

male and female, the immanent and the ecstatic, the God and the Goddess, in each whole human person.

In her response Susan Windley noted three themes linking the OB and Christian theological anthropology: (1) "participation" in God's life through the *chakras* or the *imago dei*; (2) the mind/body conundrum; and (3) the essentialist vs. social construction understandings of gender. Participation in God's life through the *imago dei* is a common although difficult theme within Patristic anthropology. The Latin *imago dei* works as a point of contact, a capacity for the redemptive relationship engaged through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Is this capacity which resides in the rational at all analogous to the *chakras* resident in the body? The Greek fathers also discussed participation through the *imago dei*, emphasizing a participation in goodness. The resulting Orthodox formulation firmly emphasized the themes of knowing God through the divine energies and the importance of the theological aesthetic—themes analogously important to the OB. The gender issues Clooney raises elicit multiple questions. Does the OB's seemingly essentialist understanding deserve the same "social construction" criticism made by certain Christians of their own religion? And if this Goddess is worshipped by men to actualize their possibilities by transcending into the Other (in this case, Woman), how do women actualize *their* possibilities?

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MISSIOLOGY AND MISSION THEOLOGY

- Topic: Syncretism or Development of Doctrine:
When Rites, Symbols and Language Meet
- Convener
and Moderator: Lou McNeil, Georgian Court College
- Presenter: Carl F. Starkloff, Regis College, Toronto School of Theology
- Presenter: Gideon Goosen, Australian Catholic University, Sydney
- Presenter: Robert J. Schreiter, Catholic Theological Union

Carl Starkloff's presentation offered some basic points for clarification and discussion. He observed that Joseph Coulter, a Cree, notes that "syncretism is an unavowed norm for the Church." Throughout the history of Christianity the process of development has always and necessarily been an ongoing dynamic of interpretation of God's word and activity within cultural constructs. Starkloff reminded us that not even Sacred Scripture itself can make claim to being the undiluted Word of God. After reviewing the consistent instances of philosophical and cultural interpretation of God's activity in the life of Christianity, Starkloff

suggested that non-European Christianity can resolutely challenge us regarding our ecclesial bias that the earliest interpretations become the norms leaving little to contribute to more recent arrivals to the Christian and Catholic traditions.

Gideon Goosen provided a striking case study of many of the issues raised in Starkloff's paper. He described a presentation made to the Seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra. Professor Kyung Chung's presentation, in part, consisted of drama and other media reflecting her Korean culture. Most specifically, she invoked the listeners' attention to *Han*. *Han* is the anger, bitterness, grief, etc., that elicits "the raw energy for the struggle of liberation." The spirits possessed of *Han* have been those who died unjustly or were murdered. These spirits wander the world of the living seeking their justice. Professor Chung invoked the *Han* memories so as to remind everyone of the spirits of indigenous peoples and others who have fallen victim to genocide. Her presentation evoked accusations of syncretism. Professor Chung replied, "As to the eurocentrism of mainstream theology . . . their traditions are Christian. When we Asians use our traditions it is syncretism."

Goosen asked rhetorically whether the above case study easily led us to profess that language is certainly symbolic, while all too frequently our unreflective selves continue with the assumption that words can, indeed, capture reality itself. Words, as religious rituals themselves, are symbols representing something other than themselves. Thus, the peace pipe among aboriginal peoples in Australia seems as fitting a ritual of repentance to them as the sprinkling of water, which is now so readily identified with Christian notions of repentance. The problem religious people face with the question of syncretism is simply this: in Christianity as in other religions of the book, authorities rightly watch over rituals and the articulation of beliefs exercising the role of the guardians of a tradition. Such a role can, however, easily lead to an ossification of the tradition's ritual and verbal expressions if it is not sensitively exercised. Goosen asked us to reflect on the idea Alois Pieris has put forward. In interfaith dialogue, a symbiosis must occur whereby each religion rediscovers and renames its own understandings and experiences in light of the encounter.

The final presentation by Robert Schreiter was intended to draw together some of the questions raised. His assignment was to suggest criteria for a theological evaluation of the validity of doctrinal development: what is legitimate, what not? Using Acts 15 as his starting point, he developed three principles for assessing the validity of development, not as the social sciences may understand it, i.e., a simple process of development, but from the perspective of theology, which seeks a more valuative judgment. He proposed that three principles undergird the norms for behavior outlined by James in resolving the debate in Acts 15. These are that development is legitimate if (1) it connotes continuity, or more precisely does not break continuity; (2) the development enhances belonging; and (3) if the activity of interpretation/belief does not invite a misreading or misunderstanding. Acts 15 gave particular force to Schreiter's contention that the criteria for discerning the legitimacy of doctrinal or

theological development rests in negatively stated criteria. Positive criteria would cast the norms within a particular cultural coding. James resolves the conflict in Acts 15 with four injunctions which delineate Christian behavior vis-à-vis pagan ritual. Do not (1) eat food dedicated to idols; (2) participate in fornication rites; (3) eat meat of strangled animals; nor (4) drink blood of animals. The decision does not center on mandates of a positive nature, e.g., customs which would have prevented Gentiles from embracing Christianity: circumcision, dietary laws, etc. Identity often is served with negative markers and therein, suggested Schreiter, may be found the most sure pointers for setting criteria helpful in determining the validity of development and continuity within the tradition.

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METHOD IN THEOLOGY

- Topic: Doctrinal Pluralism in a Postmodern Context
 Conveners: J. Michael Stebbins, Woodstock Theological Center
 M. Shawn Copeland, Marquette University
 Moderator: Tatha Wiley, St. John's University, Collegeville
 Presenter: Paul F. Lakeland, Fairfield University
 Respondents: Nancy C. Ring, LeMoyne College
 Anthony J. Godzieba, Villanova University

Paul Lakeland began his presentation by examining Bernard Lonergan's analysis of doctrinal pluralism. (The background reading for this year's session was Lonergan's 1971 *Père Marquette Theology Lecture*, published as *Doctrinal Pluralism* [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1971].) On Lakeland's reading, Lonergan distinguishes three forms of pluralism, all of which have an apologetic function. The first, a "pluralism of communications," refers to the flexibility with which the saving truth has to be expressed if it is to take root in different cultures. The second form, which Lakeland labeled a "pluralism of the interim," is constituted by the fact that divergent theological methods, viewpoints, and opinions have developed in the wake of scholastic theology's collapse. Lonergan expects this situation eventually to be rectified by the emergence of a new, comprehensive theological method. The third form of doctrinal pluralism, the "pluralism of inadequate conversion," results from inauthenticity on the part of theologians. Lakeland took aim at Lonergan's negative assessment of the "pluralism of the interim." In the context of postmodernity, he maintained, most theologians find this diversity not only inevitable but desirable, and consider the search for a totalizing theological synthesis pointless.