

The Concept of the Divinity in La Luz del Mundo

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ABSTRACT: Very few scholars have studied the theology of La Luz del Mundo. The article explores the concept of God in La Luz del Mundo and how the church approaches the eternal problems of suffering and happiness. It then examines La Luz del Mundo’s vision of Jesus Christ, who is not regarded as “God,” nor as “God the Son,” but is recognized as “the Son of God,” who, through his sacrifice, opened the possibility of salvation, once reserved for the Jews, to the entire humankind.

KEYWORDS: La Luz del Mundo, Light of the World Church, Theology of La Luz del Mundo, Doctrine of La Luz del Mundo, Christology.

Introduction

La Luz del Mundo believes in God as the supreme creator, and believes in Jesus Christ, Son of God. It does not believe in the dogmatic concept of Trinity as defined in the Roman Catholic Church and accepted by several Protestant denominations, nor does it use the Trinitarian formula in its baptisms. For La Luz del Mundo, God and Jesus Christ form the divinity. In this article, I discuss the theological aspects, or the set of doctrinal knowledge, about the divinity in La Luz del Mundo (of which I am a member).

I examine the concept of divinity in La Luz del Mundo by first applying traditional Weberian interpretations of religion. While these contributions are important, I regard Ken Wilber’s approach and his concept of “transcendental sociology” as more useful to understand the theological premises to the notion of divinity in La Luz del Mundo. I will thus briefly review some sociological

concepts, and discuss how they may explain certain principles of the church's theology.

1. Terminology

I refer here to “doctrine” as the set of religious principles related to God, to Jesus Christ, to God's choice of humans for certain roles and positions, and to the aspects that govern the life of the believers in La Luz del Mundo. Besides faith and values, La Luz del Mundo regards the revelation of God as fundamental. For practical purposes, I will not make a distinction between La Luz del Mundo's “doctrine” and La Luz del Mundo's “theology,” the latter being understood as everything related to God and faith in the church.

2. From Weber to Transcendental Sociology

Spanish sociologist Prisciliano Cordero del Castillo states that,

One of the few sociological paradigms that has the general consensus of the majority of sociologists of religion is to consider religion not in its essence, but in its external manifestations, as a social fact (Cordero del Castillo 2001, 239).

By applying this paradigm, La Luz del Mundo is an undeniable “social fact,” yet few, very few scholars have tried to understand its essence, its *raison d'être*, its doctrine. In his traditional work on the sociology of religion, Max Weber (1864–1920) refers to two concepts that are important to understand La Luz del Mundo's notion of God.

The religious interpretation of suffering, as a sign of antipathy to the gods and as a sign of secret guilt, has satisfied, from the psychological point of view, a generalized need. The happy person is rarely satisfied with being so (Weber 1997, 12).

We may add a footnote: in La Luz del Mundo, the happy person is indeed satisfied with being happy. She does not need to know that she has a right to happiness, nor does she understand suffering as a kind of evil inflicted by a God who punishes humans. She is happy because she understands she occupies a place in the divine plan. Unlike Weber, La Luz del Mundo considers that benefits and prosperity are granted by God's intervention, not despite him.

If the general term ‘happiness’ encompasses all the goods of honor, power, possession, and pleasure, this is the most general formula of legitimacy accorded by religion for the benefit of the external and internal interests of all the powerful, owners, triumphant, and healthy. Religion, then, provides happy people with the theodicy of their good fortune (Weber 1997, 12).

Both suffering and happiness are important concepts in Weber’s analysis, yet their respective origin is different. Weber suggests that, when examining a religious faith, we ask the question what is in its view the origin of happiness, and what is the origin of suffering. According to La Luz del Mundo, suffering, in whatever form it may present itself, is a human situation *permitted* by God. Happiness, on the other hand, *has its origin* in God, as every believer is part of the divine plan. Suffering is permitted, while happiness is granted.

