

## MEDIEVAL THEOLOGY

Topic: Reading Reconciliation

Convener and Moderator: David M. Williams, Belmont Abbey College

Presenters: Dale Coulter, Lee University

Thomas Ryan, St. Thomas University

Dale Coulter's paper, "*Historia and Sensus litteralis: An Investigation into the Approach to Literal Interpretation at the Twelfth-Century School of St. Victor*," offered a contribution to the understanding of literal interpretation among the Victorines by offering a reconstruction of the "theoretical framework" behind their approach to exegesis. He examined Hugh of St. Victor's use of *historia* (understood as "the narration of events expressed by the primary signification of the letter") to designate literal interpretation in order to unpack (1) how Hugh believes interpreters should approach a text of scripture, and (2) precisely what it means for a passage to possess a literal sense. In order to illustrate the ways that Hugh's thought is appropriated and employed by his followers, Coulter reviewed Richard of St. Victor's exegetical practice. With these resources in hand, the author argued that Boethius's philosophy of language with its analysis of the mutual relations among *res* (created realities), *intellectus* (mental understandings of those realities), and *voces* (words as conventional signs) serves as an important, albeit neglected, source for this framework. The task of literal interpretation then involves the movement from *voces* to *res*, to be traced out with the use of all the grammatical, historical, and scientific resources available to the interpreter. Discussion of the paper centered on potential shifts in the idea of *historia*, and the impact of other developments (speculative grammar, artistic realism) in fostering the Victorine insistence upon the literal sense.

Thomas Ryan's paper, "Reconciling Images of Aquinas in his *Summae*, Biblical Commentaries and Beyond," began with a brief slide presentation of recent book covers depicting Thomas Aquinas. Focusing on the popular *Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Ryan noted that it is historically inaccurate in that Thomas was not entirely triumphant during and immediately after his lifetime. Indeed, he was caught up posthumously in the 1277 condemnations by the Bishop of Paris. This image can, however, be reconciled with the historical Thomas in that it presents him as a teacher of wisdom, which he most certainly was. Ryan then outlined Thomas's account of wisdom and reviewed its implications in selections from his sermons and biblical commentaries. These works reveal his affective and scriptural side. Ryan then suggested that ongoing comparisons between Thomas and more affective medieval women and men spiritual writers would be fruitful in highlighting their perhaps overlooked theological sophistication. Finally, Thomas's work is reconciling in the sense that it is poignant; he wants his work to be transformative. Roaming through often overlooked works in the Thomas corpus makes this clear of him and helps us

notice his moving, transformative, reconciling intentions even in his more well known and speculative works.

The ensuing discussion of the presentation focused on the relationship of spirituality, wisdom, and knowledge.

DAVID M. WILLIAMS  
Belmont Abbey College  
Belmont, North Carolina

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#### TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

- Topic: The Catholic Reception  
of the Trinitarian Theology of John Zizioulas  
Convener: Anthony Keaty, St. John's Seminary  
Moderator: Cara Anthony, University of St. Thomas  
Presenters: Elizabeth Groppe, Xavier University  
Earl Muller, Sacred Heart Major Seminary

Elizabeth Groppe began by observing that we inhabit a postmodern world in which "freedom" has lost a clear meaning, a world in which we oscillate, as Reinhard Hutter describes in a recent issue of *Modern Theology*, between a Promethean dream of expansion of freedom and the nightmare of a totally eclipsed freedom. In such a world John Zizioulas offers us a Trinitarian theology that identifies ontological freedom as love. In his reconstruction of the origins of the Trinitarian tradition, Zizioulas emphasizes the importance of the patristic position that "person" rather than "substance" is the ultimate ontological category, and that God the Father begets the Son from the freedom of love, transcending the pagan cosmology of the Greek philosophers in which true freedom was impossible to conceive. Groppe argued that Zizioulas's theology of freedom is an important alternative to modern assumptions that freedom means autonomy and choice. At the same time, his theology of freedom as love could be carried out more consistently in his Trinitarian theology and theological anthropology.

Earl Muller offered three criticisms of Zizioulas's Trinitarian theology. The first criticism questioned the accuracy of Zizioulas's reading of patristic sources. One of the most extensive critiques, by Lucian Turcescu, challenges Zizioulas's reading of the Cappadocians, in particular, Gregory of Nyssa. The second criticism questioned Zizioulas's characterization of Western theology. Here, Muller argued that the charge made by Zizioulas that in Western theology the essence of God is a fourth reality in God does not hold for a Western theologian such as Thomas Aquinas. The third criticism questioned Zizioulas's understanding of the procession of the Holy Spirit. While accepting the filioque on the level of the economy of salvation, Zizioulas denies the filioque on the level of the immanent