

## SEMINAR ON THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

### A. WOLFHART PANNENBERG'S *ANTHROPOLOGY IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE*

The first session was devoted to a discussion of Wolfhart Pannenberg's book,<sup>1</sup> and was chaired by John Farrelly. The discussion was introduced by Edmund Dobbin (Washington Theological Union, D.C.). Dobbin gave an analysis of the theoretical structure of Pannenberg's theology into which this new work fits and which largely determines the conclusion it arrives at. Pannenberg's *Gestalt* is formed by his retrieval of the apocalyptic horizon and by Dilthey's definition of meaning as the interaction of the whole and the parts. For him, this entails the ontological priority of the future and the view that the essence of anything is what it will be, for "appearance is the arrival of the future." In this book he applies this, for example, to the understanding of person; and he takes the metaphor of resurrection from the dead as a root metaphor in anthropology. But Dobbin raised the question whether causality from the future destroys freedom and contingency, despite Pannenberg's strong statement to the contrary. Dobbin indicated some theological and philosophical positions against which Pannenberg reacts, such as Barth's emphasis on decision in faith; an emphasis by others on intentionality, the transcendental, and constitution of knowledge by the subject; and an interpretation of human action as concerned with means that do not have their own intrinsic goal in contrast to the receptive and playful activity of *praxis*, understood as human activity which immanently possesses its goal or *telos*. Pannenberg manifests here a Reformation theme in making room for the Spirit by emphasizing receptivity in our lives aside from our action. He gives an analysis of language in this book, defending, among other theses, the priority of thought over language, and rejecting John Searle's speech act analysis. Dobbin questioned this rejection and noted Pannenberg's assertion, in this context, of the need to limit the claims of human action to allow language and the religious thematic to come together. Dobbin noted more positively the new emphasis in this work on the role of feeling in our coming into contact with the whole and on the "representative" function of language or its capacity to stand for and make present new possibilities. In conclusion, Dobbin acknowledged that his comments tended to be negative but that this did not represent his overall view of Pannenberg or this work.

The discussion that followed centered primarily on issues raised by Dobbin's talk rather than upon the details of Pannenberg's use of the human sciences in this book. Some of the issues discussed are the following. (1) Granted the onesided-

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<sup>1</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985).

ness of Pannenberg's emphasis on the future as determining the present, or the movement from the future to the present, is there not in much Catholic theology a degree of emphasis on teleology that is similarly onesided? And is not one of the problems of theology today an attempt to interrelate the future as *adventus* (shown, e.g., in the early Christian expectation of Christ's *parousia*) and the future as *futurum*? This question was raised in several forms, without full agreement being reached in answering it. (2) What was the intentionality of the early symbolic language in Christianity? What happened in the Easter experience? Does Pannenberg's heavily theoretical use of language do justice to this? (3) In what sense does my concrete future destiny determine my present identity? If my future is shipwreck, is that who I now am? To what extent does Pannenberg's viewpoint imply a determinism in fact, though this is not his intention? (4) To what extent has history already been given its final answer? Rahner's view on eschatological assertions was called upon here to suggest that perhaps we should interpret the Easter experience as promise. We participate in the future by our faith, and thus we experience the kingdom; and the mode of the kingdom will be determined by our freedom in grace. (5) Pannenberg tries to show in this book by his use of the human sciences that they point beyond their own limits toward hints of man's relation to God. He stresses play as a prime place where human experience intersects with the religious thematic. His emphasis on metaphor and on presentational language point in the same direction.

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## B. THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

At the second session, co-moderated by Mary Catherine Hilkert (Aquinas Institute, St. Louis) and Susan A. Ross (Loyola University of Chicago), presenters were Christine E. Gudorf of Xavier University, Cincinnati, and Nancy C. Ring of LeMoyne College, Syracuse. Mary Buckley of St. John's University was scheduled to be present, but was unable to attend. The text for this session was Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), Chapters 1, 3, 4 and 7.

Christine Gudorf began by noting the assumptions of theological anthropology—that there are fixed structures discernible in people—and that feminist theology rejects this concept and follows the social sciences which see differences between the sexes as largely learned. The issue for feminist anthropology is how to change social structures for a renewed human nature. Gudorf then went on to describe three types of feminism, according to their anthropological assumptions. First, liberal feminism sees sex roles as having been uncritically handed down and that the purpose of education is to dismantle these roles. Liberal religious feminists rely on analyses of Genesis 1:28 and of Genesis 2-3 as describing an originally androgynous human nature. Second, radical feminists see the problem as located in men who fear and envy women. In religion, this fear and envy is seen