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SUMMARY OF THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS – 1*

Patrick S. Nogoy, S.J.

On the second day of the International Theological Symposium, two round table discussions were held at the LST Cardinal Sin Center in response to the various speeches delivered on the first day of the symposium. The discussion focused on the question "how do we lead and serve through theology in the changing Asian contexts?" Each round table discussion had a moderator. Every panelist was given three minutes to present his/her reaction. A free-flowing discussion among the panelists followed. Afterwards, the floor was opened for the audience to interact with the panelists and also to share their reactions.

First Round Table Discussion on Systematic Theology

Panelists

Dr. Joaquin C. Yap, Jr., S.W., D.Phil. (Moderator)—Professor of

*On the second day of the LST International Theological Symposium held at the Cardinal Sin Center (Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University: March 11, 2016). Statements attributed to the panelists are the author's summaries/paraphrases and not verbatim transcriptions. Thus, the panelists cannot be cited as authors of the statements.

Systematic Theology, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City.

Rev. Albertus Bagus Laksana, S.J., Ph.D.—Professor of Systematic Theology, Wedabhakti Pontifical Faculty of Theology, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta.

Rev. Jose Mario C. Francisco, S.J., Ph.D.—Professor of Systematic Theology, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City; Gregorian University, Rome.

Rev. Jojo M. Fung, S.J., Ph.D.—Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Loyola School of Theology and East Asian Pastoral Institute, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City.

Dr. Patricia Panganiban-Lambino—Assistant Professor, Theology Department, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City.

Mr. Michael J. Liberatore—Assistant Professor, Theology Department, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City.

Rev. Quirico T. Pedregosa, Jr., O.P., Ph.D.—Rector and Professor, University of Santo Tomas Central Seminary, Manila.

Thoughts of Each Panelist

Jojo M. Fung

- Consider the faith in specific contexts like Africa, Oceania, and Asia—with their own rich traditions in mystical cosmology—they are like an "oasis" that can refresh the way we do theology.
- Ours is a Jesuit institution; we should be inspired by GC 34 which stresses the importance of dialogue between faith and culture and listening to the *sensus fidelium.*
- Pope John Paul II's *Redemptor Hominis* 6 acknowledges that the belief of the non-Christian religions is also "the effect of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body." For example, the mystical notion of the earth can lead to cultural conversion and integral ecology. Hence, communicate with the earth, listen to the earth, and respond to the pains of the earth.

Jose Mario C. Francisco

- My hashtag for yesterday's symposium is #LifeTheo—the link between theology and life. How do we strengthen the link? First, we need to take into account the history of religious formation. Current religious formation that includes theological education categories or divisions are products of German theological foundations. The teacher of theology should be self-reflexive, aware of his/her social location. For example, a woman theologian teaching the priesthood would go through the classic questions but bring in a different experience.
- Second, the texts of theology are not walls that divide but windows to God. The Logos is present in and around us. Thus, everything is fair game. There should be an interdisciplinary approach to theology.
- Third, the relationship between pastoral ministry and theology begins with listening to the faith of the people—the *sensus fidelium*. Listening is a skill: how do we listen to and understand the faith of the people? There is a dynamic and dialectical relationship between theology and pastoral ministry; they interact with one another. Kathryn Tanner says that "theology is an ongoing conversation of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus."

Albertus Bagus Laksana

- In the next fifty years in Asia, there is a call to reflect on the category of beauty. The starting point: beauty of Christian life that is inspiring rather than convincing (truth). Beauty helps make Christian life whole in Asia—shrines, festivals, humanitarian movements. Starting point should be *pulchrum*: what makes our Christian life worth living? Examples are the personal testimonies of the speakers in the symposium. It is time to reflect on the new theology of Asia through beauty. It is reason that contemplates on the mysteries of life and God. Thus, we can be an "oasis" in Asia. We stop

in categories of thinking and instead connect to the beauty of life so we can be a more contemplative people. Asian traditions are wisdom traditions, not systems of thinking. They comprise a life force.

Patricia Panganiban-Lambino

- My hashtag is #TeachingfromBooksTeachingfromLife. Where do we draw out theological thoughts? This is a question of theological sources. My professors taught not only from books but also from life. My criticism in learning theology is that we read a few books particularly the classics, and only in part.
- How have we led and served through theology? Cardinal Versaldi mentions that through theology, we found better ways of communicating doctrine, ways that integrate. For Cardinal Quevedo, it is through the theology of dialogue. The testimonials in the symposium tell us that it is from life.
- David Tracy says we theologians are accountable to the wider society, Church, and academy. I wonder how we can develop more accountability to the academy?

