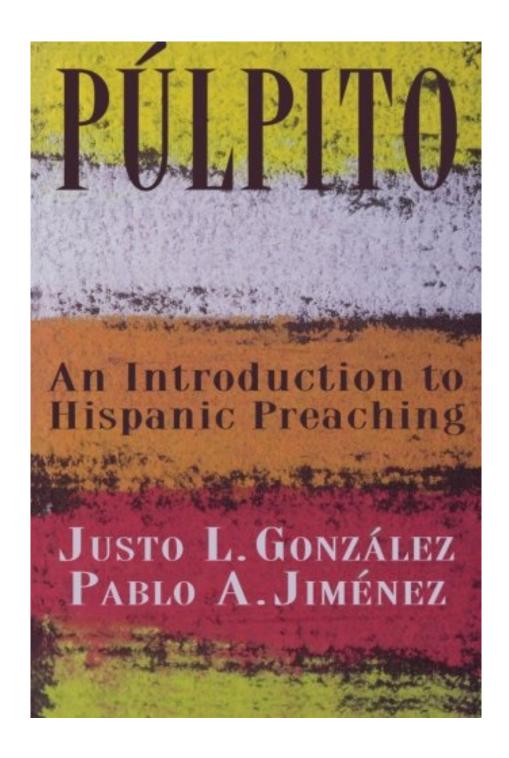


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In this, the only book available that addresses the distinctive issues and character of preaching in the Hispanic congregation, the authors discuss important historical, theoretical, and methodological issues in Hispanic homiletics. Includes ten sermons.

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Review of Pulpito

By David Packer

Overall a good, thorough, and helpful treatment of the subject. It does cover important information and gives a good historical and cultural explanation for why things are the way they are.

A small weakness is that it does not really explain the multicultural aspect of American life, or the

theological and church perspective the assimilated American Hispanic has. Perhaps that is out of the range of the book, but it would be an interesting subject to deal with.

Book Summary of Pulpito: An Introduction to Hispanic Preaching, Written by Justo L. Gonzalez and Pablo A. Jimenez

Chapter 1: Building the Pulpito

The Hispanic population of America is highly influenced by the immigration of Spanish speaking peoples from Central and South Americas. The homiletic theory has been shaped by numerous preaching books used in these cultures, some of which are translations of texts used in the United States.

## 1. First Stage: Transculturation

In the 19th Century Britain and the United States provided the largest numbers of missionaries serving in Latin America. Prior to this missionary activity was illegal in most nations. Protestant Christianity did not become well established until the 20th Century. The first manuals on preaching were translations from English. The most popular of these books were:

- Charles H. Spurgeon: Lectures to My Students Spurgeon's focused mainly on molding the character of his students
- John A. Broadus: On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons Broadus' book is arguably one of the finest books on the subject of developing speeches to instruct and persuade. It reminded the Hispanic population of the Spanish estilistica, techniques for oral and written expression they had learned in school. It appeals mostly to the well educated
- John W. Blackwood: The Preparation of Biblical Sermons ¬—Blackwood's emphasis was on expository preaching and, like Broadus, appealed mostly to the well educated.
- James D. Crane: El sermon eficaz though originally written in Spanish it was mainly a simpler reelaboration of Broadus' approach.

Only the last was originally written in Spanish, but then it was written by a missionary from the United States.

#### 2. Second Stage: Inculturation

The well-educated pastors were helped by these four influential books. However, most pastors in Latin America had barely an equivalent of a high school education. The popular styles of sermons developed among the less educated pastors were extemporaneous expositions of a biblical passage.

- The narrative sermon telling a story and commenting on it as it is being told
- The "reference/concordance" sermon, where the preacher quotes a string of biblical verses as proof texts definitely topical preaching style
- The testimonio, where the preacher narrates and interprets theologically an episode from their life.

There was some conflict between these styles, with some of the less educated pastors accusing the more educated style of preaching as void of the power of the Holy Spirit. Crusade evangelism also influenced a popular style of preaching.

Angel Mergal emphasized preaching as an art form. Orlando Costas brought into consideration insights from

speech and mass communication. Other Hispanic writers, namely Osvaldo Mottesi and Cecilio Arrastia, began to interpret preaching with a decidedly Latin outlook.

#### 3. Third Stage: Contextualization

The Hispanic preaching in the last three decades has taken on a distinct contextual or political theology, influenced by the Hispanic social condition and its marginalization. Hispanic preaching takes into account the community and identifies with its suffering and its experiences.

