

Foreword

It is with great joy and pride that I introduce to you Ambrose Mong and his latest book *A Tale of Two Theologians: Treatment of Third World Theologies*. Not that Mong himself needs any introduction; by now his many publications have established him as a leading Asian theologian in his own right. A Catholic priest, he obtained his doctorate in religious studies from the Chinese University of Hong Kong after his theological studies in Rome, with a dissertation on Joseph Ratzinger's theology of religious pluralism and inter-religious dialogue. For a Catholic priest to do a doctorate in religious studies in a secular Asian university is rather unusual; the University of St Thomas in Rome, popularly known as the Angelicum, where Mong had obtained his Bachelor of Sacred Theology, would have been a more traditional choice, where it would have been much easier to earn a doctorate. But the Chinese University of Hong Kong afforded him greater freedom of research and imposed higher scholarly standards.

After completing his doctoral studies Ambrose Mong has published a series of books and articles, and this astonishingly prolific production was achieved in the midst of a busy parish ministry, not the tranquillity of university life. The title of his latest book is reminiscent of Charles Dickens' celebrated novel. But here, instead of two cities, we have two world-renowned theologians from two continents, the Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez and the Indian Michael Amaladoss. In spite of enormous geographical distance and cultural differences, the two theologians, the former a late-in-life Dominican and the latter an early-in-life Jesuit, share similar theological concerns and approaches.

I am deeply gratified that Mong followed through with my suggestion that he research the historical and theological connections between Latin American and Asian theologies, and the choice of Gutiérrez and

Amaladoss couldn't be more felicitous. Both of them are unquestionably theological giants and lend themselves to a fruitful comparison. Another more remarkable connection is that both were under scrutiny from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith when Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, was its Prefect. (Part of the reason why Gutiérrez became a Dominican was to elude ecclesiastical harassment for his theological views.) Fortunately, both have been 'rehabilitated' under Pope Francis and liberation theology is back on the theological scene. In this context, the word 'treatment' in the subtitle is a sharp pun: it means a discussion of the behaviour of the CDF toward Third World theologies.

Ambrose Mong's study is, as is his trademark, historically grounded and theologically sophisticated. We (and the Catholic Church) owe him a debt of gratitude for bringing together the diverse yet similar insights and methods of these two great liberation theologians. In this way he enriches both Latin American and Asian theologies. In our increasingly global church, such comparative theological work is sorely needed, and Ambrose Mong is a sure and capable guide. May this book be widely disseminated not only in Asia and Latin America, but also across the other continents, and may other theologians follow in his footsteps.

Peter C. Phan

*The Ignacio Ellacuría Chair of Catholic Social Thought
Georgetown University*