

Toward Postcolonial Liturgical Preaching: Drawing on the Pre-Columbian Caribbean Religion of the Taínos

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Abstract: *Postcolonial criticism has made its way into the field of religion mostly in the disciplines of theology and biblical studies. Little has been done to approach liturgics and homiletics from a postcolonial perspective. Building on such initial approaches, this paper recovers the tradition of the Taíno religion—the pre-Columbian religion in the Antilles prior to colonial times—and borrows from it a worldview of “complementary dualities” and a ritual pattern that embraces both conflict and unity. Drawing on the tradition of the Taíno religion and building on the work of postcolonial theologians, this paper proposes a liturgical dynamic that moves the community from spaces of tension to experiences of connectedness in order to alleviate the segregation of colonized and colonizers.*

It seems that little has changed in Christian congregations in the United States since Martin Luther King, Jr., said that, “eleven o’clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of Christian America.”¹ This segregation is part of the aftermath of imperialism and colonization, and their corresponding worldview of opposing and antagonistic binaries that continues to hurt both colonizers and colonized peoples by keeping them divided and engaged in cycles of oppression. Thus, both the colonizers and the colonized need healing and reconciliation from the effects of colonialism. Toward this end, I suggest that postcolonial liturgies and preaching can help us overcome segregation in worship; achieve healing, reconciliation, and complementarity; and find a new way of being in community that truly embodies the unity of the body of Christ and the diversity of its parts.

From a distinctive Caribbean perspective, this paper develops a postcolonial approach to liturgical preaching.² It recovers the tradition of the Taíno religion³—the pre-Columbian religion in the Antilles prior to colonial times—which I suggest can teach us how to decolonize our religious rituals. Borrowing from the Taíno religion a worldview of “complementary dualities” and a ritual pattern that embraces both conflict and unity, in this paper I propose a liturgical dynamic that moves the community from spaces of tension to experiences of connectedness.⁴ In

¹ Martin Luther King, “Communism’s Challenge to Christianity,” sermon delivered on August 9, 1953 in Atlanta, GA.

² The approach that guides this proposal is based on these postcolonial critical perspectives: 1) to expose colonial ideologies, 2) to recover the histories and traditions of the colonized, and 3) to give voice to the previously voiceless. See Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Michael N. Jagessar and Stephen Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives* (London: Oakville, CT: Equinox Pub. Ltd., 2010); and Pablo A. Jiménez, “Toward a Postcolonial Homiletic: Justo L. González’s Contribution to Hispanic Preaching,” in *Hispanic Christian Thought at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 159–67.

³ While scholars contest the term “Taíno,” it has not been effectively substituted and continues to be used to refer (1) to the natives inhabiting most of the Greater Antilles prior to and during the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Western hemisphere, and (2) to their culture. See. José R. Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols: The Web Spun by Taíno Rulers between Hispaniola and Puerto Rico* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 6.

⁴ I am grateful to Cristian De La Rosa and Lucy Atkins Rose who inspired the language of tension and connectedness, respectively.

this postcolonial liturgical process preaching encourages imagination and guides the community in the journey from tension to connectedness.

Drawing on the Taíno Religion to Develop a Postcolonial Liturgy

In my context of origin, Puerto Rico (a territory and colony of the United States), people attend worship as colonized persons, even if most of them live rather unconscious of this fact. Puerto Ricans enter the church building as marginal people because we are colonized, and exist still at the margins—an experience common to most immigrants and racial minorities in the United States. Yet in predominantly Euro-American congregations, most people enjoy white privilege and a concomitant sense of being at the center of society, byproducts of white supremacy and imperialism. The colonial system and its corresponding worldview of opposing and antagonistic binaries together have produced this situation in which colonizers and colonized people worship separately.

Yet in the Taíno culture, a different worldview does not entertain antagonistic dualisms but instead portrays the world in complementary dualities. In this worldview dualities do exist (male/female, night/day, visible/invisible), but instead of excluding one another the worldview considers them to be simultaneously opposing and complementary forces. If we open ourselves to recover the wisdom of this culture that was suppressed by colonization, and if we let it influence our worship rituals, we may find a way to overcome the effects of colonialism that maintains the colonized and the colonizers as opposites of an irreconcilable binary. We may find a way to overcome segregation in worship by reconsidering how our differences or dualities might instead be complementary forces. Let me introduce this Taíno worldview to you through the examples of their religious and political organization, beginning with the Taíno divine pantheon.