Michael J. Liberatore

- Three thoughts come to mind: first, pray over the lessons and not simply teach the lessons. In praying, questions rather than answers are opened. It is a wonder how theologians grapple with these questions.
- Second, commit to a particular place where prophetic witness can spring. Cardinal Versaldi recognizes that service has a particular location. We should witness to the value of social movement, the prophetic spirit awakening in a specific place, in a certain community.
- Third, can we spend time developing a robust lay vocation? Let's move beyond seeing the laity simply as leftovers or non-clerics, but as people possessing a rich vocation that articulates what it means to participate in the Church.

Quirico T. Pedregosa, Jr.

- The connection between leading and serving is more intimate than it appears. We should emphasize serving which is the greatest need of theology. It is serving the transforming life of God. Theology is the science of the love of God.
- Second, notice the powerful impact of testimonies. They are more concrete and experiential. They show how alive the *sensus fidelium* is, declaring the presence of the loving God. Theology in Asia should be a living and life-giving theologizing. Reality is characterized by a surplus of love.
- Third, there is the need for systematic theology that is formative and, if possible, transformative. Pope Francis says, "Go to the peripheries." The call to theologians is to stay close, listen with a heart, and learn from the people with whom we do theology. Pope Francis tells us not to be a "'museum' theologian who gathers data and information on Revelation without, however, really knowing what to do with it."[1] The places of reflection are the peripheries.

Jose Mario C. Francisco

- (To the laywoman and layman): Suppose you are to design the curriculum on the priesthood, what will you say to us today?

Patricia Panganiban-Lambino

- It's something to be in the minority. Being one of the few females in the classes gets attention. A better gender mix in class would help. From a religious education perspective, strengthen homily giving.

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[1]Letter of Pope Francis to the Grand Chancellor of the Pontificia Universidad Catolica Argentina for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the faculty of theology (March 3, 2015), https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150303_lettera-universita-cattolica-argentina.html (accessed March 18, 2016).

Michael J. Liberatore

- Consider how power gets bound up with sacramental responsibility. The faculty given to the priests to administer the sacraments does not necessarily mean they know everything. In the management of the parish, lay people can bring more expertise to the table—like the budget—and transparency can be served more by the lay rather than the priest.
- Theology is taught partially in the classroom. Houses of formation reinforce what is learned in LST. The biggest challenge is how theology can be lived and witnessed in the houses of formation.

Jose Mario C. Francisco

- Religious formation is taken care of by different sectors. There are areas of life to which priests are not privy. There are major aspects of human life to which lay people can contribute.

Quirico T. Pedregosa, Jr.

- The experience and life of the lay are important loci of theologizing in our time. That's why we need to go to the peripheries where God's presence can be articulated more.

Joaquin C. Yap, Jr.

- Classroom discussions vary but in general, lay people have a lot to share, making conversations dynamic and provocative.

Open Forum

Ruben Habito: I see a common theme: we are called to do a theology of life. We should realize that God's people are hurting. In our task as theologians, how does theology connect with the hurts of God's people?

Joaquin Yap: Theologians speak a lot about God but not to God.

Francisco Machado: What worries me is the quality against the quantity: too many courses but very little time for reflection. And homilies are not central in studies and formation.

Jojo Fung (responding to the question on the mysticism of the earth): Mysticism has to do with the web of relationships with the seen and unseen. God is everywhere and in everyone. Connect with the earth, hear the cries and joys of the earth. Mysticism is the door that opens us to the beyond—God. One experiences it as fullness of life.

Albertus Bagus Laksana: We have to test the avenues and how they connect with the lives of the people. We have to be attuned to the culture, which is fluid. We have to differentiate the sociological aspect from the theological aspect. We have to be creative; there are no easy answers to the questions.

Jose Mario Francisco: When we speak of inculturation, we must be careful in talking about pure Gospel. Christianity is incarnate. Faith and culture are dynamic.

Patricia Panganiban-Lambino: Theologians offer different principles or frameworks for inculturation.

Jose Mario Francisco (commenting on pedagogy): On one extreme, we have a dry, academic, and technical lecture, and on the other extreme, we have a theology class that is like a recollection. How do we locate ourselves, both theologically and pedagogically?

Quirico Pedregosa: There is no concrete formula. Our approach should be integrative. The Gospel is not about something but about Someone who loves us. We should not make people know theoretically but make them experience.