The concepts of happiness and suffering, connected with that of the divinity, outline some essential features of La Luz del Mundo. Although they are not “measurable” or “visible” realities, they should not be left out of the conceptual analysis we intend to propose here.

3. *The Supreme Being*

Who, or what, is God? For La Luz del Mundo, God is the Supreme Being *par excellence*. He is the one who has neither beginning nor end or, put another way, the one who is. In the theology of La Luz del Mundo, the reference to Jehovah, the God of Israel, would be the most correct comparison, but not without nuances. Jehovah is to the Jews what God is to La Luz del Mundo; or what Allah is to the Muslim world, God is to this church. Without a name, God is the creator of all things, and the one who provides humans with everything they need. God is spirit (*John* 4:24) and, as the evangelist stated, also requires worship in spirit.

In its theology about God as the creator of the universe, La Luz del Mundo does not share the Darwinian theory of the evolution of the species, nor does it share the Big Bang hypothesis. It believes that the creation of the world was literally carried out according to the narrative in the Book of Genesis. Thus, it also believes that God created Adam from the dust of the earth. After its passage through life, the human body will return to the dust from where it was taken. When God created Adam from the dust of the earth, the book of Genesis tells us that he also blew a “breath of life” (*Genesis* 2:7). For La Luz del Mundo, the

breath of life is the soul, this abstract, intangible entity that, coming from God, allows communication between the human beings and the Creator. When a human life ends, the body returns to the dust of the earth, but the soul, that breath of life that for a time lived in a human body, aspires to eternal life with God and Jesus Christ.

Unlike the God of Israel depicted in the Old Testament, the God of La Luz del Mundo does not drive or promote armed wars, or the conquest of peoples through slaughter. Nor does he promote looting or spoils of war. The “conquest of peoples” mentioned in the Bible is interpreted by La Luz del Mundo in a completely symbolic sense. La Luz del Mundo does practice religious proselytism, but insists that its moral and religious principles should be presented through discernment and rational analysis, avoiding any kind of improper pressure.

La Luz del Mundo believes that the God “who is spirit” mentioned by the evangelist John is the same God who acts today within the church. “He is the God of present actions [...] He is the one who provides all things” (Joaquín García 2017). Unlike the God of Catholicism and other Trinitarian traditions, the God of La Luz del Mundo is regarded as a spirit who cannot be represented in any physical figure. It is the God who walks beside every believer and who “carries him in the hollow of his hand” (Joaquín García 2017). The church member, in turn, believes in the existence of God and trusts him. The believer perceives in the daily life God’s help, care, and protection. Even situations of illness, pain, or sadness are understood by the Luz del Mundo as permitted by the Creator. The believer is called to maintain the faith in God when problems arise. The unbeliever may experience suffering as an opportunity to encounter a loving God.

Members of La Luz del Mundo like to say that they worship God all the time, and that they do so with all their hearts, with all their strength, and above all things (Joaquín García 2017). By having few fixed dates for worship in their calendars, members of La Luz del Mundo understand that at any moment, for any motive or reason, in any circumstance, they serve and recognize God. The present Apostle teaches that the God of La Luz del Mundo is a guarantee of prosperity; with him one never loses (Joaquín García 2017). The believer recognizes in all circumstances the power of the Creator and his work, his action, his intervention.

The God of La Luz del Mundo is also a “jealous God.” He is a God who gives due attention to the believer but also expects exclusive recognition and honor and worship in turn. He only shares the right to be worshiped with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. By sharing this right, God commands believers to worship Jesus Christ as well (*Hebrews* 1:6).

4. Jesus Christ, the Son of God

In the theology of La Luz del Mundo, Jesus Christ is not “God.” Neither is he “God the son.” He is the “son of God.” He is worshipped by commandment of God. Jesus Christ is the origin of all things in God. He is the reason for a divine plan for humankind. La Luz del Mundo quotes *Hebrews* 1:2, “he is the heir of all things, and by him also [God] made the universe.” Jesus Christ is the brightness of God’s glory. He is the highest love (Joaquín García 2017). He is the instrument that God uses to bring to the whole world, not only to Israel, the opportunity of a life after death.