Complementary Dualities

The Taíno worldview is one of complementary dualities, as we learn from archaeologist Antonio Stevens-Arroyo. He used the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum*⁵ (coincidence of the opposites) to explain the structure of the *cemí* pantheon.⁶ A *cemí* is a portable religious artifact, made of stone, bone, or wood, “that the Taínos and other natives of the Greater Antilles... regarded as numinous beings and believed to have supernatural, magic powers.”⁷ They are not the mythical beings of primordial times, but the sacred beings pertaining to the here and now who the Taínos believed had the power to affect their real and everyday world.⁸ Stevens-Arroyo identified a pantheon of *cemíes*, which are organized in two dualities of opposites that form four parts of a whole. There is a female and a male principle for the *fruitful order*, which corresponds to the day; and there is a female and male principle for the *reversal order*, which corresponds to the night. This is a total of four principles and each one has a main *cemí* with two helpers,

⁵ *Coincidentia oppositorum* is a Latin phrase that means literally the coincidence of the opposites, in reference to opposite parts that form a whole. It was proposed in 1464 by Nicholas of Cusa but it is a concept that may have a history that goes all the way back to the notion of unity of opposites in pre-Socratic Greek philosophy.

⁶ José R. Oliver, *El Centro Ceremonial de Caguana, Puerto Rico: Simbolismo Iconográfico, Cosmovisión Y El Poderío Caciquil Taíno de Boriquén* (Oxford [England]: Archaeopress, 1998), 110.

⁷ Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*, 3.

⁸ Oliver, *El Centro Ceremonial de Caguana, Puerto Rico*, 110; my translation.

making a total of 12 *cemíes*.⁹ For the Taínos, the number four—two pairs of elements—indicated totality and completeness.¹⁰

In this worldview the opposites coincide to form complementary dualities. As archaeologist José R. Oliver explains, “The Taíno vision is one of a dynamic cosmos, alternating between opposing forces that are simultaneously complementary..., alternation which ultimately was ruled by the numinous powers of *cemíes*.”¹¹ For example, the pair of divine beings known as Atabey-Yúcahu served to show the complementary female-male duality.¹² Another example is Atabey, who has both an angry and a benevolent manifestation that together constitute a balance between destructive and harmonizing forces.¹³ Furthermore, in the religious-political organization, the *cemí* as a category of power from the extraordinary world formed a pair with the Cacique,¹⁴ who was the political and religious leader of the community and the power in the ordinary world. We also see this structure in how the ceremonial space of Caguana in Puerto Rico is divided up. It has ritual spaces at the periphery in which Taínos embodied conflicts through a *batey* and it has a main square at the center to embody unity through an *areyto*.¹⁵ In short, opposites need, constitute, and complement each other.

Attending to this understanding of the world in which the opposites are not supposed to be kept separate but rather brought together to form a whole, it is necessary to bring together colonizers and colonized peoples. This is not only an implication of the Taíno worldview, it is also an imperative from the Gospel in which “there is no longer Jew or Greek, ... slave or free, ... male and female; for all... are one in Christ Jesus.”¹⁶ This is not an easy task given the long history of opposition, oppression, violence, and segregation that afflicts the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized.

The Taíno worldview filtered through the lens of postcolonial theory allows us to draw on the two main Taíno rituals of *areyto* and *batey* and to reclaim their functions in order to propose a way toward postcolonial liturgical preaching. These rituals, to which we now turn our attention, along with the work of theologians and scholars who have used postcolonial theory to enhance the fields of liturgical studies, homiletics, and theology together lead me to propose a postcolonial liturgy in three movements: (1) spaces of tension, (2) journeying imaginatively, and (3) experiences of connectedness.

