

CHRISTOLOGY

- Topic: "Jesus of Galilee for Culturally Contextualized Theologies
Grounded in the Option for the Poor"
- Convener: Mark F. Fischer, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo
- Moderator: Robert Lassalle-Klein, Holy Names University
- Presenters: Sophia Park, Holy Names University
Michael E. Lee, Fordham University
Jamie Phelps, Xavier University

Robert Lassalle-Klein described the panel as "part of a process leading to a forthcoming volume by an international panel of theologians that will address the significance of the recovery of Jesus of Galilee for communities around the world." The project honors the 30th anniversary of Virgilio Elizondo's *Galilean Journey* (1983) and the 40th anniversary of the Latin American Bishops' conference at Medellín, which affirmed the Church's preferential option for the poor.

The first presenter, Sophia Park, spoke about "Jesus as Border Person in Korean Theology." The term "border person," she said, refers to anyone who blends cultures, who embodies the life of distinct groups, and who achieves a "hybrid identity," establishing a "third space" between two others that are more familiar. Jesus is a border person, Park said, because he stands at the border of humanity and divinity. Those whom he attracted became border people as well, configured to him and standing at the border of their old identity and their new.

Park elaborated this theme with a commentary on John 19:23-30, the passage in which Jesus entrusts his mother to the beloved disciple. Hanging at the border between life and death, Jesus invited the disciple to be a "son" to his mother, and invited her to be a "mother" to him. In Park's reading, the two became something they were not before, namely, members of a family. Once the two were "fragmented" by the loss of Jesus, who was Mary's son and the disciple's master. Now, united by him, they have a new, "hybrid" identity, each occupying a third space, not quite what they were before and not fully what they will be.

The story of Jesus enables Korean immigrants, Park said, to realize among themselves a hybrid identity. Once dislocated by their immersion in the U.S. culture, immigrants who encounter Jesus discover in Christian communities that they, like him, are "border persons." No longer what they were in Korea, not yet fully integrated into their new land, they stand at the border between the two and, in Christ, can become a new family.

"Raised in Jerusalem: A New Galilean Journey in the U.S." was the title of Michael E. Lee's presentation. The title referred to the reception of Elizondo's book by the next generation of U.S. Latino/as. Unlike the "old" Galilean journey of Mexican Americans described in Elizondo's book—a journey to empowerment from marginalization symbolized by "Galilee"—the "new" journey is one of both empowerment for the poor and kenosis for the middle class. Post-immigrant Latino/as are culturally and economically "raised in Jerusalem," i.e.,

a place of privilege, and filled with ambiguities in understanding their religious and cultural heritage.

Lee sketched out the ongoing reception of *Galilean Journey* in three parts. First, he articulated an understanding of the text as a correlational theological exercise best understood under the see-judge-act methodology. Secondly, he defended the text from critics who accuse it of containing anti-Jewish sources and rhetoric, noting both that Jesus is presented within his Jewish milieu, not over-against it, and that Elizondo's three "principles" decry the very exclusion upon which anti-Jewish theology is based. Finally, Lee concluded by grounding the ongoing reception of *Galilean Journey* in dialogue with biblical and Galilean research, but also by enacting the correlational theological methodology for the next generations of U.S. Latino/as—generations whose situation of hybridity and ambiguity are best symbolized by being raised in Jerusalem.

Jamie Phelps, the third presenter, spoke about "Jesus in Black Spirituality and Theology." She began with an analysis of James H. Evans' recent studies of American slave narratives and of Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949), a portrait of slave attitudes toward Jesus. Thurman insisted upon the Jewishness of Jesus who, like the slaves, was a foreigner to gentiles, poor, and oppressed. In Phelps' analysis, Evans and Thurman were prophets of liberation. Their reflections on the African-American experience not only demonstrated the depth of the slaves' faith, but also asked why U.S. churches were impotent to halt racism.

Phelps then turned listeners' attention to the popular music of slaves by drawing upon the work of James H. Cone (*Black Theology and Black Power*, 1969). Influenced by the psalms, slave music was not the music of resignation but an effort to reclaim the slaves' true identity as a people of dignity. The theme of liberation sounded in lyrics such as "Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go," "My Lord delivered Daniel; why can't he deliver me?" and "Lord, help me to hold out until my change has come." Throughout U.S. history, said Phelps, many African Americans have interiorized the worst of the slaveowners' prejudices and have regarded their black skin as a sign of inferior status and slave caste. Christian faith, reflected in slave narratives and music, was a bulwark against prejudice and offered hope for liberation.

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