

PIEDRA VALDEZ, José, S. J., 2012, *La misión andina. La historia de la Palabra encarnada en los Andes*, Lima, Universidad del Pacífico. 232 pp.

In *La misión andina*, the priest and theologian José Piedra provides us with a considerably updated account of the missionary work carried out by the Catholic Church among Andean and Latin American peoples. This subject continues to be relevant, not only for priests, theologians, pastoral workers, and missiologists, but also for those who, from different perspectives and approaches, are continuing to focus on Andean society with its immense cultural and religious wealth, as well as its historical, cultural, and religious processes. The relevance of the book owes much to the author's profound and rigorous research and analysis of the different forms of evangelization and mission carried out throughout Peruvian history from the Conquest up until now.

One of the principal characteristics of the academic and scientific approach applied in *La misión andina* is inter- and intradisciplinarity. Not only is the subject matter approached from historical, theological, and missiological perspectives, but a highly productive and rich dialogue and interaction between these approaches is established. Starting with the anthropological assumption that every culture constitutes a fundamental center for the development of human life, and from whose religious systems human beings approach "the mystery of God," José Piedra situates a social framework in the cultures that should be carefully studied, understood, and respected as the text of every evangelization. Human beings are not only "subjects of faith" but are also "cultural beings" and this constitutes the starting point that faith, in relation to God, is lived and experienced.

This book is divided into four sections. In the first, "Evangelization and Culture after the Second Vatican Council," the author provides the basis of his argument, situating the relationship between evangelization, faith, and culture in the context of the important changes that occurred on the Church's path to this Council. To accomplish this, he reviews the various council and post-council texts and demonstrates how, in the case of the peoples of Latin America and, in particular, the people of the Andean world, contemporary missionary and evangelization work has to start from the anthropological fact of their cultures, in whose framework the Word must be incultured. This, nevertheless, is already historically established, since these are Christian peoples. In this first part, the central idea is the interpretation of the idea of inculturation as "a concrete form of evangelizing cultures" in such a way that the message is transmitted "in the language of the others"\*(p. 50).

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\* All translations in this book review are by *Apuntes*.

In the second and principal part of the book, José Piedra analyzes and applies his approach to the case of "Religion in the Andean World in the Writings of Manual Marzal." In effect, in a meticulous and very detailed way, he provides a historical analysis of the diverse milestones of the evangelization process in the Andean world described and studied by the Jesuit anthropologist. As is well-known, Marzal was one of the most important scholars who worked on the religious transformation of Peru. His contributions to the history of the evangelization of the Andean world are the basis on which Piedra reconstructs the process by which the mission incorporated, little by little, the centrality of Andean culture as the framework of its activities. In Marzal's anthropological perspective, the Andean peoples constructed a form of Christianity that was closely linked with the consecration of nature, the cult of saints or images, community life tied to the festive and celebratory, and to reciprocity, among other characteristics. It is starting from this reality, studied exhaustively by Marzal, that Piedra emphasizes the centrality of the inculturation of the gospel as an indispensable condition for efficient missionary labor founded on respect and appreciation of local cultures. Thus, he considers popular Catholicism as one of the central elements of Andean cultures, whose fundamental aspects had been established by the second half of the 17th century. Current Andean societies have constructed what is fundamental in their cultures and their cultural ethos on this religious base, which should be considered as one of the frameworks for contemporary evangelization. That is to say, what Piedra proposes is to recognize the importance of an intercultural vision that subjugates the vision of a process of inculturation of the gospel in the Andes whereby dialogue with the cultures is what orients the mission. Piedra concludes the second part by noting some of the challenges that Latin American socio-cultural and religious reality presents to inculturation. One of these is the necessity that Andean peoples, as they "develop and live their own cultures, should also question them on the basis of the Gospel and illuminate them by faith in Christ, which reveals not only the mystery of God, but also the mystery of man" (p. 147).

José Piedra dedicates the third part of the book to examining the relation between "Faith and Culture in some of the Writings of Diego Irarrazábal and Gustavo Gutiérrez," both priests and theologians. They contribute their reflections and experiences with the reality of Andean popular religion to the current vision of inculturation developed by José Piedra. For Irarrazábal, known for this pastoral work and his close relationship with the cultural and religious universe of the Aymara in southern Andes in the prelate of Chucuito, Andean culture and religion is very dynamic in the sense that Andeans enter into "a dialogue with what occurs around them [...] since the Andean is part of a process of contemporary conflicts and mutations" (p. 151). José Piedra sees in this aspect of Andean reality "the possibility of thinking about the issue of faith within a changing environment"; this requires, the author tells us, the permanent revision in the modes of "presenting Jesus Christ in pastoral life." On the other hand, the theological reflections about "Spirituality and the Human

Experience in Gustavo Gutiérrez," allows Piedra to access the contributions of Bartolomé de las Casas to evangelization. In the thought of Las Casas, Gutiérrez emphasizes the conception of "God who inhabits in history," that is, God incarnate. Because of this, José Piedra thinks, in Bartolomé de las Casas "there exist clear ideas [...] that [...] now help in proposing the task of transmitting the Gospel in which there is more coherence in the message transmitted, and the mode of communicating it" (p. 177). The author ends this third section by emphasizing the contributions to inculturation that are based on the community experience of Christian reflection, one of the central elements of spirituality proposed by Gutiérrez in his works.

Finally, in the fourth part of the book, José Piedra presents some "Elements for the Study of the Faith in the Andean World." It is necessary, the author says, to further study Andean Christianity, using, in addition to a theological perspective, an approach that integrates various social sciences and the humanities. This is fundamental "in order to clarify and better interpret the experience of faith" (p. 195). This insistence on including disciplines such as anthropology in the study of Christianity becomes clear in the symbolic content of culture, whose discernment and hermeneutics are fundamental keys to understanding the sentiments and knowledge of those who are part of Christianity and believe in it.

This book is a valuable contribution to the study of Andean religious issues, presented with great clarity and, at the same time, full of facts and sources as well as being scientifically and theologically rigorous.

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