Spaces of Tension

The first movement of the liturgy, spaces of tension, I illustrate with the Taíno ritual *batey*, a ball game. The Taínos used the same word to refer to the ball, to the game, and to the space or court where they played it. The ceremonial space for the *batey* was located in the periphery of the village, in zones of ecological and topographic transition.¹⁷ According to Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, at the outskirts of some villages there were parks with

⁹ Ibid., 110–111.

¹⁰ Ibid., 112.

¹¹ Ibid., 106; my translation.

¹² Sebastián Robiou Lamarche, *Mitología Y Religión de Los Taínos*, 1st. ed. (San Juan, P.R.: Editorial Punto y Coma, 2006), 5–6.

¹³ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴ Taíno villages could have a male or a female chief. The female term for Cacique is Cacica. For the sake of convenience and space, every time the word Cacique is used, the female Cacica is implied.

¹⁵ Oliver, *El Centro Ceremonial de Caguana, Puerto Rico*, 71.

¹⁶ Galatians 3:28, New Revised Standard Version.

¹⁷ Oliver, *El Centro Ceremonial de Caguana, Puerto Rico*, 101.

seats for people to watch the game. It is possible that each clan or lineage had its own *batey* park.¹⁸ Thus the squares at the periphery served as scattered spaces for confrontation and competition that people embodied and ritualized in the *batey*.

The main functions of the *batey* were to mark moments of transition or disjunction and to provide a mechanism for interaction and coordination between social groups within the community—groups that were unequal or even competitive.¹⁹ Taínos understood the *batey* to be a religious ceremony insofar as they believed the *cemíes* controlled the outcome of the game.²⁰

To develop a liturgical form for today that manifests the function of spaces of tension, I will draw on the work of Caribbean Christian theologian Michael N. Jagessar and liturgical theologian Stephen Burns. In the field of liturgical studies, these theologians approach Christian worship from the perspective of postcolonial theory in order to decolonize rituals. They identify the following postcolonial perspectives: “(i) affirmation of the equal dignity of human beings, (ii) exposure of imperial dynamics at play in culture and politics, unreflective everyday practices as well as carefully and intentionally constructed policies, and (iii) celebration of subaltern wisdom, creativity, and resistance to dominant supposed ‘norms.’”²¹

Jagessar and Burns argue that the liturgical genres that serve as counterparts to each one of these postcolonial perspectives are (i) proclamation, (ii) lament, and (iii) praise, respectively. In addition, they propose that the convergence of postcolonial and liturgical critical perspectives also beckons an invitation to repentance.²²

Jagessar and Burns also identify interruption as a liturgical strategy that builds on the concept of lament in order to generate worship that disturbs and dislodges an imperial agenda. What is novel in Jagessar’s work on interruption is that it brings “different narratives, moods and sources into creative, immediate ‘collision.’”²³ Some concrete ways of doing this in worship include using non-scriptural readings or unexpected music or songs. The authors recommend that anything and everything is a good topic for interruption in the liturgy.

The concepts of interruption and collision seem to describe well what is going on in the *batey*. The *batey* from the Taínos and the lament and invitation to repentance described by Jagessar and Burns provide the raw material for the first movement of the postcolonial liturgy proposed here, that of spaces of tension.

Using the function of the *batey* and liturgical genres identified by Jagessar and Burns, the first movement of the liturgy I am proposing embodies lament and repentance. In this first part of the liturgy the worshipers will bring into the ritual unexpected elements that show the conflicts, violence, collisions, and damaging effects of colonialism in their lives. This is the time to lament racism, segregation, oppression, as well as the privileges that come with an imperial system and that alienate human beings from one another. This is the time to expose imperial dynamics present in culture, society, and politics. This is also the time to repent from any participation in the perpetuation of such systems and its consequences. This liturgical moment recreates scattered places that characterize imperialism. This could be done through prayers of confession, litanies, call and response, and through songs and the telling of stories that show the negative effects of imperialism and colonization in the life of the congregants. However, all these liturgical forms so

¹⁸ Ibid., 102.

¹⁹ Ibid., 100.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship*, 11.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 100.

recognizable to us should be designed in such a way as to achieve interruption as a liturgical strategy. This is the point or place in the liturgy at which worshipers experience confrontation and disjunction or recreate spaces of tension.

