

CHRISTOLOGY

- Topic: Postmodernism and Christology: The Case of Jean-Luc Marion
Convener: Michael E. O'Keeffe, Saint Xavier's University, Chicago
Moderator: Tatha Wiley, St. John's University, Collegeville
Presenter: Mark Napack
Respondent: Mike Raschko, Seattle University

Reflecting the importance of postmodernism in academic life, this year's Christology session examined the work of Jean-Luc Marion. The sole presenter was Mark Napack, whose presentation drew heavily from Marion's *God without Being*. Napack's insightful presentation, followed by numerous questions, can be summarized in two parts.

Part one examined the postmodern context of Marion's work by concentrating on Marion's critique of modern Western metaphysical notions of God, beginning with Descartes and ending with Heidegger. For Marion, modern metaphysics proves to be an inadequate foundation for Christian theology since metaphysics relegates God to an "idolatrous projection" of human beings, who cannot escape their own limitations when considering God. Metaphysics therefore consigns God "to the measure of the human."

To escape this idolatry and the conceptual atheism it gives rise to, Marion seeks to construct a nontheological grasp of God which is grounded in the self-revelation of God in Christ. As such, God is no longer thought but received through an "idoloclastic gaze," which perceives in Christ the God of love.

Part two then explored the importance of Christ as the self-gift of God, which becomes for the Christian the central resource for receiving a nonidolatrous revelation of God. Marion sees Christ as the icon of God, who receives from God the self-gift of God and can thus pass that revelation on without idolizing God. Christ does so since for Marion he is one with the Father, and thus enables us to receive God "from God" rather than "from the gazer." In addition, Christ is illuminative since through Christ we receive God in eucharistic participation, which by passes the idolatrous quest to "comprehend the incomprehensible" in favor of knowledge based on experience. Hence Marion's Christology naturally points to the centrality of the Eucharist, and the role of experience, profession, and agapic love as the principal avenues for receiving God.

Following Napack's presentation was a twenty-minute question and comment period, which was initiated by the respondent, Mike Raschko and mediated by Tatha Wiley. Raschko was particularly impressed with Marion's understanding

of the idol and the dangers of "finding in Jesus the mirror image of what we would like to see." He was also interested in the possibility of using Marion's focus on agape as a gateway into a metaphysics of relations, which would counteract the metaphysics of being that Marion criticizes. Additional comments focused on the intersection between philosophy and theology, the continuing value of theologies based on experience, and the necessary role of revelation.

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