

MISSIOLOGY AND MISSION THEOLOGY

Topic: Trinitarian Themes in Mission to Various Cultures

Convener: Lou McNeil, Georgian Court College

Moderator: Carl Starkloff, SJ, Regis College, Toronto

Presenters: Lily Quintos, RC

Alejandro Garcia-Rivera, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley

Lily Quintos placed her theological perspective in relationship to her Asian Christian experience. She emphasized that since mission is God's activity, Christianity must carefully reexamine the manner in which it has attempted to "reshape" the nations of the world to its cultural preconceptions. This demands a reassessment of what it is that missionaries bring. If earlier soteriology drove the missionary enterprise, what do we understand missionary activity to focus upon today? Quintos suggested that missionaries must offer hope, while penetrating the whole of the human family in ways which do not set one family of cultures in a favored position.

Quintos's presentation was strongly rooted in Pastoral and Mission Theology. She reminded us of the shifts in the paradigms during the past 50 years by which most of us now approach Trinity and Mission. [Mission is no longer seen as the activity of the Church but as God's activity and the Trinity's activity is no longer seen as *ad intra* and *ad extra* but that these are tied together.]

Since World War II, international conferences on mission have reflected more clearly that, as a consequence of our being participants in the *Missio Dei*, we are likewise participants together in a mission. At the Willingen Conference (1952), this compelling insight led theologians to recognize that the very nature of church is missionary and that this reflects the missionary character of the Trinity. Corollaries are that 1) God is active everywhere, long before our arrival as adjuncts of the *missio Dei* and 2) being participants in God's mission means we share a common call prior to our cultural or ecclesial membership.

Alejandro Garcia-Rivera offered this challenge: What happens, if the Creator or a Christian cosmology became the focus of mission theology? In the past mission theology proceeded from either a Christological/ soteriological or a Pneumatological/ecclesiological starting point. Yet, indigenous cultures have always been closely attuned to the cosmic order as "sacred." From this perspective, we can understand culture as not purely a human construct, but a *cosmic chore*. As such, culture is the ground of nature and revelation. Cosmos and cultures are acts, therefore, of *poesis* as much as are the works of Mozart.

Mission also, viewed cosmologically, is *poesis*. Cultures and cosmologies do not simply reflect rational or practical order, but are the poetic acts of the Creator's love. Mission, likewise, is not primarily *theoria* nor *praxis*, but *poesis*. The image which Garcia-Rivera offered for missionary activity was that of the bride and bridegroom whose creative calls and responses of love create bonding.

The discussion was lively among the twenty-four participants. Numerous issues arose: What distinguishes a Christian? Can a Christocentrism adequately deal with multiculturalism? What norms can we hold to as a result of competing cosmologies? What about traditional Christian soteriology? Can we claim a unique Christian cosmology or is it cultural, not theological?

In response to the questions and issues, the presenters asked: What is the "Good News" we proclaim? If other cosmologies focus upon the *telos*, would it still not imply that the judgment be related to the protological, the beginnings?

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