Journeying Imaginatively

The second movement of the liturgy, journeying imaginatively, consists of proclamation of liberation through preaching. Since this postcolonial liturgy begins with tension and culminates in connectedness, how do worshipers move from one place to the other? Postcolonial liturgical preaching helps with this move. The sermon should bring together these two places, these two Taíno rituals, these two times. It is a companion in the journey from tension to connectedness. The two-fold role of the sermon is to fund the imagination of the worshipers granting them access to the extraordinary realm, and then to inspire their movement from one place to the other.

Jagessar and Burns tie proclamation to the postcolonial perspective of affirming the equal dignity of human beings. The role of preaching within their proposal, which affirms the dignity of human beings by not colonizing the listeners of the sermon, they borrow from Walter Brueggemann and it consists of “funding” the imagination of a new world. They cite Brueggemann’s words from *Texts under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination*:

It is not, in my judgment the work of the Church (or of the preacher) to construct a full alternative world, for that would be to act preemptively and imperialistically as all those old construals and impositions. Rather, the task is to fund—to provide the pieces, materials and resources out of which a new world can be imagined. Our responsibility, then, is not a grand scheme or a coherent system, but the voicing of a lot of little pieces out of which people can put life together in fresh configurations.²⁴

Feminist theologian Kwok Pui-lan also advocates for the imagination as an important tool in overcoming the impact of colonial systems. In her book *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, the author engages critically with postcolonial thought in order to create a “space to imagine that an alternative world and a different system of knowing are possible.”²⁵ This perspective emphasizes the need for another reality. This reality is born of the imagination that has experienced colonial systems. It is an imagination that does not expand the circle to extend the privileges of the colonizers to the colonized; but rather it is imagination that proposes a completely different reality, a different way of being in the world, and of relating to each other.

In addition to imagination, the postcolonial liturgical preaching I propose requires movement from tension to connectedness. Here, the contributions of Pablo A. Jiménez in the field of homiletics are useful because he proposes a structure for postcolonial sermons that has motion: struggle >> empowerment >> celebration. This motion mirrors the movement of the liturgy I am proposing that uses the liturgical genres identified by Jagessar and Burns: lament and invitation to repentance >> proclamation >> celebration and praise.

The first movement of the sermon proposed by Jiménez is “struggle” because its point of departure is the conflicted reality of the colonized. The preacher first needs to understand the

²⁴ Michael N. Jagessar and Stephen Burns, “Fragments of a Postcolonial Perspective on Christian Worship,” *Worship* 80, no. 5 (September 1, 2006): 430.

²⁵ Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology*, 3.

reality or situation that needs to be transformed. This is the situation of Hispanic/Latin@s²⁶ living in the United States (born in the U.S. or immigrants), a situation characterized by suffering. According to Jiménez, Hispanic/Latin@s are a complex set of subcultures. Though they are both united and divided by language, all of them have experienced the effects of racism, discrimination, and bigotry—the effects of colonialism. The oppressive practices of colonialism are based on the premise that the colonizer is inherently superior to the colonized. Jiménez states, “Colonialism locks both the colonizer and the colonized into a rigid hierarchy of difference.”²⁷ Therefore, decolonization is not just for the benefit of the colonized but also to provide a better world for all human beings.

The second movement of the sermon is “empowerment,” through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jiménez suggests this is important because colonialism taught the colonized to be silent and stay in his or her place. These two notions are in conflict, and require Hispanic theology to address the imperial discourse that renders the colonized as subalterns who cannot speak. To respond to this challenge, Jiménez engages Gayatri Spivak’s question, “Can the subaltern speak?” He summarizes existing answers to this question and adopts the response that affirms that subaltern groups have always found ways to keep their voices through cultural practices and texts, even though the colonial powers disregarded or suppressed these voices. For Jiménez, the subaltern not only can speak but also can preach because of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The third movement of the sermon is “celebration.” Jiménez explains that Hispanic worship is often long and loud because worshipers celebrate having that power of the Holy Spirit; they know that even if imperial powers kill the colonized, there is resurrection. In the difficult contexts in which Hispanic/Latin@s live, Hispanic worship still celebrates God’s mercy and presence among the community. The closing prayer does not end the celebration; the celebration continues as believers go off to their schools, homes, and places of work. Jiménez asserts that Hispanic preaching emphasizes God’s promises to the believers and God’s sustenance in response to our prayers. Through *testimonies* people share how God has responded to their prayers; they share their stories of survival, empowerment, and hope. This eschatological hope affirms that the status quo is not all there is. There is something else, something that the community must build using the prophetic imagination of prophets in the Old Testament and of current theologians, in addition to their own.

