

CHRIST – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Christology and Social Salvation
 Convener: Mary Kate Holman, Fairfield University
 Moderator: Eugene R. Schlesinger, Santa Clara University
 Presenters: Ligita Ryliškytė, S.J.E., Boston College
 Michael Lee, Fordham University
 Paul Schutz, Santa Clara University

This session consisted of three papers, each approximately twenty minutes long, that explored the convention theme of Social Salvation in connection to Christology, and especially notions and practices of solidarity. The presentations were followed by a lively and substantive question and answer period.

Ligita Ryliškytė, S.J.E., began our session with her paper, “In Solidum Obligari: Without Kenotic Solidarity, No Social Salvation.” Ryliškytė’s paper was developed largely in conversation with the solidaristic practice, rooted in the mystical body of Christ, articulated by M. Shawn Copeland. Ryliškytė traced the emergence of the term “solidarity” in the nineteenth century and its appropriation by the papal magisterium of Leo XII in *Rerum Novarum*. She then turned towards an account of kenosis, a term she noted is not used by Copeland, though its meaning is rather prevalent in her rooting of solidarity in the self-giving love of the Son by the Father to the world for the world’s salvation. The paper challenged Christians to consider the way in which a Christic solidarity at once stands with the victims of the violence of oppression *and* refuses to let go of the victimizers, even while insisting upon their conversion.

Michael Lee’s paper, “Crucified People as Judge: Agency for a Social Salvation,” developed Ignacio Ellacuría’s notion of the crucified people, in light of critiques leveled against this particular notion and also theologies of redemptive violence more generally, by such figures as Delores Williams or Daniel Castillo. Drawing from James H. Cone, Lee noted that certain types of suffering (e.g., Martin Luther King’s, which involved his agency) are easier to account for theologically than others (e.g., Emmett Till’s, where he was deprived of meaningful agency). By articulating Ellacuría’s position in light of the influence of Karl Rahner’s Theology of Symbol, Lee opened a pathway for appropriating the notion while also refusing any valorization of the suffering of the crucified people or endorsing their surrogacy. Christ effects salvation by expressing (symbolizing) it, rather than by suffering, *per se*. The eschatological dimension of the eschatological parable of Matthew 25 helps to preserve us from voyeuristic relationships to suffering, or from underwriting such suffering as a redemptive necessity, and instead helps us to understand that Christ’s agenda is not the crucifixion of the crucified people, but rather their resurrection and the doing of justice.

Finally, Paul Schutz offered his paper, “Love of Christ, Heart of Creation: Salvation as Socioecological Flourishing,” which drew connections between the incarnation, ecological theology, and an evolutionary view of the world. In conversation with Karl Rahner’s evolutionary vision, which posits the hypostatic union as the ultimate overcoming of the matter-spirit binary, and the goal of the cosmos’s emergent history, Schutz articulated an account of “deep incarnation” in which the flesh assumed by the Word is not just humanity but the cosmos itself, issuing finally

in a cosmic divinization. Meanwhile, the works of Ignacio Ellacuría build upon this Rahnerian frame, while moving far more insistently into the realm of praxis. We are called not just to contemplate such realities, but to attend to the death-dealing structures of life, transforming them in light of the reign of God. Schutz noted that the ecological crisis provides a new context for such theological methods and commitments. The cry of the earth is now to be heard as the cry of the poor, and Christians must recognize the love of Christ as the heart of creation, and act accordingly.

The questions that followed in the discussion time were fairly evenly distributed among the participants, and covered a range of issues. The themes of recognition and relationship were prevalent. Several participants pushed the presenters further on critiques of redemptive suffering and any notions of necessity tied to unjust suffering (even the “historical necessity” posited by Ignacio Ellacuría). The limits of forgiveness and the distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation—the latter of which depends upon the wrongdoer’s conversion—also received considerable attention.

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