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From the Editor

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From the Editor

In his 1993 BBC Reith Lectures, subsequently published as *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Random House, 1994), literary and cultural critic Edward W. Said writes:

The intellectual does not climb a mountain or pulpit and declaim from the heights. Obviously you want to speak your piece where it can be heard best; and also you want it represented in such a way as to influence with an ongoing and actual process, for instance, the cause of peace and justice. Yes, an intellectual's voice is lonely, but it has resonance only because it associates itself freely with the reality of a movement, the aspirations of a people, the common pursuit of a shared ideal. . . . Speaking the truth to power is no Panglossian idealism: it is carefully weighing the alternatives, picking the right one, and then intelligently representing it where it can do the most good and cause the right change (101–2).

In many respects, what Said says of the intellectual applies equally well to the task of the theologian. His sage advice about the care with which intellectuals must choose their words and discern the most appropriate and effective venues for those words should resonate profoundly in those who teach, write, and publish theology. As we reflect in this vein on the place and the purpose of this theological journal on the university library shelf, on the pastoral agent's table and in the wider public square, this issue offers three carefully-crafted studies. Despite their considerable differences, they converge in common attention to the sources of theological reflection, to the varied audiences of theological scholarship, and to the transformative goals of the theologian's commitment. In that sense, it would not be inaccurate to classify all three as public theology, as the sort of *fides quaerens intellectum* that refuses to be relegated to the private sphere as "armchair theology." This is so insofar as the three contributions to this issue join their voices to insist on the relationship between theologians and the intersecting communities (church, academy, and society at large) to which they belong and to which they are accountable.

For theologians who write from the U.S. Hispanic American perspective and whose words appear in these pages and elsewhere, neither mountaintop nor pulpit constitute privileged vantage points, either for the sort of listening that makes it possible for us to hear with understanding or for the sort of speaking that makes a real difference. All three contributions to this issue of the *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* also raise their eyes and voices toward the future, both in active interest in the future of theological education and reflection among U.S. Hispanic Americans, and in deep concern for the future of U.S. Hispanic American communities.

Dr. Efrain Agosto (Ph.D., Boston University), author of "Social Analysis of the New Testament and Hispanic Theology: A Case Study," is professor of New Testament and director of the *Programa de Ministerios Hispanos* at Hartford Seminary. Dr. Agosto, whose commitment to U.S. Hispanic American theological education is demonstrated through his participation as a faculty mentor for the Hispanic Theological Initiative, takes an autobiographical point of departure in his essay. A New York City-born Puerto Rican, Dr. Agosto shares the ways in which his experience as a church and community leader influenced the direction of his doctoral studies. In research that resulted in a dissertation entitled "Paul's Use of Greco-Roman Conventions of Commendation," Dr. Agosto discovered the complex interrelationship between the social realities of Greco-Roman antiquity that were the matrix of Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian Christian community, and the social realities of late twentieth-century U.S. Hispanic American readers of the Corinthian correspondence. Placing biblical scholarship at the service of U.S. Hispanic American theology, Professor Agosto suggests that the Pauline legacy can provide a useful stimulus for a theology of leadership in our churches and communities.

Benjamin Valentin, a Ph.D. candidate at Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, whose area of research interest is public theology, contributes "Nuevos Odres para el Vino: A Critical Contribution to Latino/a Theological Construction." In this essay he articulates a threefold critical assessment of U.S. Hispanic American theologies, moved on the one hand by his recognition of what these theologies have already achieved, and on the other hand by the urgent need to pour the new wine of U.S. Hispanic American theology into new wineskins. He thus warns U.S. Hispanic American theologians against the old wineskins of a too-narrow ecclesiocentrism, of a too-uncritical appeal to the authority and the liberative potential of the biblical text, and of the narrowly parochial construction of the constituency of our discourse.

In his contribution to this issue, "The Body of Christ: The Claim of the Crucified People on U.S. Theology and Ethics," Dr. Robert Lassalle-Klein (Ph.D., Graduate Theological Union), assistant professor of field education and systematic theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, reminds U.S. theologians and ethicists of the binding claim of those whom the late Ignacio Ellacuría called "the crucified people" on all of us. The crucified people are, as Dr. Lassalle-Klein explains, that "vast portion of humankind, which is literally and actually crucified by natural . . . historical and personal oppressions." Professor Lassalle-Klein, who wrote a doctoral dissertation entitled, "The Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America: An American Christian University and the Historical Reality of the Reign of God," draws on the late Ignacio Ellacuría's historical realism and on the work of Ellacuría's University of Central America colleague Jon Sobrino. Yet even for those who have never read a page of Ellacuría's theological or philosophical writings, the testimony of his Christian commitment abides in the eloquent ink of his martyrdom. On November 16, 1989, Ellacuría, then rector of the university, was shot to death along with five Jesuit confreres (Amando López, Joaquin López y López, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Segundo Montes, and Juan Ramón Moreno), together with their housekeeper Julia Elba Ramos and her daughter Celina Ramos. Just as neither their priestly ordination nor their academic affiliation deafened them to the cries of the people of El Salvador, neither were they shielded from the bullets that made them fellow members of the suffering body of Christ.

Taking up Edward Said's words once again, the voices of the theologians whose work we present in this issue of the *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* resonate deeply and broadly because they associate themselves with "the aspirations of a people," in the "common pursuit of a shared ideal."

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It is now possible to contact the editorial office of the *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* by electronic mail at JHLT@mci2000.com. We welcome correspondence and comments from our readers both by e-mail and at our postal address. Please use the postal address to submit articles for review. Submissions by e-mail cannot be accepted.