This three-fold movement of struggle-empowerment-celebration is found in Latin@ preaching, teaching, and worship. As Jiménez notes, “The person who arrives in utter despair is ushered into this movement, which seeks to help every person face his or her situation, receive the necessary tools to address it, and find joy in the process of struggling for life.”²⁸ According to Jiménez, Hispanics are not the only ones who resonate with and preach in this manner; every person from a persecuted or marginalized group will appreciate this sermonic structure. Indeed, this common approach could help different oppressed groups to build bridges and work together.

The role of the sermon does not end in the worship service. The sermon provides pieces that fund the imagination of the worshipers and inspire them to act. Imagination and inspiration go with them as they face daily cycles of struggle, empowerment, and celebration. The sermon reminds them that they are empowered by the Holy Spirit to imagine and generate different kinds

²⁶ Latin@s is a shorter way to express Latinos and Latinas.

²⁷ *Preaching God’s Fiesta: Toward a Postcolonial Homiletic* (McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL, 2014), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6WmVu357_s&feature=youtube_gdata_player. 17:34-17:46.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 40:20–40:43.

of relationships. The sermon reminds them that they have the power to generate hybridity that leads to connectedness.

Experiences of Connectedness

The third and culminating movement of the liturgy, experiences of connectedness, I illustrate with the *areyto*, a Taíno ceremony of unity and social continuity characterized by synchronized music, song, and dance. Symbolically, it was held in the central square of the village. The songs served as history books for the Taínos, in that they narrated the genealogies of their caciques and their mythologies.²⁹ Fray Ramón Pané describes the *areyto* in these terms:

In fact, just as the Moors, they have their laws gathered in ancient songs, by which they govern themselves, as do the Moors by their scripture. And when they wish to sing their songs, they play a certain instrument that is called *mayohabao*.³⁰ ... To its sound they sing their songs, which they learn by heart, and the principal men play it; they learn to play it as children and to sing with it, according to their custom.³¹

Through storytelling, the *areyto* functioned to foster unity and to celebrate the history of the Taínos.

The *areyto* required synchronization to physically demonstrate unity. The reward of the unity and harmony of the community in the *areyto* was to transcend the ordinary and experience the extraordinary, sometimes under the influence of mind-altering substances.³² The Taínos believed that only under an extraordinary mindset would a person be able to experience and communicate with the extraordinary world. As previously discussed, I propose imagination as the igniter of the extraordinary mindset needed to transcend the ordinary. Transcendence then was experienced via an altered mindset and unity was expressed bodily.

The *areyto* was also a space where different realms converged. Oliver analyzed the structure and dynamics of the symbolic and ceremonial space of Caguana and found that the iconography of the central square followed a cyclic and timeless logic. One half of the central square represents the primal cosmos and the other half the ordinary cosmos. The iconography expresses the Taíno cosmos as one “that is simultaneously constituted by the sacred and the profane, by the visible and the invisible, the primal and remote, and the terrestrial and near.”³³ Hence, the central square serves as a place where the two realms converge and multiple complementary dualities are manifested as one. This should not be surprising, since topologically the central square marked the primordial cosmic axis or vertex—*axis mundi*—through which the numinous forces of the ancestors invoked by the *areytos* were channeled and projected onto the ordinary world.³⁴

The central square was also a space in which different categories of time converged. According to Oliver, the central square was oriented astronomically towards the solstices and

²⁹ Oliver, *El Centro Ceremonial de Caguana, Puerto Rico*, 94–100.

