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SUMMARY OF THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS – 2*

Sherwin Q. Santos

The round table discussion focused on the question "how do we lead and serve through theology in changing Asian contexts?" There were two sets of panelists chosen from a wide range of competencies, and each set had a moderator. The panelists were given three minutes each to present his or her views. A free-flowing discussion among the panelists then followed. Afterwards, an open forum allowed the audience to engage the panelists in a conversation and also to share their own reactions.

First Round Table Discussion on Systematic Theology

Panelists

Dr. Joaquin C. Yap, Jr., S.W., D.Phil. (Moderator)—Professor of Systematic Theology, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City.

*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.

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

- Fr. Jojo began by stating that it would be good for the Loyola School of Theology (LST) to consider not only *fides quaerens intellectum* but also to engage the faith and explain what God is saying to God's people of various cultures and religions. There is a need to engage the different contexts of Africa, Asia, and Oceania.
- In the next fifty years, we should consider ourselves as an oasis into which many springs from other religions flow, so that they would seep into the way we are doing theology.
- As a Jesuit institution, we are to be guided by GC 34, decree 4, no. 17 (dialogue with culture) and by GC 35 (depth in theological reflection).
- According to John Paul II's *Redemptor hominis*, God works in different religions.
- Forming others must include what Fr. Jojo calls a mystical sense of the earth. There should be an ecological conversion.

Jose Mario C. Francisco

- Fr. Mario summarized the symposium of March 10 as "Life-Theo."
- He asked the following questions: How can we strengthen the link between life and theology? How is theological knowledge produced and who produces it? He commented that there has been a division in the structure of studying theology that is an influence of the German approach to theology.
- Suggestions:

  1. The teacher of theology must be self-reflective.

  2. The matter of theology is the text. However, texts should not be walls that divide but rather windows into life. There is a call for an interdisciplinary approach.

  3. Theology and pastoral ministry—this is not only applying what we learned in theology in the pastoral ministry. What is needed is to listen to the faith of the people before trying to purify and deepen the faith of the people.

- A good description of what theology is about is that it is an on-going conversation on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Albertus Bagus Laksana

- Truth, goodness, and beauty are some of the categories of thinking that were presented yesterday. Perhaps it is necessary to reflect more on the category of beauty.
- Proclamation is presenting the Gospel in a more inspiring (beauty) rather than more convincing (truth) way, that is, relating the beauty of our Christian life. Non-Christians go to our shrines and participate in our rituals and humanitarian activities but they do not go to schools of theology.
- The new theology of beauty contemplates the mystery of God. It is not discursive but contemplative.

- We can be an oasis of this kind of life; life somehow makes sense despite the frailties and failures; it makes sense to be a Christian.

Patricia Panganiban-Lambino

- Hashtag: teaching from books and teaching from life.
- This is not just a question of pedagogy but a question of theological sources.
- Patricia's experience as a student in LST is that the professors taught from life. However, her criticism is that they read too few books, and not even entire books. Can we read the classics?
- How have we taught and served after Vatican II? Quoting Cardinal Versaldi, she said that we have to find ways to communicate the doctrine. Cardinal Quevedo's answer is that we serve through the promotion of a theology of dialogue. From the testimonies of speakers at the Symposium, it was experiences and fruits of faith seeking understanding.
- The theologian is responsible to society, academy, and church. How are we accountable to the academy?

Michael J. Liberatore

- What is the role of theology in the life of the theologian? His suggestion is to stop teaching the lessons and start praying the lessons, that is, to lead the students to pray. In many cases, questions are more important than giving answers.
- Commitment to a particular place from which the prophetic witness would be able to spring.
- Some of the challenges: how do we evangelize a cleric-centric church to become a more robust lay church?

Quirico T. Pedregosa, Jr.

- The connection between leading and serving is more intimate. In Jesus' ministry, serving is the essence of leading. We have to emphasize more serving than leading—not only

knowledge of God (*scientia dei*) but signs of the love of God (*signa dei amoris*).
- The testimonies had more impact on us because they were concrete and experiential.
- What we need is a theology that is not only informative but also formative and transformative.
- We need local or contextualized theology in Asia.
- To theologize is to communicate God's love to the peripheries. To understand theology is to understand that God is love. The call of Pope Francis to the theologians of Argentina: do not go for desktop theology. Do not be museum theologians.

Open Forum

Jojo Fung (to Panganiban-Lambino and Liberatore): If lay people were to teach the course on the priesthood, what would you tell us about the way we are forming priests today?

Patricia Panganiban-Lambino: My experience of going through formation alongside those being trained to be priests was that I was treated as a minority. There was no ill intent but there should be a better mix of seminarians and lay persons in a class. From a religious education perspective, we need to understand and appropriate. The latter task needs to be strengthened.

Michael Liberatore: The priest's power is tied to the sacraments. The sacramental role of the priest does not give him knowledge of everything. Lay people can bring something to the table; for example, the parish budget. Second, the houses of formation are supposed to be partners with LST. Theology should be taught in the classroom and witnessed to in the house of formation.

