

ASIAN AND ASIAN AMERICAN THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

Topic: “One Baptism” in Asian Theology
 Convener: Min-Ah Cho, Georgetown University
 Moderator: Shinjae Lee, Boston College
 Presenters: Linh Hoang, O.F.M., Siena College
 Victoria Basug Slabinski, University of Virginia
 Zachary R. Dehm, Loyola University (Maryland)

The Asian and Asian American Theology Consultation brought together thirteen participants to explore the theme of “One Baptism” in Asian theological contexts. Since Cecilia Francisco Tan was unable to attend the conference this year, Shinjae Lee from Boston College graciously facilitated the discussion, providing wonderful leadership throughout the session.

The consultation began with Linh Hoang’s presentation titled “Baptism in Asian Theology in light of the Climate Crisis: Water Accessibility and Scarcity.” Hoang examined the sacramental significance of water in baptism as representing new life, while addressing how the climate crisis affects this fundamental element. Drawing connections between the theological understanding of “one baptism” in Christianity and the mandate to protect all of God’s creation, Hoang focused particularly on water accessibility issues in Southeast Asia, a region severely impacted by climate change. The presentation highlighted the Asian Catholic bishops’ call for intercultural and interreligious dialogue to address the situation of the poor, and examined current efforts by Asian secular and religious leaders to engage with *Laudato Si’* as motivation for climate action.

Victoria Basug Slabinski followed with “Re-Narrating ‘One Baptism’ towards the Healing of Colonial Wounds.” Slabinski confronted the colonial histories of baptism in the Philippines, where Christianizing and civilizing efforts reconfigured bodies according to European colonial hierarchies and displaced Indigenous peoples from their traditional cultures and lands. The presentation argued that when baptism is narrated as initiation into such colonial processes, it participates in creating colonial wounds. However, Slabinski proposed that “one baptism” might be reimagined to address global wounds. Drawing from Bruce Morrill’s liturgical theology of communal healing and Jennifer Mullan’s work on colonial trauma, she offered a re-narration of baptism as entry into the solidaristic healing ministry of Jesus, oriented toward healing colonial wounds.

The final presentation by Zachary R. Dehm was titled “‘One Baptism’ in the Vision of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences.” Dehm explored how the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences understood baptism from their earliest meetings, even when it was not explicitly discussed in their documents. He demonstrated that their understanding was shaped simultaneously by the ecclesiological innovations of Vatican II and by unique insights emerging from Asia, the most religiously pluralistic continent. The FABC’s approach to baptism reflected their emphasis on the local church as both inculturated and incarnate in culture. Dehm argued that through their statements, the FABC provided a foundation for a genuinely inclusive understanding of baptism into a diverse church.

Following the three presentations, participants engaged in a rich question-and-answer session that allowed for deeper exploration of the themes presented. The conversation revealed the interconnected nature of ecological, colonial, and ecclesiological concerns in Asian theological reflection on baptism. Participants discussed how Asian contexts offer unique perspectives on sacramental theology that can contribute to global theological discourse.

The consultation concluded with a business meeting to discuss plans for next year's theme and session format. The administrative team expressed gratitude for the robust participation and the quality of theological reflection demonstrated throughout the session.

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