

MORAL THEOLOGY (I)—TOPIC SESSION

- Topic: Theological Voices of Puerto Rico: A People, an Island,  
Their Hopes, and Their Challenge
- Convener: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University at Mesa
- Moderator: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University at Mesa
- Panelists: Teresa Delgado, Iona College  
Jorge Ferrer, S.J., University of Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences  
Campus Luis Rivera-Pagan, Princeton Theological Seminary

The first Moral Theology Topic Session attracted an overflow group of forty-eight attendees. A panel, consisting exclusively of Puerto Rican theologians and ethicists whose work dealt extensively with the island's economic, political, and social dimensions was invited to speak and field questions. Jorge Ferrer, S.J., began with an overview of Puerto Rico's current situation, focusing on its impact on public health. He analyzed possible causes for the present situation, rooted in its political and economic relationship with the United States, political corruption, gross mismanagement of Puerto Rico's finances, and well-intentioned but misguided social programs. He proceeded with ecclesial responses and non-responses to the crisis, and concluded with some theological reflections looking to the future, where the Church would treat social issues more extensively. Luis Rivera-Pagán spoke about having a postcolonial conversation in the context of Puerto Rico, a place whose destiny was always decided in foreign capitals without consulting its people. He followed with a critique of U.S. coloniality toward Puerto Rico, and its features of military power, economic domination, racial hierarchy, cultural arrogance, and its ability to develop consent and admiration on the part of the colonized toward the colonizers. This critique is made more complicated by the way Puerto Ricans have migrated into diaspora societies. All of these vicissitudes enter into the question of Puerto Rican identity. He spoke about the potential for diaspora as a place of liberation, where Puerto Rican identity can be articulated. His presentation concluded with a critical survey of the current state of the conversation between theology and postcolonial studies as a help for Puerto Ricans to understand their situation better. Teresa Delgado used the history of the island of Vieques, ecologically impacted for years by the U.S. Navy's use of the island as a range for military exercises, to illustrate the oppression Puerto Ricans experience and the hope that comes through the process of resistance by "speaking truth to power" through a theology of emancipation.

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