

TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

Topic: Eucharist as Participation in the Koinonia of Father, Son, and Spirit.
Convener: Joseph A. Bracken, Xavier University, Cincinnati
Presenter: David N. Power, The Catholic University of America

After a quick review of recent ecumenical statements on the relation between the Eucharistic ritual and the mystery of the Trinity, Power focused on texts written by Basil of Caesarea and Germanus of Constantinople as a *locus theologicus* for understanding this connection. Both "distinguish in the eucharistic liturgy between the thanksgiving for the works of God in the Word and the Spirit, and the glorification of the divine Trinity." This distinction between thanksgiving and doxology corresponds, of course, to the theological distinction between *oikonomia* and *teologia*. In Power's view, therefore, liturgical texts can illuminate creedal statements and Christian ethical practice. A "poetics" of eucharistic language, for example, yields the following theological conclusions. First, Eucharist is primarily a response to the primordial address of God: "The Church speaks the name of God, only because God has first spoken to it." Secondly, the Eucharist seeks to establish a *koinonia* of Christians with one another and with the world around them as well as with the three divine persons. Thirdly, the necessary linkage of Word and Spirit both within the divine life and in the economy of salvation is reflected in the various forms of address within the Eucharistic liturgy. On a deeper level of reflection, however, one realizes that the Eucharist "is an economy of gift, where the gift is from God, of and through Christ and the Spirit, and the communion table is the central rite, not the consecration nor any gift made by the Church to God." Furthermore, this ritual of Eucharistic self-giving is such as to require expression in varied forms of liturgical practice. "By force of the indwelling Spirit, those who love in Christ hold no form or representation of the event remembered or of the community formed above the call of love. They hold on to nothing, in the urge to embrace through action, and give vitality and a place within God's love, to others." Similarly, with respect to the understanding of the immanent Trinity, the liturgical tradition counsels caution in explaining the theoretical relations of the divine persons to one another. The apophatic tradition of the East and recent philosophical/theological speculation in the West (e.g., the work of Jean-Luc Marion and Louis-Marie Chauvet) all point to the ineffable Otherness of God to human experience. The discussion afterwards focused on the similarities and differences between the basic understandings of Eucharist as gift and as sacrifice. Power himself preferred the understanding of Eucharist as gift because it is more inclusive in its explanatory power.

JOSEPH A. BRACKEN
Xavier University
Cincinnati, Ohio