Jose Mario Francisco: Liberatore's last comment is true. The religious houses are important in formation and the study of theology. The role of lay people as theologians is also very important. For example, lay people have more experience of marriage, family life, the reality of death, etc. Religious could learn from their stories.

Quirico Pedregosa: We have to respect the sociology of social process. The experiences and the life story of the lay are important loci in theology. Therefore, we have to go to the peripheries.

Joaquin Yap: In my experience as a teacher in LST, the classroom discussion varies from class to class. Lay people, especially women, have a lot to share. Seminarians tend to be more sheltered.

Ruben Habito: I like what you said: there's a need to connect theology with life—[following through on Fr. Quirico's comment, Ruben asks] for whom are we doing theology? We should realize that people are suffering. As we speak, children are dying of hunger. There are cases of suicide in the Ateneo. The earth is facing destruction. The task that I am offering is this: how is our theology informed by these hurts?

Joaquin Yap: Quoting John Paul II: "you theologians speak of God, but you do not speak to God."

Francisco Machado: What worries me is the quality and the quantity, the amount of courses versus depth and dialogue, the number of subjects versus the time for reflection. I don't think it works. Homily seems to be not given much attention in formation, yet it is important to the people because it is their source of knowledge of Church teaching and their daily contact with their priest. Question for Fr. Jojo Fung: what do you mean by mysticism of the earth?

Jojo Fung: Mysticism is relationship with the seen and the unseen. It is like a door that opens us to the beyond, which is God. God is everywhere, ready to be discovered. Does LST have a meeting with the formators, and listen to each other's concerns? How do we form people?

Albertus Bagus Laksana: We have to test all those avenues and see how they connect with the real life of the people. We have to be attuned to the development of culture within our own situation or context. We need to differentiate the sociological aspect and the religious context. Culture is not dead: it thrives and develops, especially with the young who have a sub-culture of their own.

Jose Mario Francisco: When we speak of inculturation we must be careful in speaking of the Gospel as pure Gospel, or of Christianity as pure Christianity. The process is dynamic and it should move both ways.

Patricia Panganiban-Lambino: There is no a priori answer to how far we can go with inculturation. Theologians offer various suggestions. Some endorse creative fidelity, while others call for authenticity. These are attempts to explicate a balancing act.

Jose Mario Francisco: There is one question that needs to be answered: is theology dry and boring, or is it reflective and inspiring, like a recollection? It is important to locate ourselves where we are, pedagogically or theologically.

Quirico Pedregosa: There should be integration with life. All of theology should be integrated and connected with life. The Gospel is not about something but about Someone. Teachers of theology are more appreciated when they share their experience.

Kristiono Puspo: The real situation is that priests are working hard and often they do not have time to reflect. In LST, the people in formation have more time and resources. Therefore, they should be led to do deeper reflection.

James Kroeger: Witnessing and testimonies moved us most deeply. Some of the questions were in Quevedo's talk yesterday: where must we go, where are the peripheries? We need a roadmap where we are going and we are going to go there. The informative/intellectual (the roadmap) has to be there. The transformative aspect forms us. There should also be the performative dimension that should tell us what we are supposed to do.

Grace Marquez: How are we to marry "book-theology" with "life-theology"? Is it possible to include family life and stages of development in the seminary formation?

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

- What does it mean to put what we have heard on the ground? There is no need to debunk the need for formal theology. We need theological reflection alongside our experiences. Theologians need help from lay people who think historically to think theologically. If not, history will also go down the drain. A theologian could provide a theological understanding of what happened to us.
- It is important to heed the call to be prophet and mystic. One needs to be in the world and not of the world. What is

the shape of the Kingdom in the Philippine context? With the evangelicals, there is a difficult attempt to bring back the social dimension of the Gospel. We need to develop a hermeneutical community (theologians and social scientists) because theologians tend to think in the abstract.

Carmen M. Scheuerman

- How does one make meaning in theology? It is when we create, live, and embody theology that is based on your context. Theology should not be divorced from the daily life of the people. It should not be separate from our identity. We need to create theology from our authentic identity.
- How is the theological formation of the students mediated though their everyday life? How is the theological teaching mediated through everyday life? The suggestion is to listen to our students. Do students have spiritual directors who can listen to them? How are students transformed?
- How has theological education changed the theological grammar and conversation that bring people to service and leadership? Is *damayan* and *malasakit* learned from the study of theology or is it already imbedded in the psyche of a person?
- I am surprised that there were no Christian educators invited to yesterday's symposium.

Niceta M. Vargas

- See what a woman theologian can offer.
- What does doing theology mean? Doing theology for me should lead to humility and the love of God. Simone Weil said that studying is "in view of the love of God."[1] It is about humility so as to live in truth. To study theology is to

[1]Simone Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God," https://www.scribd.com/doc/230812218/Weil-Simone-Reflections-on-the-Right-Use-of-School-Studies-With-a-View-to-the-Love-of-God (accessed March 8, 2016).

pay attention. To pay attention is the beginning of prayer, leading to an encounter, leading to a love of God, to love of neighbor.

