

ty. Accordingly, theology needs a critical theory of communication which will help people understand the character of true communication.

Zukowski asserted that global and cyber cultures are generating the new narratives by which people live. The Church must dialogue with these new cultures and translate her continuing experience of the faithful love of the Triune God into narratives which make sense in these cultures. Otherwise believers' lips will be out of sync with their hearts. Increasingly individuals will create these narratives themselves, telling in support groups and cyber-chat rooms their own stories of the Triune God-with-us through Jesus to whom they are disciples in the Spirit.

Colella's experience confirms that people use whatever communication tools culture provides to express and "redesign" themselves. Theology must learn how to proclaim and manifest the Good News today by engaging with the leading creators of the new media. At the same time, theology and Church must address people at all stages on the communications spectrum—preliterate, literate, and postliterate. J. Redmont and G. Baum underlined the pastoral challenge of this complex situation. M. Campbell noted that students think very differently from their teachers and have great difficulty stepping outside their stream of consciousness.

Discussion touched on Mother Angelica, media literacy, wisdom theology, and the Chinese rites controversy.

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THEOLOGY IN A SEMINARY CONTEXT

Topic: "Foundations," Truth, and Narrative in Catholic Theology

Convener: Jack A. Bonsor, St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park

Moderator: Roger E. McGrath, St. Mary's Seminary and University

Presenters: John C. Haughey, Loyola University, Chicago

John E. Thiel, Fairfield University

John Thiel reprised philosophical critiques of foundationalism and indicated their influence within Protestant theology. He noted the work of Lindbeck and Thiemann. These thinkers hold that "foundational theologies are misguided from beginning to end in their ascription of authority to spurious universals and in their concomitant willingness to trade the integrity of the gospel message for

apologetical intelligibility." Both thinkers turn to the work of Hans Frei. "Good theology properly takes the form of nonfoundational description of the scriptural narrative." In this they are consistent with the classical Protestant commitment to the plain sense of Scripture.

Thiel asked how Catholic theology might embrace a narrative approach. He suggested that Trent's teaching that revelation is handed down in Scripture and unwritten traditions "offers the form of a story of the reception of faith from generation to generation, a plot line in which the Christian community struggles to believe, to live, to understand, and to pass on the saving truth of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ." Here is a distinctively Catholic approach to narrative theology. While Frei locates truth in the gospel portrait of Jesus's self-manifestation, a Catholic version would locate "truth-in-reception," that is, "the written and unwritten truth of Christ proclaimed in the apostolic preaching and embraced in the lives of the faithful through the ages." Thiel concluded with the suggestion that hermeneutical theologies can offer valuable insights into how the Catholic narrative unfolds, attending to interpretive development, contingency and pluralism.

John Haughey focused on the character of the truth claim in narrative theology. Haughey accepted the postmodern account of self as narratively constituted. The self has many narratives but "at least for Paul there is one that is paramount by which the others must be interpreted, namely, 'the Gospel I preached to you.' That narrative is to be the organizing story of a Christian's selfhood."

For Catholic theology Scripture and sacred tradition are the locus of this narrative. Haughey suggested that Aquinas's *Contra Gentiles* exemplifies how truth and narrative belong together. For centuries commentators have focused on secondary, metaphysical aspects of the work. Acknowledging his debt to Thomas Hibbs, Haughey observed that "It took a modern emphasis on narrative to go back to Thomas and to appreciate how completely narrativel his work is." Haughey asked: "What kind of truth does narrative give?" He turned to Gadamer for an answer. "If there is a fusion of horizons, truth happens in the fusion." "There seems, then, to be three distinct moments in this matter of truth. There is the already true, the now or newly true and the not yet and completely true."

A lively discussion ensued. The question of criteria was central. Why opt for a particular narrative? The epistemological humility of postmodern thought was lauded.

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