

MIEVEAL THEOLOGY

Topic: Does the Incarnation Represent the Ultimate Form of Human Fulfillment?

Presenters: Michael Gorman, Saint Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia

Jane Bullock Schlubach, University of Notre Dame

Respondent: Robert Kennedy, Saint Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia

Is Christ a perfectly fulfilled human being? If so, is our fulfillment to be found in becoming like him? And if it is, then would our reaching our fulfillment do away with his uniqueness? Michael Gorman began the medieval theology session by offering overviews of how some of the medieval scholastic theologians would tackle such questions. He focused on Thomas Aquinas's thought, noting a few places where John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham would take different approaches. Jane Bullock Schlubach analyzed human fulfillment from the monastic and pastoral perspective of Aelred of Rievaulx, a twelfth-century Cistercian abbot.

Complete human fulfillment, according to Thomas, is found only in the next life when the body is resurrected and reunited with the soul which has attained an intellectual union with God. The incarnate Christ, too, according to Thomas, lacked some human perfection before his resurrection so he could fulfill his mission of saving humanity. Christ's body and soul lacked the perfection of impassibility because Christ had to be able to suffer for the sake of humanity. After the resurrection, the difference between Christ and us is that Christ is divine by nature and we are deified by participation. Could God overcome this distance between Christ and us? After discussing various ways in which Thomas, Scotus and Ockham might have dealt with the possibilities of us having the same amount of grace and knowledge as Christ, or us being hypostatically united to the Word, as is Christ, Gorman concluded: "In God's salvific plan to save us from sin and elevate us to divine sonship, he won't join us hypostatically to himself, because instead of saving us, he'd destroy us as persons. So paradoxically our remaining at a certain distance from the Word is a necessary condition of our fulfillment."

According to Aelred of Rievaulx's soteriological anthropology, humans—in their memory, understanding and will—find fulfillment by "clinging in the spirit to God." Through meditating on Scripture in the light of the Incarnation, the human memory is enabled to share in God's eternity; through faith and the liturgy, human understanding is enabled to share in God's wisdom; and through daily growth in charity exercised both in love of God and love of neighbor, the human will can taste God's sweetness. Thus Schlubach explained that it is in the *asceticism* of Christ's discipline, found in the Cistercian rule, that God's image is restored in human beings, and their attention is recentered on God to recover his likeness, and the soul grows wings to ascend to everlasting reunion.

The response and following discussion was wide ranging. Robert Kennedy looked for some similarities between the scholastic and monastic perspectives.

Other topics discussed were the significance of Christ's self-emptying for his beatific vision, the nature of Christ's knowledge, whether or not the medieval theologians thought that union with other humans was part of complete human fulfillment, and how Hindu anthropology might view humans' assumption into divinity.

KATHERINE M. YOHE

*Trinity College
Washington, D.C.*

THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Topic: The Flesh of Adam: Two Medieval Women on Bodiliness

Convener: Anne H. King-Lenzmeier

Presenter: Marie Anne Mayeski, Loyola Marymount University

Respondent: Francis X. Clooney, S.J., Boston College

This session of the continuing group on Theological Anthropology focused on the question of embodiment as a means of understanding the issues of nature, grace, soteriology and other themes. It was the first session of a collaborative effort between this group and the Comparative Theology group which was proposed for 1998 and 1999 by the steering committees of both groups. It proved sufficiently stimulating so that this collaboration may continue further into the future, or at more than one scheduled session per year. In order to facilitate the dialogue between comparative theology and theological anthropology, it was decided that the presenter and respondent would build their papers around specific textual material as well as general theses. The respondent then had the completed paper in advance. The motivation behind using a text or texts is to encourage and enable both the respondent and those present to have clear access to a presentation that might not be in their immediate field of specialization.

The presenter for this year, Marie Anne Mayeski, used two medieval women as examples of how theological anthropology can be understood through embodiment. The first figure presented was Dhouda of Septimania, a ninth-century woman whose *Liber Manualis* was written as a book of formation for her children. Her claim to authority in writing on these topics was that of the need for maternal guidance, which could not be given in any other way from a distance. Dhouda used the concepts of genealogy, ancestry and inheritance to make her theological as well as her practical points to her sons. Mayeski's claim is that Dhouda clearly sees biological descent and genealogy as having ramifications for theological anthropology in that there is no dualism present: "biological descent involves spiritual consequences and obligations; grace is transmitted equally through natural and supernatural ancestors; the social roles, which are conferred