

BLACK CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

- Topic: Black Catholic Theologians Across the Generations
 Convener/
 Moderator: Shawnee M. Daniels-Sykes, Mount Mary College, Milwaukee
 Presenters: Lilian Dube-Chirairo, University of San Francisco
 LaReine-Marie Mosely, Loyola University, Chicago
 Diana Hayes, Georgetown University
 Paulinus Odozor, University of Notre Dame

This consultation proposed to examine the musings and work of black Catholic theologians across the generations in a panel comprising of two junior scholars and two senior scholars. The junior scholars, LaReine Marie Mosely and Lilian Dube, responded to these questions: what so far has motivated your theological study and work (i.e., dissertation)? What from your study and experience, are two of the most pressing theological issues for the Church that you are familiar with and how do you hope to contribute to the discussions of these issues? The senior scholars, Diana Hayes and Paulinus Odozor responded to these questions: what has motivated your work so far? What have you been trying to achieve and what do you hope to achieve? Due to illness, Hayes was unable to be physically present for the consultation, but she wrote a reflection/response paper to the questions that was read by the convener, Shawnee M. Daniels-Sykes.

Mosely began the panel discussion by highlighting aspects of her doctoral dissertation, entitled, *Salvation Despite the Death of Jesus? The Cross in the Later Soteriology of Edward Schillebeeckx*, which she defended in April 2008. Drawn to the work of the Flemish theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, who articulated a wide concern for the abuses leveled against the cosmos, Mosely, likewise, wants her theological purview to be wide enough too, as she continues research on suffering humanity and our beleaguered cosmos. Her dissertation developed around the understandings of the cross and salvation in the theologies of Schillebeeckx, Delores S. Williams, and M. Shawn Copeland. With their work, Mosely made applications to suffering in black female life. In the future, Mosely plans to do a pilot study on Black Catholics in Chicago to document the experiences of black Catholics and “used-to-be” black Catholics in order to understand better what it means to be black and Catholic in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Dube, who described herself as a contextual theologian, began her reflections/responses by sharing that her theological journey is shaped by her experiences of growing up a black girl in Southern Rhodesia, Zimbabwe with a post-Vatican II Catholic mission education. Dube noted that her colonial experiences have been shaped by the Catholic Church’s involvement with African Nationalism, traumatic war experiences, the Church’s involvement with those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, post independence injustices, and subsequent immigrant experiences. Her doctoral dissertation was motivated by the pull and push

factors displayed between African Independent Churches (AIC) and the African Catholic Church. The Catholic church's early mission progress was being questioned and reversed by the AIC, as it satiated the African Catholic's genuine quest for 'belonging' and 'longing' to live out the Gospel message in a way that did not alienate them from their African selves. Today as a part of the migrating Church, Dube noted that this quest for 'belonging' and 'longing' continues, pervading the life of African Catholics in the contemporary Diaspora. She proposed that the playing of drums during liturgy, perhaps, would alleviate some of that 'belonging' and 'longing' desire. Her research has not been fixated merely on issues of inculturation on the African continent, but has shifted beyond those borders and onto the migrating Church.

Womanist and black liberation theologian Diana Hayes reflected on her journey from the Protestant Church to the Catholic Church, as well as on her journey from a civil attorney in the state of New York to a full professor of theology at Georgetown University. Hayes stated that she has always been moved by the poor, suffering, and marginalized in our society, indeed in our world. Entering into the field of theology helped to feed that hunger and thirst for social justice and social transformation within her. Her goal is to develop and articulate a black Catholic theology of liberation that is womanist in perspective. As she approaches retirement from active teaching, Hayes hopes to continue lecturing and writing in ways that further opens our eyes to the rich diversity of our Church and US society while also continuing to learn more herself.

Paulinus Odozor's scholarly interests are in foundational issues of moral theology/Christian ethics. Odozor is currently working on a book that explores the question of morality and tradition from an African Christian theological perspective.

A lively forty-minute question, answer, and conversation period followed the panelists' presentations. Truly, this was a wonderful engagement of 'Black Catholic theologians across the generations.'

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