- [Quoting Versaldi:] "Integral to the spirituality of the theologian are: a love of truth, a readiness for conversion of heart and mind, a striving for holiness, and a commitment to ecclesial communion and mission."[2] It is thus desirable that theologians are persons of prayer.
- Doing theology is learning how to listen. According to Timothy Radcliffe, studying is not learning to be clever but listening. We wait upon the Lord, and so we are led to what he may give us; we wait with intelligent receptivity to what will be given. Listening, waiting, begging.
- What do you seek? Whom do you seek? Doing theology is the spirituality of seeking Jesus. The story of Jesus becomes my story. Therefore, doing theology leads to sanctity.

Federico G. Villanueva, Jr.

- The main theme of the conference: what is the purpose of doing theology? What is the purpose of studying the Scripture? Versaldi's answer is: to serve the Church. Theologians are sons and daughters of the Church.
- How do you make this into reality? I would like to share three things. First, it is prayer; it is acknowledging our dependence on God and praying with one another.
- Second, there should be a fruitful collaboration between the bishops and the theologians. Biblical scholars should work closely with the pastors. The people of God suffer as a result of this dichotomy.
- Third, according to St. Bernard of Clairvaux, "there are those who seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge—that is called curiosity. There are those who seek it to be known

[2]Cf. Giuseppe Cardinal Versaldi, "Leading and Serving through Theology: 50 Years After Vatican II," *Landas* 30:1 (2016): 21–22.

by others—that is called vanity. And there are those who seek it in order to serve—that is love."[3]

Samuel H. Canilang

- The first point is the figure of the Asian theologian. A theologian is a person who truly prays. A person who truly prays is a theologian. For Asians, witness of life is of utmost importance. Asian people are not moved by power positions or authority. Asians will follow Jesus if they find Jesus in their disciples.
- Second point: the testimonies of yesterday's symposium point to the unity, equality, and inter-complementarity of discipleship.

Arthur Leger

- Spirituality and theories of leadership. Theology alone is inadequate for leadership in the Church today. It is not complete. We need to dialogue with the secular disciplines. Lonergan suggests that we dialogue with the sciences. We need to change the pedagogy. We don't learn about theology but learn theology. Many people advocate this. Examples include Lonergan and Amaladoss (theology of the oppressed).
- Faith seeking understanding is not enough. Understanding is a low level learning in Bloom's taxonomy. As Michael Amaladoss said, it should be "faith seeking transformation through understanding"[4] that leads to conversion.

Open Forum

Walter Isaac: According to Lonergan, the image of God is in everyone. It comes alive when we pray.

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[3]See St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sentences* 1.19; 3.57; 3.108.

[4]Michael Amaladoss, "Is there an Asian Way of Doing Theology?" Available at http://www.eapi.org.ph/resources/eapr/east-asian-pastoral-review-2008/volume-45-2008-number-1/is-there-an-asian-way-of-doing-theology/.

Carmen Scheuerman: When you enter a space (say a space of conversation), one should not monopolize. This will not create a space of peace.

Arnel Aquino: The defensive stance of the Church is a medieval stance. And we are already moving away from that.

Melba Maggay: We live in a pluralistic world. Christianity no longer monopolizes the social space. Asian Christians are not interested in boundaries. They are more interested to know where it will lead. The more important process is to journey together. And we ask ourselves the following questions: who are actually shaping us? Who are we and to whom do we belong?

Jeffrey Scheuerman: There is a Native American saying that goes like this: have you walked a mile with my moccasins? Have you danced with the people you are working with? Pope Francis danced with the poor. He danced with the prisoners. He prayed in the mosque.

Arthur Leger: The new pedagogy is to tell the story. In the old pedagogy, the students went to the classroom and the teacher provided all the information and knowledge. In the new pedagogy, the teacher is the facilitator. The students have knowledge, and the role of the teacher is to draw it out and bring the students to the desired level.

Carmen Scheuerman: We cannot remove Christianity from us. However, culture is also in us. How do we weave these two together? In our mission with the Aetas, we use their culture and their categories to evangelize (e.g., Jesus as Apo Namalyari).

Niceta Vargas: Augustine has a theory on dialogue. To study theology is to push the student. This is an exercise of humility.

Melba Maggay: Western culture is left-brained, linear, sequential. Asians are normally right-brained, and appropriation is very important. We tell stories. We sing songs. The music in our soul shall carry us on our deathbed.

Jun-G Bargayo: My frustration in Mindanao is that we do not reflect on the Mindanao displacement. We react only when it is of national importance. We do not reflect and write about what is happening there.

Hernando Coronel: How are we going to make our theology more attractive to families?

Carmen Scheuerman: Suggestions: gather the families and look at their great practices. Bring those practices to the educators so they could learn from them, and teach them to their students.

Federico Villanueva: In what way do we address the hurt of the people? Allow the negative experience to have a place. God is good all the time, but not all can identify with this every single time. We need to teach the people that it is sometimes ok not to be ok.

Niceta Vargas: In the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP), we have written new textbooks for basic education in which we have integrated Scripture with the lesson. Then there are assignments/activities that involve the family. Homilies should be inspiring for the people.