Kristiono Puspo: How deep is the reflection? We should lead and teach students how to reflect.

James Kroeger: Cardinal Quevedo mentions the need for a road map and our roles. The informative/intellectual (the roadmap) and the transformative—both have to be there.

Grace Marquez: In the effort to marry book and life theologies, is there a possibility to include family life and human stages of development in the curriculum?

Second Round Table Discussion on Spirituality & Biblical Theology

Panelists

Rev. Arnel dC. Aquino, S.J., S.T.D. (Moderator)—Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City.

Rev. Samuel H. Canilang, C.M.F., S.T.D.—Director and Professor, Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia, Quezon City.

Rev. Arthur Leger, S.J., Ph.D.—Director and Professor, East Asian Pastoral Institute, Quezon City.

Dr. Melba P. Maggay, Ph.D.—Founder and Director, Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture, Quezon City.

Dr. Carmen M. Scheuerman, Ph.D.—Assistant Professor, Union Theological Seminary, Dasmariñas, Cavite.

Dr. Niceta M. Vargas, O.S.A., Ph.D.—Assistant Professor of Biblical Theology, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City.

Dr. Federico G. Villanueva, Jr., Ph.D.—Lecturer, Asian Graduate School of Theology; Assistant Professor of Biblical Theology, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City.

Thoughts of Each Panelist

Melba P. Maggay

- It is important not to debunk formal theology. But we have to think theologically from historical experiences. We need to have a social consensus, for example, on martial law. The work of theology is to provide a theological understanding

of our experience and tell us what is wrong. It is to look at the truth through the lens of God.
- We must heed the call to be prophets and mystics. We have "to be in the world but not of the world." What is the shape of the Kingdom in the Filipino-Asian context? How should it look like from the perspective of Asian theologians?
- We should develop a hermeneutical community composed of social scientists and theologians because theologians tend to think in the abstract.

Carmen M. Scheuerman

- How does one make meaning in theology? We make meaning when we do, create, live, and embody theology. The testimonies of the symposium speakers remind us of our theological quest. At the end of the day, we are human beings confronted with the realities of life. Theology cannot be divorced from the life of the people.
- Has our theological formation mediated theological learning? Has our method touched the lives of the people? Has our theological formation changed the theological grammar that frames your service and leadership?
- When we do our theology, there is something in our bodies that reflects the *imago Dei*.
- We need to create theologies from our authentic identities. We need Christian educators who can teach the Filipino and Asian way of learning.

Niceta M. Vargas

- Why is it that in the curriculum we divide theology and spirituality? We start with the lived experience, with the love of God, and then reflect (do theology). Doing theology leads to humility and to love of God and neighbor. Studying theology is in view of the love of God. It is about humility so as to live in truth.
- To pay attention is the beginning of prayer. Theology as prayer becomes an encounter with Someone, leading to love of God and neighbor. Cardinal Versaldi mentions that

"careful, patient, and deliberate attention to the thoughts of others cultivates the capacity in loving God," and "it is desirable that theologians are persons of prayer." Doing theology is learning how to listen. Study is learning how to listen.

- In my experience of studying the Scriptures, it is about listening, waiting, begging. Doing theology is seeking Jesus.

Federico G. Villanueva, Jr.

- What is the purpose of the study of the Scriptures? We study the Scriptures to serve the Church and the world. How do we make this a reality?

  1. First, through prayer. And we should pray for each other. Biblical theologians don't talk to each other. Can we be more welcoming?

  2. Second, collaboration between bishops and theologians. In actual practice, bishops and pastors don't work closely with theologians. There has been a dichotomy imported from the West; but Filipinos see things holistically. It is the people of God that suffers from the dichotomy.

Samuel H. Canilang

- On the figure of theologian in the Asian context: it is desirable that theologians are persons of prayer. In the Asian context, witness of life is important in transmitting the faith. Asian peoples are not moved by doctrine, logic, or authority. The transforming experience of God becomes their primary source of doing theology.
- On ecclesial communion: there is unity of different forms of discipleship. We are *Christi fideles*.

Arthur Leger

- On spirituality and theories of leadership: theology is inadequate for leadership today in the Church. We need to dialogue with secular disciplines to avoid continuing Church problems.

