

METHOD IN THEOLOGY

- Topic: Method and the Situation of Theology
Conveners: M. Shawn Copeland, Marquette University
Terrence Tilley, University of Dayton
Presenter: Roberto S. Goizueta, Loyola University, Chicago
Respondents: María Pilar Aquino, University of San Diego
Gerald Boodoo, Xavier University, New Orleans
Cynthia Crysdale, Catholic University of America

Modernity's sharp break with the classical horizon and the moral failure of its own project, the abrupt emergence of postmodernity, and Christianity's collusion in the domination of oppressed, marginalized, and poor peoples have created an "angular situation" for theology. At the same time, the creative intellectual struggle of theologians from oppressed, marginalized, and poor communities to navigate this "angular situation" has resulted in several important shifts in theological method. The workshop on method grappled with this "angular situation" through a sustained discussion of Roberto Goizueta's work, *Camine-mos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment*.

Goizueta began by highlighting main methodological shifts in his work: the shift from the focus on class (as in Latin American Liberation Theologies) to a focus on culture; the importance of popular Catholicism (often neglected in "mainstream" theologies), especially the crucified Christ and Guadalupe; the place of suffering in popular theology; the reconceptualization of "freedom"; "walking with" others as central to the theological enterprise; and the internalized duality of *mestizaje*.

Aquino discussed key differences from "mainstream" theology in the U.S. Hispanic/Latino theology: the anthropology of the social self, the sense of walking with others, and the openness to other cultures. A reunderstanding of "praxis" has emerged: Praxis as a liberating social act accepts technological reason, and is thus instrumental, that is, radically incomplete. Praxis must be understood as sacramental, empowering, liberating. Instrumental praxis must be corrected and completed by aesthetic praxis as well.

Boodoo's Caribbean perspective presented theology as not a "choice," but an expression of and in the space of confrontation and oppression which we inhabit. Freedom as self-determination is, in this situation, an illusion; the only freedom is resistance to exploitation. Freedom is not a function of hope (which is often carnivalesque), but a possibility only in/out of despair. Appeals to "common human experience" viciously negate the particularities of the human

conditions. Freedom is finally the ability to continue on in our particularities, despite oppression.

Crysdale recognized a number of strengths in beginning form particular social locations and addressed a number of questions about methodological priorities in Goizueta's work, especially the relation of the particular and the universal, the nature of the epistemic privilege of the poor, the criteria for the validity of popular religion, the centrality of "inbetweenness," and the significance of the "preferential option."

The discussion focused on how concepts function to limit our thought and the significance of oppression, especially in doing contextual theologies.

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