Jesus Christ became the redeemer of the world through his sacrifice. In doing so, he opened the opportunity of an afterlife to all who believe in him. He left behind the monopoly of salvation for Israel, and opened this possibility to every human being. For a believer of La Luz del Mundo, Jesus Christ is “the cause of the march; the beginning and the end of the journey; the alpha and the omega of hope” (Joaquín García 2018).

La Luz del Mundo believes that, since the church was founded in 1926, God and Jesus Christ now act on its behalf. Jesus Christ, though he died on the cross, according to the faith of La Luz del Mundo is found at the right hand of God, enjoying the “glory that [he] had with [God] before the world was” (*John* 17:5). Apostle Naasón shows how these teachings resonate in the present experience of La Luz del Mundo.

Your people were awake [...] this time, Jesus Christ was not alone; this time, an angel did not come to comfort him; this time, we are millions on earth and millions in heaven who worship his name, his love, his surrender, and his sacrifice (Joaquín García 2018).

The relationship of La Luz del Mundo with Jesus Christ is direct. The believers and those who are called to be Apostles adore and worship Jesus Christ (Joaquín García 2018). He is regarded as the church’s advocate before God (*I John* 2:1).

Church members learn that Jesus Christ is the reason and life of believers, and that Jesus' sacrifice for humankind is the greatest sacrifice ever made by any human being (Joaquín García 2015). They are taught that Jesus' sacrifice has not been in vain, as believers in the church now worship Jesus Christ when they know their time has come.

5. The Most Sacred

Divinity is the most sacred reality recognized by La Luz del Mundo. Here, I apply the concept of "sacred things" of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), which is significant insofar as they manifest and exert an influence on society (Durkheim 1984). The life of La Luz del Mundo believers hangs completely from the divinity. They do not believe the statements of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) that divinity is a human-made creation (Feuerbach 2007). For the members of La Luz del Mundo, divinity is an intangible yet undeniable reality.

That divinity, in a secularized world, remains alive and well as the supreme concept of the sacred for a significant number of believers, allows for some theoretical reflections. Religion does not disappear in a secularized world (although it may move into the sphere of private life), since it remains a necessary and legitimizing force for the majority of human beings. Peter Berger (1929–2017) once wrote that humans continue to construct their religious cosmos as an immensely powerful reality (Berger 1975).

I mentioned above Ken Wilber's "transcendental sociology" (Wilber 1983), summarized by Cordero del Castillo in the following terms,

In his new model of sociological analysis, Wilber starts from the premise that the religious fact is linked in an essential way to human nature. Since, when studying different manifestations of the social, we always find human beings as subjects and objects of everything social. But humans are at the same time world (corporeality), mind (consciousness), and spirit (transcendence). Dispensing with some of these dimensions or levels of realization would lead us to fall into a new anthropological reductionism (Cordero del Castillo 2001, 246).

Transcendental sociology is relevant to interpret the relationship La Luz del Mundo maintains with God and Jesus Christ. In the world of faith of La Luz del Mundo, Wilber's three conceptual categories of embodiment, consciousness, and transcendence are manifested and lived every day. Believers use their bodies,

their minds, and their spirit to manifest, in their daily life and in their actions, their faith in God and Jesus Christ. God is the cosmovision of La Luz del Mundo believers.

Final Thoughts

Transcendence beyond this life is at the core of the experience and faith of La Luz del Mundo believers. Transcendence becomes one of the fundamental theological axes that are directly linked to divinity. Without Jesus Christ and his sacrifice, there is no chance of salvation for the believer. Nor could we have been saved without God's plan for humanity.

The notions of God and Jesus Christ of La Luz del Mundo have a central place in its doctrine and theology. However, in order to fully understand La Luz del Mundo, other themes should be examined in future studies, including life after death and how God chooses his representatives and speaks through revelation. Here, further studies will find great and substantial differences between La Luz del Mundo and other faiths.

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