- Bernard Lonergan asks: how do we make theology dialogue with sciences? Our categories and pedagogy are European and until we move away from this mental framework, we will not be able to make sense in the Asian context. I am proposing a new pedagogy of theology. Unless we change the pedagogy, there will be a disjunction between the classroom and the reality outside the classroom. Faith-seeking-understanding is a European-Greek category. It is inadequate, especially in Bloom's taxonomy of education. Michael Amaladoss, S.J., uses faith-seeking-transformation for conversion. The end of theology is the transformation of the person.

Open Forum

Walter Ysaac: The image of God is in everybody. It comes alive when you pray, when you do theology. Talk to God. Everybody becomes a mystic.

Jun-G Bargayo: There is need for theological reflections on issues affecting our people, especially in Mindanao. How do we address people who criticize us?

Carmen Scheuerman: The problem is the posture that Christianity is the religion with answers to all. When we work in a particular place, we should not monopolize the power of transformation. Keep an open space and look into the "diwa" (spirit) of "kapwa" (fellow)—look into the practices of the people and learn from them.

Melba Maggay: We live in a pluralistic world where Christianity no longer monopolizes space. Understand religion in terms of our spiritualities. The language of the defense of the faith presupposes boundaries but we have to realize that maybe those boundaries are superficial. We are inheritors of dualism: sacred-secular. It is important to apprehend the reality of pluralism and see where the boundaries are shifting. Asian Christians are not interested in having boundaries but in direction or movement. I can be a fellow traveler of anybody who is a follower of Christ. The problem is that religion has become

boundary-keeping, which we inherited from the West. Let us begin with our spirituality, like Carmen who begins with her Aeta heritage. Who are actually shaping us?

Jeffrey Scheuerman: Have we walked with those whom we bring Christ to? Have we danced with the people we're working with? Pope Francis dances with the poor. Have we danced with the poor?

Arthur Leger: Jesus' pedagogy is story-telling (narrative teaching). In the old classroom pedagogy, the teachers fill up students with knowledge. In the new pedagogy, the teachers facilitate leaning. The students have the knowledge; the teachers bring it out. The students have the wisdom; the teachers draw it out of the students and they celebrate as a community.

Carmen Scheuerman: We do weaving. We cannot remove the Christianity from us, but culture is also in us. How do we weave the two together? Since Christianity has transformed our culture, we need to look at our concept of God in two ways: from Christianity's standpoint and also from our cultural perspective.

Niceta Vargas: Use dialogue as pedagogy. For example, in the process of exchanging ideas, theses grow. This is a question of humility, openness, and growth—create a place for discovering oneself and listening.

Melba Maggay: Most Western cultures learn with the left brain, which is linear, logical, abstract. Theology in the West is mostly abstract and compartmentalized. It is important to recognize this. Whereas Asian cultures are dominantly right-brained: intuitive. The aim is to learn more with the right brain: e.g., through songs, narratives. It is the music in our souls that will carry us from our deathbed to the afterlife.

Carmen Scheuerman: My suggestion is to gather families, look at their best practices, and bring an educator to learn from them and make a module for the classroom. We need to listen to them and their great practices.

Federico Villanueva: We should allow the negative things to find a place. "God is good all the time," but not all can identify with it. It's

okay not to be okay; there is room for that in prayer. Many times our testimonies are all positive. I hope we can also have communal lament.

Niceta Vargas: For every module we made in the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) textbooks, there was a family activity. Also, the homilies we give should be inspiring for the people.

Summary

The purpose of this summary is to present some common themes arising from the panel discussions. In the first round table discussion, the conversation revolved around the impact of the *sensus fidelium* in helping articulate "new theologies" in Asia. *Sensus fidelium* refers to the faith of the people. This faith is a "life force" interacting with culture. Here, specific avenues of doing theology surfaced. For example, Jojo Fung, S.J., points to the importance of mysticism in creating intimate relationships with the earth. He defines cosmic mysticism as the "web of relationships with the seen and unseen," and as the "door that opens us to the beyond." This particular type of doing theology deals with cultural conversion and integral ecology. Pope Francis released *Laudato Si'*, an encyclical calling for deeper engagement and care for creation. In Fr. Fung's example, this care for creation is contextualized in cosmic mysticism.

Jose Mario Francisco, S.J., emphasizes the need for listening. Taking a cue from Kathryn Tanner who insists that "theology has to be engaged in negotiations with popular theologies,"[2] Fr. Francisco sees theology as an "ongoing conversation of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus." Such conversion requires listening especially to the *sensus fidelium*. Michael Liberatore deepens the notion of *sensus fidelium* by pointing out the importance of the commitment to a particular place where prophetic witness can spring. He draws from the insight of Cardinal Versaldi who recognizes that service has a particular location.

