

SEXUALITY AND RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Convener: Susan A. Ross, Loyola University, Chicago
 Moderator: Susie Paulik Babka, University of Notre Dame
 Presenters: Christine Jamieson, Concordia University, Montréal
 Susan A. Ross, Loyola University, Chicago
 Patricia Beattie Jung, Loyola University, Chicago

This session considered the role of sexuality in relation to the resurrection of the body. While the presenters approached the topic from different vantage points, the convergence of ideas paved the way for forty minutes of animated discussion.

In the first presentation, “The Nontime of Sexuality: Julia Kristeva’s Reading of *Jouissance*,” Christine Jamieson explored Kristeva’s psychoanalytic and linguistic interpretation of the always sexualized body of the human person. Broader than merely genital sexuality, here sexuality has to do with drives and forces within the body which are always part of our experience whether conscious or not. Although a nonbeliever, Kristeva draws heavily on theological writings that speak of the passion of love because, for Kristeva, theology allows us to be lured into what she calls “a blessed loving madness,” an experience of *jouissance*—total joy or ecstasy. This experience suggests the “nontime” of sexuality which evokes not so much the continuum of eternity as the continual rebirth and renewal of resurrection.

Susan A. Ross approached the topic by way of “Gender, Sexuality, and Eschatology in Vatican Documents.” In particular, she explored how a feminist perspective might respond to the implications of the Vatican’s statement on the “Collaboration of Women and Men” (Summer 2004). For example, while human sexuality is intrinsic to who we are as human beings and so will continue to exist in heaven, the physical expression of sexuality, since it is ordered toward procreation and ultimately death, will not. Celibacy therefore, for the Vatican, prophetically symbolizes our eventual glorified bodies. Yet, is not fulfillment of desire a more appropriate conception of our glorified bodies than celibacy which is essentially a renunciation? Another limitation is the Vatican’s overuse of the nuptial metaphor—humanity as Bride (who receives) and God as Bridegroom (who gives)—in articulating God’s relationship to humanity. The absence of others in this exclusive relationship undermines the interrelationality of the Trinity. Problematically, the nuptial metaphor emphasizes God as essentially male and, so, needs to give ground to broader visions such as a theology of beauty which opens out the insatiable desire of humanity for God and a more developed theology of the Trinity which gives humanity a more expansive vision of God.

The final presentation by Patricia Beattie Jung, “Sex and the Heavenly City,” focused on the question of whether there will be sexual desire and sexual pleasure in heaven. Jung cites a theological and a hermeneutical reason for her affirmative response. Theologically, the Triune God is a passionate God of desire and delight. God’s passion is more than, yet includes our understanding of sex. In contradistinc-

tion to mainstream tradition's sharp distinction between agape and eros, Jung speaks of God's love encompassing all kinds of love and reveals a necessary continuity between our heart's desire in this world and the next. Hermeneutically, biblical tradition affirms God as desiring and delighting in humanity. Many biblical images speak of sexuality as God's good handiwork even while biblical passages such as "the fall" in Genesis 3 and Jesus' denial of marriage in heaven in Mark 12 are often used to counter claims of sex in heaven. The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender community are challenging traditional readings of these texts with innovative possibilities.

Several key issues were emphasized in the discussion that followed. First, the Vatican's overemphasis on and almost exclusive use of the nuptial metaphor omits many other possibilities—for example, the abundance of metaphors found in *Lumen Gentium*. There was extended discussion of the *motive* behind the exclusive use of the nuptial metaphor. Second, a concern was raised about the erasure of the feminine in so much contemporary theology. One possible explanation is the gender instability that seems to mark our age. Third, a concern was expressed about connecting the passion of God and the passion of Christ—that is, the danger of aligning love and death. Yet, is the cross necessarily a denial of desire? Was it not desire that led Jesus to the cross? Fourth, we need to overcome the duality of gender—could Kristeva's thought help? Her emphasis on an ethics of respect for the irreconcilable seems to suggest a different route. Also, the experience of the transgender community may be helpful. Fifth, why speculate about sex in heaven when life is so hard for so many people and sexuality is a painful experience to many who have been abused? Yet, the role of eschatology is to imagine a vision that will draw us toward God. Sixth, the "theology of the body" does not have anything to do with sex yet it should. So we are really challenging the heart of the tradition on embodiment. The whole issue of shame needs to be explored in this context.

CHRISTINE JAMIESON
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec