

CATHOLICITY AND MISSION – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Social Salvation
 Convener: Antonio D. Sison, C.P.P.S., Catholic Theological Union
 Moderator: Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education
 Presenters: Wilson Angelo Espiritu, Ateneo de Manila University
 Leo Guardado, Fordham University
 James Adeoye, Duquesne University

The three presenters in the Catholicity and Mission topic session delivered relevant and engaging papers that meaningfully resonate with our chosen trajectory:

In view of an inclusive, intercultural understanding of Catholicity and Mission, and in solidarity with those who struggle to find a fuller humanity amid the multiform asymmetries in the global Church, the theme of “social salvation” necessarily belongs to contextual theologies where salvation and the liberative quest for human flourishing are mutually inclusive.

For his paper, “Popular Piety and Social Salvation: Lived Soteriology in the Grassroots,” Wilson Angelo Espiritu explored the impassioned popular devotion or *panata* (Tagalog) to Manila’s Black Nazarene and how this is moored in the quest for collective well-being; potentially, this lays down a bridge toward sociopolitical praxis. He spoke of the marriage and human and divine agency within the performative faith of the *panata* as a liberative pathway toward social salvation.

In his presentation, “Social Healing and Salvation in New York City,” Leo Guardado offered an incisive diagnosis of the “incurable violence” wrought by the ecclesiastical exclusion of Latin American Catholic practices rooted in Indigenous cultural wisdom. This forces people to live out their faith in a split-level Catholicism: one in the authorized space of the official church; the other, sublimated in an “unwelcome” space outside the boundaries of what is deemed as authentic salvific expressions. He appealed to Pope Francis’ prophetic-liberating call for the church to be a “field hospital,” a site for the exorcising of present-day analogues of the demonic “legion” (from the synoptic gospel pericopes) and a pathway toward healing for festering social, colonial wounds.

James Adeoye’s presentation, “‘Missionary Spirituality’ in the Light of *Redemptoris Missio*: A Theological Appraisal for a Pluralistic World,” emphasized that an overriding concern for personal salvation in Catholic spirituality falls short of the vision of a missionary church that is responsive to the pluralistic realities of the twenty-first century. Drawing from *Redemptoris Missio* as a critical principle, he reiterated the wisdom of Saint Pope John Paul II who called for witnesses of Christ to be his image-bearers by way of Christic-Orthopathy—“an interior transformation of the human agent of mission into heralds of Christ’s compassion, love, and empathy”—in both intra- and inter-human relationships.

From questions posed by attendees, a lively and thoughtful discussion followed the presentations. Notable questions revolved around the points of “inclusiveness” and

“retrieval” of both biblical and Indigenous wisdom, and how these figure in contextual, inculturated understanding of social salvation, and also in view of the “multiple temporalities” spoken of in the keynote discussions. A fitting epilogue came from Leo Guardado, who spoke dialectically of the need for the church to determine boundaries yet remain cognizant of, and attuned to, the pneumatological movements of a God who is Triune, who cannot be hedged-in by decisions and “management” by human institutions.

ANTONIO D. SISON, C.P.P.S.
Catholic Theological Union
Chicago, Illinois