theology from his experiences as a Japanese growing up in the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a doctoral student in the United States at Princeton Theological Seminary, and a missionary in Thailand. His most challenging books are *Water Buffalo Theology* (Orbis, revised and expanded, 1999) and *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai: A Critique of Idols* (Orbis, 1984). Korean theologian Andrew Sung Park studies the issue of racism and suggests ways to overcome it in *Racial Conflict & Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Orbis, 1996).

Catholic theologians such as Korean Anselm Kyongsuk Min and Vietnamese Peter C. Phan have added their own voices to the emerging Asian-American theology, the former with his liberation theology in *Dialectic of Salvation: Issues in Theology of Liberation* (State University of New York Press, 1989) and the latter with his christology of Jesus as the eldest son and an ancestor and his theology of the reign of God in his many writings, of which the most recent is *Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam* (Orbis, 1998).

From this cursory overview it is clear that cross-cultural theologies in the United States have experienced a tremendous spurt of growth. These multiple voices have challenged and enriched the Christian theological tradition. May they, as the United States and the American Catholic Church become increasingly multi-cultural and multi-ethnic, continue to increase and multiply.

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### Thoughts for Summer Vacation

*He was never less at leisure than when he was at leisure.*

—Cicero

*All intellectual improvement arises from leisure.*

—Samuel Johnson

*Generally speaking anybody is more interesting doing nothing than doing anything.*

—Gertrude Stein