

community, in that I can be part of groups that "meet" on the internet—but in reality, they are dependent upon my financial means to secure regular access to a computer. If access to the internet is the new mode of participation in a putative community, it runs the risks of not only the Docetism and Gnosticism to which Baron refers; it also runs the risk of excluding those whom Jesus loved most: namely, the poor, who have only their bodies.

A lively discussion followed the papers and response. Such topics as funeral liturgies and cremation surfaced as possibilities for next year's meeting. The possibility of holding a joint session with the Ecclesiology Program Group was also mentioned.

JUDITH M. KUBICKI
Fordham University
Bronx, New York

* * * * *

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

- Topic: Hindu God, Christian God: Questions on a New Methodology
 Convener: Michael T. McLaughlin, Saint Leo University
 Presenters: Michael T. McLaughlin, Saint Leo University
 James Keating, Providence College
 Respondent: Francis X. Clooney, Boston College

The methodology of the groundbreaking book in comparative theology by Francis Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God* (Oxford, 2001) was the focus of this session. The book is part of a much larger trajectory which Clooney has been working on for a number of years. Chapters of the book focus on specific concepts of God in each tradition: God as maker of the world, naming God, divine embodiment, and the concept of revelation. It can be difficult to find Hindus who understand Christian theology in any depth, which makes things a bit one-sided. Clooney gave a brief summary of the careful structure of the book before the presenters gave their analysis of problems and issues. McLaughlin commented on the significance of this work as a real advance in the field of comparative theology because of its close attention to actual arguments within the multiple schools of Hinduism and between Hindus and Buddhists. He referred to his own book on Lonergan and Aurobindo (Gregorian University Press, 2003) as a related effort in comparative theology.

There is a great complexity of argumentation internal to Hinduism. For example, Vedānta resists the Nyāya view that by reasoning we can know that God exists, focusing instead on the priority of scripture over reasoning. Others argue whether sectarian symbolizations of the divine found in Śaivism and Vaisnavism are secondary to the concept of Brahman or reveal essential attributes.

McLaughlin raised questions about the philosophical systems which undergird these theologies. Hindu theology is intertwined with the Indian philosophical traditions and their ways of dealing with issues like perception, causality, and induction. Most of the work on Indian philosophy has been done by philosophers like Steven H. Phillips (University of Texas), who are trained in the analytic tradition. There would be more to explore in looking at the philosophical positions that support theologies on both sides. Creation could be explored from Thomistic and Hindu perspectives, as in the work of Julius Lipner, in order to clarify what one means by the world having a "maker."

It was noted that Clooney uses terms to cover or bridge both traditions, for example "embodiment" which may not be fully adequate to either the Christian concept of incarnation of the preexistent Logos or to the language of avatar. McLaughlin raised the issue of holism taken from analytic philosophers like, Christopher Peacocke (Oxford), by which it is said that words have meanings only within broader semantic fields from which they cannot easily be isolated. Clooney has addressed this issue in earlier publications. McLaughlin mentioned that perhaps the act of faith (rationalism or fideism in Christian terms), a commitment of the whole person, required more analysis, as does the meaning of multiple religious belonging. Comparative theology would eventually have to address significant differences in understanding of key moral issues such as abortion, cloning, and sexuality.

In his response, James Keating argued that theology and philosophy differ at the level of method, and in particular, the priority given to a form of knowledge that is received (i.e., revelation) over knowledge that is obtained. While this does not mean that theology is meaningless apart from an acceptance of its revealed source (if it did Comparative Theology would be an oxymoron), but it does mean that theologians will require a revealed basis—internal to their own tradition—for being interested in what other theologians say in light of an alien revelation. In other words, Keating indicated that his main point, as a Christian, is that the integration of "non-Christian *theology*" into Christian theology requires a properly Christian theological justification. If Christian theologians are to be Comparative theologians the justification must arise from God revealed in Christ.

In discussion that followed Keating was asked whether his position on this issues was not similar to Karl Barth (one of the interlocutors in Francis Clooney's book), other significant Christian interlocutors being Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Richard Swinburne. Keating mentioned being influenced by the discussion of similar issues of scripturally revealed truth in the work of his wife, Sandra Keating, on the dispute of the great Muslim theologian Ibn Hanbal around the place of the Qu'ran in his ultimately victorious struggle with the Mutazila. In this time of war, in which fundamentalism and terrorism are in our minds, we would look forward to a similarly impressive comparative

work on the Islamic and Christian view of God and perhaps on the place of martyrdom in both.

MICHAEL T. MCLAUGHLIN
Saint Leo University
Norfolk, Virginia

* * * * *

METHOD IN THEOLOGY

- Topic: The Legacy of Rahner and Lonergan
Conveners: Richard M. Liddy, Seton Hall University
J. Michael Stebbins, Gonzaga University
Moderator: Catherine T. Nerney, Chestnut Hill College
Presenter: Michael Vertin, St. Michael's College

The 2004 session was devoted to honoring Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan in this centennial year of their births. The session began with a presentation entitled "Rahner, Lonergan, Loving, and Teaching," by Michael Vertin, of St. Michael's College, Toronto. The presentation had four main parts.

First, Vertin recalled a basic similarity of philosophical perspective. Strongly influenced by the interpretation of Thomas Aquinas developed by Joseph Maréchal, both Rahner and Lonergan maintain that I have my general notion "being" by nature rather than by acquisition. It is a notion that is transcendental not just in the scholastic sense of "transcategorical" but also in the Kantian sense of "a priori." And my actual knowledge of this or that particular being emerges through a cognitional process that culminates not with judgmental intuition but rather with judgmental affirmation, the assertion that this or that intelligible synthesis of experiential data is a partial instantiation of my transcendental notion's content.

Second, Vertin suggested a basic but easily overlooked philosophical difference. For Rahner, my transcendental notion of being is primordially cognitional. It is my preapprehension of the universe of being, my actual though wholly indeterminate and merely implicit knowledge of all that is. Consequently, the affirmations that culminate my knowledge of particular beings are mere elucidations, not extensions, of that primordial knowledge. They simply make explicit various portions of the implicit knowledge that is already naturally in place. For Lonergan, by contrast, my transcendental notion of being is strictly heuristic, a mere anticipation of the universe of being, not actually cognitional in any way. It is only through my particular affirmations that I know anything at all. And those affirmations, for their part, are my transitions not from merely implicit to explicit knowledge but rather from merely anticipated to actual knowledge.