³⁰ This was a particular kind of drum. For a detailed description, see Robiou Lamarche, *Mitología Y Religión de Los Taínos*, 84.

³¹ Ramón Pané, *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians: Chronicles of the New World Encounter*, A new ed. / with an introductory study, notes, and appendixes by José Juan Arrom; translated by Susan C. Griswold (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 20.

³² Oliver, *El Centro Ceremonial de Caguana, Puerto Rico*, 96.

³³ *Ibid.*, 193; my translation.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 99.

equinoxes of the sun, and towards the exit of main constellations. This probably served the function of marking the calendar times. That is how the Taínos measured ecological time, a cyclical non-linear time, and the cycle of eternal return.³⁵ Bordering the central square were the *cemíes*, the sacred images that connected the mythical and the historical times.³⁶ Their position represented mediation between the ordinary space and the extraordinary space, but also mediation between the space below the ground and the space above the ground, thus making both horizontal and vertical connections. Therefore, this ceremonial space served as the point of connection between opposite and complementary times and spaces.

From a postcolonial perspective the coming together of the opposing forces cannot be unified into a whole that merges the different parts making them lose their particularities. Rather, postcolonial theory would identify this space in which opposing forces meet as a hybrid space. Hybridity denotes mutuality and interdependence instead of integration into sameness. It is an in-between-space that allows the coincidence of opposites and difference without assimilation into a “monolithic cultural whole.”³⁷ The exchange between groups in tension when they come together into the hybrid space is not a one-way process in which colonizer subsumes the colonized. The mutuality in the process allows “a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past.”³⁸ The notion of hybridity in postcolonial theory leads to the reframing of the coincidence of opposites of the Taíno worldview.

Besides providing a mechanism for opposing forces to coincide, the *areyto* was a presumptive celebration of the realization of the will of the *cemíes*. The ceremonial practices of the Taínos reflected their understanding, specifically that *batey* and *areyto* complement each other; and they structured the ritual movement from competition to unity, and from discernment to celebration. The pair *batey-areyto* required physical movement from periphery to center via the discovery of the divine will for liberation. The movement culminated by celebrating the *already-acquired* and *yet-to-be* liberation.

That the Taínos used the periphery for discernment and then moved to the center for celebration is illustrated in what is known as the “case of Sotomayor.”³⁹ In this case, a Cacique wanted to kill the colonizer Cristóbal de Sotomayor as a solution to the negative effects of the Spanish colonization. In order to make the decision, he consulted the *cemíes* through a *batey*. The outcome of the game would decide the fate of Sotomayor as well as the fate of the Taínos.

The result of the game was as follows: “It is presumed that victory by one of the baseball teams gave the prerogative of carrying out the act of war and execute Sotomayor, whom the indigenous people perceived not only as an enemy but as representative of harmful forces and unbalancing of the cosmos: the Spanish conquerors.”⁴⁰ The Taínos understood as divine will the idea of killing Sotomayor. Their understanding of the *cemíes*’ support for the task led them to celebrate as if Sotomayor were already dead. Therefore, they moved to the central square and celebrated an *areyto*, telling of the death of Sotomayor as if it had happened, even though they were planning to execute the plan the next day.⁴¹ In such a way an imagined past joined the stories of their past as they celebrated a future event in the present moment allowing past,

³⁵ Robiou Lamarche, *Mitología Y Religión de Los Taínos*, 46–47.

³⁶ Ibid., 76.

³⁷ R. S. (Rasiah S.) Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 249.

³⁸ Bill Ashcroft and Gareth Griffiths, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 183.

³⁹ Oliver, *El Centro Ceremonial de Caguana, Puerto Rico*, 116–118.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 116; my translation.

⁴¹ Ibid., 117.

present, and future to converge. The powers of the Cacique-Cemí ritually accessed the power of the extraordinary realm and in turn the community celebrated this with extreme confidence, as if that liberation were already a reality.