#### 4. The Road Ahead

The Hispanic community has developed a homiletic theory that is centered on function and content, not on traditional sermon design. If Christian preaching is indeed the theological interpretation of life, the aim of Hispanic preaching must then be the theological interpretation of the Latin experience. "Beyond teaching parishioners the rudiments of the Christian faith, the aim of Hispanic preaching must be helping the Latino community to develop and maintain their cultural identity, even as such identity is modified by the experience of living permanently in the United States. The pulpito should also equip the Hispanic community to resist the social manifestations of evil that try to destroy the Latino people through racism, sexism, xenophobia, and classism. In a word, it is our conviction that, through the pulpito, God seeks to empower Hispanics to persevere and prevail in their ...struggle for life."

[My notes: the influences of culture can be seen above in the concern for the community (collectivism) and the perceived power of the pulpit to influence all of society (high power distance).]

Chapter Two: Issues at the Pulpito

Hispanic preachers have been trained in preaching methods that encourages repetition rather than creativity. "Many textbooks for biblical courses tell students what the Bible says, rather than teaching them how to read it with responsibility and creativity. The same is true of many of the textbooks of theology, whose purpose is to teach the student a list of orthodox doctrines, and the arguments to support them, rather than teaching how to think theologically." Homiletics is also often taught in the same manner. The teaching is too objective and does not allow for subjective and personal understandings. Preaching also became too political and not biblical enough – they neglected the "wrestling with a text" that is part of the hermeneutical and preaching process. Hispanic pulpits tend to be dominated by fundamentalists and liberals – neither of which seeks a new word to deliver to their congregations.

Hispanics should see the Bible as a living word, not a dead document. They need the biblical authority and Christian freedom to allow the Bible to speak in a new way to a new situation.

The New Shape of Our Theology

The doctrine of incarnation implies that true Christian theology must be incarnate, it must take flesh in each culture and situation, in each time and circumstance – without denying the central truths of the faith. "Each of us must preach the gospel from our own perspective, and incarnate it in our own situation."

A Theology that Is Ours – theology must be ours without ceasing to be universal.

A Theology of Affirmation – Rather than a theology and preaching that show the hearers their unworthiness. Instead people need biblical messages that lift them up in their estimation of themselves.

A Theology of Solidarity – [A long discussion on the issues of collectivism vs individualism.] "In the New Testament, however, the church is much more than a conglomerate of faithful individuals who gather in order to support and guide each other. The church is the body of Christ. The church is the manner in which Christ exists in the world."

A Theology of Eschatological Subversion – a theology of hope

The Text That Interprets Us – "The reason why we interpret the text of Scripture is that in turn that text interprets us. What is ultimately most important is not what we find in the text, but rather that the text finds us – and even finds us out!"

"When I open the Bible in order to begin preparing a sermon, I fully expect, not just to discover in the text something I had not seen before, but also to see all those around me and myself under a new light. Biblical interpretation is not ultimately about the text, but about the community in which the interpretation takes place, and which in turn is interpreted by the living text."

Other subtitles in the chapter deal with social, economic, and political issues, as well as immigration, exile, and identity. He urges that the pulpit should identify with the suffering of the people and the people in their sufferings.

Chapter Three: The Bible at the Pulpito (written by Pablo A. Jimenez)

A Brief Survey of Hispanic Hermeneutics

Three influential Hispanic theologians in this area:

Virgilio Elizondo, a Mexican American Catholic priest, during his studies in France, came to see Galilee as similar to Texas, a borderland, therefore, "Jesus' life and ministry became an image for the struggles of the Mexican American people who live in the United States. The Mexican-American experience is understood, then, as a modern Galilean journey."

Orlando Costas, taught at Latin American Biblical Seminary in San Jose, Costa Rica. He also saw a correlation between the Hispanic experience in the United States and the Galilean experience of Christ.

Justo L. Gonzalez, an historical theologian, proposed a methodology for reading the Bible in Spanish, and popularized the idea through his book, Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes.

Other theologians also advanced certain concepts:

Fernando Segovia, a Cuban-American Catholic scholar, advanced a "post" colonial reading, that "recognizes that we live in a world shaped by centuries of Anglo-European political and cultural hegemony." "This explains the critical presence of ever increasing minority groups in the United States and Western Europe. It also explains the ethnic struggles in Eastern Europe and Russia. Segovia employs postcolonial theory to interpret the condition of Hispanics in the United States, stating that we live in 'diaspora.' He then establishes a correlation between the Hispanic diaspora and the biblical images of exile, diaspora, and 'otherness.'"

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, a Cuban-American Catholic scholar, emphasizes Hispanic feminism known as Mujerista Theology, searching for the "canon within the canon" approach to biblical hermeneutics, seeking

to get beyond the message enveloped in patriarchal and hierarchical garb.

Gilbert Romero, Mexican-American Catholic, emphasized becoming "Apiru" – a legendary group that revolted in Egypt in 1500's – suggesting that Hispanics should recognize their marginal status in society.