[2]Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 85.

Therefore, we should witness to the value of movement and be sensitive to the prophetic spirit awakening in a specific place. This includes a deliberate development of robust lay vocation, which is a rich calling, articulating the meaning of participation in the life of the Church.

Another theme that came up in the discussion was the link between theology and life. Albertus Bagus Laksana, S.J., points to beauty as the starting point of theology since beauty communicates life rather than doctrines. The personal testimonies given by the speakers on the first day of the symposium are powerful examples of what Christian life means. Fr. Laksana notes that beauty "helps make Christian life whole in Asia—[with its] shrines, festivals, [and] humanitarian movements." Perhaps the important theological question is: "what makes our Christian life worth living?" Quirico Pedrosa, O.P., thinks along similar lines when he mentions that the testimonies in the symposium were powerful reminders of how alive the *sensus fidelium* is when people speak about the presence of the loving God. He opines that theology in Asia should be a living and life-giving theologizing since the reality is characterized by a surplus of love. Patricia Panganiban-Lambino and Jose Mario Francisco, S.J., question whether our sources of theology are close to, or divorced from, life. Panganiban-Lambino notes that her professors taught not only from books but also from life, while Francisco highlights how the texts of theology are windows to God and not walls that divide.

Spirituality affects and animates the *sensus fidelium*. Whether it is about pedagogy or methods of inculturation, listening to the various movements of the one Spirit found in the various ways of Christian living is an indispensable tool in forming the relevant frameworks of doing theology. Here we encounter the old adage that a good theologian is the one who prays and the one who prays is a good theologian. In the second round table discussion, Niceta Vargas, O.S.A., and Federico Villanueva reiterate the value of prayer in studying the Scriptures. Vargas reminds us that in prayer, one waits, begs, and becomes humble in letting the text speak to him or her. Villanueva sees the importance of biblical theologians praying for one another and talking with one another, since they work individually most of

the time. Furthermore, he notes that prayer leads to a transformative experience. Samuel Canilang, C.M.F., says that "it is desirable that theologians are persons of prayer. In the Asian context, witness of life is important in transmitting the faith. Asian peoples are not moved by doctrine, logic, or authority. The transforming experience of God becomes their primary source of doing theology."

Doing theology opens up the question of pedagogy, which became a crucial point of discussion among some of the panelists. Carmen Scheuerman, a Methodist educator, notes that the testimonies remind us of our "theological quest" and manner of meaning-making. Our human context makes theology integral in our life and is enriched by our different realities. In terms of pedagogy, she raises crucial questions: "[How has] our theological formation mediated theological learning? Has our method touched the lives of the people? Has our theological formation changed the theological grammar that frames [our] service and leadership?" Melba Maggay vouches for a "hermeneutical community" composed of theologians, social scientists, etc. This will make the study of theology more holistic and relevant to the situation of the people. Arthur Leger, S.J., proposes a new pedagogy that moves away from the prevailing European mental framework. This new pedagogy underlines the role of the teacher as facilitator of wisdom or knowledge among students in order to bring out a more contextual theology. He cautions that unless we change the pedagogy, there will be a disjunction between the classroom and the reality outside of the classroom.

An important *locus theologicus*, especially in Filipino culture, is the family. Grace Marquez, a counselor of the Center for Family Ministries (CEFAM), suggests the inclusion of family and human development studies in seminary formation. Scheuerman presents the idea of gathering the "best practices" from select families and arranging them into a teaching module, while Vargas notes the inclusion of a parent-child activity in the CEAP education module. Villanueva points out the importance of allowing negative experiences to find their place in prayer and theology. He notes that there is very little room

for negative experiences in the Church, and that our testimonies are oftentimes positive.

These common themes that arose from the round table discussions have enriched the speeches and testimonies in the International Theological Symposium. They also open new avenues for further reflection on the sources, issues, and pedagogy of theology. Although there may be limitations to what can be achieved in reinventing and applying theology to various contexts, these themes may reflect the signs of the times. In its effort to lead and serve through theology, the Loyola School of Theology tries to be sensitive to the movement of the Spirit. In the words of Melba Maggay: "We must heed the call to be prophets and mystics. We have 'to be in the world but not of the world.' What is the shape of the Kingdom in the Filipino-Asian context? How should it look like from the perspective of Asian theologians [and not elsewhere]?"