

SEMINAR ON THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The Theological Anthropology Continuing Seminar met in two sessions. The first was a discussion of Franz Hinkelammert's "Entrepreneurial Metaphysics," in Pablo Richard, ed., *The Idols of Death and the God of Life* (Orbis, 1985). With Susan A. Ross (Loyola University, Chicago) chairing the session, Christine E. Gudorf (Xavier University, Cincinnati) and Lee F. Cormie (University of St. Michael's College, Toronto) began with brief responses. Prof. Gudorf began by affirming Hinkelammert's basic theme that prevailing economic thought and activity is idolatrous, and that the market and commodities are divinized so as to demand obedience and humility from humans. His treatment of economics and politics is a welcome move away from the more simplistic arguments against First World multinational corporations. But she was critical of his interchangeable use of the terms "entrepreneurial" and "capitalist"; she questioned whether his critique was specific to capitalism per se; she asked whether economics was the root of the problem because of its embeddedness in a hierarchical system which demands obedience from a supreme God; and she proposed that feminism provided support for an alternative to economic idolatry through its emphasis on mutuality.

Prof. Cormie provided some background on Hinkelammert: a Chilean economist under Allende, now working with a multidisciplinary group in Costa Rica. He then discussed the historical background of the relation between theology and the sciences and pointed out how church discourse and scientific language have become more and more separate. Hinkelammert's challenge is a theological one; his work represents a new kind of discourse: theological-social-analytical. His contribution is breaking the false barriers between such divisions as economics and religion. Hinkelammert has exposed the reigning ideology of Friedman, Novak, and the Trilateral Commission through their use of such language as "faith," "reason," "hope," and "ethics." Thus economic discourse involves a faith in every sense of the word; the greatest theological debates are taking place in a discourse (economics) largely foreign to the official language and life of the church. There are signs of hope (e.g., basic communities, attention to the role of women, the fact that these conversations did not take place 20 years ago), but the problems remain large.

The discussion which followed was wide-ranging and focused on a number of issues. The types of religion, reason, faith, and values implicit in the marketplace sparked considerable discussion. One participant questioned the "progress" of the first world in responding to these issues; Prof. Gudorf made the point that Christian hope cannot rely on concrete results alone. Another participant questioned Hinkelammert's use of ideology and argued that the author misinterpreted such economists as Hobbes, Locke, and Smith with exaggerations. A spirited debate followed with both Profs. Gudorf and Cormie defending Hinkelammert's basic

insights, especially concerning the implicit theology in economic and political issues. The need for conversation between first world economists and third world liberation theologians (many of whom are trained in the social sciences) was emphasized. Other issues included the stress on individualism in the rhetoric of capitalism, the difference between a prophetic statement and a realistic political agenda, and a need to attend to the economics and politics of dialogue.

The second session met Friday with Mary Ann Hinsdale (Holy Cross College, Worcester) moderating. A collection of syllabi for courses in Theological Anthropology had been compiled and distributed prior to the meeting. Prof. Hinsdale began the session by giving a brief history of the continuing seminar's concern for teaching theological anthropology and began the discussion by suggesting that the participants look for the kind of theology evidenced by the syllabi. She raised a number of questions, such as: what is the rationale for the inclusion of certain topics? how does one handle "the tradition?" is there a "hierarchy of truths" or does one choose topics out of pedagogical interest? and to what degree is there data from other areas, such as the social sciences?

The seminar proceeded with participants commenting on their syllabi or their teaching experiences. A variety of resources and strategies emerged, such as the use of literature to spark student (especially undergraduate) interest (e.g., *The Blood of the Lamb*, *One Day of Life*, *The Color Purple*, *Night*), and the use of social scientific resources (B.F. Skinner, Myers-Briggs testing). Classical questions, such as suffering, eschatology, human nature and destiny remain important; there was a concern expressed by many to retrieve the tradition creatively.

The session concluded with a brief business meeting. Because of the growing number of workshops and the large number of continuing seminars, the participants decided to schedule one meeting (rather than two) for the 1990 Convention, and Patricia Wismer (Seattle University) will chair the steering committee involved in planning the session.

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