This presumptive celebration echoes the eschatological hope of *Latina Evangélica* theology. From this perspective, eschatology is about the fulfillment of God's vision. The fulfillment of God's vision is not about another place—going to heaven after death or the Second Coming of the Lord. Instead it is about the advent of a new and just order.⁴² The principal elements of the *areyto* of song and dance, that are still present in *Latina Evangélica*'s spirituality and modes of worship, show an intimate joining in a dance of salvation, where salvation is “the coming together of God, humanity, and creation,” not an individualistic decision or an event at the end of times.⁴³ Spatiality takes precedence over temporality in the belief that “God is present in sacred spaces, which continue to be holy throughout time. These spaces are the intersection of divine space and *kairos* with creation. They are border crossings, *eschatos* moments, and places in the midst of us.”⁴⁴ These eschatological moments of convergence of human and Divine may happen at any time and any place. They do not happen exclusively in formal worship. They may happen in the kitchen, in the ladies restroom, or in the laundromat, as we learn from *Latina Evangélica* theology. The final movement of this prophetic postcolonial liturgy is then the celebration of *coincidencia oppositorum*, the coincidence of the divine and the human in the present moment and in a timeless eternal moment, not something to wait for, but rather something to be experienced already now during worship as the Taínos did during the *areytos* and also in other moments in life.

Like the Taíno *areyto* and the eschatological hope of *Latina Evangélicas* theology, celebration is the third postcolonial perspective that Jagessar and Burns address. They tie it to the liturgical genre of praise. In particular, the postcolonial perspective on which they focus celebrates subaltern wisdom, creativity, and resistance to dominant norms.⁴⁵ Celebration of a new order and of the convergence of forces in tension embodies unity in these experiences of connectedness in worship, the unity of the body of Christ. This unity is characterized by hybridity instead of uniformity and comes as a result of reconciliation between colonized and colonizer. This reconciliation generates an experience of connectedness and results in wholeness that arises out of shedding the affliction of colonization and imperialism. The celebration of reconciliation and wholeness is also a celebration of particularity and multiplicity in the experience of connectedness.

Connectedness in this proposal is the effect of the convergence of forces in tension overcoming the spaces that separated them. It builds on the unity sought by the *areyto* filtered through a postcolonial lens resulting in hybridity. It is the coming together of forces in tension generating hybrid experiences in any chronological time and physical space. In these hybrid experiences there is “continual and mutual development of independent” particularities.⁴⁶ As a hybrid experience, connectedness is characterized by mutuality and interdependence.

This culminating movement of the liturgy embodies celebration and praise to demonstrate connectedness. The dynamic of this part of the worship service should be

⁴² Loida I. Martell-Otero, Zaida Maldonado-Pérez, and Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, *Latina Evangélicas: A Theological Survey from the Margins* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2013), 117.

⁴³ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 118.

⁴⁵ Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship*, 11.

⁴⁶ Ashcroft and Griffiths, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 184.

synchronization and conjunction in opposition to the confrontation and disjunction experienced during the first movement of the liturgy. During this part of the liturgy, celebration and praise could take the shape of the celebration of the Eucharist, prayers in unison, affirmations of faith, testimonies, and praise songs, for example.

Conclusion

Drawing on the tradition of the Taíno religion and building on the work of postcolonial theologians, I have developed a postcolonial liturgy in three movements: (1) spaces of tension, consisting of lament and repentance; (2) journeying imaginatively, consisting of proclamation; and (3) experiences of connectedness, consisting of celebration and praise. This liturgical dynamic moves the community from tension to connectedness in order to alleviate the segregation of the colonized and the colonizers.

The liturgy proposed here begins at spaces of tension by naming and engaging the conflict that characterizes colonization and ends in experiences of connectedness by celebrating the convergence of all peoples in Jesus Christ. To move us from the one place to the other, preaching plays a particular role; it funds the imagination of the community and facilitates the journey. These liturgical movements will look different in a Euro-American congregation than in a congregation of immigrants or descendants of colonized social groups, or even than in an intercultural congregation. The hope is for this kind of postcolonial liturgical preaching to provide a mechanism for interaction and coordination between colonized and colonizers, culminating in the imagining and celebration of a new order characterized by connectedness. Perhaps one day Sunday morning will be the time of greatest unity in Christian America. Perhaps one day we will be able to embody in worship that in Christ we are one.