Francisco Garcia-Treto, a Presbyterian biblical scholar, wrote on contemporary Hispanic biblical hermeneutics, emphasizing the "interpretive community" – an interdenominational and intergenerational doing teologia en conjunto (collegial theology).

Harold Recinos wrote on reading the Bible from the perspective of the marginalized, exploring the meaning of the Bible for the Latinos and Latinas who live in the inner city barrios that continue to grow across the United States.

### An Hispanic Hermeneutical Model

- 1. The Bible is a liberating text: "The life and struggles of the Hispanic American community, howsoever defined, have been anticipated in the life and struggles of the people of God in the Bible."
- 2. A "reading of resistance": Hispanic theologians call the Latino community to develop an alternative way of reading the Bible, normally calling into question the present social order in light of the reign of God.
- 3. The eschatological dimension: seen as a radical word of both judgment and hope.

Here is the model that Jimenez proposes:

- 1. Marginalization is the entry point: the first step is pondering the social situation of the Latino people in the United States. The experiences of marginalization, oppression, and discrimination endured by the Latino people serve as the point of entry to the liberating power of the Bible. "This grants Latinos and Latinas a unique access to the "core" of the biblical message."
- 2. Seeking points of contact: With the above-mentioned social analysis at hand, we then read to seek in the Bible different points of contact between the social location of the Hispanic community and the biblical narrative.
- 3. After finding such points of contact, the model calls us to compare the social location of the Latino community and the social location of the Bible. "For example, I read a brief commentary on the dedication of Solomon's temple. After sound historical analysis, the author ended by calling the readers to see their church buildings as places of encounter with God. In this case, the author correlated "temple" with "church building," applying the ancient teachings to the modern edifices. This is the kind of reasoning that prompts preachers to say phrases like: "We are just like the children of Israel in the wilderness" and "Aren't we just like Peter, John, and the rest of the disciples?" To see correspondences of relationship requires further biblical research, using sociological and anthropological analysis. An interpreter looks for the correspondence of relationships when he or she correlates biblical concepts with contemporary ones on the basis of their functions in society. The key question is: Which contemporary situation works in a way similar to the situation we see in this biblical text?"...This biblical reading does not yield formulas to be copied or techniques to be applied. It offers orientations, models, types, directives, and inspiration. The aim of such reading is to give us elements to be used as tools in the interpretation of both our current reality and the possibilities that the future will bring.

4. A key metaphor: Hispanic theology employs different metaphors to communicate the implications of the correlation between the social location of the text and the social location of the Latino community.

Chapter Four: Standing at the Pulpito (Justo Gonzalez)

Preaching as a Communal Event: "Hispanics do not see the sermon as a text, but rather as an event. Just as music written on a pentagram is not music until it is played, so words written in a manuscript do not become a sermon until they are preached. Although usually the manuscript is chronologically prior to the act of preaching, what makes a text be a sermon is not what is written, but rather that it is preached." This event is communal in that it involves the preacher hearing the congregation as he preaches. The congregation is communicating to the preacher that it does or does not recognize the Word of God in the preacher's words. There is a difference between elegance and eloquence. Elegance is the ability to create beautiful language. Eloquence is the ability to communicate with a congregation, a communication that must flow in both directions.

The Practice of Preaching from the Pulpito: The setting and delivery are not peripheral to the sermon, rather they are integral parts. Language, voice, and gesture are not mere adornments, but a constitutive element of the sermon.

Hispanic pastors preach frequently – often three or four times a week to the same congregation. There is hardly a service without preaching. It is also lengthy – forty minutes at a minimum.

The length of the sermon in Latino churches affects both its structure and its preparation. Latino sermons have more digressions, detours in the preaching to consider a related subject. A sermon may often lack clear coherence, taking three of more unrelated themes from a single biblical text. Hispanic preachers tend to be more dramatic than Anglo preachers.

Preaching in a Bicultural Setting: The Hispanic community in the USA is changing, and more and more of the people are becoming more comfortable in English and less in Spanish. Some preaching and singing is in Spanish and some in English. There is a sense though that the Hispanic will never be fully accepted and his last name cannot be ignored, so the Hispanic roots cannot be forgotten.

Class, Gender and Status in the Pulpito: The difference between clergy and laity is less marked. Many testimonies are given in the churches. "The best Hispanic preaching, however, relies on Scripture in a different way. It does not go to the Sacred Book as to a quarry for proof-texts, but rather deals seriously with an entire periscope, asking it to interpret the situation and the calling both of the preacher and congregation." The services consist not only of words and ideas but also of emotion and to the senses, so that all may relate.

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