

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

- Topic: "Seeking Egyptian Gold:
A Theological Response to S'aṅtīdeva's *Bodhicarya-vata-ra*"
- Convener: Paul J. Griffiths, University of Illinois at Chicago
- Moderator: Thomas Forsthoefel, Mercyhurst College
- Presenter: Terrence W. Tilley, University of Dayton
- Respondent: Paul J. Griffiths, University of Illinois at Chicago

This session was designed to address a particular Buddhist text (named above), and to ask what significance it might have for Catholic theology—moral, systematic, pastoral, etc. The session's title mentions a patristic trope (taken from Exodus 3 and 12) for the enterprise of reading alien texts. The text—A Sanskrit work composed in India in the eighth century—had been made available in English translation to participants beforehand. Only the first half of the text was discussed: the second half will be discussed in next year's (2003) Comparative Theology session at the CTSA.

Terry Tilley's paper began with some comments on the idea of creatureliness. He identified this as one of the principal differences between S'aṅtīdeva's work (perhaps Buddhist thought in general) and Christian theology. For Christians, we are creatures, brought into being and sustained in being by a creator; for Buddhists we are not: we live in a natural world of cause and effect. There is no analogue for the Christian God-World distinction in S'aṅtīdeva's thought, and Tilley explored the effects of this difference—the fact that Buddhists describe a fundamentally natural world while Christians do not—upon anthropology and moral thought, with special attention to the idea of sin. In a natural world there is no sin (though there is certainly suffering and affliction, and perhaps also vice), while in a created world there is. This difference, Tilley suggested, might fruitfully be further explored.

Tilley's second major point was the striking formal or structural similarity between S'aṅtīdeva's idea of tradition-based spiritual practice and (some) Christian ideas. Both link mental, physical, and spiritual; both might be construed as forms of therapeutic pragmatism; both are profoundly practical.

Paul Griffiths provided a brief response to Tilley's remarks, and much of the following lively discussion focused upon the questions of sin, agency, and volition, with special reference to the question of anger. S'aṅtīdeva's analysis of anger had treated it entirely negatively, as something to be overcome, based on a false idea of the difference between self and other. Participants were divided in their response to this; but it was broadly agreed that the question of how human agency is to be understood provides one of the more fruitful avenues into a theological appropriation of this work—and perhaps of Buddhist scholastic work more generally. The question of how a Christian theologian's work and approach to work might be altered by a serious reading of an alien text like the

Bodhicarya-vata-ra was also discussed, and it was agreed that there would be such alterations (as Aquinas' work and approach to work was altered by serious reading of Aristotle), but that the nature of such changes could not easily be known in advance.

Next year's discussion of the second half of S'a-ntideva's work will also be prompted by Terry Tilley's reflections. You don't need to have been present at 2002's discussions in order to participate in 2003's, and if you'd like a copy of the text or of Tilley's 2002 paper, please contact: Paul Griffiths, Catholic Studies Program, University of Illinois at Chicago (MC 228), 601 S. Morgan Street, Chicago IL 60607.

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PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

- Topic: Contemporary Theory,
the Signs of the Times, and Practical Theology
- Conveners: Raymond J. Webb,
University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary
Kathleen A. Cahalan,
St. John's University School of Theology-Seminary
- Moderator: Raymond J. Webb,
University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary
- Presenter: Kathleen A. Cahalan,
St. John's University School of Theology-Seminary
- Respondent: Stephan Bevans, Catholic Theological Union

Paul Lakeland's work, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age*, describes three emergent critiques of modernity: the late modern, counter-modern, and radical postmodern positions. He describes examples within contemporary philosophy and theology that comprise each position; in her presentation, Cahalan extended his argument by suggesting that these postmodern positions find a corollary in contemporary practical theology: the late modern position in Don Browning's fundamental practical theology; countermodern arguments support the idea of Christian practices in the work of Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra; and issues within the radical postmodern perspective are being explored in contextual theologies of Robert Schreiter and Steve Bevans. Cahalan described the way in which each type of practical theology (1) puts forth a particular reading of the postmodern situation based on an analysis of the Enlightenment's impact on Christian thought and practice, (2) constructive proposals to advance the Christian community's attempt to live faithfully in